



Chairperson's Annual Report

Dobcross Village Society Ltd Annual Members'
Meeting 14.09.25

Executive Summary

A true good news story! In two parts: Formation, and Transformation!

With the enthusiastic support of the community and the generosity of the original members raising £63k we formed the Dobcross Village Society Ltd; a community co-operative owned and governed by its members. We acquired the business and lease to secure the future of the village store and Post Office services. This is our mission.

The original steering committee, and current Management Committee worked collectively to set up the society, bank, and Post Office contract, dealing with the insurances, staff contracts and fundamental policies required to establish a positive trading business.

The hard work is done and we are a proud model of community ownership in action. Our village store and post office serves and relies on our growing loyal customers, our numerous volunteers and our Members at its core. This is our Vision.

To underline this we successfully applied for a Community Ownership Fund Grant and secured funding for the transformation to what we enjoy today, and beyond. The new store fit-out has been a complete success with improved shelving, point of systems and the community space that has transformed what we offer to be unique.

Trading overview

Exceeding expectations

Our business plan for the initial period has been exceeded in all areas. Revenue from shop sales has increased beyond expectations generating over £200k, and



Dobcross Village Society Ltd

The 'Dobcross Village Society Ltd' is a Community Benefit Society registered with the Financial Conduct Authority under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014. Registration no. 9169. Trading as the Dobcross Village Store and Post Office. A member of The Plunkett Foundation.



**Funded by
UK Government**

this has helped offset the one-off costs associated with establishing a new business and almost reach a breakeven position.

Our staff are the heartbeat of the operation and have supported one another as a team throughout the transformation. We are proud that we can offer secure employment and thank them all for embracing the opportunity with enthusiasm.

We have improved the retail offer with greater choice and quality and have driven the support of local suppliers to great effect. The milk, bread, honey, scones, ice cream and, of course, pies have been vital to our success and are valued by all.

The business has seen an uptick in the number of people using and accessing the post office services; for business and personal use. We are, in effect, the local bank, travel currency and parcel hub that a thriving village requires.

We have encouraged more and more and more people to call in, and call back again! This is the true test of our business. And it is exceeding all expectations.

Volunteers

The Magic Ingredient!

The Village Store has been supported by a loyal and dedicated team of 30 volunteers so far. Without these it would be difficult to offer a complete service. The management committee members and advisors make up the volunteer numbers to almost 40 in total.

Volunteers apply and go through an Induction Programme and are given a Volunteer Pack and Handbook. A Volunteer training session took place during the shop refurbishment weeks and a Volunteer Co-ordinator offers ongoing support where required.

Volunteer roles include general shop work, sales, purchasing, stock taking, cleaning, repair and maintenance, gardening and management committee, and working groups.

Our volunteers are very much appreciated we have enjoyed two Volunteer Socials organised by the DVS management committee. The volunteers themselves have formed a strong social group and also organise events themselves. It has been a delight to meet and get to know each other.



Dobcross Village Society Ltd

The 'Dobcross Village Society Ltd' is a Community Benefit Society registered with the Financial Conduct Authority under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014. Registration no. 9169. Trading as the Dobcross Village Store and Post Office. A member of The Plunkett Foundation.



**Funded by
UK Government**

Refurbishment

Securing Our Assets

A Grant of £91,200 from the government managed Community Ownership Fund for the Dobcross PO and shop project was approved in March 2024 and received in August 2024. Its aims were..

1. To purchase and operate the business associated with the Dobcross Village Post Office and Store and secure a 15 year lease on the premises.
2. To secure the shop for the community and furthermore to develop the business into a strong community hub catering for the needs of the Dobcross residents, with multiple facilities offering community support, as well as providing an enhanced Post Office and shop promoting local produce/suppliers and increasing awareness of village events, groups and support .
3. To refurbish and reorganise the shop in a manner which will enable further products and services to be incorporated and create a village hub by providing a small drop in meeting space with refreshments.

All aims have since been achieved by April 2025 and the grant expenditure completed. However, a monthly grant report showing progress is submitted each month.

Media and Communications

Positive News!

Our Social Media stories and pictures are a wonderful summary of the place and space and people that have discovered us so far. There are non-stop activities and events that add colour to our community. It is simply joyful. The website and wider media communications are expertly managed to present a positive and pro-active community, seeking to improve what we do or can do in the future. We have been on TV, radio and in the local press frequently, and always with a positive message.



Dobcross Village Society Ltd

The 'Dobcross Village Society Ltd' is a Community Benefit Society registered with the Financial Conduct Authority under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014. Registration no. 9169. Trading as the Dobcross Village Store and Post Office. A member of The Plunkett Foundation.



**Funded by
UK Government**

Co-Operative Benefits

Part of a bigger picture

The DVSL is set up as a Community Benefit Society, which means the business is now owned and controlled by its members who have a genuine say in how the business is run.

Community owned businesses, such as shops, pubs and farms are more successful and resilient than traditional types of business (99% surviving beyond the challenging first five years, compared to 39% of other forms of small business) This is due, in large part, to the numbers of people who are involved and engaged as members, as well as the hard work of staff, volunteers and committee members.

Community owned businesses thrive as values-led grass roots organisations deeply embedded in the communities they serve.

Succession Planning

The Future...

There are 124 invested society members that supported the initial call to action (and it is impossible to thank you enough). And incredibly, we have almost 600 loyalty card members of the village store indicating a very strong level of support for the transformation we have achieved.

The hardest work is now done, and the committee are seeking a minor amendment to involve more members, more closely, and to push forward with new ideas and support. The community co-operative needs greater reach, younger and older members willing and able to contribute in setting and achieving our next goals. We particularly seek new people to be involved on the management committee this year. It is a highly rewarding personal and community experience.

Appreciation

Thanks to You

As ever, this initiative is not about me, or any individual, but it would be impossible not to thank every single founder member for giving us their trust. Every member of



Dobcross Village Society Ltd

The 'Dobcross Village Society Ltd' is a Community Benefit Society registered with the Financial Conduct Authority under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014. Registration no. 9169. Trading as the Dobcross Village Store and Post Office. A member of The Plunkett Foundation.



**Funded by
UK Government**

the management committee for giving their expertise. Every member of staff for their hard work; and every volunteer for every minute given. We have started something quite special, and I am proud to say, it is thriving.

Nathan Beckwith

Chair of Dobcross Village Society Ltd



Dobcross Village Society Ltd

The 'Dobcross Village Society Ltd' is a Community Benefit Society registered with the Financial Conduct Authority under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014. Registration no. 9169. Trading as the Dobcross Village Store and Post Office. A member of The Plunkett Foundation.



**Funded by
UK Government**