

Chairman's Report for Financial Year 2024-25

Management Summary

During the year I am pleased to report that our engagement with the Community continued. Improvements were made to the building particularly in relation to our less-able customers.

Whilst the Lease with Happy Wolf Pub Company Ltd was not due to expire until September 2025, we have already successfully renewed the Lease for a further 5 year term. This is a clear demonstration of our joint commitment to continuing the good work of the last 4 years. Our thanks to Jack McEntee and the whole team for making The Yew Tree a place that the village enjoys and where people visit from outside the immediate locality.

In January 2025, we made the final payment on the Key Fund Loan that was an element of the original purchase back in 2017.

The Operating Finances of The Society remain healthy. However, we did not pay any Share interest during the year, using that money to fund improvements to The Yew Tree.

Finally, our Society Member numbers have increased slightly during the year. We will always welcome new and additional member investments, both financially and as active volunteers.

The Yew Tree

Jack McEntee and The Happy Wolf Company Ltd continue to successfully operate The Yew Tree as our tenants. The restaurant continues to thrive and has a growing reputation that is wider than the immediate locality. The introduction of midweek "country themed evenings" proved to be popular. The Shack - serving tea, coffee, snacks and Frellie's Ice Cream remains a popular destination for walkers, cyclists and those that are in the area at the weekend.

The monthly Quiz (last Sunday evening in the month) continues to be well attended, and the Friday Breakfast Club, introduced last year, remains a popular addition to village life.

Social Impact (More than a Pub activities)

Whilst the Government "more than a pub" initiative is no longer active, we continue to use its guiding principle as the foundation to much of what we are looking to achieve. As well as hosting local groups and societies, we support local activities and events as a key component of our strategy.

The Soapbox Derby was once again a real success, attracting hundreds of visitors, competitors and spectators into the village. With the finish line being adjacent to The Yew Tree then the

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pub is naturally the centre of the activity for the day. The Society was again happy to support the event by contributing to some of the infrastructure costs of the day.

I am pleased to say that various groups continue to be based from or in The Yew Tree. The monthly Walking Group start and end their monthly walks from the pub, always finishing with a drink and pub lunch to relax after their exercise. The fortnightly Bridge Club, the monthly Book Club, a popular book exchange all continue to use the pub for their meetings. Last year saw the start of the pub acting as a distribution point for the local award winning artisan bakery in Kineton. This has grown significantly since its inception, with the pub being very busy every Saturday morning as people from the wider area call in to pick up their Order, maybe pick-up an additional treat and stop for a coffee and a chat.

The pub welcomed visitors to the village during the annual Open Gardens scheme, and a donation was then made to the National Open Gardens day and the organisers received many complimentary comments about both the Yew Tree and their staff. A clothing bank in support of the Warwickshire Air Ambulance is now located in the pub car park. This year we held a single Pop-Up Market, hosted by the Yew Tree and organised by a group of volunteers. It was very well supported, and all profits donated to local charities.

Whilst Warwickshire Rural Community Council no longer provided any grants to operate weekly Warm Hubs throughout the winter, The Society and The Yew Tree jointly provided funding for this important village event to continue. With the energy prices still being significantly higher than a few years ago, the Hub has proved to be very welcome for a number of village residents. Our thanks again to those volunteers who continued to host these sessions.

As with previous years, The Society again invited a number of village residents to join The Walking Group for their Christmas Lunch. This is always an excellent opportunity to bring some of our more isolated residents into a warm and welcoming setting.

You will see that the common theme running throughout the “more than a pub” activities is the significant commitment of volunteers. Our thanks to them.

Financial Status

We are pleased to report that the original loan used to assist with the purchase of The Yew Tree in 2017 has now been fully repaid.

This has enabled the Management Committee to raise new loans to support the work on the new toilets, the replacement of the windows, the repairs to the drainage, the refurbishment of the existing toilets and the work on the front patio. Given the extent of this work we were unable to pay interest on members' investments, but hope to be able to do so in the future.

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The Management Committee strategy going forward is to reduce the loans taken for the property improvements and to provide for future interest payments and share withdrawal repayments.

I am pleased to say that we had minimal Corporation Tax liability for this financial year, and we will continue to focus on any tax liability for The Society.

Sub-Committees

We continued to operate three sub-committees throughout the year: Finance, Yew Tree Development, and Business Development. Each has clear Terms of Reference under which they operate.

The **Yew Tree Development Group** has driven and overseen various major and minor repairs to the property. Following approval of the Planning Application for the toilet extension in the previous year I am pleased to report that the extension build was fully completed by the end of March 24 and the new facilities were in operation by the end of April. More recently, work has been completed on lifting the paving to the entrance frontage, cleaning the paviers, replacing a collapsed drain, and relaying the patio on a new sub-base. The entrance steps have been rebuilt and now comply with current standards. The result is a massive improvement in the approach to the entrance to the Yew Tree.

I am pleased to say that all these works were undertaken by local tradesmen, and our thanks to them.

The **Finance Group** continued to support the strategy of accruing funds for both interest payments for the year and share withdrawal requests. No shareholder interest was paid this year, focusing our funds on completing the building improvements. This group has a key focus on implementing the policy of a maximum investment of £5,000 per shareholder. This is not a short-term project, but I am pleased to report that some progress has been made with support from both Plunkett and our accountants.

Our original Key Fund Loan was finally repaid in January 2025. We have now secured an additional Key Fund Loan to provide funds for the work to the Yew Tree entrance (see above), replacing the remaining single-glazed windows with double-glazed units, and refurbishment of the toilets. This work is scheduled to be completed during this year.

The **Business Development Group** had no wider projects to consider, but remains in place should such opportunities arise in the future.

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Summary

I am pleased to report that the community has continued to support The Yew Tree and The Society at every opportunity, something that helps keep the pub as the “hub” for Avon Dassett.

Finally, I am indebted to all the members of the management committee who continue to devote significant amounts of time to the business of The Society.

Clive South

Chair

Avon Dassett Community Benefit Society Limited

Management Committee

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