

Pub is the Hub Case Study

The Star Inn, Harbottle, Near Rothbury, Northumberland, NE65 7DG



Harbottle is a village with a population of about 250 in the Northumberland National Park about 10 miles from Scottish border and 10 miles from the nearest town Rothbury. The ruins of 12th century Harbottle castle overlook the pub garden and provide a historic tourist attraction to this isolated village.

The Star Inn is the only one remaining of three pubs in the village and, until August of 2019, had been run by the same family for over 40 years. The pub was built as coaching inn about 200 years ago and so has a range of substantial but mostly derelict outbuildings around a courtyard.

In August 2019 Phil and Karen Wilkinson, who already knew the village well, bought the freehold of the pub and started their project to re-establish it as not just the centre of the village community but as the centre of the wider local farming community.

Project Summary:

The previous owners of the pub had, for many years, run a newspaper delivery round to service the village and the many outlying farms and homes. The new owners wanted to retain this service and develop it by refurbishing the area used to store and distribute the newspapers to create a small village shop and tourist information centre.

Phil and Karen soon realised there was also an opportunity to include in the shop project a small cafe. This would give the parents from the outlying farms who were delivering or collecting their children to and from the village primary school the chance to meet and talk with neighbours other than stand around the school gate.

Outcome:

A lean to building at the entrance to the pub from the stable yard was completely refurbished to provide newspaper and magazine displays, shelving and racking for household goods and food and drinks, refrigerated storage and a display for tourist information.

A coffee machine is sited in the space next to the shop within easy reach of the bar and shop and coffee or tea can be drunk in the shop or taken into one of the pub rooms or in the summer to a table in the yard. The shop continues to serve the local community with newspapers but now provides so much more and has quickly become well used by the village. In the summer as the village camping site starts to fill the shop is the likely to be first port of call to stock up on essentials.

Lessons to learn:

Good forward planning by new owners meant they were ready to implement their plans for the shop very soon after they took over the pub. Good knowledge of the village and how the pub fitted in to it was an important factor in engaging the community with ideas to improve services offered at the pub.

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Early contact with Pub is The Hub ensured their support with a £3,000 grant from the Community Services Fund towards the £5,000 total cost of the project which was completed by the end of October 2019, only 3 months after the purchase.

Project Costs:

Contribution from Licensee	£2,000
Pub is The Hub's Community Services Grant	£3,000
Total Project Costs	£5,000

LICENSEE CONTACT: Phil and Karen Wilkinson

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PUB OWNER: Free House

For more information telephone 01423 546165 or email enquiries@pubisthehub.org.uk