celebrating 30 years of serving the community

workspace Chronicle

OPEN FOR BUSINESS

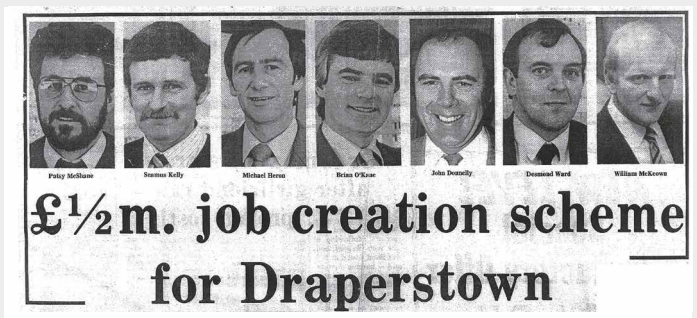
Thirty years ago Draperstown was aptly described as the place where the bus came, stopped, turned round and then went back to where it had come from.

It was a vulnerable, declining place fixed firmly on the economic margins. And it was declining from a low starting base rather than from one of prosperity. Emigration was a fact of life, jobs were scarce, local industry was underpinned by a fading textiles sector and prospects seemed grim.

But there were also great local strengths. These included strong heritages and traditions, a powerful sense of community, entrepreneurial flair, a belief in hard work however and wherever it could be found and a passion for self-help and local co-operation.

Draperstown's problems were not unique and were equally experienced by much of rural Ireland. What was different about Draperstown was the local power and energy that were generated to tackle the problems. In too many other places it was a case of "nobody shouting 'Stop!'" Here it was instead a case of many, many candles being lit to clear the darkness. Workspace was and is at the heart of that.

The official unveiling in 1985. Pictured are George Mackey, Chief Executive LEDU, Cllr Mary McSorley and John Donnelly, Chairman Workspace



Patsy McShane, Seamus Kelly, Michael Heron, Brian O'Kane, John Donnelly, Desmond Ward, William McKeown

£½m. job creation scheme for Draperstown

Workspace's original seven Directors

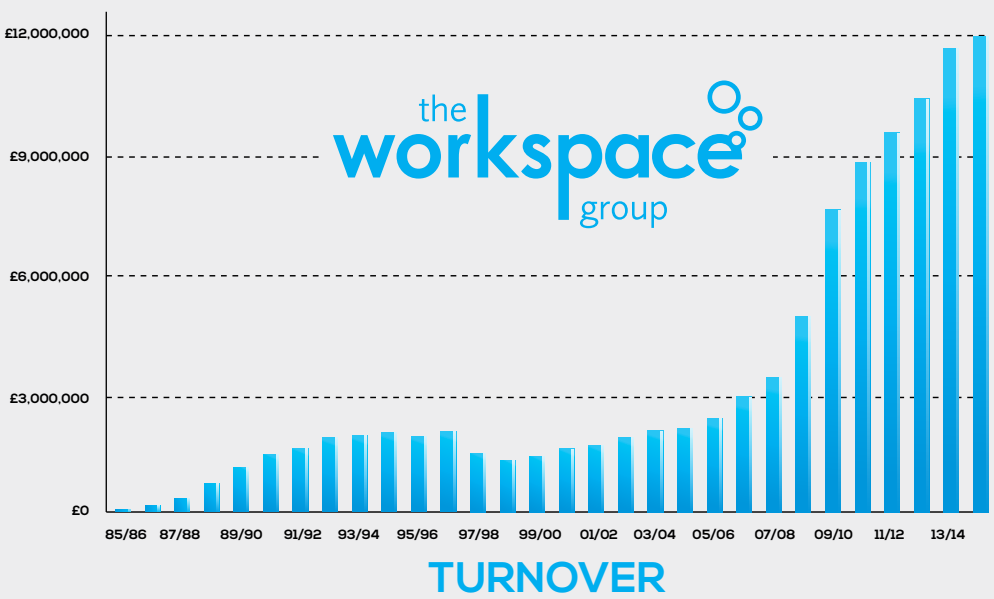
Sperrin Bakery were one of the first tenants of Workspace in 1985 and are still baking away

Those candles have since made Workspace and Draperstown shining lights in the local development world. Because local life is varied and because Workspace is market-driven, it has developed a very wide-ranging portfolio. Its business activities and areas of interest now include business start-up/growth support, childcare/after-school provision, insulation, energy efficiency and heat recovery, employability programme delivery, property/workspace for rent, recreation and leisure, recruitment, rural and urban regeneration, social inclusion and training.

Workspace is in fact open for a great deal of business.

The Story So Far

- Local people first came together in 1981 to talk through how the area's chronic unemployment might be tackled
- By 1984 a Training Workshop was up-and-running and the community had raised £40,000 in share capital to take things forward
- The subsequent purchase of a vacant local shirt factory to provide workspace for small businesses clearly signalled a new start arising out of old closures
- Strong Rural Development Programmes and the allocation of economic development powers to Councils in the early 1990s aided the momentum
- Later in the 1990s society's growing energy efficiency concerns saw the creation of Homeseal: energy is now a major part of the Workspace portfolio
- Workspace then helped 'pump-prime' the Rural Housing Association, Townland Community Radio, Country Markets, The Rural College and many other major initiatives
- Workspace is not an insular organisation and has business interests across Ireland and Britain
- The company's group structure covering eight different businesses provides flexibility, focus and the constant ability to react to community and market needs and trends
- Quality is a core Workspace value and is evidenced by IIP and ISO 9001/18001/14001 accreditations as well as a long list of prestigious awards
- The Group now operates from 15 different locations



Up and Up

In its first formal year Workspace had a high level of activities generating £59,000 of income and had created assets worth £63,000. Ten years later it was earning £1.94m and had grown its asset base to £1.16m. Today its annual income is £12m and its assets are worth £6.1m. It started with a group of volunteers and it now directly employs 172 people. That puts it in the 'top 1%' of businesses in NI by employment size. It's very fitting that a Draperstown initiative should grow mighty oaks from tiny acorns!

Workspace won UK Chamber of Commerce Award for Sustainability in 2013

www.theworkspacegroup.org

BRICKS & MORTAR, FASHION AND HAIRSTYLES HAVE ALL CHANGED...

...THE ETHOS OF WORKSPACE REMAINS THE SAME

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An Enterprising Programme

Workspace's roots lie in training and specifically in the Moyola Community Workshop set up in 1984. Since then it has become central to the delivery of virtually every major government employment, training and skills development initiative. That amounts to well over 20 in total. Workspace's delivery is consistently excellent with performance targets exceeded time after time. An example of one was our *Up for Work* programme which helped 267 unemployed people locally to get back into permanent jobs.

From Strength to Strength

Workspace is unequivocally a social enterprise and has always worked to a clearly-understood model. It combines tried-and-tested business practices with good commercial acumen to deliver social results. The company actively celebrates profit and then promptly re-invests that profit to achieve new results. Workspace puts in. It doesn't take out. Its results are inspirational. And it's all strategically led by volunteers.

1. Daily Telegraph/BT Business Champions Award 1994

2. Gallagher Business Award 1989

3. Our team who helped develop an economic development strategy for East Belfast

4. The Workspace Playbus travelled the local roads for many years providing play group facilities for some 100 rural children every week

5. Participants from our Rural Enterprise Business Opportunities programme which aimed to encourage young farmers to set up businesses

6. Workspace Directors ageing well in 1994

7. Peter Bottomley, former NI Minister and former Master of the Drapers' Company at the launch of the Drapers' Towns Partnership

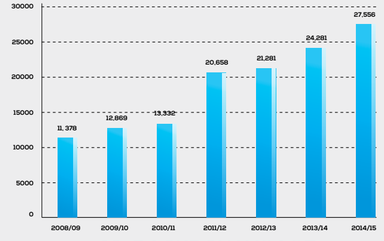
8. Network Personnel through the years

9. Queens Award for Enterprise in Sustainable Development 2013
We become the third Draperstown company to win a Queen's Award for Enterprise

10. Our Community Fund distributes some of our surpluses both locally and in other areas where we work. To date we've given out more than £50,000 to some 150 community and voluntary groups

11. We bought Therm Tech in Manchester four years ago. Our manufacturing plant makes waste heat recovery systems for customers such as Heineken, Royal Liverpool Hospital and Eli Lilly

12. Since 1995 Homeseal has insulated over 72,000 properties



13. BACKROW USAGE

13. Draperstown needed a Recreation Centre and as no-one would provide one, we did. It's getting increasing usage every year

14. In 2011 we distributed 200 Carbon Monoxide Detectors to local pensioners

15. Our recruitment agency's office in Donegal, along with our office in Magherafelt provide permanent and temporary recruitment services across all of the UK and Ireland

16. In 2002 we completed the renovation of the Cornstore, a derelict building on the Backrow. It is now in full time use as a creative hub for Glasgowbury

17. Draperstown needed social housing units so in 2011 we built 23 housing units on the site of our initial premises

Cllr Patsy Groogan, Cllr Anne Forde (Chair Magherafelt District Council), Cllr Kate Lagan and Cllr Sean Kerr pictured at the site of the new Social Housing Development, Scutchers Lane, on the Tobermore Road, Draperstown

18. At the opening of the extension to our Magherafelt units we recognised the achievements of our first Magherafelt tenant BA Components. They now employ more than 200 staff, export to 21 countries and they're 25 years old this year Happy Birthday!

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

Draperstown is now a vibrant area, with a young and growing population.

People now want to move here and peace, technology and new ways of doing things have transformed life.

But the basics remain the same. How can we continue to keep our young people at home? How can we develop good jobs locally? What are the community needs that are not being met? How do we make sure our people have the knowledge and skills they need to take them on through the 21st century? How do we react to global trends and patterns? How can we be comfortable with and within ourselves? How can we improve our local quality of life? Most crucially of all, how can we use business to help address these issues?

Workspace will continue to look for answers to these questions. We didn't set out in the 1980s to do a time-limited piece of work. Instead that work goes on. That cause endures.

Our success is a combination of many people and organisations including members of the local community who provided initial funding, our directors, management and staff, the various government departments and agencies we work with and of course our customers who are our products and services. Many thanks to all for the magnificent team effort.

Workspace.
Passionate about business delivering to our community

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21b.

19. Speaking to David Cameron at Downing Street when picking up our Big Society Award in 2014

20. Running for 17 years now our After School Club provides much needed childcare for local primary school children

21. In 2013 Draperstown Library was under threat of closure. We worked with LibrariesNI not just to save our library but to get a new much bigger facility

ThermTech
Waste Heat Recovery Systems

workspace enterprises ltd.

Network RECRUITMENT
Connect | Achieve | Grow

Draperstown after school club

network personnel
Together Towards Employment

homeseal

backrow
RECREATION CENTRE

workspace community fund

The Business Centre
Draperstown, BT45 7AG

The Business Centre
80-82 Rainey St
Magherafelt, BT45 5AJ

2nd Floor, Molesworth Place
Molesworth Street
Cookstown, BT80 8NX

7A Port Road
Letterkenny
County Donegal

1-4 Parker Ave, Castledawson
Magherafelt, BT45 8AR

Dungannon Enterprise Centre
2 Coalisland Road
Dungannon, BT71 6JT

Omagh Community House
2 Drumragh Avenue
Omagh
BT78 1 DP

2nd Floor
Spring House
Springwell Street
Ballymena BT43 6AT

The Old School House
19a Church Hill Road
Gracehill
Ballymena BT42 2NL

10 Cheston Street
Carrickfergus
BT38 7BH

12e Market Square
Antrim
BT41 4AW

Farranshane House
1 Ballygore Road
Antrim
BT41 2RN

14a Old Glenarm Road
Larne
BT41 1RW

Business Centre
River House, Castle Lane
Coleraine BT51 3DR

Unit 4a
Kayley Industrial Estate
Richmond Street
Ashton Under Lyne
Manchester, OL7 0AU

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