

COMMUNITY*
LAND SCOTLAND

Case study



21 North Main Street, Wigtown - Dumfries & Galloway

2 refurbished houses by Wigtown & Bladnoch
Community Initiative

Due to be completed by January 2021

Location

21 North Main Street, Wigtown
- Dumfries & Galloway



Priorities

- **Addressing local housing need**
- **Town centre regeneration**
- **Supporting the local economy**

Background

Wigtown & Bladnoch Community Initiative (WBCI) was formed to address a local housing need. When the local Bank of Scotland branch closed in 2017, they took the opportunity to buy the empty branch to create housing. The upstairs manager's flat had not been used as accommodation for many years and the Initiative were keen to bring it back into use. Had the community not purchased the building, it would likely have lain empty and deteriorated over time. Using the Community Right to Buy legislation, the property was purchased at market value with a grant from the Scottish Land Fund.

Wigtown has very little social housing, and what private rental accommodation there is, is often unaffordable for residents. Housing needs research found a demand for both family housing and accommodation for older residents. WBCI are therefore converting the majority of the building into two units: one family sized, and one for single occupancy, which may enable the opportunity for intergenerational living. Community consultation also identified a bunkhouse as the best use of the original bank space. This will provide much needed affordable holiday accommodation and importantly will complement rather than compete with other businesses in the town. Work to create the 8 bed bunkhouse will begin in the spring, and provide a small additional income for WBCI.

Funding

Development costs were completely grant funded, without the need for additional borrowing. Grants were secured from the Rural Housing Fund, a local windfarm community benefit, SSE Development Fund, Dumfries & Galloway Town Centre Living Fund and the Scottish Government's Town Centre Capital Fund.

Support

WBCI approached South of Scotland Community Housing (SOSCH), formerly Dumfries and Galloway Small Community Housing Trust, for project management support to take their plans forward. SOSCH undertook the housing needs assessment work, project management of the design team, and assisted with funding applications. While WBCI had funding experience, the support and expertise of SOSCH in housing development proved invaluable.

Image credit:
South of Scotland
Community Housing



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“If you want communities to tackle housing issues, there needs to be the grant funding to support it”

Jak Kane, Director,
Wigtown & Bladnoch
Community Initiative

Outcomes

By creating an allocations policy based on a local housing needs and demand assessment, priority will be given to families and single people in housing need, particularly those currently working and living in the town. Rents will be at locally affordable levels. The project will also contribute to the revitalisation of Wigtown's High Street as well as building local confidence.

Future Plans

Following the successful completion of this project, WBCI are keen to explore further opportunities to deliver additional housing to meet the needs of local residents and have registered a Community Right to Buy interest on a piece of land. Ongoing support from Scottish Government will be critical to delivering further housing in the town.

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