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'HUB' FOR COMMUNITY REUSE DURING LOCKDOWN

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REUSE HUB PEEBLES

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**PEEBLES COMMUNITY
TRUST (PCP)**

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At the heart of towns and villages all over Scotland, community venues have lain empty as lockdown necessarily prevented gatherings and activities during the coronavirus pandemic.

For Peebles Community Trust (PCT), having recently taken over the School Brae Hub – a large, 11,000-foot space in the centre of the Borders town – it meant an asset to the community lying temporarily unused.

But PCT co-ordinator Alex Wilson spotted an opportunity. With locals taking advantage of the hiatus from 'normal' life to declutter, but with nowhere to take their unwanted kit as charity shops and recycling centres were closed, Alex saw the space as a hub of a different kind. She set up a [Facebook](#) page and invited people to donate items for resale.

Since then she has raised over £3,000 in just one month for the hub renovation fund, and saved more than two tonnes of goods from landfill.

Alex and her squad of 10 volunteers aged 14 and upwards photograph donated items and post them to the Reuse Hub Peebles Facebook page. Buyers then pay for goods they want via a contactless card payment system and pick up items from a table outside the building.

Alex has been delighted with the success and said the project has really helped maintain a sense of community spirit during challenging times. She said: "I've been so impressed with the dedication of the volunteers – I couldn't have done it without them.



"They have said how much it has benefited them for a variety of reasons, including easing some of the social isolation that many people have felt during lockdown."

Meanwhile members of the [Peebles men's shed](#), which is co-located at the School Brae Hub, have helped out with repairing items to prepare them for resale, and a nearby [Restart](#) group in Romano Bridge has helped to repair some electrical goods. She also has a volunteer [PAT](#) (Portable appliance testing) tester.

Of the goods donated, Alex said the team has seen "all sorts" – from a Victorian bedpan to old sledges and school chairs. "We had an old peacock chair which was beautiful, and a vintage barbecue," she added. "We even had a gas iron, now for purely decorative purposes.

"We've learnt a lot about researching the value of things. One of our volunteers, Murray, has been doing a great job making sure we can put realistic prices on everything."

She has also had great feedback from the community. A number of people moving home have said they couldn't have done it without PCT's help, while a local business that was desperate for a filing cabinet was able to secure one from PCT.

"Our main priority, other than raising much-needed funds, is to keep things out of landfill – and it's great to see even really small, low-value items getting rehomed," Alex continued.

"According to one of our contacts at Scottish Borders Council mugs are one of the most thrown-away items,

but we've managed to supply a load of them to a local organisation, [The Food Foundation](#), for their new community café."

So what's next for the Reuse Hub? Subject to funding, Alex has great ambitions. Development of the School Brae Hub into a great community resource continues, and in the long term Alex said she'd love to be able to set up a 'library of things' there.

Like a book library, this would be a place where customers could borrow a wide variety of items – from power tools, to food dehydrators to tents. They exist in some locations around Scotland already, with the ethos that people can save money and valuable natural resources by borrowing over buying. Why buy a power tool if you're going to use it once a year?

PCT are also looking to set up upskilling sessions. They've carried out a survey to gauge local interest and say the response has been positive. Just one example is sewing and textile repair, to encourage people to utilise the countless sewing machines languishing in cupboards and attics unused. Not only would such a scheme keep those items in good use, it could save huge amounts of easily-repairable textiles ending up in landfill.

"If this project has shown us anything," Alex explained, "it's that people really want to support local community initiatives.

"We're so pleased with its success and the response from the public. Thanks to everyone involved."



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