

Pub is the Hub Case Study

BLACK SWAN VILLAGE SHOP, RAVENSTONEDALE, CUMBRIA



APPLICANT AND BACKGROUND

The Black Swan holds a pivotal role within the small remote community of Ravenstonedale, being a hotel, restaurant and public house. After many years of decline Mr and Mrs Dinnes purchased the hotel in July 2006, and have invested around £150,000 restoring the building and developing the business. The business provides valuable local employment for 3 full-time and 9 part-time staff, and it has always been the aim of the owners to provide as many services as possible. There are currently no community services in Ravenstonedale, and the hotel provides a meeting place and holds many community events and fund raising activities for the village. The parish of Ravenstonedale has 570 residents, and 107 people are aged 65 and over (Source: 2001 Census). The final grocer shop closed some 7 years ago, and the nearest shops are at Kirkby Stephen (4 miles) and Tebay (6 miles). This means that local residents, particularly the elderly, infirm, and those with no transport have to travel to Kirkby Stephen for the most basic groceries. The Parish Council have been very supportive of the creation of a new village shop, and many local people (and visitors to the area) consistently commented that the lack of a shop in the village is a frustration. This anecdotal evidence, supported the need for a shop, and demonstrated local support for the new service.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The main catalyst for the project was a 50% financial contribution from Cumbria County Council, through the Cumbria Rural Infrastructure Programme (CRISP), which helps rural communities retain and create services. CRISP covered half the costs of converting a room at the pub into a shop selling groceries, including local produce and some local crafts. The shop is a small scale, cost-effective development, which has converted an existing ground floor bedroom adjacent to the car park, and has good disabled access. The room was in good condition, with basic services installed, and the work included the removal of a partition wall and ensuite bathroom, plastering and decorating, and installing shelving, fridge and freezer and sales area. New signing was also provided. The work was project managed by the owners, completed on budget and within a very short time-scale of around 8 weeks.

OUTCOMES

The shop has strengthened the community role of the hotel and added to the quality of life for local people; particularly those who are find it difficult or are unable to travel to local shops further afield. The shop has created new employment opportunities for local people, providing 4 part-time jobs. The shop sources all goods locally, and the fresh food section sells only local produce, supporting local suppliers. The increased turnover in fresh goods has also helped to improve the overall buying power of the business. There have also been real environmental benefits. A customer survey found that the shop has saved locals driving around 100,000 miles a year, equating to a reduction in CO2 emissions of 33 tonnes.

LESSONS TO LEARN

- Enthusiastic owner was prepared to act on advice provided, enabling the project to develop quickly.
- Good relationship with local trades people, allowed the project to start and complete quickly.
- Supportive local authority including planning and building regulation officials who acted promptly.
- Enthusiastic Parish Council and village support.
- Strengthened relationship between pub and local suppliers.

PROJECT CAPITAL COSTS (EXCLUDING VAT)

Total project capital costs	£12,460.00
Applicant contribution	£6,230.00
Cumbria County Council CRISP grant contribution	£6,230.00

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PUB IS THE HUB CONTACT: Mr Gordon Stewart. Tel. 01423 568987