
THE RIDGE SOCIAL IMPACT REPORT 2023-2024

04





THE RIDGE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Message from The Chair 3

TRUSTEES

Board of Trustees 4

OVERVIEW

Our Story so Far 5

SUPPORT TEAM

Here for our Community without
Judgement 6

Working in Partnership 7

GARDENS

Everyone is Welcome Here 8

THE RIDGE FOUNDATIONS

We Make A Difference 9

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Connecting Communities,
Shaping Futures 10

TRAINING

Our team can be relied upon to give
you the best training and guidance 12



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THE RIDGE SCIO

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome to our latest Social Impact Report!

I'm delighted to offer some opening reflections to this year's Social Impact Report. The report is a way of capturing and communicating The Ridge's work over the past year; and while we can put numbers on activities and staff colleagues, what's more difficult to communicate is the very significant impact on people's lives and on the place where we live and work together. In short, The Ridge changes lives for the better!

The way we do that is through

- Provision of locally accessible support and training to disadvantaged people
- Support and empowerment for those struggling to access important life skills
- Restoration of derelict or dilapidated land and buildings to benefit the community

We have all seen the way in which impacts from Covid, the cost-of-living crisis as well as global issues have brought new challenges. It has also brought opportunities, and The Ridge has continued to grow and develop to meet some of these challenges. Indeed, our work has never been more relevant and important, whilst resources to meet these needs have become ever harder to source.

Once again, we have seen the vital importance of face to face, locally accessible and familiar interaction and support for our many clients and volunteers during the past 12 months. Anything which The Ridge is able to deliver depends upon the ongoing generosity and support of our partners and funders. Many of them understand the ongoing challenges and have been incredibly generous as they see the hard work continue day in and day out. We are nearing the completion of our project within Black Bull Close with the new build Support Centre and Training Kitchen alongside the painstaking restoration of north-side ruins within the historic Close. This will clearly and significantly enhance our ability to deliver services and to provide a purpose-built and welcoming community hub. It has been inspiring to see local individuals through supported apprenticeships in Joinery and Stonemasonry, creating a skilful workforce to care for our precious built heritage into the future, and offering a way in to a rewarding career for many individuals who would otherwise have struggled to access and sustain such high quality skills training.

In the midst of this, the staff of The Ridge continue to work at pace led by a refreshed and professional Senior Management Team. All deserve a huge word of thanks.

Thank you for your continued support and enjoy all the great stories within this report.

BOB FYFFE
Chairman of the Board

**BOB FYFFE****CHAIR**

With many years of senior leadership in the Faith and Voluntary sectors, Bob is an Executive Coach and Mentor who has a strong sense of social justice. He has extensive governance experience with various charities including a number of years as a Trustee of Christian Aid. has enjoyed working

in community based innovative projects in the past and The Ridge offers an opportunity to continue that. He enjoys photography, travel and has recently learned to kayak.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Team**HEATHER BLACKWOOD****SECRETARY**

Heather was born in Inverness and moved to Edinburgh to study law. She has been a lawyer for 40 years, initially as a court practitioner. In 1993, she became a tribunal judge with the Social Security Appeal tribunal. In 2005 she was appointed as a legal member of the Mental Health Tribunal for Scotland (MHTS) and she continues to work part time as a Convener of Mental Health Tribunals. She served on the Parole Board for Scotland from 2008 and became vice chairman in 2011. Heather and her husband moved to Dunbar from Paisley in 2015. Her interests include dog walking, gardening and drawing and painting.

**DANNY KELLY****TREASURER**

Originally from Greenock, Danny is a graduate of Glasgow University and a Chartered Accountant. He worked in the accounting profession in Scotland and Europe for a number of years before joining the oil industry in the early eighties. He spent most of his oil industry career with Total (French oil major); working in the UK as well as a number of overseas postings - Middle East, France and most recently Kazakhstan. In addition to financial positions, his career latterly focused on transporting and marketing production from a large central Asian field. Retired in 2015, Formerly living in Aberdeen, Danny and his wife relocated to East Lothian in 2018 to be nearer their grandchildren (and two children!).

**LIAM ROSS****TRUSTEE**

Liam is an architect, and a lecturer in Architectural Design at the University of Edinburgh. He has experience of work in Edinburgh, London and New York, on projects in the UK, USA, Russia and UAE. Prior to becoming a lecturer, he spent 5 years with Malcolm Fraser Architects, leading and assisting on award-winning projects at all stages of the design process. Among his roles at the University, he has led initiatives designed to create employment and outreach opportunities. In 2012 - with colleague Lisa Moffit - he established 'ESALA Projects', a means to support staff and students engaging in pro-bono design consultancy for clients in the public and charitable sector.

**ANDY PRINGLE****TRUSTEE**

Born in Aberdeen, Andy has moved around Scotland, graduating from Glasgow University many years ago, then chasing the technology industry from Greenock to Glenrothes, most recently working for semiconductor and photonics companies in Edinburgh and Livingston. He moved to Dunbar in 2013 and, now is keen to help develop the unique environment this town offers. He has recently retired from the workplace and hopes his skills in general management and data analysis can help the Ridge, which he joined as trustee in November 2022. The aims of the Ridge - supporting and helping people develop their life skills, improving the environment for the community, and restoring dilapidated old buildings - are a good fit with his personal interests.

**ROB BISSET****TRUSTEE**

Rob has lived in Dunbar nearly his whole life. He spent all his working life at the local cement works, eventually reaching the post of Chief Electrical and Process Control Engineer. He has previously held director positions at Edinburgh and District Employers Training Association Ltd (EDETA), Dunbar Community Development Company (DCDC) as a representative of the Dunbar Community Sports Clubs Association and at Hallhill Ltd. His hobbies are campervanning, geocaching, birdwatching and gardening, and a strong interest in the history and development of Dunbar, tracing some of his town ancestry back to the 17th Century.

**JOHN IRVINE****TRUSTEE**

John spent his career as a Chartered Surveyor, latterly as UK Development Director for an international property group. He has experience in managing teams of employees and consultants engaged in the development process, as well as the strategy and running of a large company. John has also held appointments as a voluntary director for a housing association and for Architecture and Design Scotland.

He is now retired and spends his time rowing, cycling, running and gardening (aches and pains permitting!).

THE RIDGE

OUR STORY SO FAR...

The Ridge was established in 2012 in response to the lack of local opportunities to access training and support services.

The Dunbar and East Linton ward includes remote hillfoot villages and is overall poorly served by affordable public transport, meaning some of our area is within the 10% most deprived in Scotland in terms of rural access. We wanted to deliver high quality training, initially in horticulture and hospitality, and quickly became established as an SQA-accredited centre, offering primarily young people locally the chance to overcome barriers to getting into fairly paid work, where their potential could be realised. It quickly became apparent that some of the barriers people were facing needed more input, over a longer period of time, and that those needing help were not just our young people. Our Support Team was established and grew alongside our Training provision, beginning the fully holistic model for which The Ridge has since become so well known.

Having delivered early-stage design and management of the Belhaven Hospital Community Garden on behalf of Sustaining Dunbar, by 2014 The Ridge was looking for a garden site closer to the town centre, to make its services truly accessible in the place of greatest need. East Lothian Council made available a wasteground site behind Black Bull Close, which was transformed through the efforts of volunteers/clients, working together to create a beautiful community space which reflected their own personally restorative journey. This demonstrated powerfully the hidden talents and dormant potential which lies untapped in so many of us, and the enormous personal benefits of getting the opportunity to uncover that potential, with all the dignity and sense of self-worth which making a valued contribution brings.

A particularly high personal impact was evident among those involved in rebuilding the walls of the garden. The social enterprise 'The Ridge Foundations CIC' (TRF) emerged from this experience, as we aimed to offer long-term access to the transformative experience of stonemasonry skills learning through apprenticeships with the company, which would also allow us to give back to the community through a rolling programme of restoration of historic structures locally.

Over time, we took on East Lothian's first Community Asset Transfer and purchased Black Bull Close (C17-18th ruins) along with the Backlands garden, securing them in perpetuity on behalf of the community. Our offer expanded to include Joinery apprenticeships, and the high quality of our teams' work was recognised nationally, including through The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB)'s Sustainable Heritage award. The transformation of these humble but precious parts of our local built heritage has been mirrored by the impact on the lives of all involved. To date 13 apprentices have commenced the training journey with us to date, with 6 having fully graduated, among them 3 now working as stonemasons with Historic Environment Scotland. Their work, under skilled trainers, has seen ruins restored in Dunbar town centre, but they have also been part of many external jobs, making their skills available across the community, and generating much-needed funds for the work of the charity.

We have also developed highly effective courses in partnership with East Lothian Works, to provide qualifications in Construction and in Rural Skills for young people for whom school is not always the most positive learning setting.

Our training model would not work without the sustained input for trainees of our Support Team. From nothing, they have grown and developed expertise and built trust locally to become the go-to source of advice, support and onward referrals for the local community, where previously there was little or no access to any such service. They also work closely with our Garden Team who have expanded from restoration of the Backlands Gardens, to create beautiful spaces in Garden Lane and the Sanctuary Garden and most recently in Empire Close, all through the work of clients and volunteers, who benefit from all the positive impacts of gardening alongside others, and making a very visible and much appreciated positive contribution to the community.

KATE DARRAH

FOUNDER AND MANAGING DIRECTOR



We have been able, through amazing funder/ donor and community support, to take ownership of a number of derelict/ wasteground sites in the town centre, which are all fertile grounds for our model of personal regeneration through engagement with regeneration of place. Once Black Bull Close development is complete, Flishers Close, 86-88 High Street and Empire Close all offer enormous opportunities for skills training and personal development, alongside the chance to develop end uses which serve the purposes of The Ridge (including training centre, therapeutic spaces, supported accommodation, community garden), meet other needs within the community (residential and commercial accommodation) and create income-generation opportunities for The Ridge in the long term. Of course they also contribute significantly to the feel of our wonderful historic town centre, attracting visitor footfall/ economic benefit to the High Street and contributing to a sense of optimism and civic pride in our carefully tended past now made ready for a brighter future., all through the efforts of those least expected to make such positive contributions to our collective community wealth.

Over the years, The Ridge has certainly evolved, offering a range of services, activities and training in response to both local needs and the opportunities. But at the heart of it has always been the conviction that everyone has something positive to offer, and that we all deserve the chance to fulfill that potential. We exist to help break down the barriers to that fulfillment, and will continue to strive to find effective and high impact ways to facilitate this on behalf of our amazing community.

SUPPORT TEAM HERE FOR OUR COMMUNITY WITHOUT JUDGEMENT

2023-2024

The core purpose of our community based Support Team is to work with local people to address both the impact and the root causes of issues such as poverty, homelessness, substance use and mental ill health.

During the last year, supporting mental health, providing income maximisation (vital during this cost of living crisis) through securing benefits and support into employment were some of the main services that we provided, often alongside issues related to secure housing. Overlapping these issues are often recovery journeys and the impact of addiction on wellbeing and family relationships. Each person that comes to us receives tailored individual, person centred support.

The support team provides services within an accessible and trusted community based space in Dunbar alongside a range of therapeutic, social and skills based groups including wellbeing, music appreciation, gaming and creative workshops. We have also focused on developing groups that positively affect physical health such as our fortnightly cycles for all abilities and walks with East Lothian Countryside Rangers, giving individuals the opportunity to socialise and enjoy our local area. Our regular creative workshops enable people to express themselves within a safe and encouraging community based environment.

Referral numbers have again risen from the previous year to more than double in 22-23. The majority of referrals to our service are self-referrals, demonstrating our reputation and visibility within our community. Other referral sources are built on our strong links with partner organisations and the confidence they have in The Ridge. Many of the recent increases are from families in crisis with children with complex needs. Many of these recent referrals benefit from long term support as well as the initial crisis support.

We provide local employability support based around client needs including building CVs, gaining confidence through volunteering, accessing training courses and providing support as they move into employment. We have continued to build on our network of employers who provide sympathetic work placements and employment opportunities for our supported individuals.

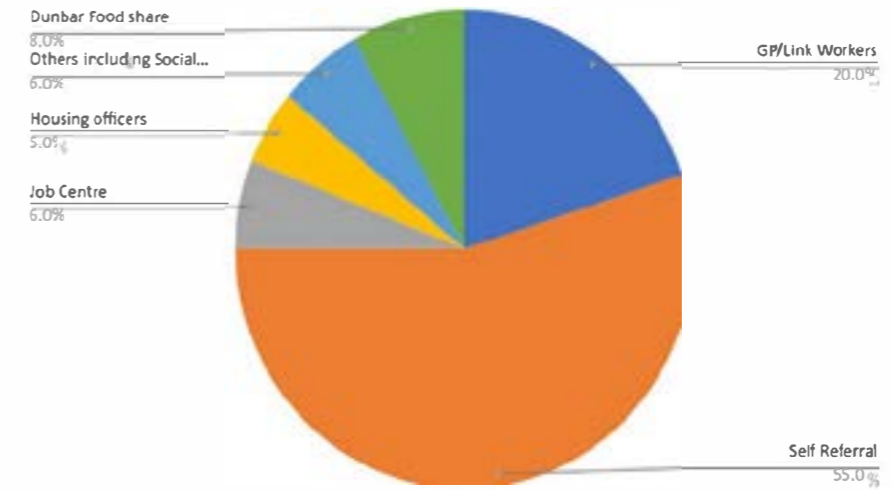
We continue to benefit from the many professional and organisational relationships we have built up over the years, including with the Job Centre, Foodbanks, ELC community, Dunbar Grammar School, churches, community warden and many others. We have worked hard to create a Support service that is Person Centered, Community Based, Collaborative, Holistic and Accessible, capable of Crisis Management and LongTerm Support but always focused on personal dignity and on supporting individuals and families to find and develop wherever possible the tools to cope, rather than fostering long-term dependency.

We have created a safe and trusted space for the wider community to access support.

Being visible and accessible is key to our work and how it is perceived by those who use our service. Our focus has always been to respond to local need as it presents itself.

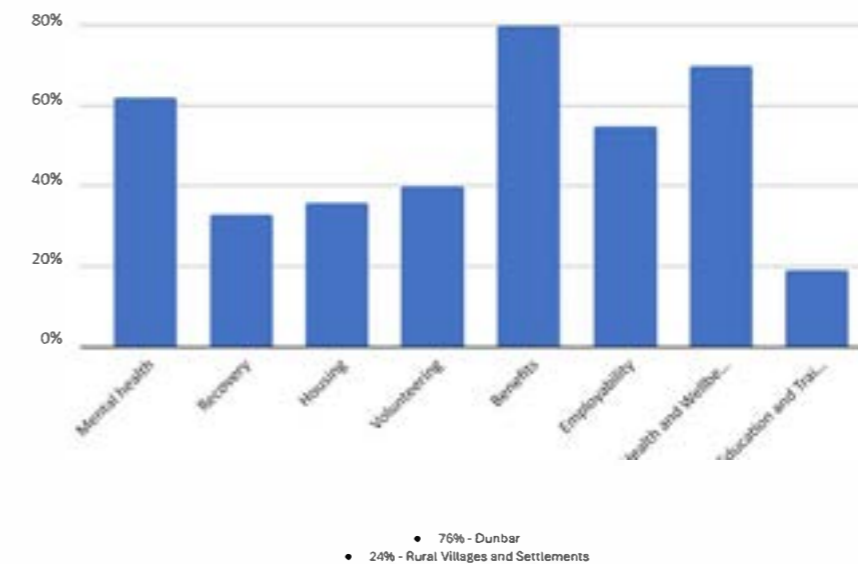
2023-24 REFERRALS TO THE SUPPORT TEAM

Referral Routes 2023-2024



RANGE OF SUPPORT

Range of Support



WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

We work together with partners to bring our community specific support by opening our base to other services including weekly and monthly drop ins. We also provide easy access to our services by running Community hubs in more rural communities so that there is no barrier to access our service and the other organisations that come together to make this possible.

These include:

- Debt advisory drop in (Salvation Army debt advisory)
- Social security local delivery appointments and drop in (Social Security Scotland)
- East Lothian Council Rent team
- Business Gateway drop in
- Numeracy and budgeting support (Multiply, Lead)

While providing these alongside our other services:

- Counselling and wellbeing groups
- Food and larder access
- Workshops and groups including Music, Gaming, Creative
- Recovery support and cafe
- Employability support
- Volunteering
- Befriending
- Community outreach Hubs

Here's what they say:

Social Security Scotland

"Working in partnership with the Ridge has provided Social Security Scotland with a fantastic base to support clients living in Dunbar and surrounding areas of East Lothian. The Ridge's position as an established organisation providing personalised and holistic support services for local people has assisted Social Security Scotland to provide devolved benefit advice and support to some of the most vulnerable clients in the community"

Dunbar Foodshare

"We run a Social Café serving breakfast and lunch and providing a warm space for three-and-a-half hours each Wednesday to which all clients and visitors are welcome. A Support Worker from The Ridge team generally attends... New clients can be immediately introduced to her or him following their initial interview. Sometimes a quick chat is all they need to get a speedy resolution to a simple problem. For more complex issues they may have to schedule a lengthier appointment with the Ridge Support Worker at their base, but having had the opportunity to meet, break the ice, and give an outline of their situation, clients are less anxious about going somewhere new, and all parties are better prepared for the upcoming appointment"

East Lothian Council's Rent Income Team

The Ridge understands the challenges that people in the local community face and their expertise, compassion and dedication are commendable. They are a trusted resource and source of support for many, making a real difference to people's lives and providing critical support to local residents. By working in partnership, we can reach out to people in need of help and ensure our Officers are accessible and available to anyone in need of advice, including the most vulnerable in our communities and those who are most in need.



GARDENING TEAM EVERYONE IS WELCOME HERE



Our garden team is keen to get back into the Backlands (once work on the new building is complete) but in the meantime the team has done extraordinary work with limited space, helping numerous volunteers and clients reap the benefits of outdoor, collaborative work. We continue to follow no dig methods and we are a non-certified organic garden. Our garden principles complement The Ridge in that we have created a space where we can provide opportunities and support to clients and volunteers alike, each following their own path to contribution, however that looks.

Our Garden Team works closely with colleagues across The Ridge, the Support Team in particular where there is crossover with clients being given support in the garden while completing tasks as opposed to seeing their support worker in the support space.

We use various methods to reduce waste and our environmental impact by maintaining our spectacular compost heaps, gathering rain water for use elsewhere in the gardens, using composting toilets, choosing native plants which we source from local nurseries and repurposing materials salvaged from the building sites in the garden. We also provide our trainees and modern apprentices with opportunities to use their skills in building various walls, huts, walkways and of course our beloved compost bins.

For the garden lovers amongst you, here is a quick guide to our various garden spaces, there are more of them than you might think!

Sanctuary Garden

This Garden has a gate that leads off from Garden Lane. The walls were rebuilt by our stonemasonry trainees and we have created it as a climate resilient garden planted with drought tolerant plants and offering a quiet space to sit and meet. This area is ever popular with local people and we love seeing people enjoy the space which we have created.

Garden Lane

Garden lane is a beautiful walkway between the Co-op car park and the High Street, accessed via a pend from the High Street or the steps at the back of the store. We have planted a wildlife corridor with lots of pollinator friendly flowers and trees which provide fruit for birds. As with all our spaces, there are benches (made by our team) and plenty to look at including the stunning wing gate which gives access to another of our sites.

While our volunteers are working on Garden Lane we always get comments from the passing public who truly appreciate this lane, you can see a few of our favourites in the box to the left here:

Rainbow Garden and Orchard

Tucked behind the wing gate, just off Garden Lane are our dye garden and orchard. The dye garden is populated with natural dye plants which are not only incredible to look at but also used for materials including silk ribbons for the flower bouquets we sell in the community. The orchard is planted with apples, plums, currants, gooseberries, raspberries and rhubarb all of which we use in our food bank, for our cookery classes or we sell them to local businesses.

Backlands Garden (back soon....)

Empire Close

This Garden consists of a productive flower garden, an apothecary garden and our beloved polytunnel. This space also houses our three compost bays where we make all our own compost for the gardens using garden waste and the coffee grounds from local cafes which our volunteers to add to the mix. Without our volunteers we simply couldn't do what we do in our gardens - thank you to everyone for their hard work.

Empire Close also supplies the flowers which we sell to local florists. We also run a flower bucket scheme where people can buy local seasonal flowers and support our work at the same time. We also grow and sell bulbs and a small selection of seedlings which are surplus to our needs.

Other work which we have done over the past year is running a course for young adults to learn about the medicinal benefits from plants in the Apothecary Garden and create a wonderfully illustrated booklet with help from children from Dunbar Primary School .

As well as our volunteers we now have a trainee Gardener through the Work and Retrain as a Gardener Scheme (WRAGS). This is a paid part time course for a year providing our trainee with additional skills to progress their career and open up employment opportunities.

Again, this complements our ethos of finding local opportunities for local people and we are absolutely thrilled to be able to offer the trainee this opportunity.

In 2023 we were awarded outstanding achievement from the Royal Horticultural Society's "It's Your Neighbourhood" award.

“

"Makes my heart sing "

"Dunbar Botanics"

"So surprised I nearly
dropped my pie"

"Thank you"



THE RIDGE FOUNDATIONS WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE



Over the last year the joinery team within The Ridge Foundations has been almost entirely focused on the construction of the new building which comprises a support centre, training kitchen, training space and offices. This involves restoration of the historical building, ("building one") in Black Bull Close and linking it to an entirely new building to create our new purpose built space. Aside from the huge benefit the new building will give to the community, and The Ridge team, the build itself has proved to be a valuable and meaningful process.

It has had a very positive influence on people whether they have been directly involved with the project or not - our apprentices talk with pride about the particular parts of the building that they have worked on, giving them and the qualified team a sense of the scale of their contribution to this huge project.



We have had many groups visit the site at various stages, - artists, architecture students, funders, potential funders, service delivery partners, school children (from our own NPA programme), a First Minister and his travelling cabinet, local dignitaries and representatives from other social work organisations and charities to name just a few. All come away from the site with both positive feedback and some level of inspiration - all have noticed something different about our work, whether it be the soundproofing methods, the restored windows, the joists or the skirtings .

Within TRF Joinery the core team of apprentices have advanced their learning and skill set exponentially. Being able to work on each phase of what has been a very technical and complex job at this early stage of their careers has been a massive positive for them all. Throughout the duration of the build TRF at Black Bull Close, they have made available skilled tradespeople, providing invaluable and unique opportunities to our local community to to enable learning about traditional skills. In addition to our full time joiners we have been able to give part time work experience to four young individuals keen to get into construction. Other work experience on site has been given to candidates from our pre-apprentice programme, again reflecting the holistic Ridge approach to our work, giving opportunities to others wherever we can.

In short, when the dust has settled from this monumental build all of those involved will look back with pride and move forward with priceless experience gained.

The masons who work at The Ridge have been fortunate to work on repairs and conservation works to masonry structures both on our Black Bull Close site and out in the community, preserving historic structures and teaching valuable skills to our trainees.

This impacts the local public and seasonal tourists who come across and view these features and like our joinery colleagues, brings an immense sense of achievement and pride to the team.

Examples in the last 12 months include:

- Annual limewash of the Fisherman's monument in Cromwell Harbour for Dunbar Harbour Trust
- Wellhead for Dunbar and District History Society
- Stone and brass sundial for St Mary's Pleasance Gardens Haddington.
- Rebuilding 25 metres of traditional rubble wall for Belhavenhill School



We are also contributing to the new support centre to create a beautiful indoor and outdoor space for the good of the community and our colleagues. Our work has included showcasing drystone walling, vernacular stone building finishes and paints as well as an incredible amount of plastering using traditional lime hemp plaster.

We also proudly supported three team members into full time employment with Historic Environment Scotland and set them up from school leavers with no prospects into happy stonemasons with wonderful careers ahead of them.

It would be remiss of us not to mention at this point our Head of Joinery and Head of Stonemasonry who continue to lead their respective teams with good humour, patience and a bucket load of talent.



Open evenings - Walk and Talks on sites.

We engaged with approximately 260 people at our workshops, walks and talks. Different activities attracted different audiences of all ages and backgrounds, many of whom had not engaged with their local community and environment, construction activities or local history before. The aim of the workshops and walk and talks was to involve, interest, inspire, upskill, create connections and build capacity within the community. We developed our relationships with some of the Ridge community, schools (West Barns and Dunbar), community groups and universities and built our own audiences as well as tried and tested ideas for engagement. Attracted local neighbours from the High Street or wider Dunbar community keen to know what's happening on their street as well as community groups or contractors from further afield keen to find out more about our projects. Some sessions had different technical themes and visitors could learn about the materials and technology used on site or find out how they might set up or develop their own similar community projects. The open evenings have been very successful in improving local awareness and knowledge about Ridge projects as well as an opportunity to showcase what's happening at the ridge and inviting ideas for future activities.

THE RIDGE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CONNECTING COMMUNITIES SHAPING FUTURES

In year 2 we continued to develop our community engagement activities and programme of events on our Ridge sites as well as extending our activities onto the High Street and further afield in order to reach a wide ranging audience and cover a range of topics.

We continued to run regular sessions for locals and community groups, including our Ridge explorers' sessions with Dunbar Primary, we participated in Dunbar Civic Week and the Heritage Fortnight as well as running a second Summer School putting on a series of creative activities for all ages. Content ranged from technical talks and open evenings to woodworking skill taster sessions to local history investigations looking at our sites and the High Street or creative learning activities experimenting with woodcarving, cooking and clay in the gardens.

We collaborated with other Ridge staff and service users, apprentices, builders, architects, local makers, surveyors, historians, students, school groups, the Brownies as well as some larger organisations including the Marine Conservation Society and Society for Protection of Old Buildings, East Lothian Council and of course The Community Carrot. Over the year we hosted 4 Open Evenings with walk and talks looking at Ridge construction projects, 12 site tours (including many more informal tours), 19 creative workshops and 2 field trips with staff and apprentices. Wherever possible we buddied up or collaborated with different local groups, participated in local events and even had a small mention in an exhibition at the Farrell Centre in Nottingham. Our audience ages ranged from young to old and included local families and community members, Ridge regulars as well as visitors from places further afield who were keen to join in with our activities or learn more about the Ridge and its projects.



We ran **workshop skill taster sessions** to learn about tools and making in the workshop. These attracted people keen to discover new skills or develop their construction knowledge in order to undertake their own projects. These sessions attracted community interest and ideas for content for future making or learning sessions.

Creative Workshops

Covered a wide range of activities and skills from ceramics to wallpaper design, metal casting or creative writing and outdoor cooking using ingredients from the garden. Photography workshops and mentorship sessions invited people to engage with their surroundings through the medium of photography. These sessions brought people of all ages together through creative activities to do with design or construction, place or environment, where they learned new skills through mindful making and engaging with the Black Bull Close, the High Street and the town and built new connections with the people and places of Dunbar at the same time.

Regular Celebrations - Apple Pie Day and Samhain

The final celebration of the year was during the heritage fortnight where we hosted our second apple pie day with the Community Carrot following two days of green woodworking where local children learned how to make spoons. It was an event for all ages for making and eating and celebrating together and will hopefully become a regular event in the future.

Wider Collaborations

We have collaborated with Caitlin from the Marine Conservation Society who has come to talk about the oyster rewilding project on the Forth and we have had several seaweed themed walk and talks and creative workshop collaborations. Connections with 2 universities could lead to design and making collaborations on site.



“
Very interesting, not what my kids expected - in a good way”

Brilliant workshop. By far the best workshop I've been in for years”

Lots of fun, would love to do pinhole photography with Richard again”



Local History and Heritage Fortnight

Over the year we looked at the history and heritage of the Ridge buildings and sites. One of The Ridge community, was involved in some research on some of the objects and history of the sites and we hosted some talks about object finds including one on some of the exciting timber discoveries by a dendrochronologist. A window display at 88 High Street also revealed a keen interest within the local community to develop a project looking at the stories behind some of the buildings and characters on the street. Volunteers will continue to be involved as the group develops.

Apprentice Trail

Bronze plaques featuring the people involved in restoring/building Black Bull Close will be embedded in the ground around the Black Bull Close, with audio material to accompany the walk. We are delighted with our first phase of the Apprentice Trail which will see the bronze plaques set into the ground as the building is completed We collaborated on the designs with The Mobile Foundry, who turned photos into laser cut moulds and then into bronze disks. The Trail will have several stopping points along routes around the Black Bull Close where you can hear stories and some of the highlights from all of the people involved in the building of the close. The castings and audio are complete and the trail will be launched in the autumn.



TRAINING TEAM

Our team can be relied upon to give you the best training and guidance

The Ridge Training team offers a variety of training opportunities for members of the community, through our SQA Accreditation we offer National Progression Awards along with our bespoke training courses. Our team comprises both stonemasons and joiners and we work with colleagues across The Ridge to provide support and guidance to those who need it.

We have worked on a number of training programmes and courses over the past year.

Construction training programme for East Lothian School Children

Another busy year has passed here with the training team with another cohort of East Lothian school children having passed through our training areas at Empire Close, Black Bull Close and an additional training area at 88 High street with great success.

The training this year saw us deliver practical SQA modules in Stonemasonry, Construction Joinery and Bench joinery, delivering SCQF level 5 Construction skills & SCQF level 4 Construction Craft & Technician Qualifications.



The combined results this year saw a total of 36 candidates pass their full award with a further 9 passing 1 or more modules - a massive improvement on last year where a total of 25 passed their full award and 14 passed 1 or more modules and is testament to the skills of our training team. Success here at the Ridge is not always gauged by qualifications. Low self-esteem and poor confidence is a common theme for many of our students and helping them to overcome these issues is our first priority. Experience tells us that qualifications are much more easily achieved with these two basic fundamentals in place. The environment at The Ridge is much more akin to the working world outside school and acts as a stepping stone for many of the pupils as they transition from school to working life.



Star progress

One of the successes this year was a pupil who had health problems, which they did not take seriously and they refused to engage with trainers. Their confidence was so low they could not look at anyone and when spoken to would merely grunt. This pupil by the end of their time with us was engaging in group conversations and through conversation was confident enough to make a decision on what they wanted to do going forward. To our delight and immense pride, this included the summer job they secured while with us and coming to terms with their health problems which they are now addressing.

Following on from last year

It is important to us to keep up with the progress of our former pupils and see how they have progressed.

A successful candidate from last year who came to us with a lack of confidence, yet had very good practical skills has successfully completed their first year as an apprentice with a high end joinery workshop. Their Employer has remarked on how well they have progressed, incredibly after only one year making Sash & Case windows from start to finish.

Another pupil from last year, who again lacked confidence has completed their first year as a stonemasonry trainee at The Ridge. They have become a well respected member of the team who can be relied on to work diligently and can be trusted to work with little guidance on many jobs - it is incredibly rewarding to see them thrive and progress from pupil to colleague.



This year saw the introduction of our pre apprentice programme funded by Historic Environment Scotland (HES). We were delighted to have the opportunity to work with HES to offer this course, which so complements our ethos.

This programme saw us take on 6 young adults all looking for an avenue into the construction industry with an emphasis on traditional skills. This was a pilot programme with the involvement of the Skills Training, Support and The Ridge Foundations apprenticeship training teams.

All 6 members completed the programme successfully, part of the programme involved the SCQF Construction Craft & Technician NPA Level 4 course and they also gained a number of other accreditations and certificated courses. They also got a chance to do work experience mainly with local trades and work towards their CSCS cards.

Three members of this group obtained jobs, one as a joinery apprentice, one as a painter and decorator apprentice and one as a plasterer. One candidate secured a position as a stonemasonry trainee here at The Ridge. A further member continues to work with our Support Team to obtain their CSCS card and go on to find employment.

As with our colleagues, we find that there is an immense sense of pride from those who have created something which will last and many who have been less suited to academia have thrived with the learning environment created by our team. The Skills Training Team is a key part of The Ridge's offering, giving opportunities to members of the community to shine in a welcoming, skilled environment.

“People working together in a strong community with a shared goal and a common purpose can make the impossible possible.”

- Tom Vilsack



“A community that is engaged and working together can be a powerful force.”

- Idowu Koyenikan

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