

# 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Members' Meeting – 20<sup>th</sup> May 2018

## Chair's Report

### Introduction

On behalf of the Management Committee (the 'Committee') it is with great pleasure that I present the first Annual Report of Norton Lindsey Community Pub Ltd ('NLCP') to you, the Members, who made the purchase of The New Inn possible.

This is a report of the activities of NLCP Ltd over the first 17 months of its life, from September 2016 when the Community Benefit Society was legally registered until its first financial year-end in February 2018. However, the story of the revival of The New Inn begins 6 months before this period when a few villagers got together to talk about the community buying the pub, so this report will therefore also say a little about those formative months.

After being put up for sale by Enterprise Inns in June 2016, The New Inn closed its doors at the beginning of August as the final tenant landlord called time on the pub. Interest from residential property developers galvanised the village to take matters into their own hands and the Salvation Squad was formed.

Foresight had seen the pub listed as an Asset of Community Value in 2013 which enabled the community to trigger a 6-month moratorium on the sale of the site. During this period, which would end on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2016, the community had the opportunity to submit a bid to purchase the pub. The strategy of the Salvation Squad however was not just to submit a bid for The New Inn by that deadline but to actually complete the acquisition! This very tight timescale drove a frantic programme that included setting up our Community Benefit Society; doing due diligence and negotiating a purchase price; preparing a Business Plan and Share Offer; raising funds from the community; applying for grants; publicising our plight and marketing our vision; taking advice from industry experts and learning from other community pubs.

The hard work of the Salvation Squad and the fabulous response from both the community and support organisations saw us succeed in completing the acquisition of The New Inn on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2016, just 4 days after the moratorium expiry.

With a vision for how we wanted the pub to look, enough money to carry out some refurbishment, and the support of many willing and capable volunteers, we set about preparing the pub and the garden for our grand reopening. The New Inn, now rejuvenated, opened for business as Warwickshire's first community pub on the 13<sup>th</sup> April 2017.

### Review of the year

#### Staffing

The appointment of our first Manager, Steve Hay, after a thorough selection process was greeted with some relief by the Committee given the very scarce availability of suitably qualified and appropriate applicants in the market. Steve provided some useful support during the preparation for reopening phase but left us not long after we opened. After an anxious period of waiting we were very lucky to find our current Manager, Danny Storer, who took the reins as Interim Manager at the end of June 2017 and started building our product offering, customer service and our reputation. After the successful interim period, Danny accepted the role of

permanent Manager in September and since then his enthusiasm, can-do attitude and desire for success has positioned The New Inn as a pleasurable and exciting place to visit for both villagers and visitors alike.

The appointment of Nick Barker as our Chef in March 2017, shortly before we opened, was also greeted with relief by the Committee given the even scarcer availability of suitably qualified and appropriate applicants in the market. Right from the word go, Nick has been clear to show that our food offering is his responsibility. The fact that he lives in the village brings added connectivity with the community.

Whilst Danny and Nick are the core team, the pub could not operate without additional casual labour and we have employed a number of individuals to support the operational and customer service needs of the business. Jenny Bendall fulfils the role of Assistant to Committee, providing administrative support for the Committee meetings. To ensure we maintain high standards of cleanliness in the customer areas, including the toilets, the Committee has recently recruited a regular cleaner, rather than using the bar staff. Our commitment to provide local employment opportunities has been delivered by employing an average of six people during the year.

Matching staff rotas to the anticipated busy periods for food and drink has proved to be rather trickier than expected and as a consequence the Committee has had to make some difficult decisions on staffing levels. The opportunity to ease the pressure on our staff costs by using volunteers is an area that will be considered during the upcoming year.

Danny's passion for delivering a range of high quality cask ales, many of them local, has done much to promote The New Inn's reputation as a real ale pub and Nick's passion for providing quality food has helped us maintain good momentum in establishing ourselves in the very competitive local food market.

I would like to thank all members of staff for their valued contribution to the successful running of The New Inn.

### Food & Drink

Our range of drinks and food offering is pretty extensive for a small pub and Danny and Nick have worked very hard to provide something for everyone. They are of course happy to listen to suggestions for new products and, where possible, also meet these requests.

We have been very successful in positioning ourselves as a real ale pub, having up to four ales available at a time, and the team have worked hard to achieve the Cask Marque and LocAle awards.

Cask Marque is aimed at beer quality and ensures that standards are achieved and maintained, and once awarded the pub appears on the CaskFinder App for those on the 'World's Biggest Ale Trail' to visit. LocAle is awarded by CAMRA (the Campaign for Real Ale) and is aimed at promoting pubs that consistently sell at least one locally brewed real ale (within 25 miles of the brewery). Supporting local breweries that provide local employment and reduce 'beer miles' from brewery to pub links well with The New Inn's sustainability and environmental ethos. A listing in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide is still a key objective for the future.

The Gin Bar has tapped into the gin revolution and our offering of over 30 varied and interesting gins, paired with the full range of high quality Fever-Tree tonics, and matched with appropriate garnishes, has delighted existing G&T fans whilst inspiring a new generation of gin drinkers.

I'm pleased that the investment in the refurbishment of our kitchen, plus the robust operational controls we have in place, have enabled us to achieve the top food hygiene rating of '5', which means 'very good'. Our vision was to provide fresh and well-cooked food using, where possible, locally sourced produce and I believe we've been pretty successful in achieving that. The interesting and eclectic daily menu has been

supplemented, by popular demand, with the return of Fish & Chip Friday, made possible by the purchase of a dedicated fryer unit. In addition, outdoor barbecues and several themed nights e.g. Mexican, Steak night, tapas... (and with a Caribbean evening in planning) have added variety and sparked interest.

Provision of a café, which would widen the range of people who come into The New Inn, has not worked anything like as well as the Committee had hoped and therefore after Christmas we took the disappointing, but necessary, step of substantially reducing the hours it operates in order to reduce staff costs. The reasons for the café's failure to entice the community are not fully clear to us, so we will be soliciting your views on this question in due course, however we do recognise that we did not market the café well enough. The café remains an area where staffing with volunteers could enable us to build the service without adding to our already tight labour costs.

## Events

Important to both our financial performance and our community engagement are the events that we organise at The New Inn. Some good examples of what we have offered during the last year are:

- \* Christmas – traditional Christmas party menu and hosting of the 'village street parties'
- \* BeerFest – held in June 2017, the range of 15 real ales (and 5 ciders), the marquee set-up and the music were all excellent, it was a terrible shame that the weather didn't match it.
- \* Burns night – haggis, neeps and tatties with a real piper!
- \* Open Mic nights – these increasingly popular evenings showcase talented musicians and vocalists, albeit mostly from outside the local community so don't hide your light under a bushel, have a go!
- \* Quiz nights – a regular favourite on a Sunday night for not-too-serious quizzers.
- \* Classic Car and Motorcycle Show – held in early May 2018 as The New Inn's 'taster' for the Stratford Festival of Motoring. A very good turnout of vehicles, the majority of which were owned by villagers.
- \* Lions Rugby 2017 Tour – early morning TV sessions with bacon butties were well supported.

Apart from providing opportunities for the local community to meet at The New Inn, the above and other events encourage new visitors into the pub, some of whom we hope will become regulars.

## Property

Our base position in the event that only the minimum shareholder funding was achieved was to carry out just the essential maintenance works and give the pub a lick of paint. With your incredible support we achieved a higher level of funding than the minimum target which enabled the Committee to utilise these funds to provide a more attractive and functional pub environment.

During the pre-opening phase from December 2016 until April 2017, a number of significant works were completed and important investments made. These included a major refurbishment of the bar area and toilets, repairs to the main roof and cellar roof, updating the electrical system, new cellar equipment, full kitchen refit, outside painting, refurbishment of the upstairs flat. The works were undertaken before reopening the pub to improve customer facilities and to help ensure that future maintenance costs for the property would be reduced.

We now have a very well presented and attractive pub and gardens for us all to enjoy, and which I am sure adds to our appeal as a destination, particularly for visitors.

### Financial performance

The majority of community pubs using the 'employer' model have not made a profit in their first year and, whilst it is a big disappointment to the Committee, our target to make a modest bottom line profit was not achieved, the reasons for which are laid out in the Finance Report. What is clear is that this first year has been one of great learning for everybody. Looking to our second year of trading, the Committee are confident that our budget, which shows an improved and positive bottom line profit, is both realistic and achievable. Your use of the pub is of course key to a successful financial performance, so we look forward to your continued support in this area.

### Community Engagement

Community involvement is key part of what we do at The New Inn since it demonstrates that we are part of the wider community and more than just a pub. As part of our vision to create a community hub we seek to engage with all members of the community including parents and their children, the elderly, the lonely and socially isolated. To encourage this engagement a number of facilities and events have been established:

- \* Enchanted Garden - which provides a safe and fun environment for children to play and learn was created by volunteers. Storytelling events for young children have been successfully held in this garden.
- \* Little Libraries - one for adults and the other for children, have been provided to encourage reading through book swapping.
- \* Bridge club – a teacher-led Monday night club for beginners (at present).
- \* 'Sniffers' Carols – this annual charitable event run by the village's 'Stilton Sniffers' club has now returned to The New Inn.
- \* 'Nurturing Nature @ The New Inn' – a series of events for children and parents held primarily in the enchanted garden including building bug hotels, planting sunflower seeds and a RSPB-led dawn chorus walk.
- \* OAP lunches - we offer a discounted menu at lunchtimes Tuesday - Friday, which continues to be well supported.
- \* Village WI – Tuesday morning meet for coffee and doughnuts.
- \* Walking groups from the local and wider community are now regular visitors at The New Inn. This is an area of our custom that we intend to develop further in the future with a new walking guide in preparation. In addition, cyclists and more recently some motorcycle clubs are also starting to be more frequent visitors.

Our commitment to the local economy is demonstrated by our philosophy of sourcing locally where we can. Current key local suppliers include Inn Express (drinks), S-O-A Brewery (real ale), Hilliers (butchers), Sweet & Tasty (cakes).

To give something back to the community, the Committee agreed that each year The New Inn should support a local charity by raising funds whenever suitable opportunities arise. For our first year the charity chosen was Myton Hospice, a very important terminal care facility of which many shareholders will be aware, and we're

happy that we've been able to raise £130 for them this year.

In addition, we have also supported fundraising activities for other charities including the local Lions Club Easter egg raffle and a private event that raised £450 for The Brain Tumour Charity.

## Volunteers

After the purchase of The New Inn was completed in December 2016, a few celebratory volunteer-led bar sessions saw a smile brought to everyone's faces in the run up to Christmas. This was highly successful, great fun, and even generated a very welcome small profit!

During the pre-opening refurbishment phase, dozens of volunteers from the community undertook repairs, redecoration and cleaning of the building, extensive garden improvement, environmental and safety work, in order to get the pub ready for business.

Since re-opening, volunteers have continued to support The New Inn in many and varied ways. Apart from the Committee, who have worked tirelessly on a range of matters, significant effort has been put into the maintenance and development of the garden area, as well as help to keep on top of other property issues. Of particular success is the effort that has been put into developing the Enchanted Garden, and the series of children's events that have been organised in it. This facility is probably unique within a pub environment and will undoubtedly act as a draw for families both locally and from further afield. Also of great significance was the considerable effort put into obtaining planning permission for the shop, which was much more onerous than was originally envisaged.

The work of volunteers is much appreciated by customers, staff, and the Committee, with its purpose being to involve the community in the business and create a more engaged community pub. I have purposely not mentioned volunteers by name in the certainty that I would miss someone out. The lack of a mention by name in no way reflects the importance and value of your contribution. The Committee's sincere thanks go out to all those who contributed.

The Committee recognises that volunteering has not been as extensive or well co-ordinated as it could have been and hope to address this over the coming year. If you would like to be a volunteer e.g. to help in the café, work behind the bar, help with maintenance, help with marketing, ... please email [volunteer@nlcp.ltd](mailto:volunteer@nlcp.ltd)

## Marketing

Social media is a crucial marketing tool in today's digital world and the Committee aims to provide a presence on all the main digital platforms, ensuring engagement with as many people as possible. Our aim is to promote The New Inn and its events in a timely and enticing way that will encourage existing and potential customers to visit the pub.

Facebook, Twitter, and email are used to proactively publicise the pub and our events, a task which takes considerable and continuous effort. We would be delighted to hear from any volunteers who would be prepared to help with this task. Please send an email to [volunteer@nlcp.ltd](mailto:volunteer@nlcp.ltd)

A professional website was established to provide a 'shop window' for The New Inn and it has two key functions, one to provide information to existing customers on menus, events..., and the other to showcase our message and offering to potential customers who come across The New Inn either through recommendation e.g. word-of-mouth, TripAdvisor, ... or by chance.

We have also carried out additional publicity and advertising using the 'traditional' channels such as newspapers, the Parish Magazine, CAMRA periodicals, leaflet drops, business cards, ... to get our message out as widely as possible.

It is clear to the Committee that our marketing and customer engagement efforts could be strengthened, and this will therefore be a focus area during the coming months.

### Grant Funding

In November 2016, NLCP was awarded £50,000 of grant funding (matched with a £50,000 loan) from the 'More than a Pub' programme (managed by the Plunkett Foundation and funded by the Department of Communities & Local Government, Power to Change, and Cooperative and Community Finance) to support the acquisition of The New Inn and the subsequent provision of a range of amenities and services over and above those usual in a pub, as we described in our business plan.

The progress against the key items in our application is as follows:

- \* Café – unfortunately this got off to a faltering start and has had to be pared back. A relaunch may be undertaken once a robust operational and marketing plan has been established.
- \* Shop – our original plan was to use the 'garage' of The New Inn as a shop to sell basic items. However, after a review of the condition of the building it became clear that this was not viable and a plan to create a bespoke shop facility was drawn up.  
In March 2017, NLCP was awarded £38,500 of grant funding from WDC to fund the establishment of a shop to support our community hub vision for The New Inn and in June 2017, an additional 'top up' grant of £3,000 was awarded by Pub Is The Hub (PITH) for the shop project.  
Despite a number of obstacles to progress, most notably obtaining planning approval and negotiating a satisfactory agreement on the terms of the Warwick District Council (WDC) grant, we are now getting closer to a green light for the project. On the first point we have received planning permission and on the second point we are hopefully now in the final stages of agreeing the terms of the grant. Once the grant agreement is signed we can proceed to the next stage of finalising our agreement with Snitterfield Stores and refreshing our quotations for the project, before getting the green light from WDC to commence expenditure.  
Our target is to have the shop up and running before the end of 2018, but to successfully deliver this project we will need volunteers (with sufficient time during the day) to manage the contractors and project timing etc. If you feel you can help please email [volunteer@nlcp.ltd](mailto:volunteer@nlcp.ltd)
- \* Community engagement – whilst not all our ideas have been put into place e.g. Barclays Bank Digital Eagles 'Tea & Teach' scheme, Alzheimer's Society 'memory café', many have been established e.g. children's play area, book exchange, OAP lunches.
- \* Parcel and dry-cleaning drop-off & pick-up – offering these services should be possible once the shop is open.

### Other matters

NLCP received considerable support from the Plunkett Foundation and our success has been applauded by them. To inspire other community pub ventures, Plunkett asked your Chair to speak at the More Than a Pub (MTAP) annual conference in May 2017 and to host a visit at The New Inn in October 2017, both of which provided some modest income to the pub. In addition, the pub also hosted a MTAP Board meeting and a visit from Lord Gardener of Kimble, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Rural Affairs. On both occasions our 'journey' was presented to an interested and absorbed audience.

In terms of the wider co-operative community, we continue to learn from other community ventures and in particular we have built a helpful relationship with the Anglers Rest in Derbyshire



## Governance

### Management Committee

The Management Committee of NLCP is responsible for enacting the Rules on which our Community Benefit Society was established and has been structured to ensure that this responsibility is properly discharged.

Of the seven members of the Salvation Squad that would transfer to being the first Management Committee under the Start-up Provisions within our Rules, one of those members, Lucy Boyes, resigned before that transition. My sincere thanks go to Lucy for all her enthusiasm, creativity, and effort during the critical acquisition phase of our journey. Four additional persons were co-opted onto the Management Committee during 2017 (Mike Killeen, Orlando Elmhirst, Faz Subhani and Mark Goossens).

In line with our Rules, all six 'original' members of the Management Committee (Alex Mellon, Amy Birch, Greg Judd, Phil London, Zanna Patchett and myself) plus the four co-opted members named above will all retire at the conclusion of this first Annual Members' Meeting (AMM).

Amy Birch, Greg Judd, Phil London, Zanna Patchett and myself have all put ourselves forward for election at this AMM. Alex Mellon has decided not to stand for election. My utmost thanks go to Alex for taking up the challenge of being the Committee member responsible for overseeing Operations, a hugely demanding task which he has carried out with great thoroughness, patience, and professionalism. I would also like to thank the four co-opted members of the Committee who brought specific, and much needed, skills to the team and who gave so generously of their time and passion.

In addition to the above five 'original' members of the Management Committee offering themselves for election, three further individuals have offered themselves for election at this AMM (Hugh Gilmore, Mike Killeen and Quentin Hayes). Since the number of nominations is below the maximum number of 12 Management Committee members, all 8 nominees will be duly elected at this AMM and will form the new Management Committee with effect from the conclusion of this AMM.

We believe that to be inclusive, diverse, and open minded, the Management Committee must bring in fresh ideas and views, so the decision by other shareholders to stand for election is warmly appreciated. For a more effective team structure we aim for a committee of eight, including a range of relevant skills (including legal, finance, property, marketing, operations) with further individuals co-opted for specific tasks or responsibilities as required.

To facilitate succession planning and to comply with the Society's Rules members will be elected to the Committee for one, two or three years based on the order of preference of votes cast. At the first meeting of the new Management Committee, the Committee will select four officers, namely Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer.

I feel privileged to have been Chair of the Salvation Squad and the initial Management Committee for almost two years, but I now feel it is time to pass the baton to someone else, somebody who will bring a fresh perspective and energy to the role. I will therefore not put myself forward for the position of Chair at the first meeting of the new Management Committee, however I will of course provide my full support to the new incumbent both during the important transition phase and beyond.

### GDPR

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is a law on data protection and privacy for all individuals that will apply from 25<sup>th</sup> May 2018, replacing the Data Protection Act (DPA). NLCP and The New Inn are currently taking steps to ensure that we will become, and remain, compliant with this new law.

## Membership Strategy

NLCP has 230 members covering a wide geographical base. The majority are understandably from the local area, but many are from further afield across the UK. We're also delighted to have a number of International members from Europe and North America.

During the coming year the Committee will establish a Membership Strategy which will address the Society's approach to supporting and developing our membership such that members remain at the heart of our ethos.

## What next?

The next 12 months will see a particular focus on some key issues: robust delivery of the 2018/19 budget, establishing the shop, strengthening our marketing, relaunching the café, and using volunteers more widely.

There is also something novel in the pipeline.... a funky outside bar for the garden! You will surely have noticed the horse box at the edge of the car park which is in a state of reincarnation as the 'Gin Tin' (working title). Danny's brainchild, the bar will be fitted-out to serve keg lager, gin, +??... and will even have a hand pull to serve real ale!

We also plan to carry out a new survey to get feedback on what members want from their community pub/hub so we can start building a strategic plan.

## Final words

As members of NLCP we should all be very proud of what we have achieved. We have been part of a community pub revolution, fighting back against the tide of pub closures and establishing a welcoming and thriving pub that has put life back into the community.

It has been a huge year of learning, and whilst our financial performance has not been as strong as we had hoped, we have so much to celebrate on the positive side.

The pub is definitely back in business but we now need to work on developing it to be the community hub we envisaged, which not only makes social sense but also financial sense.

You may remember we left you with some 'final thoughts' on the last page of our Business Plan back in October 2016, and I believe they are as pertinent now as they were then.

***When the members of a community come together for a common cause, without purely financial or commercial motives, when they co-operate and collaborate to save or preserve something that is important and valuable to their community, they can unlock something very powerful.***

Please continue to support this wonderful facility that we have created so that we can go from strength to strength over the next 12 months.

*Rob Brook*

Chair of NLCP Limited