

Pub is the Hub Case Study

THE CHERRY TREE, CHERRY WILLINGHAM, LINCOLN, LINCOLNSHIRE, LN3 4AS



BACKGROUND

The Cherry Tree, known locally as the 'Tree', is located in the village of Cherry Willingham, approximately 3 miles east of Lincoln. The pub is owned by Punch Taverns. About four years ago, the pub closed down for several months, and then was taken on by another landlord for six months. A pattern that continued. Over this time, there was little consistency with how the pub was run and regulars didn't know what was happening. Facing another change of hands, a newsletter was sent out to the community explaining the situation and expressing concern about a phase of uncertainty about the future of the Pub. The newsletter also explained that following some preliminary discussions with Punch Taverns, the community had been given an opportunity to take over the running of 'The Tree' as a village/community concern. There were two conditions that needed to be met: someone was needed to run the pub and funds were required in order to take over the lease.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The community had to raise approximately £15,000 for the initial set up, to cover rent, stock purchase, first month's wages, fixtures and fittings and licence (£ 6,000 Refundable bond). A letter was sent to everyone in the community asking for interested parties to come forward and purchase 'A Share' in the venture of 'Owning the Tree' and give local people a chance to ensure the long term future of the Tree, and have a say in how it will be run.

A total of 43 people raised the cash to become "shareholders" in the Cherry Tree Inn, and the venture is being overseen by a team of four directors.

OUTCOMES

Since the local community have taken it upon themselves to run the pub, there has been plenty of interest and support from the local people. Members of the local community all helped with internal and external repairs, refurbishments and decorations that were needed. The food offer has been improved, and bookings are being taken for private parties and local village organisations. Regular committee meetings are held and the pub has teams in the winter darts and pool leagues.

The pub has been given a stable base and there is a sense of mutual benefit and a focus on the needs of the community, for example, the pub will host the local amateur dramatics group who then support the pub regularly.

This is a good example of how a standard pub leasing arrangement can provide a flexible and affordable solution for a community group to run a successful pub business and is an example of a large pub company offering flexibility so that communities can keep their pub open.

The new licensee Barbara Mawer had worked behind the bar at the pub for over 20 years and has now successfully studied for the correct qualifications needed to run a pub.

The idea is to generate enough funds to pay back the £13,000 for the lease and stock over the next year, and director, Mark Wilkins says; "It's been hard graft but absolutely worth it."

LESSONS TO LEARN

- Shareholders receive regular newsletters to keep them informed of progress and asking for any new ideas, the pub advertises in the local parish newsletter, and a 'Facebook' site has been set up.
- Any community taking on this option has to have a fully costed business plan and some knowledge of how to run the business to make it viable.
- As well as four directors, there is also a committee to act on behalf of residents to ensure the pub takes the direction wanted by the community.
- The project demonstrates that community groups don't always need to raise the capital to buy a pub when they could try taking on a suitable lease agreement.
- The project is a good example of a large pub owning group adapting its lease model to suit the needs of the local community.

LICENSEE CONTACT: Barbara Mawer 01522 754244

PUB OWNER: Punch Taverns

PUB IS THE HUB CONTACT: Mr Mike Clayton 01423 546165