

Pub is the Hub Case Study

MUSSEL INN POST OFFICE, DOWN THOMAS, PLYMOUTH, DEVON



APPLICANT AND BACKGROUND

The Mussel Inn is located in Down Thomas; a small village with a population of around 333 residents, situated about 4 miles south of Plymouth, on the Wembury peninsula, in South Hams. The pub is owned by Enterprise Inns, and run by licensees, Victor & Lynn Walsh.

The local Post Office closed in 2005, but the small village shop remained open. Following the closure of the Post Office, there was strong community support for its re-opening, and the Down Thomas Action Group was formed. The licensees put forward the suggestion to convert their disused garage into a Post Office, and in early 2007 Pub is the Hub was approached to help. Pub is the Hub has been the catalyst for the development of this complex project, working closely with pub owner Enterprise Inns, the licensees, the Post Office and Devon Rural Renaissance, providing development support, and bringing partners and funders together.

PROJECT SUMMARY

Converting a disused garage fronting the pub car park, directly opposite the front door of the pub, has created the Post Office. An additional valuable facility has been created in the form of a room at the back of the Post Office that can be used for community meetings. The new Post Office and community room are ideally located within the village. Planning permission was required, and the local planning department were very supportive of the development. This was a complex project, and required a significant public sector investment. The work involved included completely refurbishing and fitting out the disused garage. In addition to the valuable new service, the project has also created a new job for a Post Mistress.

OUTCOMES

The strength of local community support for this project demonstrated the need for the new services created, as there are a number of older residents and people without cars, who depend on the Post office in the village. The project has taken three years to develop, and shows determination on the part of the rural community, working with the pub business. The project is a good example of a 'partnership approach', and the success is in no small part due to the commitment of the licensees and support from Enterprise Inns. These new services have strengthened the community role of the pub and have begun to introduce people to the pub who haven't been before, which also helps to support the traditional pub business. Other outcomes include bringing a redundant rural building back into productive use, and helping to generate local employment, creating a Post Mistress job that has also included training.

LESSONS TO LEARN

- Resilient community support and determination.
- Licensees with enthusiasm and commitment, working closely with the Parish Council and other partners.
- Strong, early support from the pub owner and the local authority planning department.
- The availability of public funds to enable the capital works to proceed.
- Significant financial support from the Post Office

PROJECT CAPITAL COSTS

Total project capital costs	£30,000.00
Devon Rural Renaissance	£15,000.00
Post Office Limited	£15,000.00

LICENSEE CONTACT: Victor & Lynn Walsh Tel. 01752 862238 **OWNER:** Enterprise Inns

PUB IS THE HUB CONTACT: Sarah Burns. Tel. 01423 546165

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