

# Pub is the Hub Case Study

**The Mermaid Inn, Church Street, Elsing, Norfolk NR20 3EA**



The Mermaid Inn is located in a small rural village 12 miles from Norwich, with a population of just 280, and Licensees Helen Higgins and her partner Kevin Wills have been at the pub for the last 13 years. During that time they have seen a decline in services for the community, practically leaving them the last business standing. They had heard about the Norfolk County Council fund supporting pubs throughout the County to develop community services with the not for profit organisation 'Pub is The Hub', and started making plans to address the lack of facilities in the area.

## PROJECT SUMMARY

Helen and Kevin were very keen to retain The Mermaid Inn as a community meeting place and therefore working with 'Pub is The Hub' they decided to re-focus some of their offering towards a more niche market, including stronger ties with charitable organisations. 'Age UK', 'Dementia Adventure' and various other special needs bodies. Their plan was to make the pub accessible to the more disadvantaged and become a welcoming haven for the elderly and infirm plus special needs groups. Added to this they decided to change their dining room into a multi-functional tea room with disabled facilities and to hold 'IT' classes during the winter months, thereby helping all sections of the community.

## OUTCOMES

A new decking area was made overlooking the beer-garden with a specially designed walkway made of non-slip material, to allow wheelchairs and mobility scooters access to the new covered pergola - tea room and throughout the pub. The tea room is a great success with visitors and walkers on the 'Wensum Way' making the pub a definite stopping off point, plus the addition of the other facilities and their all-inclusive welcoming policy making The Mermaid Inn a true hub of the community.

## LESSONS TO LEARN

- Local Authority backing giving a kick-start to this project.
- Maintaining community inter-action and helping to combat isolation.
- Benefits to locals and the wider community plus visitors to the area.
- Licensees focused on helping the more disadvantaged in society.
- Generating a positive perception of the pub, through 'Pub is The Hub' supported by The Prince's Countryside Fund.

## PROJECT CAPITAL

Total Project Costs	£ 14,000
Applicant Contribution	£ 10,000
Norfolk County Council	£ 4,000

## LICENSEE CONTACT:

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