

Pub is the Hub Case Study

BIRD IN BUSH, ELSDON, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE NE19 1AA



Elsdon is a small village in the heart of Northumberland National Park about 10 miles south west of Rothbury and close to the Keilder Forest. It is an almost unspoilt Northumberland village with a rich history an ancient church, remains of a Motte and Bailey castle and most of the houses are built around a large village green once used by cattle drovers on their journey south. The population is about 250.

Background:

The Bird in Bush is a Grade II listed stone building with pitched slate roof and looks on to the village green in the picturesque village of Elsdon, an historical settlement in the Redesdale valley.

The Bird in Bush ceased trading March 2015. Katie Bland and Stephen Shaw bought the property at auction December 2015 and have been slowly and painstakingly restoring the pub. It is the only pub in the village and is sited overlooking the village green at the junction of two roads. It was once owned by S&N Breweries but has been a free house for many years but had a chequered history.

The building needed a lot of work to bring it back to a functioning pub business and through Pub is The Hub, the project to provide a kitchen and bunkhouse was put forward for a grant through the Prince's Countryside Fund for a grant from the People's Postcode Lottery. It was originally agreed that this project would be completed by March 2018 but significant delays and setbacks in the early stages of the pub's structural rebuild had the knock-on effect of delaying the kitchen and bunk room project.

It was agreed that the PCF/PPL funding would be delayed and the project completion date was moved to November 2019.

Project Summary:

At the same time Pub is The Hub negotiated with the library service of Northumberland Rural Council that had recently terminated the mobile library service which served Elsdon. The library service agreed to help set up a village library in the pub by providing the books and the computerised borrowing control system. The library would be part of a village cafe set up in the lounge bar of the pub and would include a computer and printer for access to the Northumberland Council website. It was agreed that Pub is The Hub would help to fund the building of the library shelves, the computer equipment and the creation of the cafe.

A separate collaboration with the [First & Last Brewery](#) brought the garage at the rear of the pub into use as an onsite brewery providing beer for sale in the pub and throughout the area as well as offering brew days for villagers and other pub customers.

The Bird in Bush project was completed by the end of November 2018 in time for filming for the [BBC Country File Christmas Special](#).

Project Outcomes:

From a closed pub it has been developed into a community hub offering beer brewed on site and locally sourced food served in the restaurant. It has a village library, computer hub, cafe and bunk room for walkers and cyclists and importantly for the future of the village offers up to 10 full and part time jobs.

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Katie and Stephen want to give this lovely pub the recognition it deserves due to its fantastic looks, location and facilities. Their approach centres on 'inclusivity' and making one and all feel that Bird in Bush is their pub and always their first choice. In addition to the library, Katie and Stephen have also identified the following services that they wish to introduce:

- Parcel collection: The pub will offer a parcel collection and drop off service for couriers delivering to the area, work with the local shop (3 miles away) for locals to collect their newspapers.
- Warm hub: As part of the 'warm hub' scheme the owners will be open on Thursdays and Fridays all day, providing a 'home from home' space for those choosing to use the pub as a work space or to meet up with friends and family.
- Exhibition space: The lounge has a large wall area that Katie and Stephen wish to offer as exhibition space for local artists and will be renting out wall space to local artists.
- Tourist information point: The lounge will also act as an information point for visitors.
- Artists/music/workshops: For example, quilting and crafts workshops and weekend breaks to the crafters/enthusiasts.
- Takeaway food/pizza oven: Katie and Stephen intend to build an outside pizza oven with help from a local expert, once again this will be a community project to benefit all visitors to the pub and created the only takeaway food outlet in the village.

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