



POP to the POP-UPS

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Where is it?

In the Royal and Ancient Burgh of Selkirk, in the heart of the Scottish Borders (Edinburgh 47 miles, Berwick-upon-Tweed 42 miles, Carlisle 54 miles). With a population of 5,784 at the last count (2011), Selkirk is also an important hub for people living and working in the Ettrick and Yarrow Valleys (population 905). Selkirk is bi-sected by the busy A7 (which is both a positive and a negative for the town), 6 miles from Galashiels and 12 miles from Hawick, both of which have large supermarkets. Leakage of retail spend is high (60% of food and drink spend and 80% of comparison goods). This spend 'leaks' to neighbouring towns, particularly Galashiels or via the Internet. Selkirk has a high level of commercial vacancies/empty properties, currently at 16% and increasing since 2007.

What is it?

The Project's overall aims were to:

- promote a feeling of community and pride in Selkirk's High Street
- to inject variety and interest that both encourages residents to shop locally, and is attractive to visitors
- create a town centre which is alive with changing retail experiences, exhibitions, activities and workshops.
- In and around Selkirk there is a huge range of arts, crafts and food produce being made, but very little of this is for sale in the town. Pop up shops, along with a range of other initiatives and investments in Selkirk, aim to help shape the town centre of the future, by presenting authentic experiences connected with local food, craft, art, history and heritage.

Pop ups have been around for a long time, in one form or another: the development of high streets came about because markets, the original pop ups, became permanent fixtures in town centres. A pop up opens for a defined period of time, with a clear start and end date.

Pop ups can be a great way to do business as they offer opportunities to:

- Give an internet-based business a boost with a (temporary) high street presence
- 'Test' an established business in a new location and/ or retail sales
- Reach a different market
- Provide a seasonal sale, exhibition or event
- Undertake market research, and test new ideas, products or services
- Provide an additional or alternative way to launch a new product
- Hold special events to increase customer loyalty.

The Project offered pop up tenants the following:

- Short-term access to High Street retail premises
- Liaison with landlords
- Advice re: legalities including Licence to Occupy, insurance
- Marketing support
- Retailing advice

Who's involved?

Selkirk Pop Up Shops is an initiative of Selkirk Chamber of Trade and Commerce. The Steering Group comprises Will Haegleand (Chair), Viv Ross, Stuart Davidson and Lawrence Robertson. The Steering Group has an excellent range of expertise and experience, from hospitality and tourism, to finance and the built environment, which the Project Manager has been able to call upon. The Steering Group are all passionate about the future of Selkirk and the surrounding area, and are committed to reversing the perceived and actual decline of our high street by finding new uses for empty and under-used retail premises. Steering Group members are actively involved in the community and sit on other local groups and committees, providing useful connections and cross-fertilisation for the Pop Up Shop project.

In February 2013 the Steering Group appointed a Project Manager, Margaret Sweetnam. Margaret was responsible for making contacts with local producers, makers and businesses to encourage bookings in the early days, co-ordinating bookings and marketing the initiative, particularly through social media.

The Project Manager and Steering Group worked closely with local landlords, who are a crucial part of the success of the initiative. The pop up 'way' arrived Selkirk in 2012. Local businessman and property owner Morris Manson was finding it increasingly difficult to find a long-term tenant for his property at **48 Market Place**, and decided to make it available for short-term, flexible bookings. In the wider world, this coincided with interest in The Portas Review, an independent report into the future of our high streets, and the response to it from government:

“There is no point in simply chasing the traditional model of the high street – a place where people come together to shop. Retail is an important element of a thriving town centre, but it's not sufficient. **Instead, you need to re-imagine your high street and town centre**, and drive towards a new future where people come together for many different reasons. Simply continuing as you are is not an option.”

Re-imagining Urban Spaces to Help Revitalise Our High streets,
Department for Communities and Local Government, July 2012

The project grew to include other premises:

- **1 Tower Street** is owned by the Selkirk Regeneration Company (SRC). It is in a very prominent location in the town centre, on the corner of the High Street and the main A7, but had lain vacant, and in poor repair, for a long time. SRC applied for a community grant and in spring 2013 the property was given a makeover and a whole new lease of life with regular pop up bookings.
- **23 High Street** was a long-established ladies clothing store before the owner retired in 2012. The property, again in a prominent position on Selkirk High Street, was put up for sale and lay vacant for some time before the Steering Group approached the owners in summer 2013 with a view to using it as pop up premises.

- **71 High Street** became available in November 2013.
- Making use of under-used spaces was also part of our remit, and we used **La Contea** restaurant, which is open in the evenings, for daytime bookings.

How is it funded?

LEADER £15,000
Awards for All £3,000

Where did you go for help and advice?

We spoke to literally hundreds of contacts during the pilot period, including small business owners, makers and producers, landlords, officials of Scottish Borders Council, local politicians and representatives of community groups, in order to develop a wide interest base and user group for our Pop Ups, and to learn from the experiences of others.

We bought a copy of Dan Thompson's excellent **Pop Up Business for Dummies**, which we recommend as essential reading for anyone considering getting into the pop up game.

We looked at what **pop up organisations** are doing in the rest of the UK, including:

Pop Up Britain	www.popupbritain.co.uk
Empty Shop Network	http://www.meanwhile.org.uk/useful-info/manuals/shop-manual http://wiki.emptyshopsnetwork.co.uk/ http://emptyshops.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/popuppeoplereport.pdf
Pop Up Space	http://www.popupspaceblog.com/
Retail Ready People	vinspired.com/retailreadypeople

Funding enabled the Project Manager to attend the first ever **Pop Up Summit**, organised by Pop Up Britain, held in London in October 2013. Although the focus was very much on the urban experience, this event was a fantastic opportunity to make connections, hear from others, learn more about problematic issues such as rental agreements (or 'Licence to Occupy', sometimes also known as 'meanwhile use' agreements) and non-domestic rates. The conference also showed us that we, in a rural part of Scotland, were being innovative in our approach, if not even slightly ahead of the curve.

Scottish Borders Council were helpful and supportive, particularly the Economic Development team, who recognised the impact the project was having on galvanising activity amongst local businesses, providing opportunities for start-ups, home-based or internet-based businesses to have a high street presence, and adding variety and energy to the town centre.

Early on, we sought the advice of Gary Smith, Revenues Manager at Scottish Borders Council, regarding non-domestic (or business) rates. Fortunately, the context of Selkirk is

that the properties we are using all have a rateable value of under £10,000 and therefore qualify for the Small Business Bonus Scheme (www.scotland.gov.uk), which effectively means that no rates are payable. The issue of rates is one which we recognise can potentially cause problems for pop up shops, particularly in larger urban areas.

Hugh Williams, formerly of Business Gateway, provide an example of a Licence to Occupy, which we modified for our own purposes, and took legal advice on.

What's been your greatest achievement so far?

In summary:

- Positive feedback from customers, tenants and landlords.
- Generating positive PR for Selkirk.
- Generating over 290 bookings in the 10-month pilot period.
- Inspiring others to try pop ups in their own towns – Galashiels, Kelso and Hawick have pop up shops now. The Hawick shop came about as a direct result of the Selkirk experience.

In our application for LEADER funding the target outcomes from the Project were to:

Target	Outcome
Improve the overall retail experience by town centre users – adding energy and vibrancy	<p>Feedback from local people and visitors to the pop up shops has been overwhelmingly positive. In their feedback forms, our tenants reported that customers regularly commented on how much they were enjoying the variety of activity in the pop up shops and how the initiative was bringing a new energy and vitality to the town centre. Mags Fenner of Smithy Cottage Cakes reported, "One lady commented that it was now exciting to go shopping in Selkirk as you never knew what you were going to find on the High Street. Another said that she felt the pop-ups brought a quality and range of goods that the town would not otherwise attract...Interestingly, some of my established Facebook 'fans' visited from other Borders towns and commented to me in the days following that they had really enjoyed the trip to Selkirk and had not appreciated how many good quality shops were in the town; the greengrocer and two of the butchers were specifically mentioned – so there is perhaps scope for the pop-up scheme to attract new visitors who would use already established businesses."</p> <p>Pop up bookings included art exhibitions, wool and bead workshops, cakes, smoked salmon pates and quiches, artisan breads, bicycles, handmade soaps, clothing and fashion accessories, handmade jewellery, childrenswear, handknits, leatherwork, photography, vintage clothing, fundraisers for community groups textiles and upcycled furniture.</p> <p>"Well done Selkirk... you should be very, very proud!" Button Moon</p>
To find uses for at least five currently empty or underused premises:	<p>We used up to five spaces during the pilot period</p> <p>One of our landlords commented, "On a financial level, the project has not filled our coffers with vast resources, but it most certainly has helped us to offset the ongoing costs of the properties – costs that would continue whether the shops are occupied or not. Pop ups are not the only answer but they most certainly are a beginning and even the most simple research shows that they are an answer to the changing face of the High Street nationwide. The world is changing for retailers, consumers and landlords alike."</p>
Contribute to	Liberty Star Trading used pop up shops to test the market and now have

<p>establishment of three new start-up businesses:</p>	<p>their own premises at 8 Market Place and a successful presence on social media.</p> <p>Bread Works is a new initiative of Working Together Social Enterprise, providing opportunities for adults with a learning disability through Social Enterprise learning and developing skills in bakery and gardening services. Bread Works used pop up shops to test demand for a new artisan bakery in Tweedbank. They were able to use their pop up experience as evidence for funders of the need for their project.</p> <p>Our youngest entrepreneur (aged 14) used a pop up shop to test his idea for a kindling and firewood business, Chop Stix, with a pop up shop, with excellent results. He's at school at the moment, but we expect great things in the future!</p> <p>Arererat Hook of Dream Designs Fashion, says: "The experiences from pop up shop is my first step in getting into business. I have learned so much from that point and built up confidence day by day. To make a decision to open the shop is a big step further. Without the experiences from Selkirk I would not come this far. "</p> <p>Mags Fenner of Smithy Cottage Cakes described the experience in her own words: "It was a fantastic experience for me as a nervous start-up. All of the feedback from people who called into the shop was positive about my products and about the pop-ups in general."</p>
<p>Secure occupation/ use of empty premises for 80% of the period</p>	<p>1 Tower Street accounted for over half the total number of bookings, and achieved a high of 90% occupancy October.</p>
<p>Achieve at least seven short-term lets</p>	<p>We generated 290 bookings across our pop up spaces.</p>

And the biggest challenge?

- Insurance for pop up properties in a big issue. We found that the insurance industry is not very supportive of the notion. Uptake from pop up tenants in the Borders has been for very short bookings of 1-3 days on average, so the throughput of people and businesses has been high, in contrast to how things seem to work in other parts of the UK (ie urban areas with lots of footfall), where bookings tend to be for longer eg 6 weeks-3 months. Through a combination of a lot of asking around, and the perseverance and determination of one of our landlords, we found a solution through Towergate in Galashiels (01896 758371).
- At our busiest, from October to December 2013, we were operating up to five pop up spaces, which presented some challenges in terms of managing the project.
- TIME! There are not enough hours in the day (or in the budget) to get everything done immediately. One step at a time...

Any tips for someone for someone setting up a similar project?

- Beg, borrow, steal (or just buy) a copy of Dan Thompson's excellent Pop Up Business for Dummies
- Talk to landlords and keep talking to them – they are your most important partner!
- Use social media – make connections, build relationships with your followers, tell stories
- Make sure you have a small and supportive Steering Group or committee that you can use as a sounding board and source of additional knowledge, expertise, contacts and good humour!
- Get your insurance sorted out
- Embrace the spontaneous nature of pop ups – just do it!

What's next for your project?

Additional funding has allowed us to continue to run a busy programme of pop up bookings in three shops. We are talking to potential partners and developing ideas for the next phase of our project, and researching funding options with a view to making applications in the near future.

More info

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