



## Greenlaw Town Hall

Greenlaw, Scottish Borders

Restoration of A listed building to office space and community hall, along with construction of affordable housing.

**Why valuable?** Greenlaw Town Hall is a Category A listed building designed by John Cunningham in 1829 to celebrate being the County Town of Berwickshire. It is the heart of the conservation area in a village with a population of only 600.

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**How:** Greenlaw lost County Town status in 1902 and the building since then has had various uses. In the last decade, the dereliction had become obvious and a dangerous building notice was served. It was a Building at Risk on the Register. Despite being the centre piece of the town, there was a real risk that the building would be demolished.

A community trust was established in the late 1990s, but was unable to develop a tenable project over 12 years. It reached the final of the BBC2 series *Restoration* in 2007 but no monies were forthcoming. The Scottish Historic Buildings Trust (SHBT) bravely stepped in and with support from Scottish Borders Council (SBC) and a local landowner, was successful in raising £1.85 million from a variety of sources for the restoration in a very tight timeframe. The restoration is due to be completed in November 2010, less than three years after a heated public meeting at which demolition was unfortunately mooted.

Crucially, this project involved a unique solution to fundraising. The promise of a £500,000 grant from Historic Scotland (HS) came with a tight 3 month deadline for 25% match funding of £450,000 from a small community. This was achieved through a gift of land on the edge of Greenlaw (effectively off-site enabling). The site was not in the Local Plan and this required an innovative planning policy solution. The site was purchased by a local housing association with financial assistance from Scottish Borders Council for use as affordable housing. This money was not tied to the SHIP (Strategic Housing Investment Programme) and this presented another challenge. The tight timeframe meant that SHBT had to accelerate the tender process and put monies at risk and SBC put monies in at risk to mitigate the exposure of SHBT. Thankfully, the cross funding from the off-site enabling, together with grants from local estates, gift aid, European LUPS monies, and the Scottish Borders Council conservation, regeneration and social work budgets, meant the project could go forward with the original HS assistance.

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**Outcome:** This unique partnership approach between building preservation trust (SHBT), a local landowner and the local authority saved a building that was intimately tied into the identity and sense of place of Greenlaw. The restored building will provide 242 m<sup>2</sup> of rented office space and a community hall. The building, and the village green, will remain accessible to the public. There will likely be indirect benefits such as employment generation and increased footfall to local shops. A key benefit is the purchase of a site which will in turn lead to the construction of 16 new affordable housing for rent within the village but not compromising the setting of the heritage asset.

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