

A Men's Shed for Lockerbie and Lochmaben

Executive Summary

Lockerbie Men's Shed (LMS) is a place where men of all ages can spend time tinkering, repairing and making things while socialising with others with similar interest; increasing the likelihood of good health and well-being by connecting with friends and maintaining a healthy mind in an active body.

A larger version of the typical man's shed in his garden, a place where men can feel at home and pursue practical interests with a high degree of autonomy. Men can work at their own pace in a safe, friendly and inclusive venue.

Drop in sessions currently take place on two afternoons per week at LMS's base in Lochmaben, a small portacabin generously provided by Billy Edwards of Rostrum Sportswear. The size of the portacabin has always been a limiting factor as only 4 to 6 people can safely use the space at any given time with only 2 or 3 of them actively involved in any work involving machinery or powertools. Members of LMS has already begun looking for larger suitable premises and the need to relocate was made imperative when Mr Edwards recently informed LMS that he wishes to begin redeveloping an adjacent property in early 2017 and that the land the portacabin sits on is no longer going to be available.

After consulting with Property Services, DGHP, who were able to identify a small number of properties that might be suitable, the decision has been taken to relocate to the former Restorative Justice garage and workshop in Kirk Lane, Lockerbie.

This large detached unit will allow the installation of a fully equipped workshop, the machines for which have been donated to LMS but are currently in storage due to a lack of space. It will also allow the creation of storage for materials, a small kitchen and a breakout room that could potentially be used for small craft courses. There is also a small yard attached to the property which potentially gives scope for an outdoors work area, demonstration garden or other activities which, in addition to extending the range of activities offered by LMS will help improve the visual amenity of the immediate area.

Organisational Summary

Lochmaben Men’s Shed (LMS) is a small, not for profit organisation established in early 2014 by Ken Harvey of Lockerbie and Colin Howe of Lochmaben with help, by means of a small grant, from SHAP, Annan.

They have also had some advice and training from Third Sector First and Age Scotland.

It is intended for the group to become a SCIO by the end of 2016 as this would give the principles the protection of a Limited Company as well as giving the organisation Charitable status.

The organisation will continue to run on a not for profit basis, under the control of its members (the men who attend the Shed) and are actively seeking partnership organisations within the community to help expand the Shed’s activities while helping promote healthier, more active living in later age and reducing isolation amongst men in the DG11 (Lockerbie, Lochmaben and surroundings) area.

To this end the Shed are already talking to Age Scotland, SHAP/SONAS, development workers with Macmillan Trust and other community groups locally.

Strategic Context

“Loneliness is a huge issue which affects 39% of older people in Scotland. [This] has serious health implications – both on mental and physical health, making people more vulnerable to illness and disease.” – Age Scotland¹

There is growing evidence that isolation and loneliness is detrimental to health and wellbeing with both the UK and Scottish Government launching initiatives to help reduce social isolation and improve later life².

¹ <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland/latest-news/archive/more-than-80000-scots-aged-65-plus-always-or-often-lonely/>

² <http://www.parliament.scot/newsandmediacentre/93466.aspx>

In January 2016 the Scottish parliament debated age, loneliness and social isolation and were informed, by the convenor of the Equal Opportunities Committee, that there is a demonstrable link between experiences of loneliness and a increased likelihood of visiting a GP, higher use of medication and a higher incidence of falls as well as being more likely to undergo early entry into residential or nursing care and use Accident and Emergency services³.

Men's Sheds are community-based organisations that typically provide a space for older men to participate in meaningful occupation such as woodwork. Men's Sheds are considered an exemplar for the promotion of men's health and well-being by health and social policy-makers.⁴

At their core Men's Sheds are a positive health measure. As people continue to live longer lives they hope to remain fit and active. They need something that will keep them engaged in order to remain motivated and so to remain active and involved in their local community.

Many men find that with age, change of employment or relationship status, that they lose their sense of purpose, their sense of place in the community. For a variety of reasons they may not want to go to the pub or down to the bookies and the community activities offered locally often does not appeal to men (or are perceived as 'women's groups' even though there is no deliberate gendering of the activity). As a result these men become disengaged from their community and are at risk from poorer physical and mental health and, with that disengagement, become progressively more isolated from the community around them.

Men's Sheds offer a solution to this problem by providing a safe, inclusive environment where, directly and indirectly, issues affecting the mental and physical health of the individuals using the Shed can be addressed, often by their peers but with assistance from professionals when required.

In addition to supporting each other by working side by side, the men in a Men's Shed help improve the wellbeing of each other by reminding

³ <http://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/news-and-events/news/2016/01/parliament-discusses-impact-of-social-isolation-and-loneliness/#.V3Keg7gwhhE>

⁴ <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/hsc.12019/full>

themselves that, despite age, health, previous lack of opportunity, they can still “do stuff” and in fact have knowledges and experiences to share that are of value to others and help increase the capacities of other men.

Project Delivery

Timeline

Initial enquiries and public meeting.

Spring / summer 2013 the idea of a ‘mens shed’ was raised. Internet based research and conversations with Sheds in the UK and Ireland suggested this might be a viable option for Lockerbie

October 2013 – Initial meeting to gauge interest at Kings Arms, Lockerbie. Meeting attended by several men interested in a ‘mens shed’ type club, various ideas proposed. Meeting supported by Age Scotland and SHAP.

2014 – During the year we held monthly ‘Cuppa and a Chat’ meetings in Lockerbie, raising awareness of the project and gathering information on potential members wants and needs.

January 2015 – Meetings with Third Sector First to develop Mens Shed proposal and identify possible funders.

March 2015 – Funding offered by SHAP (Day Events fund)
Reached out to community groups to see what premises might be available.

Spring 2015 – Lochmaben Mens Shed

April 2015 – Began holding ‘drop in sessions’ at Community Cabin, Lochmaben Primary School. Premises are cheap but very limited.

July 2015 – Secured use of Rostrum Print’s portacabin courtesy of Billy Edwards.

November 2015 – Members decide that portacabin offers insufficient space to use successfully as a workshop.

November 2015 – Wrote to D&GC re Kirk Wynd

May 2016 – Grant from Age Scotland. Enquire if landlord would have objection to our adding a store beside the portacabin. Landlord informs LMS that he intends developing the site where the portacabin is located in 2017

May 2016 – Councillors and MSPs, other community leaders contacted to get help finding premises / processing enquiry with D&GC

June 2016 – Additional support given by CDL (Sue Coulthard)

June 2016 – Part One Community Assets Transfer application submitted to D&GC

November 2016 – Moving to Part Two Community Assets Transfer

Summer 2017 – hopefully moving to Kirk Wynd

Activities

The range of activities carried out at LMS are dictated by a) the interests of the attending members and b) the availability of suitable materials and equipment.

They have included and are not limited to:

Metalwork, woodwork (carpentry and joinery, furniture making, wood turning), leather work, costume and prop making, electronics, photography, gardening and, of course, socialising with each other.

We have also carried out work for a number of local groups including Castle Loch Trust, Lochmaben Curling Club and Lochmaben Tennis Club. In addition we have built several gates for local pensioners who have been unable to carry out the repairs themselves.

With suitable premises we would hope to increase the range of activities,

both to allow members the opportunity to do more and to allow the production of items for sale for fund raising etc. We would also like to be able to have an area set aside for a Lunch Club to allow members to prepare a meal for each other and to share in social interaction around the dinner table.

Larger premises, such as Kirk Wynd, Lockerbie, would not only allow us to expand the range of activities offered but we would also look to open for more of the week, increasing the number of session hours that Mens Shed activities are available. This would also help us to offer more focused sessions, for example, for younger men, former service personnel or people requiring additional support who may wish to attend with a carer or support worker.

Project resources.

LMS already has a well-equipped workshop, mostly from direct donations of tools and equipment by members of the public but also with some machines purchased with assistance from a grant from Age Scotland. Our members are building additional benches / work stations as needed.

Due to lack of space we have unfortunately not been able to take advantage of the offer of the contents of two fully equipped woodworkers workshops. As a result the equipment offered has deteriorated to the point where repair and restoration would cost more than the purchase of new machinery. This is an especially upsetting set back for us as the donor, one of our long term members, expressly hoped that his tools and machines would be put to good use by the Shed.

Project Costs

For the period to Spring 2014 the costs of research, hosting meetings etc was met by the founding members from their own pocket.

In 2014 we had a grant of £1200 from SHAP and a small contribution from members through a token donation towards tea, coffee etc.

In 2015 our overheads have been minimal as the premises are supplied gratis by Rostrum Print who also cover the cost of heating, lighting etc.

A grant of £1500 from Age Scotland is being used to purchase materials and equipment and our members continue to contribute on a per session basis towards tea, coffee, sundries.

We have also received a number of small donations in return for work carried out locally and that has helped us to cover incidental costs (ie the fitting of heavier duty circuit breakers by a local electrician)

The premises at Kirk Wynd, or any other premises rented commercially, are likely to incur greater costs than before but we hope that these can be offset.

As we are a not for profit community group providing a service which helps both the Council and NHS to reduce isolation, improving the community and increasing opportunities, we would hope to secure Kirk Wynd at a nominal rent

It is intended to operate LMS as a SCIO. This should reduce the burden for rates.

Insurance for the building would be met by the Council while LMS would take responsibility for Contents and Public Liability insurance.

Gas, water, electricity etc would be paid for by the user and we would be seeking the most energy efficient ways to reduce these costs as far as possible.

Further Development

Unlike the majority of Men's Shed type groups currently operating, LMS has been grown from the ground up by its members and is not the result of an initiative by either the Local Authority or Health Board. As a result we do not currently have a development worker and we are aware of some deficiencies in our structure and management that arise from our members having to constantly 'reinvent the wheel' whenever they interact with the council or others.

It would be hoped that, in 2017, funding could be sought to put a Project or Development Worker in place to help with the initial setting up of the SCIO, establishing a good working practise for the Shed and also to help develop links in the community and with community groups.

Marketing and communications

LMS places articles in the local press and maintains an active Facebook / social media presence.

Posters and leaflets are distributed to local shops, business premises, GP surgeries etc.

Staff at agencies such as Age Scotland, SONAS, local carers, etc have expressed interest in the Shed and indicated a willingness to signpost their clients towards the Mens Shed.

We are also having ongoing discussions with other community groups, church and ex-Service associations to find ways that LMS can offer services that would be of benefit to their client groups.

Monitoring and Evaluation

It is hoped that a strategy for independent monitoring and evaluation of LMS performance can be developed in conjunction with a partner organisation. Discussions on this are on going.