

Pub is the Hub Case Study

The Royal Oak Inn, Rhandirmwyn, Llandovery, Carmarthenshire, SA20 0NY



Chris previously worked in technical services at Fuller Smith and Turners Brewery in London. Rachel was a primary school teacher. The arrival of their daughter made them think about moving out of London but they had no thought at the time of running a pub. They visited Rhandirmwyn on holiday. They loved the area and particularly liked the community feel to the village. A chance conversation with the landlord of the Royal Oak, who was looking to retire, led to them leasing the pub from him. They took over the running of the pub in April 2009.

Project Summary:

Rhandirmwyn stands in a remote rural location, so the closure of the only village shop on 31st March 2014 would have caused problems for the local community. However, on 1st April 2014 Chris and Rachel turned their poolroom into a temporary shop using pub furniture and the pool table itself for shop display purposes. This effectively brought matters full circle because, years ago, the poolroom had been the village shop before it was incorporated into the pub. Chris and Rachel were so pleased with local reaction to the temporary shop that they approached Pub is The Hub seeking guidance and possible funding to help them turn the poolroom into a permanent shop. Thanks to the generosity of The Prince's Countryside Fund, PiTH were able to make a grant of £4,000 towards the cost of creating a permanent shop. The work included the creation of display shelving and a loft storage area, the installation of shop freezers and chiller display units, plus the upgrading of the main electricity supply.

Outcomes so far

The conversion from temporary to permanent shop was achieved without any break in the shop's trade. It is now possible to carry a greater range of products in the shop than under the temporary arrangement. The lead-in via a temporary shop arrangement has proved useful in building up a range of local suppliers. During the period of running a temporary shop it was possible to use existing pub staff on an ad hoc basis. It is now hoped that trade in the shop will build up to the point where a new permanent member of staff can be justified. In the meantime Chris is looking to set up a team of local volunteers to help run the shop.

Lessons to Learn:

A year of running the temporary shop proved a good guide to what people want to buy in the shop. However, it is clear that it will still take some time to finally get the shop stocking policy right. Not every product necessarily needs to be displayed in the shop. For example, following customer requests, they started selling coal and bottled gas. The presence of a shop has definitely added to the pub's community feel and this spirit is enhanced by involving customers in decisions as to what items to stock in the shop. Chris and Rachel make sure that they sell a range of Welsh brands in the Royal Oak including Welsh beers, ciders, whiskies and gin. This policy is matched in their shop where they try to make sure their suppliers are as local as possible.

Total Project Costs:	£9650
Contribution from (E.g. pubco):	£500 (fridge donation from Castell Howell wholesaler)
Contribution from Licensee:	£5150
CSF Grant:	£4,000

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