

Local Community is awarded £½m from the National Lottery

THE ENNERDALE HUB LIMITED – A case study in Rural Regeneration

BACKGROUND

Ennerdale Bridge is an isolated rural community in the Western Lake District. It sits as the gateway to the Wild Ennerdale Valley (www.wildennerdale.co.uk) and apart from farming relies on tourism including the walkers reaching the end of day 1 on the Wainwright Coast-to-Coast walk and visitors coming to enjoy the most unspoilt valley and lake in Cumbria.

The community became concerned as the rural services on which they relied were progressively lost, for example the shop, post office and the emaciation of the rural bus service.

The Ennerdale and Kinniside Parish Council undertook a series of consultation events and surveys to establish how people felt about this loss of service and to determine what the local community wanted to see reinstated. This consultation process lasted for a period of 2 years.

The result was an agenda for activity that would begin the regeneration of this community. To test out the viability of these ideas the Parish Council gained funding from Cumbria Fells and Dales www.fellsanddales.org.uk/ to carry out a feasibility study and they appointed Porter Brown Solutions www.porterbrownsolutions.com/home.html to carry out the study.

The feasibility Study recommended that the restoration of the Village shop was both needed and viable as a business. The full feasibility study report can be found at www.wildennerdale.co.uk/hub/hubprojectplan.pdf

Midway through this feasibility study process, the village pub, The Fox and Hounds Inn, was closed and boarded up. www.foxandhoundsinn.org. This provided the catalyst for community action; notwithstanding the other projects signalled in the Feasibility Study report, the first challenge was to reopen the Fox and Hounds.



PROJECT SUMMARY

A Small group of villagers were brought together under the leadership of a project manager, charged to make this happen. The starting point was a business plan which helped to identify that £67,000 was needed to take over the lease of the pub (The business was independently owned and not for sale) and to pay the start-up costs associated with the reopening.

An Industrial and Provident Society (for community benefit) was formed, registered with the FAS with society registration number 31186R. The idea was to sell shares to try to raise the £67,000. However, the owner of the pub had set a deadline to the group to prove that the idea of raising share capital was viable

A village meeting was called at St Mary's Church in Ennerdale Bridge and 130 people attended. The unanimous view of the meeting was summarised by the phrase, "give us our pub back". It has to be said that there was some scepticism about the target; villagers were given just 10 days in which to pledge money (in multiples of £100 with the maximum at £20,000) if the project was to go ahead.

The target of £67,000 was reached in just 8 days. In some ways what was even more remarkable was that not one person reneged on their pledge and in the days that followed all of the money that had been pledged was collected and banked.

At the time of writing the number of shares sold has reached £89,850 with a total of 217 shareholders.

The share distribution tells an interesting story about the nature of peoples' investments

Vale of shares (£)	Number of shareholders	Total value of shareholding (£)	Percentage of shares	Cumulative total
100	96	9600	43.4	43.4
150	2	300	0.9	44.3
200	9	1800	4.1	48.4
250	29	7250	13.1	61.5
300	7	2100	3.2	64.7
400	3	1200	1.4	66.1
500	43	21500	19.4	85.5
600	2	1200	0.9	86.4
750	2	1500	0.9	87.3
1000	22	22000	10.0	97.3
1500	3	4500	1.4	98.7
2000	1	2000	0.4	99.1
4000	2	8000	0.9	100.0
TOTALS	221	82950	100	

† Figures correct at 06/03/2014 – shares continue to be available for sale

Over 41% of shareholders bought shares at the minimum level of £100. Just over 85% of shareholders had shares valued at £500 or less. This met the project team's aspiration to encourage maximum participation and this achievement was reflected in what was to follow.

The project team set the opening date as Monday 4th April 2011; that was just 4 weeks after the money was raised and 6 weeks after the public meeting in the church. The early opening was chosen to capitalise on the business potential offered by the start of the Coast-to-Coast season, Easter Bank Holiday and the additional public holidays announced to celebrate the royal wedding.

What followed was 4 weeks of frenetic activity; hundreds of villages turned out to help prepare for the opening, cleaning, redecorating, repairing, building and gardening. "Volunteer Weekends" were declared and people gave of their time and energy freely to make it happen.

The Fox and Hounds reopened as planned on 4th April 2011 and has enjoyed real success. The turnover has reached in excess of £300,000 a year against a business plan target of £250,107 in year 1. The project was support too by Copeland Community Fund.



The community had achieved its first goal and reopened the village pub.

The Ennerdale Centre

The project team were now able to turn their attention to the feasibility Study report and consider re-establishing the village shop. The prime location for the village shop was identified as a disused Forestry Commission building on the western side of the village. After negotiations with the Forestry Commission the use of the site was agreed in principle.

The ensuing discussion identified a proposal that met more of the Feasibility Study targets. The Ennerdale Centre would include a village shop, a tourist and information centre, a café and community facilities plus a shower and toilet facility for visitors and walkers. This would provide an essential service for local people but would also meet the needs of tourists to the area.

The Parish Council, using the residue of the Cumbria Fells and Dales grant left over from the Feasibility Study commissioned Porter Brown Solutions to extend the work done there and write a business plan for The Ennerdale Centre. The outcome supported the proposition and the likely viability of the enterprise.

One further and final consultation took place in February 2012. An exhibition outlining the proposal was on display for a week in St Mary's church before a meeting there on Tuesday 28th February. The same material was also published on the Web. Full details of the exhibition materials and a summary of the outcome can be found at www.wildennerdale.co.uk/theennerdalecentre/index.html.

The overwhelming outcome of that consultation was to proceed on the basis of the business plan on the Forestry Commission site. We had won their agreement to lease this land to the community, with permission to demolish the derelict buildings and rebuild new; they agreed a peppercorn rent of just £1 a year. The search for funding then began. This was to be based on the outline plans drawn up by Edwin Thompson (Keswick)

The bid to BIG Lottery was from within their Reaching Communities category where there is a specific buildings element. The 3 phase bidding process was increasingly detailed and took almost 2 years to bring to fruition. It included all the detailed planning including a new Business Plan, planning permission, public consultation, legal matters and agreeing a lease for the land. We were given a "development grant" of £22,000 to help us pay the costs involved. All of this was completed and at each stage the bid was successful. Final notification that we had been awarded a further £478,000 came at the end of February 2014. (£500,000 of funding in total)

Next steps. Contractors are expected to be appointed and on site by June 2014 when they will begin the demolition work and start the new building. The building work is expected to take 6- 8 months with the handover of the completed building around 2nd March 2015. There will then be a planned pause to allow for staff and volunteer recruitment plus stocking of the shop with the intention of opening the facility by the Easter weekend of 2015. (good Friday is 4th April 2015)

Ironically that will be 4 years, to the day, since the village reopened the Fox and Hounds Inn



The Ennerdale Centre
Where Local Community Meets Wild Valley

the Ennerdale
Community
Fund

Edwin
Thompson

Lake District
National Park



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