



THE GEORGE
ALSTONEFIELD

HELP SAVE OUR
VILLAGE PUB

www.thegeorgealstonefield.co.uk

Save the George Community Society

Community meeting minutes: 8th August 2024

1. Progress to date

At the first community meeting on 24 June 2024, the decision to bid and appoint a team to prepare and manage the purchase on behalf of the community was supported unanimously. Since then, the appointed team have:

- Issued the notice of intent (as per the rights under the Asset of Community Value) to submit a bid to Marstons, resulting in Staffordshire County Council placing a moratorium on the sale of the George to any party other than the community until 23 Nov.
- Created a 'Save the George' webpage, which will be the main source of information to the community, including a FAQs section.
- Legally established the Community Benefit Society – a special purpose limited company designed for owning and managing community schemes.
- Procured an appraisal of the pub business from Pinders Consultancy.
- Applied for a company bank account with the Cooperative Bank.
- Had an informal survey to identify any major structural issues.
- Expanded the list of those supporting the efforts as per the table below:

Position	Holder
Management Committee	
Chair	Charlie McIlroy
Vice Chair	Nick Pitts-Tucker

Treasurer	Jon Lane
Treasurer designate	Martin Jinks
Company Secretary	Satish Luhar
Fundraising	
Major events	Mandy Domville
Raffle	Emily Cooke
Grants	Nick Simms
In-pub donations	Kevin Stockton
Comms & branding	
Core script	Sue Lake
Branding	Rob Woods
Website management	Thea Wilby
Post delivery and publicity distribution	
Delivery team	Marian Beloe
	Kirsty Lipp
	Carrie Ross
	Helen Watterson
	Nicola Wilby

2. Pinders Consultancy appraisal and valuation

The main points of the valuation report were expressed at the meeting. Given the commercial sensitivity of the valuation and its role in the negotiations with Marstons Brewery, the details of the valuation have not been included within these minutes.

The valuation report is available to Parishioners only, upon request to the Management Committee.

3. Outline business plan and fundraising plans

Based on the team's knowledge of The George and its assets, discussions with the current interim landlord, review of the Business Plan for the Black Horse pub in Grimston, and information and thoughts from other known pubs that have successfully achieved community buy-outs, an estimated total capital requirement (including purchase costs and

working capital) for the pub has been reached. We do not intend to publish that figure in the public domain due to business in confidence reasons.

The Coach House value is still to be assessed, but initial views suggest that despite its size, it adds little to the business' valuation in terms of purchase price (up to £100,000) and has historically been poorly utilised. Volunteers to consider the options for the Coach House are needed (please speak to a member of the Management Committee).

The current plans for achieving the capital funding requirements are:

- 17% achieved through a target 1,600 members.
- 68% through personal loans
- 4% through the online auction/raffle
- 4% through crowdfunding
- 4% in donations in the pub
- 3% provided by successful grant applications (excluding the Community Ownership Fund which remains closed at present)

The above funding plans are targets and elements may change as information matures.

Membership and members loans

Everyone will soon be offered the opportunity to purchase a stake in the Community Benefit Society through a £50 share purchase per person. Buying shares now gives the community a say in how we purchase and eventually operate The George, as well as showing the strength of sentiment and seriousness to Marstons Brewery. The share purchase is the first thing being asked for, and this is something that requires payment now as soon as shares are offered and purchased.

Members will also be asked to make non-legally binding confidential loan commitments. These are the larger sums of money that will be used to purchase the pub and would only be needed and called upon if the Society is successful in purchasing The George. Loans may be interest bearing (but not guaranteed) and all should be aware that their money is at risk. Whilst commitments are not legally binding, everyone is asked to provide a moral commitment, as these loans are integral to the pub purchase cost calculations.

This two-step approach of share offering followed by members' loans is considered to provide the better and easier method to help increase the chances and speed at which members receive their lump sum loans back after the pub is owned and operating under the Society. A formal covering letter, membership form, and loan pledge letter will be posted to people's homes in the next week.

Fundraising

There has been a very positive start to fundraising already, with a stall arranged at the Manifold Agricultural Show and prize gathering for the online auction/raffle underway (more prizes are required).

However, we have ambitious targets and the more support and help available the better. Those who can support, in any capacity, is urged to get in touch with a member of the Management Committee.

4. AOB

Following share and membership issue, the Society will seek to begin negotiations with Marstons. All the community are requested to spread the communities aims and ambitions as wide as possible to increase support and fundraising contributions.

Shares and members loans

Can anyone purchase shares at any time?

Yes. However, after the initial share offering the Management Committee may choose to utilise share purchase windows to manage the administration involved.

When can you transfer shares?

Only in the instances of death and bankruptcy of the shareholder. In this instance they would transfer to the next of kin/named beneficiary in the Will.

Can shares be sold?

Shares can only be sold back to the Society. The re-purchase of shares by the society is subject to affordability which is judged by the Management Committee at the time, in-line with the Society's rules.

Where did 1,600 members/shares estimate come from?

This target is an ambitious target, and is focussed on showing strong will and desire, as well as meeting the income requirements. The actual number of shareholders will be subject to share purchases.

Are share purchases or loans eligible for tax relief under the EIS or SEIS schemes?

Unfortunately, under HMRC rules, purchasing shares or providing loans to the Community Benefit Society is not eligible for EIS or SEIS tax relief.

Will we see the terms of members' loans before the informal pledge request?

The loan terms are being prepared but will not be ready for the informal pledges. However, loan terms and conditions must by law be issued before the actual loans are given so that investors are clear what they are signing up to, so members will have an opportunity to see and consider loan terms and conditions before the formal loan is made.

Why have we chosen to only issue one share and then provide members loans (rather than simply buying shares)?

This approach has the following benefits:

- It allows the CBS to pay interest to members (subject to affordability)
- Members loans are higher up the hierarchy for repayment to members than shares are.
- People do not have to part with large sums of money unless the pub purchase is actually agreed.

This approach makes no difference to members voting rights (one member, one vote).

Is the max interest payment on top of the loan amount or repayment of the loan?

Interest payments are separate and in addition to repayment of the capital itself.

How much notice would members be given to handover the load pledges when the purchase is agreed?

Funds are likely to be required within 30 days from the date of the purchase being agreed.

How are you planning to pay back the members loans, given the quantum of the loans?

The tenant or manager would be paying a rent to the CBS to operate the pub (and potentially the Coach House). Subject to repayment of any commercial loans, repairs and maintenance to the buildings, a healthy pot of cash reserves, and an operating profit, members loans would be repaid through the CBS's profit over a number of years.

What happens if someone who has leant the CBS money passes away?

This will be outlined in the terms and conditions of the loan, but the initial view is that the debt owed by the CBS would then be transferred to whomever is next of kin/named in the Will. Gifting loans upon death is also an option.

Will newcomers to the community at a later date still be allowed to purchase shares?

Yes (subject to management committee approval)

Can the covering letter and membership form be available centrally for people to print and share?

Both, along with other key documents that support the fundraising and membership, will be available to download on the webpage.

The Society and its management

What governs the Society's conduct?

The Society has a adopted tried and tested Model Rules which govern its management and practices. Changes to these Rules are only through Members' agreement. The Rules are available on the webpage.

Has there been a comparison of banks to use for the CBS's bank account?

A brief review of options of suitable options was undertaken. Main high street banks were considered less appropriate and specialist banks that deal with CBS accounts were decided favourable. The Co-op bank was chosen as the preferred provider based on the fact it is stable and deals with CBS accounts regularly.

Will the Co-op's purchase by Coventry building society have an impact on the bank and the CO-op banks operation?

The initial view is there will be no impact on the Society or its bank account (once created). However, further investigation will be undertaken to assess any potential impact.

The George building

What building works are needed to the pub?

The unofficial opinion of a local builder was that whilst the building was in need of some modernisation and insulation, the structure looks sound. However, should a purchase be agreed a formal buildings survey would be procured to fully assess the condition. Any major issues would then affect the purchase price offer.

What are the plans for the Croft?

The Croft, as with everything within the red line boundary of the pub grounds, is Grade II listed. Options for its medium and long-term use have yet to be developed, and would likely be developed following an agreed purchase price for the pub.

Pub management plans

Is tenancy (rather than village ran) the only option for operating the pub?

No. However, the vast majority of successful community owned pubs are those run by professional landlords with experience. The Society are still the owners of the pub and would receive income from it.

If there is a tenant is put in, do the community have a say in how the pub should be run?

Yes. We would set the overall vision and seek a tenant that aligns with the communities aims, shared through the tenancy agreement. It would then be for the tenant to enact this vision, and for the Management Committee to ensure the Landlord acts in-line with the vision.

How do we stop cannibalising village hall use and income?

We believe the two are different types of business – with the village hall primarily a pre-booking venue and the pub open to walk-ins without pre-booking.