

Pub is the Hub Case Study

DERBY ARMS COMMUNITY SHOP, WITHERSLACK, CUMBRIA



APPLICANT AND BACKGROUND

The Derby Arms is situated on the edge of Witherslack, a small village in the South of Cumbria. The parish has a population of around 450 people, with a significant number of older residents. Witherslack was a village without a pub or a shop, as the Derby Arms pub had been closed for some time and the former shop had shut when the owners' retired and could not find a buyer for the business. When Witherslack's post office and general store closed it was a great loss, particularly for the elderly and those without transport. It also meant villagers, especially for those living alone, lost a place to meet and keep up with local news. Witherslack found they'd lost more than their village shop; they had lost the vibrant heart of their community.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The new Witherslack Community Shop is operated by an Industrial Provident Society with community shareholders and has now opened thanks to local people's efforts. The Derby Arms has also reopened under a 125 year lease as the freehold of the pub is owned by the Witherslack Community Land Trust. The shop adjoins the pub, located in a previously redundant part of the building fronting on to the main road. The shop sells as many local products as possible, supplying a wide range of goods from regular household essentials to cakes, fresh fruit and vegetables, local meat and dairy products. The shop also sells Fairtrade products as well as local crafts such as handmade cards and bags. The shop also provides a DVD sharing club and dry cleaning service, and has become the hub of the village with tables and chairs where people can meet friends and catch up with news. The tenant of the pub has allowed the shop to rent the space free for the first year.

OUTCOMES

Working together, local residents formed a committee to raise the funds and find premises to run their own community shop, and the whole village got behind the project. Local people took ownership at every stage of the project's development, including the hard work of refurbishing the redundant old building and turning it into a shop. A great deal of fundraising was necessary and advice and support was needed to secure the complex mix of funding that was needed to develop the project. Excellent relationships developed with local suppliers, and 30 volunteers are involved in running the shop six days a week with three members of the committee as managers.

LESSONS TO LEARN

- Sharing premises with the pub has provided a low cost effective solution.
- Opening the new shop is just the beginning and continual fund raising is required.
- The project would not have happened without strong local and well organised local support.
- With carbon footprints in mind villagers can purchase their essential items within walking distance.
- The new shop and pub have restored a central meeting place for the village which is the hub of the community.

PROJECT CAPITAL COSTS (EXCLUDING VAT)

Capital costs N/A.

There are over 100 shareholders who between them have bought more than £31,000 worth of shares in the shop.

The following funding was also raised:

£10,000 (Plunkett Foundation)
£1,000 (Neighbourhood Forum)
£1,000 (Hadfield Charity)
£400 (Co-op)
£200 (The Michael Lancaster Trust)
£7,000 (local fundraising)

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PUB OWNER: Witherslack Community Land Trust