



Introduction

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

The report covers the year from March 2022 to February 2023. Post Covid this was our first full year of uninterrupted trading and growth.

The year allowed us reset our plans and recover our stability as a Society at the centre of the village. Activities that had been suspended were able to re-establish themselves and grow support.

We are happy with the progress that we have made in delivering against our social impact objectives and confident that we have made arrangements to continue to achieve them.

Avon Dassett remains a very small village located in rural south Warwickshire, with less than 100 houses, a population of 210, of whom 166 are of voting age. Nevertheless, the creation of our Community Benefit Society, which purchased the Yew Tree pub on behalf of the community, has established a focal point for the community to socialise and the impact is immeasurable. Without the pub the village would not function, and rural and social isolation and deprivation would become a reality.

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

We were optimistic as we entered our fifth full year of owning the pub, with lockdown restrictions' behind us and a stable tenant in place running the Yew Tree. In previous years our ability to make progress against our social impact objectives had been limited but this year allowed us to make good progress.

Our finances have fully recovered and our previously established events, groups and activities returned. We paid interest on shares and prepared to invest in the premises.

Our commitment to the community, to local businesses and services continues and our tenant has benefitted from being served by locally provided goods and services.

Major events such as the Soapbox Derby, Open Gardens, The Dassett County Show and Pop-up Markets returned and were well supported, generating funds for charities and attracting hundreds of visitors into the village.

We believe that we have established The Yew Tree as the hub at the centre of our village and have put in place arrangements that will keep it that way. There is still more progress to be made, but we are confident that with appropriate funding we will achieve our objectives.



DETAILED REPORT

This section of our report details the specific progress that we made to our year-end, February 2023, 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.

During the year we were able to resume our association with local tradespeople. We had two roofs repaired, guttering replaced, and repointing undertaken using local businesses.

Our tenants also use local farms and suppliers to source products for sale in the bars and restaurant.

The Community Notice Board remains prominent in the entrance lobby at the pub, in view of all entering and leaving the pub by the front door. It publicises notices of events, advertises local clubs, societies and businesses and allows traders to display their business cards. We maintain a Social Impact Register which summarises these activities.

We were able to reinstate the Pop-Up market events on a quarterly basis where local businesses and traders sell their products. Surplus proceeds were donated to local charities.

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.

In the year we have new successes to report including:

- kitchen and bathroom installations have arisen after discussions in the pub with the principal of a local company, who is a regular customer
- brickwork and pointing contracts have arisen from contacts made
- the appointment of a local Tree Warden was facilitated through a relationship formed in the pub
- roofing contracts have been awarded to regular customers
- contracts for carpeting and flooring have arisen as a result of introductions made by customers using the pub
- logs and kindling are supplied to customers from contacts made in the pub
- Local producers of home-made desserts and ice-cream have continued to supply the pub
- Local beer and cider suppliers have secured new contracts at the pub
- A local farm shop now provides meat to the restaurant



Objective achieved. However, 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.

All of our clubs successfully restarted their activities and were able to attract new members.

The walking group had an average of 10-12 regular attendees for its monthly outings with many more during the summer months. Each walk ended with lunch at the pub and others who were unable to join the walks were encouraged to attend. This led to new relationships being developed, closer ties with other villages and a joint initiative to maintain and restore footpaths, stiles and bridges. The Sunday Morning dog walking group also continued to function, but was depleted by a resident with two dogs moving out of the village.

The Bridge Club met fortnightly with around eight people meeting for cards followed by dinner.

The Book Club resumed its monthly meetings followed by lunch.

We received grant funding in the last quarter of the year from Warwickshire Rural Community Council, in partnership with Cadent Gas which allowed us to offer Warm Hub facilities at the pub from December 2022. The funding allowed us to offer free hot drinks, biscuits, soup and a roll to guests of the warm hub on weekday lunchtimes when the kitchen was in operation. Volunteer hosts were recruited and joined a rota to ensure that there was always someone to welcome guests and to give advice and guidance about energy saving schemes and available support during the economic crisis. The funding and the scheme were scheduled to continue until 31 March 2023.

Objective achieved. All of these village groups were organised by people from outside the Management Committee and require no funding to operate.

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.



As previously reported, we abandoned the idea of morning openings some years ago, due to the costs of operating and the limited custom that was created. However, during the summer months The Shack continues to be a destination in its own right. It operates outside normal pub opening hours and continued to be very popular in serving homemade ice-cream and refreshments to locals, cyclists, walkers and other visitors.

Meetings and ad-hoc events once again started to be held at the pub. These included a Dogs for Good breakfast, pumpkin carving at Halloween, post event drinks linked to Remembrance Sunday and the Christmas Carol Service.

The renewal of the Soapbox Derby and Dassett Country Show also introduced a wide range of customers to the Yew Tree.

The pub played a major role in the weekend of activities related to the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

Objective achieved. We are pleased to report that there have been no set up or running costs so far and we don't anticipate facing any in the foreseeable future.

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 by bringing visitors to the area.

The Yew Tree is the only major meeting place in the village and it's the point to which visitors are naturally drawn. It is worth noting that

- The Shack continues to draw in customers from far and wide
- The Soapbox derby brings in hundreds of visitors to the village
- Pop-Up markets attract many from outside the village
- The pub is mentioned in the National Garden Scheme entry for the Avon Dassett Open Gardens event and this attracts visitors to the pub during the event
- Visitors to the Dassett Country Show draws visitors to the pub.
- The outdoor stage allows music events to be held which attract visitors
- Several local B&B businesses refer their clients to the pub
- Charity events such the Dogs for Good breakfast and the Christmas Carol singalong attract a wider range of people to the pub
- In summary, the community identity remains strong and appears attractive to a wide range of customers.

Objective achieved. To date there has been no cost to the Society resulting from the above activities and we do not anticipate facing any in the future.

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.

Once again, the pub is acting as the hub in the community. Events led by volunteers have returned and new groups started. In the year, there have been events held at the pub such as an Easter Egg hunt, Treasure Hunt, pumpkin carving at Halloween, the Christmas Carol Service and, the Warm Hub.

Well established groups like the Walking Group, the Strollers, the Book Club and the Bridge Club have continued to use the pub as a focal point. The Gardening Club holds its Christmas dinner at the pub as well as at least one 'social event' meeting during the year.

The tenant continues to host music nights, quiz nights, themed dinners such as Burns Night,

Objective achieved. To date there has been no cost to the Society as a result of the above activities and, when we are able to reintroduce them we do not anticipate there being any costs to us.

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.

Although some of the groups and activities that we envisaged did not materialise, we are pleased that the established groups continue to use the pub. Occasional events such as the ladies fashion show, meetings of the Northend Womens' Group have used the pub for events.

Objective achieved. These activities are organised by members outside the Management Committee and at no cost to the Society.

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

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

We have established a sub-committee to focus on the development of the premises with increased access at the top of the agenda. We have prepared a Planning Application for the refurbishment of the toilets including disabled access. Once approved we will seek tenders, raise funds and let a contract for the work.

Objective partially achieved.

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.



During the year we established a Warm Hub facility to provide some support to people during the economic crisis.

Objective partially achieved.

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

Our outline plans to add a microbrewery and possibly other services in the outbuildings remain unaddressed.

As reported above, we have established a Vision sub-committee to consider the development of the premises. Through this group we have commissioned a site and building survey to provide a baseline understanding of the potential work that needs to be undertaken before major developments are considered.

In addition, we have in place a Finance sub-committee to work with the Vision group to consider the options for financing. We have also created a business development sub-committee which has been designed to work with external organisations which may look to the Community Benefit Society for the leadership of their projects.

These three groups are now part of the management infrastructure of the Society and have enabled us to be better equipped to take forward plans and projects in a structured manner.

Objective starting to be achieved.

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

Once again, as with item 9 above, we have made limited progress on this item.

Our tenant still aims to establish a B&B business, but this will depend upon detailed plans being approved, planning permission and the Society having the funds to develop the main building.

Objective starting to be achieved

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

As previously reported this item is now merged with Item 4 above.

Conclusion

We have made good progress towards the achievement of our Social Impact objectives and have a number of established community groups, activities and events. We are confident



that these will continue, although the Management Committee will continue to monitor progress.

Our principal source of income continues to be from rent from our tenant and, after our financing costs, any surplus allows us to make progress against objectives that require financing, particularly the development of the premises.

We understand that we needed to put in place plans and arrangements to ensure that we were “more than a pub,” and believe that we have achieved this in a manner than can be sustained.