

The games room

Welcoming *the* WORLD

'We're trying to create that vision of Scotland that people from abroad have,' says Tom Wellings of Moffat Independent Hostel, which has been supported by Business Gateway Dumfries & Galloway

WORDS CAROL HOGARTH | PHOTOGRAPHY JONATHAN COSENS

Tom and his son Ezra



Bedroom 1



A top-class hotel masquerading as a hostel” is how one reviewer sums up Moffat Independent Hostel, which is offering something new to visitors from all over the world.

The imposing Victorian Bridge House mansion on Well Road has been converted into a luxury hostel by Tom Wellings and his wife Sindy, who opened its doors to guests three years ago.

Its main differences from a guest house, or B&B, Tom explains, are that it is self-catering, with guests using a communal kitchen, and it has two large rooms designed for socialising.

But, he stresses, the bedrooms are as comfortable as those in any guest house



Moffat Independent Hostel

or small hotel, each with a private en-suite bathroom, and guests can choose to be as sociable, or not, as they like.

“We are trying to give a fresh take on the hostel concept,” he says. “We want to encourage people who wouldn’t normally hostel to try one. It’s budget friendly, and retains all the best elements of hostelling, but is just that bit more comfortable than a typical hostel.”

Tom previously worked for Thornhill-based mine clearance charity The Halo Trust, largely overseas, but with a young son, Ezra, now seven, he and Sindy felt it was the right time for a change.

“I had always wanted to do something like this,” he says. “Living in Thornhill, we were well aware of Moffat and thought it would

be a great location for this business, so, in 2022 we took the plunge.”

Bridge House was built in 1848 as a private home until after World War Two, when it became a small hotel and later a B&B.

Tom and Sindy have revamped the interior, embracing the house’s wealth of beautiful period features.

“We’ve kept the Victorian vibe,” Tom explains. “We’re trying to create that vision of Scotland that people from abroad have. Our guests love the feel that they are staying in a Scottish country house.”

An atmospheric games room, with a large bay window, has a pool table and board games, a carved oak fireplace and leather reading chairs, while the dining room has a vinyl record player which has proved hugely popular with guests.

The well-equipped kitchen offers complimentary hot drinks and everything guests need to prepare themselves a hot meal.

Six en-suite letting rooms upstairs, including one dormitory room, can accommodate up to 18 guests and the

Bedroom 2



The new EV charger

addition of a new railway wagon-style glamping pod in the grounds in May will further increase capacity.

The hostel has a spacious garden, a lock-up garage for bikes and a drying room. Ideally placed as Moffat is on the M74 for a one-night stop off, Tom is keen to promote the town for longer stays, particularly for active tourism.

“We feel this area is undersold as a cycling destination and we are surrounded by great walks too,” he says.

Tom is promoting three circular cycling routes, all starting and finishing in Moffat – the Triskelion, named after a Celtic symbol with three spirals – with discounted four-

night stays.

After attending a Business Gateway D&G event at Moffat Distillery, Tom approached the organisation for advice and support.

They helped him source a £3,000 grant through the UKSPF funded Climate Resilience Programme to help towards the installation of a dual electric vehicle charging point.

Business Gateway’s specialist Tourism Development Officer John King also helped him with support for a new website.

“We really appreciate Business Gateway’s support and have been really happy to discover the help that’s available,” he says.

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