

Bridgend – a building, a past and a future

A 19th century farmhouse on the south side of Edinburgh will re-open in the New Year as a community centre with a difference. Just as this farmstead in days of yore involved a good deal of hands-on labour, producing food for the city, it is now being reborn as a place to get stuck into cooking, gardening, wood and metal work, arts and crafts, bicycle-repairing, stone-walling, foraging in the woods and exploring the area's local heritage.



Bridgend farmhouse on the Old Dalkeith Road was a working farm until the 1970s, with cows and pigs and a market garden. Many local people remember it well and some even recall working there. It was inhabited till the year 2000. Edinburgh City Council bought it as part of a millennium project to create the new Craigmillar Castle Park.

However, money ran out before the farmhouse could be restored and it fell into disrepair. Until a community group, calling itself Bridgend Inspiring Growth (BIG), was set up with the ambition to bring this iconic building back to life.

The Big Lottery has backed the project, so too has the City Council, handing the building over to the local community in an early example of “asset transfer”.

Now, seven years later, BIG is about to re-open the farmhouse after a major restoration and the addition of a row of workshops. Volunteers are doing the finishing touches themselves – cladding the workshops, painting and decorating the interiors, tidying up the garden. And already courses are

being run in cooking, woodwork, foraging, stone-walling and heritage.

Everyone is welcome to come along to the regular Bridgend drop-ins on Sundays and Wednesdays. And watch out for the official opening, and share issue, in the New Year.

See www.bridgendfarmhouse.org.uk