



50 giving stories shared as part of The Marketors' Trust's 50th Anniversary celebrations in 2026

No 8: The community hub that was hiding in plain sight



A summer afternoon of family games in the community garden, exactly the kind of image that pulled ahead in the Trust-funded ad tests.

For Andrew Robertson, a trustee at Sherburn and Villages Community Trust, the hardest part was never the work itself. It was getting anyone to know the work was happening at all.

“The main thing was getting the message out to our local people about what we offer, the events and activities we run,” he says. “We didn't really have a marketing budget, so a lot of that was organic reach through Facebook and through posters, hoping people would see things.”

Too often, they didn't. “We had a lot of events where people would say, the day before or the day after, I didn't know it was happening. We'd done every communication channel we could think of, local magazines, newspapers, posters in the supermarket. It was really hard work. But doing it all for free was hard.”

The Trust runs three things for its community: the Old Girls' School Community Centre, the Sherburn & Villages Community Library, and a programme of outreach projects. Even the names worked against them. “The community centre is called the Old Girls' School Community Centre, and I don't think people have twigged it's not a school anymore,” Andrew says. As for the library, run in partnership with the council, “it's tucked away behind some shops, and you wouldn't know it was there. I don't think people knew it was there at all.”

Facebook, the one free channel they leaned on hardest, kept letting them down. “A lot of it was down to the algorithms,” he says. “We might have 20,000 people in a group, but obviously not everybody's active, and not everybody sees it. Even fellow trustees said, well, I haven't seen it, and I'm a member of that group and I follow you. That's just the way the algorithms work.”

Then a £2,500 grant from The Marketors' Trust changed what was possible.

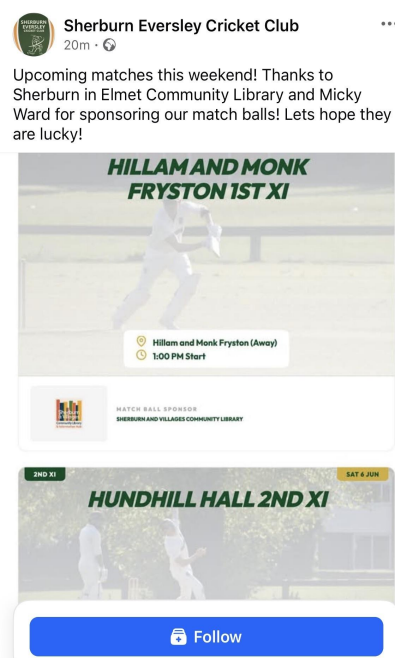
Andrew almost didn't apply. “What was going through my mind was, we've probably got very little chance of getting this, which is what I usually think with most grants. We're a very place-based organisation, so I thought you'd be looking at bigger national charities.” When the news came, he could hardly believe it. “It was disbelief, almost. I really didn't think we had a chance, and it was such a big boost. We couldn't have found two and a half thousand pounds for this ourselves.”

What the money really bought was freedom. “It's given us that freedom to experiment, in a risk-based way,” he says. “We're not being frivolous with it, but we're trying things we perhaps wouldn't have tried before because we just couldn't have justified the money.”

He put it straight into Facebook ads, targeted tightly at the surrounding villages, and tested everything. The results defied the textbook. “I found video was less engaging for our audience than still images, which I'm told is very unusual. Good static images with people in them work so much better, particularly children.” A photo set from a recent afternoon of outdoor games in the community garden, bubbles and giant Connect Four, did exactly that. “Those sorts of things resonate with people far more than just a picture of the building. And on a phone, if it's just one nice image, it hooks the attention.” At its best, engagement cost as little as 3p a click.

Slowly, the charity started reaching people it had never touched. “Because people were liking our posts, I could then invite them to like our page. We've seen our followers increase, engaging with people who perhaps didn't know we were there.” One comment stayed with him. “Somebody said, I've lived here ten years and I didn't know the community centre was there. And it's on the main road, with a huge sign outside. It just shows how people become blind to things in their own community.”

The new visibility is rippling out in ways Andrew didn't plan for. The Trust sponsored the local cricket club's match balls, at 25 pounds each, “so in all their reporting and updates they gave our name and put our logo on, and that reached new people.”



Sherburn Eversley Cricket Club's match-day post crediting the Community Library as match ball sponsor.

It printed bookmarks on wildflower seeded paper, the library on one side and the centre on the other, and handed them out alongside the town council's own wildflower planting. “It just showed partnership working, different community organisations collaborating rather than all doing their own thing.”



The seeded-paper bookmarks: Old Girls' School Community Centre on one side, Sherburn & Villages Community Library on the other. Plant, water, grow.

Room hire bookings are up too, making the Trust more self-sustaining.



A room-hire promotion for the Old Girls' School, one of the paid-for pushes the grant helped make possible.

Ask him what he would say to the Marketors who made it possible, and there is no hesitation. “Just thank you, basically. We would not have been able to do this work without the grant. It let us experiment safely, reach new people, and bring in more income because people are aware of us now. That's what makes us sustainable for the future.”

Website: www.savct.uk

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