

# READERS' LIVES

**THIS WEEK** ▼

**Paul Cusack**  
 managing director  
 Cockermouth Travel, Cumbria



## Cumbrian travel agency hit by floods reopens 10 months later with new look

Cockermouth Travel hit the headlines last year when the town in Cumbria was devastated by floods.

Within 40 minutes of the rainfall starting, the agency was submerged under three feet of water and staff were forced to grab what they could and head for home.

The damage to shops and businesses on Main Street was estimated at £100 million and recovery has been slow.

However, Cockermouth Travel managing director Paul Cusack was determined not to let the situation get the better of him. "We diverted the phones and rescued all the paperwork. We had three teams working from home. Calls were coming through on the mobile, and I was taking messages so the staff could get back to customers."

The team later moved to temporary offices nearby.

It took three months for the shop to dry out, then Cusack applied for planning permission to put in a new shop front and set about ordering all the "different part of the jigsaw" to bring the agency back to life.

After 10 months of hard work, the agency has reopened its doors with a modern and fresh new look.

"It was like starting with a blank canvas – this was an opportunity for us to make the shop very contemporary with a more minimalist look," he said.

As in many natural disasters, the local community rallied around to support the team. Cockermouth Travel also became a common feature in local and national newspapers – and Prince Charles even came to visit the shop.

"We had so much press coverage it was getting embarrassing," said Cusack. "Now I'm focusing on the agency and have lots of new things I want to introduce."

## HOW COCKERMOUTH TRAVEL TURNED THE TIDE AFTER FLOODING

- Created a comfortable TV lounge area for waiting customers
- Reduced brochure racks and used the space for artwork
- Created a separate area for admin
- Added contemporary wooden and leather desks and chairs
- Added a Gold Medal Travel TV

### How to overcome a crisis

- Stay positive
- Be proactive, don't just wait for the situation to improve
- Pull together – this is when teamwork is most important
- Regard a crisis as a chance to re-evaluate your business



Less racking leaves room for artwork in the 'contemporary and modern' agency



Prince Charles, pictured with Paul Cusack, visited Cockermouth Travel after the flooding



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