



Introduction

This is our third report of our progress against the items identified in our Social Impact Plan (SIP) that we prepared as a condition of the grant support and loan financing that we received.

The report covers the year from March 2019 to February 2020, during which time the Society has been heavily involved with supporting our village pub, The Yew Tree.

Despite the distraction of a change in tenancy during the year and a period of time when volunteers ran the pub on behalf of the Benefit Society, we are pleased to be able to report significant progress against our Social Impact Objectives.

Avon Dassett is a very small village located in rural south Warwickshire, with less than 100 houses, a population of 210, of which 165 are of voting age. The Social Impact of keeping the pub open at the centre of the community should be considered against these numbers, not only in terms of what has been achieved, but what would be lost if it closed.

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

In the second full year of having the pub open for community use, we are making good progress with our short term objectives and have begun to achieve some of our medium and long term objectives.

We continue to have relationships with local businesses to serve the pub and the networks result in the community being able to find a business or tradesman. A new beauty salon has been established within the pub building offering healthcare and beauty services to the community.

A number of clubs and regular events are well established using the pub as the central focus and meet regularly bringing members of the community together; people who otherwise might not have met or interacted and in some cases people who would not have any interaction other than family support.

The planned book exchange has been established and is regularly used and valued by our residents with a new book club being set up within the village.

We are proud to be able to report regular events such as the Soapbox Derby; an event that continues to be successful bringing spectators, competitors and volunteers to the village.

With the Yew Tree at the centre of this and other village activities, we anticipate that the community based events will continue to increase as the pub becomes more established as a business.

Although we have had a variety of tenants each change brings new energy to running the pub and, by working together with them, we fully expect to be able to report progress in future years.



DETAILED REPORT

In this section of our report we detail the specific progress that we made to our year-end against the objectives that we set out in our SIP. For ease of understanding we cross refer to our Social Impact Matrix and repeat the context of each objective.

Item No 1 - The Avon (now The Yew Tree) as The Network for local employment and knowledge about village and nearby services. (Short Term).

We aimed to create opportunities for networking for employment, and community businesses.

We continue to encourage the use of local tradesmen to undertake repairs and remedial work which has been taken up by both tenants and the Benefit Society during the year. In addition, tenants continue to use local farms, businesses and suppliers to support their venture.

The Community Notice Board within the Yew Tree is now firmly established. It publicises notices of events, advertisements from local clubs, societies and businesses and allows traders to display their business cards. These are also reported in summary within our Social Impact Register.

The pub has also provided an exhibition site for local craftsmen who have exhibited and sold hand crafted furniture and sculptures.

The beneficiaries of this service are residents in the local community who may be seeking a service as well as those in the local business community who generate contract opportunities directly from the advertising and referrals. Some examples are

- several kitchen and bathroom installations have arisen after discussions in the pub with the principal of a local company, who is a regular customer
- numerous contracts for carpeting and flooring have arisen as a result of discussions in the pub between prospective customers and a specialist sole trader who is also a regular in the pub

We continue to monitor progress through discussion and feedback generated at our Management Committee meetings.

Item No 2 - The Avon (now the Yew Tree) as The Hub for village groups. (Short Term).

We aimed to enable greater community cohesion through connecting better to existing groups and supporting the creation of new clubs eg Bridge Club; young mothers group; walking group etc.

The Bridge Club continues to be well supported and meets every two weeks in the pub. The attendance stands at approximately 12 people aged 30 – 80 years old. Attendance is steady and has included complete beginners as well as experienced players who would not normally come to the pub. Encouragingly, the club was established by a member of the Society who is not a Management Committee member.

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The Walking Club is also well established (again by residents who are not on the Management Committee). The group has grown to a pool of approximately 20 people who regularly walk of which an average of 12 turn up for each walk. The total number of people who have walked with the group is over 40. The numbers include people from other villages, who we would not normally meet. Elderly residents, also join us for lunch at the pub after the walks. This is important as otherwise these residents face isolation from the wider community as they don't get out and don't interact with anyone from the village except for family. The group plans to introduce longer distance walks and increase the frequency of the walks that we undertake.

Another walking group has also been established and meets on a Sunday morning. Owners bring their dogs and attendance is usually around six people and five dogs.

Initial discussions have successfully drawn in other established groups such as the Dassett Mens' Club to meet in the pub from where they plan their activities and excursions.

Item No 3 - The Avon (now the Yew Tree) as The Café. (Short Term).

We aimed to reduce social isolation by opening the pub in the mornings for residents to drop in for coffee, to use wifi and exchange books.

Opening the pub in the morning has been difficult to establish with current staffing arrangements and the associated costs. The attempt to establish a regular coffee morning has been abandoned due to the current opening hours of the pub and the existence of a competing monthly event within the community.

The pub continues to serve coffee and cake during opening hours and has encouraged customers to meet in the pub, even if not drinking.

Regular planning meetings and ad-hoc events are planned and held at the pub throughout the year. Examples include Halloween, Remembrance Day, Christmas Carol Service, the SoapBox Derby, Avon Dassett Country Show and many others.

The book exchange is now established and local business people are also dropping in to use the Wifi

There have been no set up, or running costs so far.

Item No 4 - The Avon (now the Yew Tree) as The Focus for visitors to the Area. (Short to Medium Term)

We aim to grow community pride and involvement in bringing visitors to the area.

There are a number of activities that have drawn visitors to the area:



1. Exhibitions are regularly staged in the pub for historical events to commemorate Remembrance Sunday and anniversaries. Historical articles, photographs, medals and other items of interest are put on display by the local History Society.
2. The popular Soapbox Derby was run again on June 22 2019. The Soapbox uses the road that winds down the steep hill through the Village, starting at its highest point and finishing outside the pub. The karts are unpowered and rely on the skills of the drivers to navigate them over the bumps bends and natural chicane along the way.

The event is run by volunteers in the village and planning meetings are held throughout the year in the pub.

We were very pleased to win Runner-Up in the 2019 Rural Community Business Award, sponsored by Plunkett for our report of the Soapbox Derby.

The event raised over £1,000 for local charities.

Local businesses had the chance to advertise and display their products. The pub has a welcome windfall in business and takings and offered temporary work opportunities.

In summary, the community develops a stronger sense of identity and is shown in a very positive light to competitors and visitors alike.

3. Prompted by members of the community, discussions in the pub have led to regular Pop-Up Produce and Craft Markets. These markets are an opportunity for the community to share surplus produce (local honey, vegetables, fruit, eggs etc) either to sell or for a donation to charity. There are also local craft stalls and refreshments served in the pub. Dates were Saturday 7th September and 7th December.
4. We also held discussions with Dassett Charities about the use of a field that they have acquired and exploring the possibility of using the field for local events. The field was used for car parking for the Soapbox Derby and could host future events such as by attracting car clubs to the village for meetings spanning more than one day.

To date there has been no cost to the Society resulting from the above activities

Item No 5 - Extend The Hub by setting up new community led groups/activities. (Short to Medium Term).

The aim here is to reduce social isolation and encourage community interaction.

Events such as Halloween enable volunteers to decorate the pub and provide a party for all the local children after a trick or treat promenade around the village.

An annual children's choir service is normally held in the local church, and participants in the choir use the regular singalong sessions in the pub to practice. This year the pub was used for a Christmas Singalong featuring young performers from the village singing carols and some



more popular songs, the community also meet before and after the traditional church services, thereby attracting a wide selection of the community

A variety of music events are becoming a regular feature at the pub and have include local children singing in Open Mike sessions and, using the piano, a weekly community singalong and open piano evening is held each Monday. This event enables residents to meet and sing and also given the opportunity to young people who are learning the piano to come and practice their singing or piano and get some experience of performing in public.

To date there has been no cost to the Society as a result of the above activities.

Item No 6 - Extend The Hub by setting up new community led groups/activities. (Short to Medium Term).

The aim here is to improve health and wellbeing.

We have made no progress so far in setting up an IT Club. However, we have identified IT hardware that could be loaned to the Society to enable community use for courses and on-line access.

Item No 7 - Increase accessibility to The Building. (Medium Term).

The aim here is to improve accessibility to the pub, for all.

We need to raise further capital through share sales or grants, or utilise retained profits after a period of trading before we can embark on new projects.

Item No 8 - Offer extra community benefits to increase The Services. (Medium Term).

We aim to enable greater community cohesion through the provision of additional services. However, we need to ensure that the pub is fully functioning and new societies and activities are bedded in before we embark on new projects to offer any additional services.

During the reporting year our first tenant relinquished their lease, which diverted our attention to activities aimed at keeping the pub open. A wide range of volunteers, including Members and non-members of the Society banded together to manage the cellar, order wet goods and bar snacks for sale as well as running the bar, banking the takings and opening and closing the doors.

Attention was also focused on appointing a new tenant, which we managed to do at the end of November 2018.

Item No 9 - Enhance The Services. (Long Term).

We have outline plans to add a microbrewery and possibly other services in the outbuildings. However, these are not a priority in the first few years of operation and will require a further injection of capital to achieve.



A local businesswoman has opened a beauty salon and we hope to be able to report a flourishing business next year.

Item No 10 - Enhance The Services. (Long Term).

Similarly to item 9 above, although we have made some progress and we have allowed our tenant to convert rooms to be able to offer B&B services. However, this is still in start-up mode.

Item No 11 - Market the pub to visitors. (Medium to Long Term).

On reflection, we plan to merge this item with No 4 above.

As reported, we have already taken action to attract local clubs and groups to the area and have ambitious plans to extend this activity. With the help of a local resident the Facebook followers have been growing every year.

Conclusion

Despite some minor setbacks, we are delighted with the progress that we have made so far and proud of the positive impact that having the pub open in the village actually makes.

We are confident that we will continue to develop the pub at the centre of the community and look forward to reporting further progress next year.

The Management Committee
Avon Dassett Community Benefit Society Limited
29 February 2020