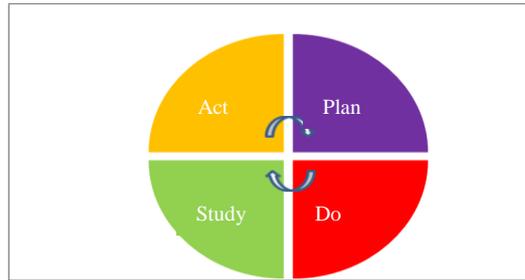


**SUPPORT FROM THE START
SERVICE DEVELOPMENT FUND REPORT FORM**



Use this form to help with feedback from service development fund projects.

Report author: Jackie Tagg/Alison Brown
Organisation: Beach Wheelchairs
Date: 8/1/16

Project TitleBeach Wheelchairs

Partners and engagement (Who was involved?)

1. The Plan

What did you want to achieve / what was your plan?

North Berwick Community Centre Management Committee wanted to support a group to develop a community led scheme to loan paediatric and adult beach wheelchairs.

We wanted to help as many people as possible to access the beaches at North Berwick. Our plan was to provide beach wheelchairs to people with restricted mobility who can't easily get onto the beach. We wanted to provide a range of equipment to enable a wide range of users to access the beach and we wanted to make this available for hire free of charge from a suitable location in North Berwick. Our plan was that we would operate a simple telephone booking system and use volunteers to help loan out equipment.

This would be the first such scheme in mainland Scotland. We wanted the scheme to attract both local users and tourists visiting North Berwick.

The plan included:

Applications for funding from various sources to purchase equipment, a storage 'Beach Hut' and year 1 running costs

Assessment and purchase of appropriate equipment

Benchmarking with other beach wheelchair schemes in England and Jersey

Local community/public engagement [including seeking volunteers]

Design and planning application for The Beach Hut to store equipment at the harbour

Marketing strategy [web site, Facebook, Twitter and leaflet design, liaising with local and national press and using available networks to get information about the scheme to the relevant people]

Seeking and training volunteers

Evaluation of the project

Obtain charitable status independent of the NBCC by January 2016

2. Do

What did you do? (Please include successes, major events or milestones.)

The group with the help of the Community Planning department carried out a local survey (over 100 respondents) and organised a 'Come See, Come Try' Day in February 2015, which attracted over 70

people. Various beach wheelchairs were trialled and the users completed questionnaires in order for us to evaluate the best options.

The group prepared an operational plan including booking system, risk assessments to ensure health and safety. They organised a public awareness event to attract more volunteers and interest in the scheme. The 'Come and Try event' was very successful generating enthusiasm, drive and passion for the project (BBC Radio covered the event).

The project planned and delivered volunteer training to ensure protection of children and vulnerable adults, safe usage of the chairs, maintenance and storage.

Many local people offered their expertise, help and support including an architect to design and plan The Beach Hut, a web master and a logo designer. We worked closely with North Berwick Harbour Trust Association to identify a suitable site for the Beach Hut.

Major milestones included: procurement of funds, planning permission and subsequent building of The Beach Hut, delivery of the beach wheelchairs, various training events, the official opening by Ian Rankin on 18 July 2015 and our first hire of a beach wheelchair on 1st July 2015.

The major success is having over 40 hires in our first season. This isn't just 40 individual benefitting from the service rather it is 40 families and groups of friends that have gained from being on the beach together.

Our customers were predominantly from East Lothian and Edinburgh but we also had visitors from England and N.Ireland using the scheme.

The Beach Hut has now slightly moved location and is benefitting from the extra protection granted by the improved sea defences at North Berwick harbour allowing us to be able to offer an all year round service.

We have had much attention from the media and have had coverage in the local and national papers and on STV.

A ten minute DVD has been made which charts the progress of the project. Volunteers and customers alike talk of their positive experiences.

In December 2015 Beach Wheelchairs became an OSCR regulated charity.

We currently have over 700 followers on Facebook, increasing interest in this project and helping us to share some of our success stories.

We visited the Hub, the green Room nursery and the Kidzone playgroup at Sanderson's Wynd primary school and Salter's Gate school in Midlothian with the Hippocampe wheelchair. This allowed some of the children to try out the wheelchair and to engage parents with the project.

3. Study

On reflection do you think you achieved what you had planned to do? Can you evidence what you achieved?

We have achieved what we set out to do and actually rather quicker than initially planned. Our success is evidenced by our customer feedback questionnaires, comments on our buoy at the harbour and comments on our Facebook page.

Here are just a couple of those comments:

'Can't thank you guys enough for today! For the first time since her accident Sarah could go down to the beach with her husband, kids and dog and have an amazing time. She even dipped her toe in the sea!' Sarah (pictured right with her family) used the Nomad beach wheelchair.



'Having a ball using the hippocampe beach wheelchair. Exploring rock pools, running into the paddling pool and enjoying ice cream on the beach! All a first! A fab day welcomed by great volunteers'



It has been so heart-warming to see adults/children on the beach with their families and friends who were previously unable to do so.

The DVD clearly shows customers explaining the difference that having beach wheelchairs has made. A survey of our volunteers has shown a positive experience and that they would like to continue to be involved with the project.

Many local groups and individuals have been inspired by the project and have approached us to offer support in expertise or financially. We are now providing information, encouragement and support for other communities wishing to set up their own Beach Wheelchair scheme [Portobello, South Blyth].

3a. Tell us about any difficulties and barriers to achieving your plan:

We had a few hic cups but no great difficulties as we have had such a lot of help and support from the community, East Lothian Council and other groups. Raising money was something we thought might be a difficulty, but this turned out to be the least worry.

Planning permission for the Beach Hut was lengthy and we learned a great deal.

Getting insurance was testing and we relied heavily on the expertise of the North Berwick Community Centre's Treasurer.

We benefited from expert guidance from NBCC and STRIVE to complete the application form for charitable status and to ensure our constitution met their strict requirements.

4. Act

What are the next steps for your project? How can it be sustained and improved?

Please include any key learning points that you want to share from your project.

We quickly realised that we had to turn some customers away as they needed a hoist. Individuals may require a hoist if they are unable to transfer or if they are being accompanied by a carer who is unable to assist with transfers due to manual handling legislation. We are in the process of researching suitable equipment and raising the funds needed to extend our service to people who are unable to stand or transfer.

Having gained charitable status we need to separate Beach Wheelchairs accounts from NBCC and open an individual bank account.

We learnt that many people do not feel able to plan ahead for booking the beach wheelchairs. This was potentially exacerbated by the poor weather we had this summer. We would like to improve the service we provide by manning the Beach Hut during the summer months to allow for more short notice or ad hoc bookings. Consideration is being given to employing students in the summer period in order that short notice customer bookings can be delivered.

Beach Wheelchairs will commence business planning in its own right and has long term plans to undertake a feasibility study looking at the option of building a permanent structure near to the beach. This would have room for storage which would result in equipment having a longer life as the building would not be damp. It would also include a 'Changing Places' facility for adults and children something that is recognised as sorely lacking at the beach in North Berwick. A purpose built building may also allow for the purchase of electric beach wheelchairs.

5. Financial report:

See attached sheet.

6. Anything else you would like to add:

Support from the Start gave us funds of £2225 which enabled us to purchase the basic paediatric Hippocampe beach wheelchair. This has been the most used beach wheelchair and has given joy to many children who have not previously been able to get on to the beach with their families.