

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR 2023.

From campaign inception to June 2023.

This report covers the period from the closure of the Fishers Arms in October 2021 and details the progress to date in saving the pub for the community.

Following the closure of the pub by the previous owner, Paul O'Keefe, and the action by a group of villagers to apply Asset of Community Value protection, a committee of villagers was formed with the aim of saving the pub for the community.

A survey of the parish was conducted in December 2021 to ascertain the level of support which led to a public meeting on 16th January 2022.

The meeting confirmed that support was of a sufficient level for us to proceed and the committee formed a Community Benefit Society to ensure that all assets acquired remained for the benefit of the community.

- The Community Benefit Society was formed on 16th March 2022, registered with the Financial Conduct Authority.
- A bank account for the society was opened in May 2022.
- The society took out membership of The Plunkett Foundation – a charity that supports community businesses.
- A website was created, a business plan produced, and a share offer announced to pledge against. This showed sufficient support for a share offer to go ahead.

Negotiations with the owner were difficult and protracted, but a purchase price of £185,000 was finally agreed with the stipulation that we complete the purchase by the end of July 2022.

It was necessary to raise £205,000 to cover purchase and associated costs.

- A share offer was launched on 23rd May 2022 with a closing date of 7th July 2022. (This closing date was later extended to 31st October 2022.)
- A public meeting was held on 14th July 2022 to inform the community of the purchase details and negotiations.
- The target amount was achieved and the pub was purchased for the community on 29th July 2022.

The purchased premises had been stripped of contents and needed work to upgrade it to current regulations and standards, including refurbishing, re-roofing, rewiring, replumbing and the installation of full kitchen equipment, plus furniture and fittings. Some building repairs were also necessary. Therefore, further funds were needed to address these issues and return it once more to a viable village pub.

Fund raising efforts were: -

- Continue with share offer (until 31st October 2022)
- Sale of donated items of artwork, bric-a-brac etc., plus cash donations.

- Social events
- 200 club
- Monthly quiz nights
- Grant applications

We applied for £190,762.37 worth of grants and achieved success with awards totalling £110,486.

Grants were awarded by: -

- National Lottery Community Fund
- Berwick Community Trust
- Prince's Countryside Fund
- Tesco Community Fund
- Community Foundation
- Community Ownership Fund

Some grants were awarded for purchase of specific items e.g., kitchen equipment, solar panels, wood-burning stove etc.

The award from the Community Ownership Fund was a match funding grant which meant we had to avoid spending any money until the award was confirmed, so as to retain as much funds as possible to fund match against.

Once the COF grant of £65,000 had been awarded in March 2023, we were then able to go ahead and engage tradesmen to commence work.

Building work, electrical work, and plumbing has all commenced, with re-roofing in hand but yet to commence.

Many villagers have stepped forward as volunteers to carry out unskilled work and to assist tradesmen to keep costs as low as possible.

A big thank you to all volunteers.

We have also received donations of time and equipment including: -

- Kitchen equipment
- Building materials
- Decorating materials
- Wood for a new bar and other fitments
- Cakes and refreshments for the tradesmen and volunteers.

We have a design team who as well as producing designs, have followed this up with sourcing and pricing the appropriate furniture and fittings.

What next.....

- To complete repairs and refurbishment.
- Open bar, letting rooms and kitchen to establish an income stream.
- Engage a tenant and to follow the business plan.
- *(Business plan available to download from the website.)*

Members of the present committee are: -

Adrian Bell	Tabitha Bell	Andrew Colls	Andrew Firth
Lesley Firth	Keith Giddens	Louise Giddens	Moir Kay

In addition, the committee have been assisted by: -

Neill Berry, volunteer's co-ordinator. Sue Worth, minutes secretary. Design Team, led by Alison Gibb.

The Management Committee wishes to express their gratitude to all the grantors, donors, volunteers and shareholders without whom the prospect of the pub re-opening before the end of the current financial year would not be possible.



Keith Giddens, Committee Chairman.