




**Greater Morpeth
Development Trust**
Regeneration of town & countryside

GMDT Annual Report April 2022 - March 2023



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 seventeen years could not have happened without the invaluable support of our partners, funders, members and volunteers. Major capital schemes which have benefitted the town include the redevelopment of Morpeth Town Hall and Morpeth Railway Station. Sitting alongside these has been our programme of community events such as the regular cinema screenings, annual picnic, book festival, and the national Heritage Open Days. 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 The front cover shows some snapshots of GMDT activity including Ann Cleaves speaking at Morpeth Book Festival, landscaping at Morpeth station, the popular café within the station, crowds at Picnic in the Park and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee display.

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

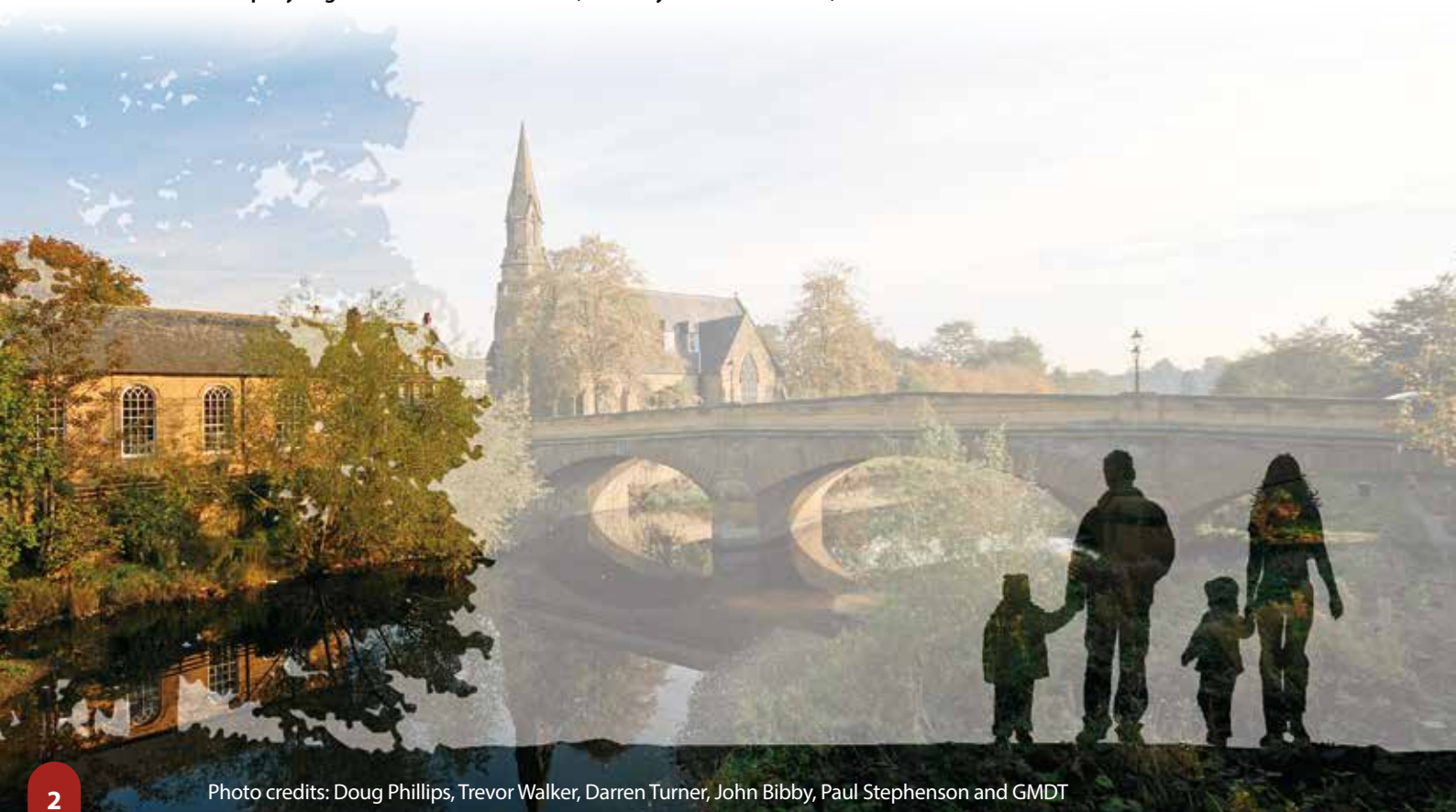


Photo credits: Doug Phillips, Trevor Walker, Darren Turner, John Bibby, Paul Stephenson and GMDT

GMDT structure and team

GMDT structure

(March 2023)



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

GMDT Staff



Linda Wilson
Office Administrator



Julie Whiteman
Office Administrator

GMDT Board



Mike Willis
Chair and
Community Director



Kim Bibby-Wilson
Heritage Interest Group
Director



Frank Rescigno
Arts and Culture Interest
Group Director



Hayley Brown
Community Director



Dai Richards
Environment Interest
Group Director



Richard Burrow
Community Director

Revision of Memorandum and Articles of Association

In last year's Annual Report I reported that the Board had commenced the process of revising the Memorandum and Articles of Association, the two documents by which the Trust is governed, as a charitable company. These documents define the governance structure of the Trust, but they also define its charitable objectives. While considering these, the Board decided that our charitable objectives had possibly evolved since these original documents were registered in 2006. It also became clear that, following completion of the major project to restore and renovate Morpeth station building, the Trust needed to refocus its energies and resources for the years ahead.

The Board therefore decided to pause the process of seeking approval for the revised Memorandum and Articles of Association, which was intended to culminate with consideration at the next Annual General Meeting. The Board has embarked on a process of re-evaluating our charitable objectives and establishing our priorities for the coming years. The current list of charitable objectives, contained in the Memorandum of Association, sets out no less than 12 objectives. This is an exhaustive list that is enabling rather than being prescriptive. In other words it allows the Trust to support a wide range of possible objectives but does not require the Trust to focus on any particular one. The Board considers that our charitable objectives are possibly phrased too broadly and are too lengthy to provide a clear sense of our actual priorities now and likely activities in the future. By reviewing them it is hoped to achieve a clearer focus that can help the Trust to grow, by drawing in more volunteers and partners, and to make us more attractive to funders who see and organisation with a clear focus for the future.

The Board is confident that this process, which will be completed during the year 2023/24, will enable the Trust to move forward with even more enthusiasm and a renewed sense of purpose to help sustain and improve the lovely town of Morpeth and its surroundings.

Richard Burrow, *Community Director*

Interest Groups Reports



Arts & Culture Director's Report

For the first time since the Covid lock down we were able to have a full year of activities. We had the first Morpeth Book Festival, Picnic in the Park, the NTC production of *Wind in The Willows* and then the Annual Morpeth Movie Weekend. The Monthly Cinema ran for a full season.

Morpeth Book Festival



The first Morpeth Book Festival was held on the 9/10 April 2022. We had 17 authors plus poets covering various genres. The event was opened with Anne Cleeves, followed by other nationally known and locally known authors with our patron Mari Hannah. It was a tremendous success with the authors and public giving the event top marks.

Picnic in the Park



On Sunday 17th July 2022 the annual Picnic in the Park was held in Carlisle Park from 12 noon to 4pm. The special theme was the 70th Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth and was officially opened by Vice Lord-Lieutenant of Northumberland Caroline Pryer and Glen Sanderson, Leader of the NCC, including a tree planting to honour the Queen's reign. As usual it was well attended, we estimate around 3,000 visitors, with a full range of activities and entertainment, plus the very popular free BBQ.

Northumberland Theatre Company

NTC returned to Morpeth on 8th December 2022 to perform *Wind In The Willows*. Thanks to Zionix Holdings and David Auld & Co. we were able to keep the ticket price to £5 to encourage families to attend. Over 60 people attended with all thoroughly enjoying the performance.

Community Cinema

The Community Cinema had another successful year with 9 monthly screenings in St James Hall, incorporating a double bill in December. Socially distanced screenings, which had been in operation since the cinema resumed in June 2021, were discontinued from May 2022. Average attendance was 73, with most screenings exceeding 80. The most popular films were *The Duke and Downton Abbey: A New Era*, followed by *Operation Mincemeat* and *The Lost King*. The new AV equipment and 4m screen in St James Hall were still appreciated by our audiences, as was the provision of refreshments, although the same cannot be said for the chairs which are not upholstered. We provided seat pads and many customers brought their own cushions, and although this factor has not deterred audiences overall, we are aware of some customers who do not return because of the uncomfortable seats.

Movie Weekend

In February, the Movie Weekend returned to the Town Hall for the first time since 2020, with 9 films screened over two days in two screens – the Corn Exchange and the Ballroom, the latter being popular with audiences. We got some excellent feedback, but audiences were well down on 2020, with only one film (Elvis), a sell out. It seems the many opportunities for streaming at home are affecting interest once a film has been released for a few months. This does mean we will have to review whether we go ahead with a similar event in 2023.

Frank Rescigno
Arts & Culture Director

Heritage Interest Group Report April 2022 - March 2023

Meetings of the Heritage Interest Group resumed in person with the lifting of Covid restrictions, in the GMDT office in June at Carlisle Park Lodge and after the move in November at the Railway Station – two of the quarterly meetings were dropped because of lack of project progress or pressures of other commitments. The usual quarterly **Morpeth Heritage Network** sessions went ahead with the Trust participating alongside other heritage groups from the area. **GMDT's heritage publications** found an extra outlet via *Postscript*, the national publications website, which took delivery of surplus stock, though copies are still available locally at the Chantry and from GMDT.

The Board's decision to move from interest group meetings to a cross-topic project-based system of working within the Trust, once ratified by the Charity Commission and GMDT AGM, will not see a reduction in heritage activity which is enshrined in the Trust's aims and objectives, especially as there are several important projects whose development should now continue following the interruption and aftermath of the pandemic. One such area of concern is **Signage and Interpretation**: The Environment and Heritage Interest Directors have combined forces to prioritise the repair and maintenance of existing interpretation boards, with Dai Richards taking the lead, the aim still being to engage with other agencies and the councils to seek funding, with new signage to follow as a second phase.

GMDT provided office support for a hybrid **Morpeth Northumbrian Gathering** in April, the annual festival of local music and traditions. This featured 17 online concerts, workshops, drama and art presentations, with a handful of live events (dance, storytelling and music, in the town's open spaces, at the castle and Bagpipe Museum) to test the water after Covid. The pre-recorded concerts included a tribute celebration for the 90th birthday of Morpeth Gadgy, the indefatigable Alex Swailes MBE. The positive response to the whole experience from performers and audiences encouraged a return to planning as near normal a programme as possible for 2023.



For the July Picnic in the Park a special **history display** was created in conjunction with Morpeth Antiquarian Society to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, with images and cuttings about visits to Morpeth by Elizabeth II and other members of the Royal Family and various royal events in the town from Victoria's time onwards. This was used again in September in the Chantry window, but for the much more solemn occasion of the Queen's death.

Later in September, the Queen's death and the period of national mourning affected the number of events for Heritage Open Days, with two openings cancelled by their organisers. Some venues following Covid were reluctant to take part, and no doubt attendances still suffered its impact, with a total of 461 visitors across 27 venues/events compared with 1021 in 2019. There were 4 new venues, including the Masonic Lodge, a fascinating workshop at the Chantry on the embroidery of Lord Collingwood's waistcoat, and the top scorers for visitors were old favourites the Clock Tower and Collingwood House. Linking with the national HODs 2022 theme celebrating inventors, a video on Morpeth's John Rastrick of threshing machine fame created for the Gathering remained online for HODs; a sequel on his son John Urpeth Rastrick of Buller's Green, the railway engineer, was delayed in production for September but has at the time of writing been completed. A huge vote of thanks goes to Barbara Martin who has finally stepped down as HODs co-ordinator after a number of years of gallant work.

In November there was a heritage theme at the Trust's "thank you" event for its volunteers held at the new office in the station. Appropriately the heritage re-enactor **John Sadler's Time Bandits** appeared as the building's architect Benjamin Green and his wife.

I must express my extreme gratitude to the group members, volunteers and venue organisers and especially Julie for keeping the Heritage Interest Group's activities on track, and to her and Linda for all their help in a myriad of ways over the year.

Kim Bibby-Wilson
Director and Chair

Environment Director's Report

In October our erstwhile Environment Director Hugh Edmundson stepped down, passing the baton to Dai Richards. We have endeavoured to continue Hugh's excellent work Morpeth Litter Group/ (MLG) / GMDT partnership has continued to work well with a number of litter blitzes in the town. Our Railway Station Landscaping project thrives and the Castle Woods and Water Signage review and potential trial 2023 has continued. 5 litter picks (79 people) were held in 2022/23 and 135 bags of litter have been collected (Town centre and Stobhill) and A1 Laybys (Morpeth to Felton)). MLG's Adopt a Street has grown with more people keeping their streets clear of detritus – there are now over 80 people now involved – one person has recently collected his 500th bag! GMDT has supported MLG's new BIN IT TO WIN IT competition where all Morpeth schools created new posters for the street bins – over 530 entries received – so successful we have been asked to do this again in 5 years' time.

Hugh Edmundson's partnership with Morpeth Lions / Rotary and MLG, in improving the front of the Railway station has been successful with a new border and rockery – starting to looking very beautiful. Members of the public have appreciated the work done. The maintenance of beds and platform tubs continues in 2023 but also hope to commence a phase 3 landscape project in partnership with Northern Rail to clean up the old Portacabin / Ticket office area at the front of the station.

MLG's Dai Richards has led on general clearing of bushes and planting of spring bulbs to the rear of the Railway station – in Spring 2023 we have had a beautiful display of Daffodils, Tete a Tete, Snowdrops and Crocus. It is planned to have a further bulb planting session on October 2023 in this area and entrance to Deuchar Park + bulbs planted.

Summer 2022, Hugh completed a full survey of the town's Castle Woods and Water signage that were delivered in 2008, report produced highlighting the urgency of a team needed to look at maintenance of existing signs and need for new signs in places. Dai's new Phase 1 Signage project, looking at using SMART technology/QR code will take place in 2023 with 2 new signs and 2 replaced. The purpose of the trial is to confirm viability of new technology to meet the needs of a wider cross section of the public. We will aim to have a team from Newcastle University / KEVI students working with GMDT other local interest groups in the production of the new signs.

Tree planting will be a key project for us in 2023 – with plans to work with Northumberland County Hall and Plessey woods Country Park. This is expected to take place in November 2023.

Dai Richards
Environment Interest Group Director

The Games Club

GMDT worked in partnership with Morpeth Library and during 2021-22 obtained funding to purchase some soft furnishings and table-top games equipment. The library then relocated from its temporary base in Manchester Street to its new facilities at Gas House Lane, and the project continues to thrive!

A GMDT volunteer runs sessions every Thursday from 11.00am-12.30pm.

As of end March 2023, 4 regular members came along to play a range of games including Scrabble and Rummikub, and there is also cards, chess, snakes and ladders etc etc on offer. Sometimes members of the group bring in their own games to share.

If you would like to come along and join in – just turn up. It's a friendly sociable group, with refreshments available and sometimes cake provided to help focus the mind!

Chair 2022/23 Report

Change is here to stay. If an organisation does not move forward, then it will simply cease to exist. I am amazed at how many household name stores have closed in the last few years, with Wilko's looming large in my mind.

For us it is the same, if we do not change, we simply will not be around. We have now completed the renovation of the Railway Station and have successfully let all but one of the office units. We ourselves relocated from our much larger offices at the Lodge, to unit 1 at the train station. Partly to reduce our cost base, which we have had a major emphasis on this, as many of our previous funding streams have dried up, and we face increased competition for reduced pots of money.

We are grateful to receive a grant from Morpeth Town Council. We are managing the train station and the office units; we have tried to generate some funds so that we can begin the

process of becoming self-sustainable in the future. The café seems now to be thriving, and there seems to be a vibrant business community working in the building. Obviously, this will take some time to get to this point.

We have also changed the way we cost our projects, as previously we used a marginal cost approach, rather than now a full cost approach, in implementing and delivering such amazing projects as Picnic in the Park, and the community cinema. Compounded this year, by the fact that the Book festival was cancelled at short notice due to train strikes, and the key author pulling out at the last minute due to health issues.

If I am painting a bleak picture, it is because the last few years have been difficult for us to navigate financially, and organisationally as we seek to evolve into what will take us forward for the next 5-10 years. We are particularly proud of the projects that we deliver

to make Morpeth a better place to live and work and continue to strive to bring new projects to fruition. One being the work we have done so far on investigating the feasibility for a new Arts and Cultural Centre in Morpeth. This we continue to work towards and hope to have some more news in the coming weeks and months.

I would like to thank all the directors for their amazing hard work over the last year, as well as all our wonderful volunteers who turn out week in, week out to help us deliver projects that make our town a better place to live. Finally, I have one request to finish my report. We need some more directors to help run the trust. If you have a heart for what we do, and have some spare time, and would like to give something towards our town, then please get in touch with us at info@gmdt.org.

Mike Willis
Chair GMDT

Morpeth Railway Station:

Following what can only be described as a slow start, due in part to the Pandemic and home working, we can report that take up of the newly refurbished railway station has moved to almost full occupancy. We now have just one of the seven office units available for letting. With Green's café and Just Taxis now also located at the station there is much more activity and a buzz around the building.

GMDT took the opportunity in November 2022 to occupy one of the vacant units so moved out of Carlisle Park Lodge – all done with a great deal of help from our volunteers. It works well and allows us to be on hand if needed, but also have the benefit of a newly refurbished office, the result of many years of hard work navigating the ups and downs of the refurbishment this Grade II listed building.

Current office tenants: Hotels International, Lisa Blaney, Metalis Energy, Charburn Consulting and Strutt & Parker.



Public engagement event – Morpeth Market on 12th October 2022

GMDT hosted a stall in Morpeth Market on Wednesday 12th October 2022. The purpose was to raise awareness of the organisation and chat with the general public and gather opinion about current and potential GMDT projects. There was a welcoming, fun vibe to the stall – with Asda kindly donating a large cellophane hamper to attract visitors over and engage in casual conversation. Useful comments and ideas were captured to inform future organisational planning.

Just one remaining!

We have just one remaining office unit available to rent, with parking space at Morpeth Railway Station. Benjamin Green House, part of the railway station building, houses 7 newly refurbished offices, kitchen and communal area; with a café and taxi office on-site along with easy access by train to Newcastle, Edinburgh and beyond this could be just what your business needs. EPC rated A. For more information contact GMDT on 01670 503866.

Greater Morpeth Development Trust

Financial Report 12 months to March 2023

Statement of Financial activities for year ended 31st March 2023

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2023 Total funds £	2022 Total funds £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM				
Donations and legacies	4,348	5,800	10,148	19,126
Other trading activities	14,871	-	14,871	18,873
Other income	21,344	-	21,344	3,494
Total	40,563	5,800	46,363	41,493
EXPENDITURE ON				
Raising funds	8,734	-	8,734	1,898
Charitable Activities	22,092	181,947	204,039	205,734
Total expenditure	30,826	181,947	212,773	207,632
NET EXPENDITURE AND NET MOVMENT IN FUNDS	9,737	(176,147)	(166,410)	(166,139)
RECONCILLIATION OF FUNDS				
Total Funds brought Forward	5,549	1,951,179	1,956,728	2,122,867
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	15,286	1,775,032	1,790,318	1,956,728

Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2022

	£	£	2023 £	2022 £
FIXED ASSETS				
Tangible assets			1,741,433	1,853,632
CURRENT ASSETS				
Debtors			4,135	14,061
Cash at bank & in hand			61,647	160,094
Total	-	-	65,782	174,155
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year			16,897	41,194
Net current assets			48,885	132,961
Total assets less current liabilities	-	-	1,790,318	1,956,728
Net assets	-	-	-	-
Funds of the charity				
Restricted income funds			1,775,032	1,951,179
Unrestricted income funds			15,286	5,549
Total charity funds			1,790,318	1,956,728

Financial Report

The accounts were produced to the year ending 31st March 2023. This financial year continued to be a difficult year for the trust, with the legacy issues relating to covid, and the issues surrounding the rental of the office units at the Morpeth train station.

At first glance donations were down 50%, from the previous year. However, in actual fact donations from the cinema were up from £2k to £4k, and the "reduction" was due to the fact we received less grants in respect of the train station, which was expected as the payments relate to small extra projects that have now all been completed.

Other income was down slightly, however again this does not reflect the whole picture. In 2022, GMDT received an £11k grant to paint the railings, so if we take this out, income has actually increased from £8k to £15k largely as a result of Arts & Culture/Book festival.

There was great news in terms of rental income as this increased from £3.5k in 2022 to £21.3k in 2023. This has resulted from the fact that many of the office units have now been let, as well as the café. If all the units were let this would yield somewhere in the region of £70k per annum. Currently as we stand, all units bar one have been let, and GMDT have the use of office 1 as well.

This overall shows a small increase in GMDT's income in 2023.

In respect of expenditure, the trust has undergone a cost cutting exercise, whilst still being able to deliver its core projects for the benefit of the local community.

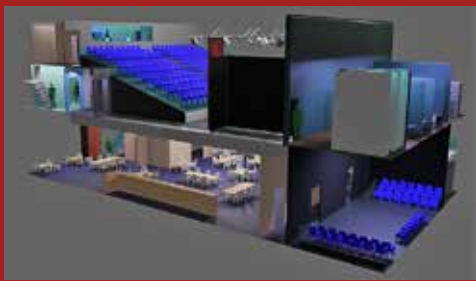
Of the £121k of expenditure, £82k relates to depreciation, which is due to the writing down in value of the fixed asset reflected in the balance sheet. At first glance, you might say we have plenty

of assets which GMDT could sell to help fund its core activities. However, the asset is actually an intangible asset. It refers to all the costs associated with the complete renovation of the Morpeth train station, and is to be written off over 25 years, when GMDT's lease with Northern rail finishes. It also needs to be said that the train station itself remains the property of Northern Rail.

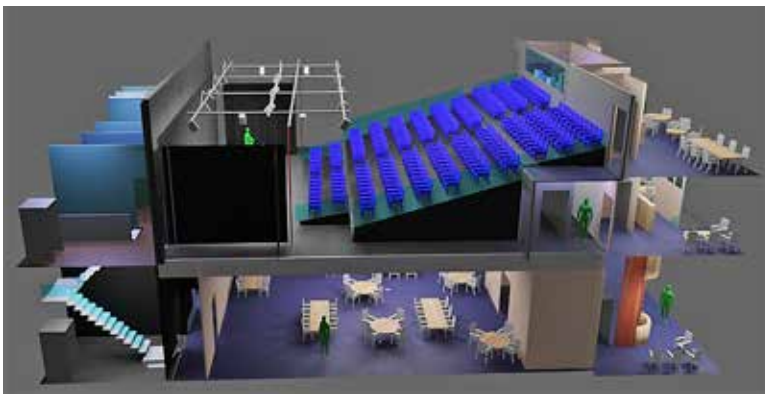
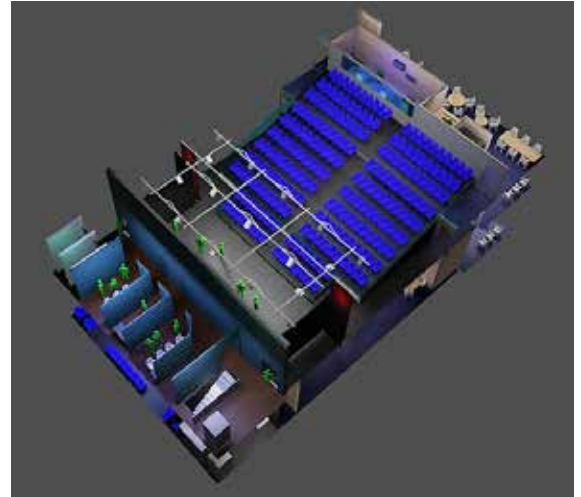
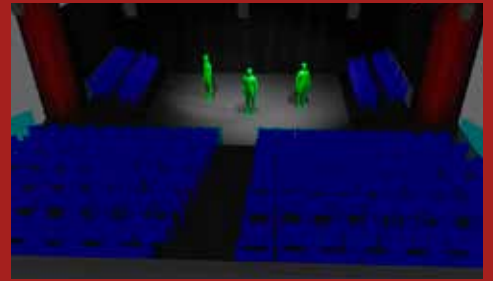
Of this balance of expenditure £40-45k relates to the core costs of the organisation, £40k to pay all the costs/contracts in relation to the train station, and £30k on historic electricity bills from 2020.

The loss on the year is comparable to the previous year. In going forward, this will be greatly reduced in 2024, due to a large, expected increase in our income.

Mike Willis
Chair GMDT Finance Committee



Morpeth Arts Centre



For the past 20 years Morpeth has been without a cinema or theatre.

GMDT in partnership with a team of local volunteer professionals, has been evaluating potential sites for an in town Morpeth Cultural/Arts Centre.

The goal is to establish a multipurpose venue for cinema, live streaming, professional theatre, music events, youth theatre, meetings, exhibitions and lectures.

The venue will have movable seating to allow for various configurations for seating. A professional theatre designer has developed images reflecting this concept. There is much more work to do but we are making steady progress to realise this aspiration.

The images are indications of a potential venue.

Morpeth Talking Newspaper

Morpeth Talking Newspaper has been available since 2017 and is circulated every 2 weeks. A group of volunteers record articles from the Morpeth Herald and Inside Morpeth, save to memory sticks, and distribute free of charge to people who have vision impairment. If you would like further details about receiving copies or being involved in recording, please contact us via: info@gmdt.org.

GMDT sales

Our friends at the Morpeth Tourist Information Centre, who are based in the mediaeval splendour of the Chantry in central Morpeth, continue to support GMDT with sales of tickets for our activities such as book festival, cinema and theatre, and they also provide an opportunity for visitors to purchase our local history books and walking maps.

GMDT's packs of 12 detailed illustrated walking maps continue to be popular, and remain available via Chantry Tourist Information Centre and also GMDT's own website, cost of £10. Packs of John Caffrey Bird Cards (blank, for personal messages to be added) are available at £3/each. And renowned local author Bridget Gubbins has written a feast of books about the local area, with the following publications also available at Chantry or via GMDT website (gmdt.net/shop) at £5/book: The Curious Yards and Alleyways, The Mysteries of Morpeth, Newminster: Monks, Shepherds and Charters, Juliana and Ranulph of Morpeth Castle, and The Conquest of Morpeth.

Diary date

Morpeth Book Festival 23rd and 24th March 2024