

MEETING TO DISCUSS THE FUTURE OF OUR VILLAGE PUB

Draft Minutes of a meeting of the community members of the Parish, which was held on Monday 24th June, 7.30 pm, in Alstonfield Village Hall.

Present: Chair: C Mcilroy, Minutes Secretary: M Mcilroy, Secretary: S. Luard, Business Advisors: N Pittstucker, J Lane. Publican advisor: Hannah Grimsey. Temporary Landlord: N Gentleman.

Present within the audience: 62 Alstonfield residents plus 2 residents from just outside Alstonfield Parish.

Apologies: 10 Parish members.

Aim of the Meeting: To update the community on the present situation of the George Pub and to discuss the options for the way ahead.

Asset of Community Value: An explanation of what the ACV means was given to the meeting.

Current Situation: The current marketing of the George on both the estate agents and an auctioneers website was explained. It was noted that apart from one interested party who had withdrawn his offer, that there had been no viewings of the property.

The current trading arrangement with a temporary landlord was explained as were the brewery's position in refusing to add more choice despite the landlord requesting it.

Plus the lack of security of tenure making it very difficult for the landlord to expand/develop and realise the potential of the business.

It was noted that the brewery had stated that they will keep the current arrangement until the pub is sold. Additionally it was noted that the brewery stated clearly in a correspondence that they intended to sell the property as "a pub".

Action options: 3 Options were discussed as follows:

1. The possible outcomes of doing nothing.
2. A community campaign to raise funds to purchase the pub.
3. Finding enough investors to purchase via an Enterprise Investment Scheme.

Community Pub explanation:

An explanation was given about the different models of community ownership of a pub with an emphasis on the Community owned - Professionally Run model as being the ideal model. A number of successful examples of such models were illustrated.

Enterprise Investment purchase options: This fund raising scheme and the tax advantages to individuals was explained.

Fund Raising:

The various methods used by other community pub projects for raising funds were discussed, including:

- Share Offers
- Community Grants
- Gifts
- Fund Raising Events
- Crowd Funding

Viability of the George Pub

The customer base when the business was run successfully was shown to be made up of primarily of :

- Walkers and Day visitors
- Holiday makers staying in Holiday lets, campsites etc
- Local population - A recent survey of local households who were pub goers today compared to 25 years ago showed an increase from 17 to 40

The current Landlord Nick Gentleman and Hannah Grimsey who runs the Black Lion both spoke of their belief that the George has the potential to be a successful country pub once again.

Options for the Site

Various options for the site were discussed including developing the Coach House into B&B, or fully utilising the function room or, splitting the site and selling the Coach House and some of the croft for private development.

Question, Answers & Comments:

Parwich resident asked "If an Enterprise Investment Scheme is established to own the George, to what extent is the control of the Parish - will they stifle the plan of the potential manager? If an Enterprise Investment Scheme or a Community Benefit Society have ownership of the pub, does this necessarily mean that they would be held back by the Community?"

Answer: A survey would need to be completed within the parish to ask people what is desired and this survey results would then be presented to the community and from this the type of establishment desired would be required of any potential manager. The vision would be that for the operation to work well it would need to meet both the needs and desires of the community and the potential manager...

Hannah, owner and manager from the Black Lion in Butterton, commented that in her experience as a pub operator it is exciting to work with the community.

Audience member suggested that if the pub and the adjacent coach house building were to be split, then the coach house building could potentially be used to provide banking facilities for the parish and surrounding communities.

Other uses for the Coach house would be to keep it within the ownership of the pub building to provide holiday accommodation or b&b.

Further ideas commented on were to sell off the coach house, so supplying financing for the development and maintenance of the pub. Also discussed was the possibility of selling off parcels of the croft land behind the George to the residences backing on to it, giving each a section of private garden. Or to keep the land within the ownership of the George and possibly develop this as a beer garden or camping area.

Question by audience member: please explain further reference Community buyout?
Answered by John Lane & Charlie Mcilroy: The money put in can provide a working capital to purchase the property and provide a working capital. The rent charged to a landlord would provide interest payments to share holders after necessary costs had been deducted.

Question from J Tomlinson, "If we say we'll go for it and propose to buy the George, does Marstons brewery ask for immediate evidence of funds etc?"

Reply from C Mcilroy: No. We'd have to initially form a Community Benefit Society, make clear our intention to raise funds and make an offer. In the meantime we would have the permitted time under an ACV regulation to raise the required funds to make an offer.

Question from audience member, "Where do the profits go?"

Reply from Hannah Grimsey: "This depends on whether there's a profit share agreement with the new landlord. So a close working relationship between landlord and Community representative group is extremely important.

C Mcilroy commented "Community owned/professionally run". The Landlord would answer to one point of contact - otherwise the process cannot run smoothly.

Comment from S Hayes: "It is invaluable to me as a local village resident that i have a friendly welcoming pub within walking distance that i don't need to drive to".

C Mcilroy commented that research shows, having a good community pub can increase local property valuation prices by approx 7%.

Question from Simon Duquenois: "How is ongoing maintenance of the pub paid for?"

Answer: It is paid for from income of the pub.

Sue Fowler commented that we are a fairly small community so we need as much help and support from everyone and from as many other people as possible outside of the Parish to help with securing the pub's future.

Comment from Audience Member: "The Government departments can be very slow in replying and acting upon applications for grants/funding for Community Schemes such as these. We are under a deadline that our offer needs to be made by November 20th. Is this a viable plan that we feel we can execute?"

Satish Luard (treasurer) and replied: In his experience in this area, he has found this not to be the case. That the turnaround for applications can be actioned upon within a 3-4 week period so in his opinion the time span we have can be worked within.

Charlie Mcilroy stated that whilst he is very passionate about continuing to help and drive this venture forward, he has already put in a lot of work towards it. He said that he does not feel qualified enough to take this challenge to the next stage on his own and ideally would prefer to step to one side as the main person in the steering seat. He would really appreciate all offers of help and support and expertise that is available within the community. Anyone is very welcome to approach him directly if they feel they could help.

There were some comments/discussion on fundraising opportunity ideas. It was decided that this area of discussion can be looked at in more detail on a future occasion as the priority for now is to form the formal Community Benefit Society and meet our initial deadline for July 2nd, followed then by the next deadline of November 20th.

Pledges in Confidence:

During the question and answer session those in attendance were asked to write down on a slip of paper an amount that they realistically would be prepared to invest either in the purchase of shares or in an Enterprise Investment Scheme.

The totals indicated from 42 slips were:

Community Benefit Shares; £234,000

EIS: £265,000

For the former were offerings as follows.

£20K x 4

£10K x 7

£5K x 1

£4K x 1

£3K x 1

£2.5K x 1

£2K x 6

£1.5K x 1

£1K x 3

£500 x 3

£250 x 3

£100 x 1

£50 x 1

For an EIS

£100K x 2

£50K x 2

£20K x 1

£10K x 2

Decision:

The initial pledges indicated a high level of support for a community buyout. It was suggested that the community had nothing to lose by putting in an offer of declaration to buy the pub.

A vote in favour of starting the process for the community to purchase The George pub was proposed by Nick Pitts-Tucker and seconded by Jon Lane which resulted in the following:

61 Voted in favour of proceeding with the motion

1 abstained

No votes against.

Election of Directors to form the “George at Alstonfield Community Benefit Company”.

Directors proposed 4

agreed: C Mcilroy - Chair,

S Luard - Secretary,

N Pittstucker - Business Planner/Advisor,

J Lane - Treasurer.

Sue Fowler nominated Nick Pittstucker to be Business Planner/Business Advisor, seconded by John Lane.

Carrie Ross nominated Jon Lane to be Treasurer, seconded by Eric Watterson.

Charlie Mcilroy proposed Satish Luard to be Secretary, seconded by Marie Mcilroy.

John Lane proposed Charlie Mcilroy to be Chair, seconded by Carrie Ross.

Date of next meeting: TBC

The meeting was declared closed at 2105.

These Minutes remain draft until ratified after having been circulated within the Community Benefit Company