

Pub is the Hub Case Study

RAVEN INN COMMUNITY RUN PUB, LLANARMON YN LAL, DENBIGHSHIRE



BACKGROUND

The Raven Inn is a traditional community-orientated free house offering locally sourced food and real ales from north Wales. The pub is situated in the heart of the picturesque north Wales village of Llanarmon-yn-lal, Denbighshire, located under the Clwydian hills in a designated "Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty", and is a short walk from Offa's Dyke. Llanarmon is a village of around 800 people, and the pub has a catchment including nearby small settlements of between 1200 and 1600 people. It is one of the few villages remaining which still retains a shop, post office, school and pub. After 3 months of closure the local community decided to take over the Raven Inn and to run it as a co-operative of volunteers.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Raven Inn in Llanarmon yn lal has been the hub of the community for centuries. The freehold pub, built in 1772, was put up for auction but failed to reach its reserve price. The community tried to buy the pub but it was not possible. The pub closed for three months and faced with losing the pub the village decided to run it as a co-operative on a voluntary basis and formed a committee. Raven Mad Ltd, a company 'limited by guarantee' has been set up run the pub, and has been able to secure a six-year lease and with community support is now running the business. This has been a real community effort, with a small army of volunteers giving the entire building inside and out a major spring clean and re-decoration. Flowers were planted, seats were re-upholstered and walls and doors were painted. The Raven Inn has been run by the community since August of 2009. The Raven Inn is manned by volunteers and any profit can only be used to fund village community projects.

OUTCOMES

The pub reopened on the 29th August 2009 and has traded successfully. A committee has been put in place to oversee and coordinate activity and the focus is very much upon the community as a whole pulling together to create a pub that is once again the hub of the village. The pub is now very much the focus of the village and holds regular social events, and promotes locally sourced produce. The pub is open 6 days a week and is operated and managed by volunteers from the committee and villagers. Since reopening, the pub has looked to offer some services and they currently are the venue for the youth club once a fortnight to complement the visits of the mobile youth club so there is a weekly club. Also they are bringing together isolated and elderly people for a lunch and a social event on a regular basis. Raven Mad Ltd now have a 20 year lease of the pub and have also provided the expertise for the community to take over operation of the village shop. They have created a micro-brewery whose products are sold at The Raven and have now put in three letting bedrooms above the pub.

LESSONS TO LEARN

- The lease model is a practical and cost effective solution if capital funds cannot be raised.
- Involving all sections of the community ensures wide ranging support.
- Focusing on serving local ales and produce supports other local businesses and custom is reciprocated.
- Volunteer support is essential initially but cannot be relied upon as the pub must develop a sustainable business model.
- Initial success can be short-lived and future planning is essential as soon as possible.

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