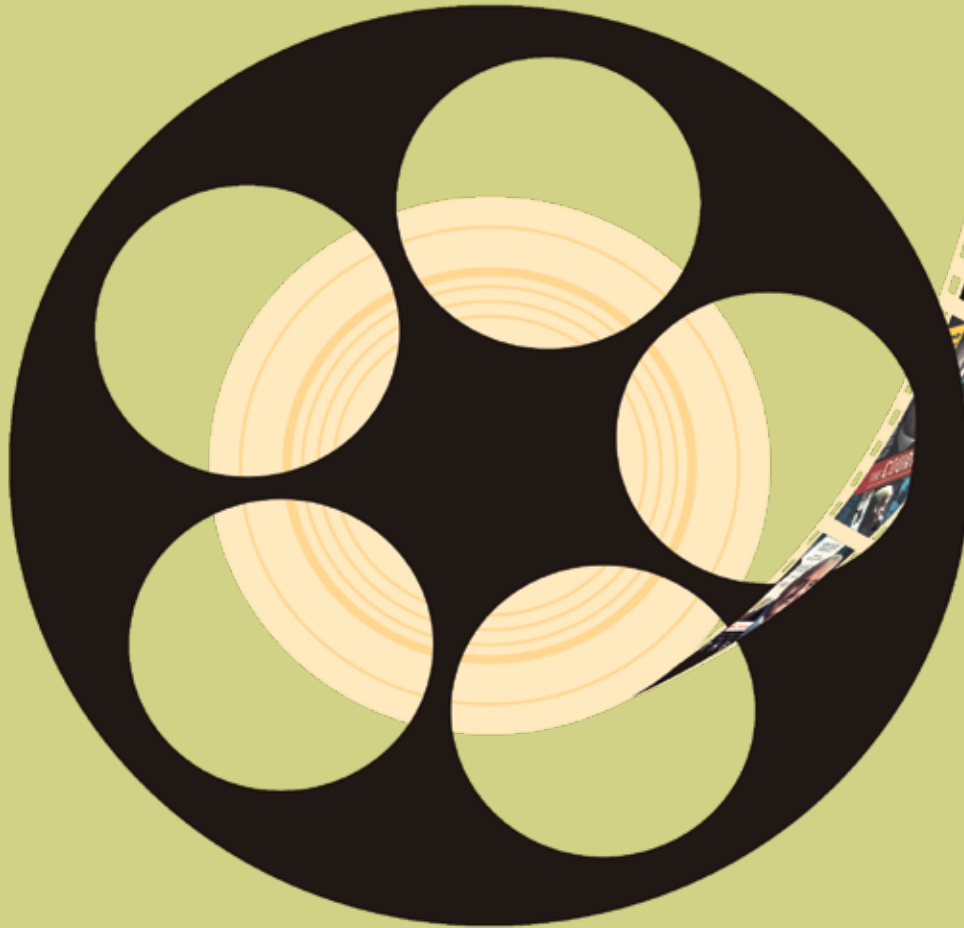




# Greater Morpeth Development Trust

Regeneration of town & countryside  
[www.gmdt.net](http://www.gmdt.net)



## **GMDT** **Annual Report** **April 2021 - March 2022**



*A successful development trust*

## Greater Morpeth Development Trust (GMDT)



### GMDT vision

Greater Morpeth Development Trust (GMDT) will continue to develop Morpeth as a premier market town in the North East England. It works to promote and improve the town and countryside for public benefit, and for the economic and social wellbeing of people living and working in Morpeth and surrounding areas of Northumberland through the promotion of urban and rural regeneration.

### About GMDT

GMDT is a community led organisation established in 2006 out of the Local Strategic Partnership to facilitate the development and delivery of community based projects through partnership working. The diverse range of projects carried out over the past fifteen years could not have happened without the support of our partners, funders, member and volunteers. Major capital schemes which have benefited the town include the redevelopment of Morpeth Town Hall and Morpeth Railway Station which generate development revenue and a sustainable income to support the activities of GMDT. This has been achieved through the support of a number of funding bodies who have invested in the vision to redevelop key public assets within Morpeth – the main funders being Heritage Lottery Fund, Network Rail, Northern Trains Limited, Northumberland County Council, Railway Heritage Trust and North East Rural Growth Network.

The existing staff team is made up of 2 part time members supported by a range of professional associates to deliver a portfolio of quality projects and through engaging volunteers' support and strong partnership working we work to maintain our level of service delivery for the benefit of Morpeth.

You can find more about our work on our website [www.gmdt.net](http://www.gmdt.net) The front cover shows some of the promotional posters from our cinema evenings.

GMDT is an independent company limited by guarantee and a registered charitable trust.

**Company Registration Number 5676236, Charity Number 1117036, VAT Number 101 6832 50**

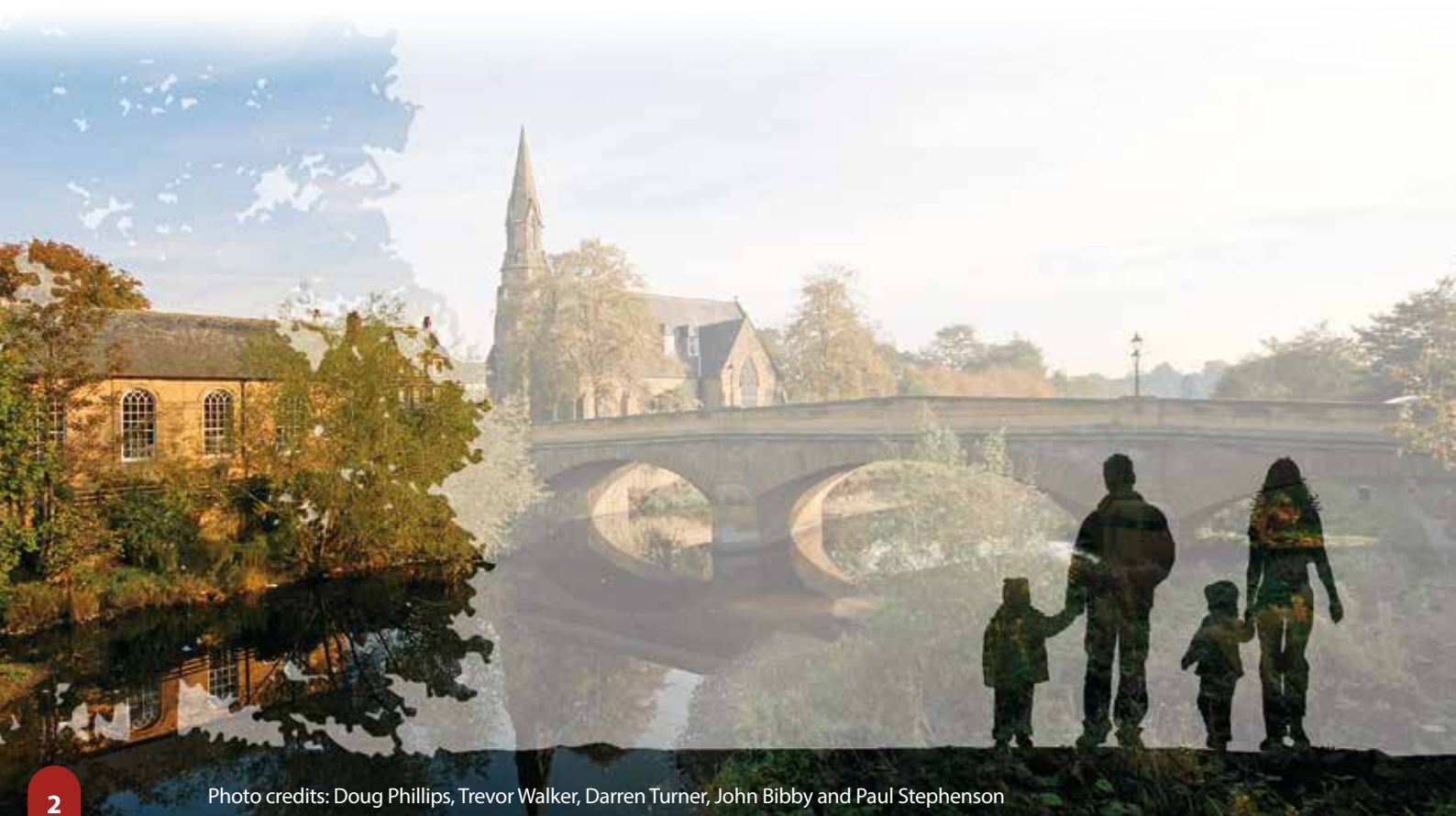


Photo credits: Doug Phillips, Trevor Walker, Darren Turner, John Bibby and Paul Stephenson



# GMDT structure and team

## GMDT structure

(March 2021)



The interest groups are made up of volunteers who help to develop and deliver regeneration projects and support other groups operating within the area. There are a number of projects that the interest groups will work together on, such as the signage and interpretation project and the event portfolio.

## GMDT Staff



**Linda Wilson**  
Office Administrator



**Julie Hawthorn**  
Office Administrator



**Kim Bibby-Wilson**  
Heritage Interest Group Director

## GMDT Board



**Mike Willis**  
Chair and  
Community Director



**Karen Bower**  
Vice Chairman and  
Community Director



**Frank Rescigno**  
Arts and Culture Interest  
Group Director



**Hugh Edmundson**  
Environment Interest  
Group Director



**Kevin Johnson**



**Richard Burrow**  
Community Director

**Hayley Brown** Associate Director

## Revision of Memorandum and Articles of Association

The Greater Morpeth Development Trust is legally structured as a charitable company. As such it is currently governed by two legal documents, the Memorandum of Association and the Articles of Association. These were drawn up, signed and registered with the Charity Commission in 2006. Times have changed since then and these two documents can now be combined into one. We have also noted a number of clauses in the existing documents that have become anomalous, bearing in mind the Trust's current status. One is a requirement to have a Chief Executive, another is a requirement to have three specified Interest Groups, each one appointing a Director to the main Board, and there is also a requirement that members and Directors must live within Morpeth or a specified area in the immediate vicinity. Perhaps the most substantial issue is that the Board consider our current list of charitable objects (which all charitable companies must have) to be unrepresentative of the Trust's current and likely future activities, containing many activities that we have never engaged in and are unlikely to do so. It is important to note that there is no intention to change the direction or range of the Trust's current activities, rather the intention is to ensure our governing document is more suited to those current and future activities.

The Board has therefore commenced the process of drafting a revised, new Memorandum and Articles of Association. The revised document will follow closely the model document produced by the Charity Commission, but we do need to draw up our own list of charitable objects that are specific to the Trust. It is proposed that the requirement to appoint a Chief Executive be removed, as the Trust is not of a size to require one, nor does it have the financial means to pay for one. It is also proposed that the requirement to have three specific Interest Groups, each one appointing a Director, should be removed. As an alternative means of continuing the emphasis in each area, the revised document will allow for the formation of committees to focus on specific areas of activity. It is also proposed to drop the residence requirement, as it may exclude people with a strong commitment to the town but who happen to live outside the specified area.

Once the Board has drawn up a revised document it will need to be considered and approved at a General Meeting of the members of the Trust before it can be submitted to the Charity Commission for final approval. It is intended that this should happen in 2023. Richard Burrow, *Community Director*

# Interest Groups Reports

## Arts & Culture Director's Report

We were affected as all organizations were with the Covid restrictions. Our normal events, such as Picnic in The Park held every year in July, had to be cancelled. We were able to have a modified schedule of events as some restrictions were relaxed. In June the Morpeth Cinema re-summed with a modified schedule (see below)

In October for the first time in 2 years we were able to invite Northumberland Theatre Company to Morpeth. Their performance of *The Importance of Being Earnest* was a huge success with a full house.

As we look to the 2022 to 2023 season we are optimistic we will be able to provide a full pro-gramme for the people of Morpeth.

## Morpeth Community Cinema

(report by Dave Warman)

The Community Cinema emerged from lockdown in June 2021 after restrictions were eased, with its first screening since March 2020. The screening was covid secure with social distancing, face coverings, etc and the film "Summerland" attracted an audience of 47 to St James Hall, where we took the opportunity to use the newly refurbished facility including brand new audio visual equipment, with a larger, 4m wide motorised screen.

Feedback from the audience was largely positive, although there were a lot of negative comments about the seats which had been provided by the Town Council, which are folding plastic with no padding. The cinema team were also disappointed by the blinds, which although provided in black out material, had a 20mm gap all round, so with 16 windows, the hall was still quite light during the screening. After a summer break, screenings

resumed in September, with fortnightly screenings for the first two months, to catch up on some of the films missed during lockdown. We continued with socially distanced seating and a limited capacity, which was appreciated by the audience. Film choice was tricky, as many fewer films were released in lockdown, so we had a mix of pre lockdown and more recent releases. Highlights were the new version of "Little Women", which attracted an audience of 52, "The Father", with 60, and "Nomadland", for which, after selling 56 tickets, close to capacity for a socially distanced audience, we added a 4.45pm screening which attracted another 31. Other films attracted audiences ranging from 20 to 50, so it has been a successful season overall, although we are not sure if it is film choice, covid or seat comfort that is deterring some audience members, perhaps a combination of all three. We have provided foam pads for audience members who do not bring a cushion, and have tended to avoid films longer than 2 hrs. Recording audience names for covid purposes has had given an insight into the audience profile, with a lot of new audience members booking tickets, as well as regulars.

Screenings are continuing to June, and we hope that with no covid restrictions, audiences will revert to pre pandemic levels as the months go by.

**Frank Rescigno**  
*Arts & Culture Director*

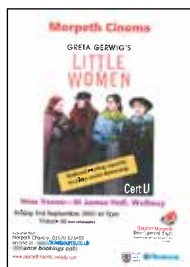
We did make preparations for a Movie Weekend in February and then again in May, but post-poned them, in the light of covid cases, and a feeling that our usual offering of 10 films in 2 days on 2 screens was a bit ambitious in these still uncertain times. So the plan is for a smaller scale event in the Autumn, say 5 films, but returning to the Town Hall with our own equipment, a more comfortable venue with the Butter Market available for refreshments

## Heritage Interest Group Report April 2021 - March 2022

Meetings of the Heritage Interest Group were held via Zoom in June (AGM), September, November and February, and the Trust was represented at the online quarterly Morpeth Heritage Network sessions and through the Morpeth Heritage website. Few projects could be progressed to any great effect because of the continuing restrictions and problems caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, but April saw the first online Morpeth Northumbrian Gathering, and live events resumed to a limited extent with September's Heritage Open Days. GMDT's heritage publications continued to be available to purchasers in person at the Chantry TIC and via the internet through the Trust's online shop.

The Online 2021 Morpeth Northumbrian Gathering featured over 20 events including concerts, art and drama presentations, archive films and live Zoom sessions for dance, music and song; there were almost 4000 viewings or attendances from an international audience, with the most popular events being the Grand Concert and the Art Gallery. Although the considerable costs were not covered, with financial support coming mainly from online donations and the shortfall met from legacy reserves, the experiment was an artistic success, and plans were made for the 2022 Gathering to have a strong online presence even if Covid uncertainties and the lack of preparation time were to permit only minimal live outdoor entertainment.

Despite the current logistical problems of planning and running in-person events, the national Heritage Open Days resumed in September with 7 venues opening up and 1 online offering, after no events at all in 2020, and 20 in 2019. The 2 Morpeth churches which were open had reasonable numbers in comparison to previous years; the Clock Tower opened for one day instead of two with numbers reduced accordingly, and the numbers attending the Collingwood Society Lecture were almost halved by comparison with previous years. A new addition to the usual programme was the Boys' Brigade Hall, displaying plans for its





future life as a youth centre. An online archive of previous HODs events, music and local history was kindly provided by MorpethNews TV, and this attracted 141 visitors although that is probably far fewer than actually viewed the content. Planning for the 2022 Heritage Open Days began, with the national theme of Amazing Inventions a useful peg upon which to hang the stories of the Rastrick family of inventors who lived at Buller's Green in Morpeth and who were important in the developments of the agricultural and industrial revolutions.

The Heritage Interest Group is grateful to all venue organisers and to Barbara Martin for co-ordinating the entire HODs programme and to Julie Hawthorn for supporting the work of the Group.

**Kim Bibby-Wilson**  
*Director and Chair*

## Community Director's Report

We have 38 registered volunteers of whom about two thirds actively engage with us over a year.

Volunteering has gradually resumed since our last report as some of our activities and events have restarted. Quite a bit of time has been spent on managing our office space including rationalising what we keep and converting paper files into electronic files which can be securely accessed electronically. We are currently looking for a volunteer to support admin on a regular weekly basis for a couple of hours a week.

Volunteers continue to be vital to the success and stability of GMDT, even

more so at the minute as we have had to reduce our staffing so much. The directors are now more involved with the operational as well as strategic planning of the Trust and so are giving more volunteer hours to support the functioning of the Trust.

Thank you to all our volunteers for their continued interest in supporting GMDT.

**Karen Bower**  
*Community Director*

## Environment Interest Group Input to 2021-22 Annual Report

Group involvement was inevitably severely restricted by the pandemic, but two main activities continued during this year.

The main focus has been on the station. With the support of Morpeth Lions and Rotary Clubs, and funding from Northern Trains, the Environment Group has developed two raised planting beds at the entrance to the station car park (See before, during and after photos below). 8 existing wooden planting tubs have also been refurbished. This was the first phase of our station landscaping project, and the forthcoming year will see a further planting area implemented, and an increased number of tubs planted, the scale of which has yet to be finalised.



A draft report has also been produced relating to an audit of the 120 or so information signs around Morpeth with a view to securing funding to repair or replace a proportion of these. We last surveyed these 6 years ago, some are now decaying, and others have been vandalised.

Our final more passive activity is a continuing "junior" partnership role with the marvellous Morpeth Litter Group. Although MLG activities were constrained by the pandemic in 2021/2, the group continued to develop initiatives, the most notable of which has been the growing "Adopt-a-Street scheme". This invites residents, or other interested parties, to take responsibility for litter clearance in their own streets. Over 100 participants have now adopted Morpeth streets. Congratulations to the MLG!

**Hugh Edmundson**  
*Environment Interest Group Director*

# Chair 2021/22 Update Report

Just when we thought things couldn't get any worse following Covid, we have seen incredibly changes in the world we live in. Recent events in Ukraine, which have in part led to the cost of living crisis, and more recently with the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, and the accession to the throne of King Charles III.

In some ways, it seems a bit irrelevant to be writing a report on the work of GMDT given the above, with so many major things occurring in the world at this time. Given the tail end of Covid, many of our events such as picnic in the park didn't take place in 2021-22, along with the community cinema.

The train station now finally completed continues to take much of our time, as we seek to let out the office accommodation at the station. The café is now finally open, and we have just relocated our office to

the station, which seems a sensible course of action for us. Currently we do have some units available to rent, along with the taxi caboose.

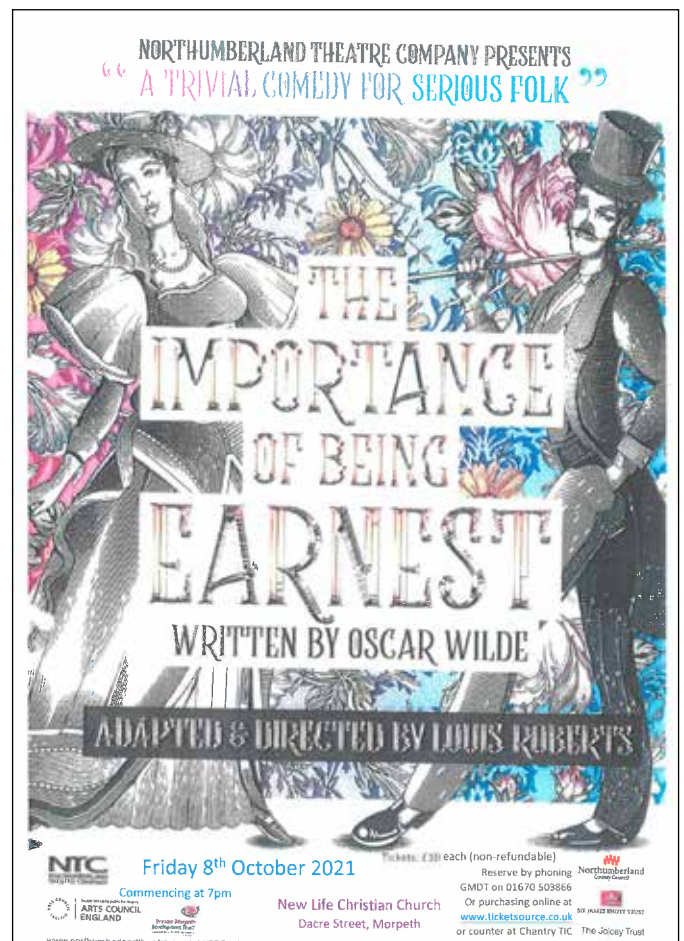
We are currently in the process of investigating the possibility of a new project along with some other partners to redevelop the old cinema in Morpeth to become an arts and cultural centre, which is long overdue for Morpeth.

Whilst we have not been able to run such events as Picnic, this does not mean that we have not been proactive in investigating new projects. We have recently received some funds which have helped us to set up a friendship group, and a man shed. The man shed which is in partnership with Barnabas Safe and Sound. We have been able to purchase some tools but are still waiting for our premises to become available in to start the project.

This current year has already been more productive with a very successful book festival (report included in the back of this report), and picnic in the park.

We as ever seek to serve and to improve our local community, to strive to make it a better place for all to live and work, especially given the current financial and economic conditions that we find ourselves in.

**Mike Willis**  
*Chair GMDT*



# Greater Morpeth Development Trust

## Financial Report 12 months to March 2022

### Statement of Financial activities for year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2022 Total funds £	2021 Total funds £
<b>INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM</b>				
Donations and legacies	2,057	17,069	19,126	47,954
Other trading activities	7,873	11,000	18,873	20,116
Other income	3,494	-	3,494	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,424</b>	<b>28,069</b>	<b>41,493</b>	<b>68,070</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE ON</b>				
Raising funds	1,898	-	1,898	2,853
Charitable Activities	11,772	193,962	205,734	217,034
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>13,670</b>	<b>193,962</b>	<b>207,632</b>	<b>219,887</b>
<b>NET EXPENDITURE AND NET MOVMENT IN FUNDS</b>	<b>(246)</b>	<b>(165,893)</b>	<b>(166,139)</b>	<b>(151,817)</b>
<b>RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS</b>				
Total Funds brought Forward	5,795	2,117,072	2,122,867	2,274,684
<b>TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD</b>	<b>5,549</b>	<b>1,951,179</b>	<b>1,956,728</b>	<b>2,122,867</b>

### Balance Sheet as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022

	£	£	2022 £	2021 £
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>				
Tangible assets			1,853,767	1,853,632
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>				
Debtors			14,061	779
Cash at bank & in hand			160,094	269,631
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>174,155</b>	<b>270,410</b>
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>			<b>41,194</b>	<b>1,175</b>
<b>Net current assets</b>			<b>132,961</b>	<b>269,235</b>
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,956,728</b>	<b>2,122,867</b>
<b>Net assets</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,956,728</b>	<b>2,122,867</b>
<b>Funds of the charity</b>				
Restricted income funds			1,951,179	2,117,072
Unrestricted income funds			5,549	5,795
<b>Total charity funds</b>			<b>1,956,728</b>	<b>2,122,867</b>

These financial statements have been audited under the requirements of Section 145 of the Charities Act 2011

## Financial Report

The past year has again been challenging for GMDT. Despite a reduction in the core costs, and a continued emphasis on controlling expenditure, the Railway station has been problematic. With the continuation of Covid 19 throughout the year and businesses being encouraged to work from home, this has led to very slow progress being made to letting out of the business units.

With the Railway Station largely being empty, GMDT has still incurred all of the maintenance costs amounting to £40k p.a. plus paying the final retention payment on completion to the contractor. Income comprised of grants (83.2%), income from the Railway Station (8.4%), and sales (8.4%), which has further led to a depletion of reserves by £165k to £133k by the end of the financial year.

The trading company remains dormant, with the intention still to close it down in the near future. It is the intention of GMDT to remain sustainable going forward by seeking new sources of income, and by working hard to see the Railway Station become financially successful and contributing to the reduced core costs of the trust.



# Morpeth Book Festival

GMDT and Morpeth library has worked together over many years to host one off local author events with well-known authors such as Ann Cleeves. The resulting enthusiasm and popularity for these events was the catalyst for the proposal of a book festival for Morpeth. This was further supported by the desire of the community to have the opportunity to attend such an event following the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic. One thing that the pandemic has highlighted is the increased interest in books of all genres and that reading of books can help with mental health, wellbeing and community engagement. Armed with this knowledge and the desire to offer the community of Morpeth a new and exciting event Frank Rescigno (Arts & Culture Director) and Sarah-Jayne Kennedy Robson (Library Supervisor, Castle Morpeth Libraries) got together in early 2021 to start the ball rolling to find a venue large enough to host the event, and to identify authors to take part. As it happened finding authors willing and available to attend was particularly straightforward to cover the genres of crime and historical fiction, travel, dystopian fiction, poetry, children's activities and sight impairment. The pandemic actually helped in our favour due to Australia locking down their borders meaning that Ann Cleeves was available to attend in person rather than by video.

Planning for the event, to be held in April 2022, continued throughout the year with a small working group of Miles Hewitt (local author), Michelle Watson (Morpeth Libraries), Barbara Ross (local Poet) and Julie Hawthorn (GMDT) joining Frank and Sarah-Jayne to work through all that setting up an inaugural event such as this involves. Fundraising was a key part of the work and thanks go to David Lodge for his help with this. As the planning progressed we became more confident that we were going along the right lines both in achieving funds to support the event and that we had a good and varied programme that would appeal to a wide audience. We identified two venues: Morpeth Library for children's events and Please To Meet You (PTMY), the newly refurbished Queen's Head Hotel, for the main author and poetry events. It was touch and go with the PTMY refurbishment being completed in time but the staff pulled out all the stops to ensure that they would be able to accommodate the two day event.

Throughout we were keen to have the involvement of the local community and this was evident with the participation of Collinwood School students who took on the role of interviewing some of the authors due to attend the event. You can see these at <https://collingwoodconnect.co.uk/morpeth-book-festival/> Thanks also go to Ian Leech (Inside Morpeth) for his help with arranging and holding author interviews.

Note: all our planning throughout the year resulted in an excellent two day event on 9 & 10 April 2022 so just outside the timescale for this annual report but which was well received and has encouraged us to start the planning for 2023! You can read about the event here <https://gmdt.net/arts-culture/morpeth-book-festival>

*"... from the off I felt like I was in good hands. So many festival organisers get it wrong. Morpeth Book Festival didn't and for that I'm truly grateful. Their communication came through my publicist with a request that was clear: date, time, fee, expected audience and so on, so very well done on that front. You wouldn't believe how many approaches I get without this basic information simply laid out. It makes a huge difference... Everyone I spoke to had a wonderful time. They are hoping - as I am - that the festival will become an annual event. You guys could almost be a model for how to run a festival... It's lovely to see Morpeth thriving. This is exactly what this region needs.  
(Mari Hannah, Author).*



The Joicey Trust



Northumberland  
County Council



TMP | WEALTH  
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THE LIONS CLUB OF MORPETH