



Heritage
Trust
Network

The Ridge SCIO, Dunbar

The Ridge is a community-focused organisation committed to generating training opportunities and employment in the area. Its vision is to ensure that future generations can appreciate and conserve Dunbar's invaluable local heritage.





Photographs from top left: an apprentice works on their stonemasonry skills; the new community training kitchen under construction; Traditional plasterwork applied at Black Bull Close; and work in progress at Black Bull Close.

HERITAGE SKILLS TRAINING AT THE RIDGE, DUNBAR

Securing employment, training and other support services can be difficult for those who live in Dunbar and its surrounding areas. Due to distance and expensive public transport to Edinburgh, opportunities for residents are limited.

As a result, Dunbar and the people in it have faced challenges, whilst the condition of many of the historic buildings in town have been neglected and declined. Therefore, The Ridge has aimed not just to transform the built environment of the town, but the prospects of people in it as well by providing a range of opportunities. This has included a particular focus on traditional skills training to provide people with skills for employment, confidence and pride in where they live.

THE BUILDINGS

The coastal town of Dunbar has a range of notable historic buildings, with some in private ownership and others owned by the local authority. The Ridge has mainly been working on buildings just off the High Street including those within Black Bull Close. These include a range of listed buildings and the traditional backland gardens behind them. The project at Black Bull Close began with clearing out decades of mess and rebuilding the collapsed garden walls. This created an opportunity for local people to learn stonemasonry skills through undertaking the repair work directly. From this initial regeneration activity The Ridge has moved from strength to strength and extensive work is now being done on the traditional structures within the close to bring them back to life, including the construction of a new purpose-built facility. These buildings will house the core activities and support services delivered by The Ridge, as well as creating spaces for use by the wider community – bringing the life back into this area!

THE PROJECT

A key aspect of The Ridge project is their impressive work with young people and the delivery of traditional skills training. Much of the building work carried out on site has been completed by their

own apprentices and trainees, providing jobs to the area and filling a much-needed skills gap. Darren, a stonemason said: "The stonemasonry apprenticeship is very comprehensive, and I have learned all the skills I need to be a qualified stonemason. My carving skills have improved to the point where my work is sellable and of a high standard."

He also said that "an apprenticeship is very hard to get these days" and would recommend The Ridge's apprenticeship to others as he felt supported throughout his training. When thinking about the impact of the apprenticeship, Darren noted, "I have earned a reputation for my skills and abilities in Dunbar and was awarded 'The Bowe Cup' for contributing to my community."

Similarly, Leon, who undertook a joinery apprenticeship spoke about the support offered by The Ridge when struggling with the more academic side of the apprenticeship as they provided him with the help he needed. When asked about his career plans after working with The Ridge Leon said: "I would like to become self-employed and perhaps travel using my trade to work in other areas and countries." Like Darren, he also noted, "The Ridge is great for the community and helps you to gain confidence

and grow within a happy caring environment."

The apprenticeships that The Ridge provide are long-term investments in the young people in Dunbar. They help people begin on pathways that give them positive future prospects. However, there is not only skills enhancement, but also a sense of community pride that has come with it. The challenges that Dunbar faced have reduced, which is likely a direct impact of these young people contributing to preserving and improving the area.

CHALLENGES

Working with young people is incredibly rewarding but can present a range of challenges. Each individual is unique, and understanding their specific needs, backgrounds, and experiences is essential in creating a supportive environment where they can thrive.

THE FUTURE

The Ridge continues to grow and add more buildings and projects to its portfolio. With these buildings completed they hope to create income to support future projects that will ultimately lead to more skills training and a boost in employability within the area.

For more information, visit:
the-ridge.org.uk

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