

## *Organisational Transformation – working with Inspiring Scotland since 2009*

In 2009 Murton Trust for Education and the Environment's journey changed when they secured 10 years support from Inspiring Scotland.

At the time of investment the organisation had two staff running a 200 acre site. It was home to a 180 acre nature reserve and a 20 acre site that the staff and trustees had the hope of turning into a Social Enterprise Visitor Farm and Tearoom.

There were a small number of young people from one local school and a handful of long term young people that had already left school with no positive destination.

All young people were gaining Rural Skills training and life skills that could not be offered in a classroom environment. The educational programmes being offered were clearly the tip of the iceberg and the potential development in this area was huge.

From 2009 to present the Trust is almost unrecognisable mainly due to the level of investment and longevity of support that Inspiring Scotland offered the Trust.

The Trust has successfully developed the site and is now delivering an excellent educational service to young people in Angus and Dundee.

Murton Trust is now an SQA accredited vocational training centre for young people aged 14:19 who are unable to cope with mainstream academic education; are at risk of leaving school with little or no qualifications and that demonstrate some barrier to learning. The Trust targets those that are at risk of social and employment exclusion as a consequence of little or no school achievement.

The Trust also work in partnership with government organisations to provide a unique, innovative and essential service through work experience placements for the young people in Angus who have left school with no positive destination.

Murton works in partnership with Angus and Dundee Councils, with young people coming to the site from most of the Angus secondary schools including Rossie School Secure Centre and from the Dundee Off-Site Centre.

The Trust offers vocational SQA qualifications to all participating students from Access 3 level to the new National 5 level qualifications and use their nature reserve, farm and tea room as resources to allow hands on learning.

Qualifications which can be achieved include estate skills, fencing, animal handling, animal husbandry, employability skills and personal development awards.

At present at least 100 different students attend Murton each academic year. The students that attend Murton are at a real risk of leaving school with little or no qualifications and as a consequence are at risk of social and employment exclusion and remaining in a cycle of poverty.

By providing their unique service to the local schools, the Trust can ensure that young people are encouraged to be involved in learning valuable life skills and at the same time becoming involved in the community.

Murton Trust is contributing to Closing the Attainment gap through their innovative vocational curriculum and most young people who find school difficult are thriving and achieving SQA qualifications in this alternative learning environment.

There are three distinct groups of young people at Murton:

The first group are young people who have left school with no positive destination.

They can attend Murton as part of their 16+ Activity Agreement designed to prepare them for a college course or employment. Murton provides a valuable work experience element of the young person's Activity Agreement to ensure they gain important life skills. The Trust also runs a number of short courses that are from 1 day to 12 day courses. These courses allow students to complete Employability and Steps to Work SQA Qualifications which include both vocational training in the land based sector and theory based classroom work, or estate machinery certificated courses.

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The second group, school students, attend Murton for different lengths of time as part of their school curriculum.

All young people who attend Murton are responsible for all aspects of running the visitor farm and looking after the nature reserve, with some young people also working in the tearoom.

Students have constructed all pens, shelters, coops and hutches and have fenced all the paddocks on the farm. They also planned and built the children's play area on the farm.

The young people are responsible for the daily care of all the animals and birds on the farm. The tearoom provides students with work experience in both catering and front of house hospitality. They work as part of the staff team and learn in a real working environment.

On the nature reserve tasks include path work, maintaining hedgerows, grass cutting and even the building of the bird hide in the car park. All maintenance and upkeep of the site is part of daily tasks and ensures the young people gain real valid skills as they work towards their SQA qualifications.

The final group of young people are volunteers and this cohort has slowly been increasing in number as the organisation develops a strong link with the local community.

Not only do young people completing the other elements of the programme also volunteer, it is also clear that there is a need for young people that have missed the chance to participate through school to be given the opportunity to attend our programmes.

In all the work that the Trust has done since 2009, Inspiring Scotland has been involved in more ways than is probably at first acknowledged.

IS has played a significant role in the Trust's journey from a small charity to their current position. IS has provided significant financial assistance but for what was a small rural charity, the non financial help has been every bit as important.

### **Capital Investment**

The initial investment from IS helped secure significant match funding from LEADER to ensure the capital required to build the tearoom, visitor farm and a much needed office space to manage the organisation.

The Tearoom and Visitor Farm were a crucial element to increasing our capacity in providing training opportunities to young people but also allowing the Trust to start to raise their own funds and work towards a sustainable future. Looking for large sums of money for capital investment having the match funding from IS allowed significant leverage for European Money and to secure investment in renewable energy for the site development.

### **Staff**

Very soon after the initial investment in the Trust the number of staff employed by Murton increased. Staff were recruited to work on the development of educational programmes and securing Murton as an SQA Centre and also a Tearoom Manager and subsequent part time staff.

As the educational programmes were established a further full time member of staff was employed to help manage the estate and train young people. By 2011 when the tearoom and farm were up and running there were 13 staff involved in running the organisation. Now in 2016 the Trust have again been looking to the end of the IS investment and have realised the need for a change in staff structure.

Always looking forward the Trust has created a new structure that allows for a clearly defined Management with someone in a position to drive all areas of the organisation from the trading elements to the educational work. The most recent development also secured the recruitment of a part time Fundraiser.

This quick increase in staff was definitely aided by Inspiring Scotland's flexible approach to how their investment was spent each quarter.

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### The Board

The Board of Trustees has developed and evolved considerably over the involvement of IS.

From a small family Trust to a large local charity, the board with the help of IS's quarterly reviews, is constantly reminded of the importance of governance, board liability and responsibility. Comparing the original Board to the current Trustees that will be steering the organisation at the end of the IS investment, it is clear they will have a full quota of Trustees that have clear roles and responsibilities, with expertise in many different fields.

The development of the Board highlights that having the support from an outside organisation ensures constant renewal and striving to be in the best position possible.

### Educational Programmes

As detailed above, Murton offers two main streams of educational programmes to young people. Those in school and those already left.

It could be argued that Inspiring Scotland's non financial assistance has been the most helpful in this area. From the creation of clear and concise reporting in the Quarterly Evaluations to the dissemination of news on new government initiatives, IS has ensured Murton positions itself in the best possible light to secure further funding and offer the best service possible on our site.

In 2012 IS attended meetings with the Local Authority and Murton to establish a Service Level Agreement for the service they provide. There is no doubt that the long term support of an organisation like IS helped in securing of the Three Year SLA.

In April 2016 this SLA ceased mainly due to the end of funds available from a particular source. With continued budget cuts it was declared there were no funds available to continue paying for the service centrally.

Murton had, however, created a successful track record and local schools are determined not to be

without the service offered. It is likely each school will contribute from their own budget to ensure the continuation of these educational programmes.

At the time of initial investment by IS, the Trust were running long term training programmes for young people that had left school with no positive destination.

Despite the good results of young people into work or further education this method of training was not financially viable mainly due to the particular qualifications required for work in the Land Based Industries.

IS were incredibly flexible as to how their investment would allow the Trust to work with these post 16 individuals in particular. They were able to pass on their knowledge to help find alternative ways to work in the area with SDS services, 16+ and government initiatives.

Murton themselves are a small and dynamic team and were able to develop their programmes to suit the needs of individuals and to work in partnership with other programmes being delivered.

### Income Diversification

As with charities across Scotland, Murton is constantly in search of financial assistance from other Grant Giving Trusts.

IS has been key to helping establish a clear fundraising system. This was done after recommending a qualified Fundraiser to offer advice and work with existing staff. This proved successful and ensure good use of IS investment by finding match funding.

With the end of IS's investment nearing, Murton took the decision to employ a Fundraiser for 15 hours a week. The position was filled in January 2016 and is already proving successful.

The importance of a stable financial situation is obvious to Murton. Over the last 10 years IS's investment has allowed their focus not to be on money but on the charitable work that they do. Despite being in a position of relative

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financial comfort the Financial Tracking as part of the Quarterly Review process ensure that the Trust remains focused on the long term financial situation of the organisation and especially now as the end of IS's investment looms.

The Trust's own potential to generate income has been a key element of Inspiring Scotland's support. From the sale of educational services provided to the development of the tearoom and visitor farm.

The initial capital investment from IS secured the realisation of the Trust's plans for the site but IS has continued to help with business development.

IS have also been pivotal in ensuring the longevity of the Trust and potential for future diversification is not missed.

### On Going Pro Bono Support

Despite being a project out with the Central Belt and the main hub of investment, Murton has benefited greatly from Pro Bono Support.

The Trust has had assistance in staff matters such as contracts and dismissal, feasibility studies and business development and more recently offered assistance with a free Health and Safety inspection.

All of these matters may seem insignificant but the financial cost alone can be prohibitive to a charity and knowing where and how to start the process can also be daunting!

### Venture Collaboration

Murton is a Rural Venture in relation to the majority of IS's other organisations. Despite not always being actively involved with other IS ventures, Murton has a clear awareness of being part of the portfolio and the benefits that brings.

During recent staff restructuring the new Executive Manager was able to visit another organisation to discuss everything from staffing, funding, government initiatives to working with a board of Trustees.

By offering these points of contacts, charities can share experiences and gain knowledge from

individuals with first hand knowledge. The shared values being part of IS ensures the sharing of information. One such example being that Murton received a full set of Policies and Procedures and Staff Handbook to develop to suit their own need – saving hours and hours of work and a significant sum of money.

### Exiting the 14:19 Fund

In many ways Murton is now simply preparing for the exit from Inspiring Scotland's investment.

IS has aided in the development of the board, the staff structure, the services delivered and how they are delivered, the financial planning of the Trust and developing their future plans.

Everything is being positioned to allow for a smooth transition out of the security of the IS investment. It is difficult to select one element of the investment and support from Inspiring Scotland that has benefited Murton most – instead simply looking at where Murton was, where they are now, and how they will continue to develop highlights how the IS model of investment is far more valuable than a simple cash donation.