



6 March 2012

Off to a great start in Lincolnshire

Seventeen pubs expressed their interest in diversification schemes at the Lincolnshire launch of Local Community Services Champions this week.

Launching the initiative to a meeting of over 60 people at the Lincolnshire County Showground, the scheme is being backed by Lincolnshire County Council, Community Lincs, Age UK Lincoln and the Big Lottery Fund.

Councillor Sue Woolley, Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community for Lincolnshire County Council welcomed everyone to the meeting and said: "Pubs are often the last community service left in a village. In looking at ways to keep a community together we have to do things differently and very often pubs can be part of that solution."

Chief Executive of Community Lincs, Fiona White then outlined the priorities that they have identified for rural Lincolnshire that pubs and good licensees could address when looking to diversify their businesses: Access to services such as cash facilities, providing rural employment, promoting tourism and supporting older, more vulnerable residents were just some areas of need.

John and Lesley Berry, who run the Cholmeley Arms in Burton-le-Coggles explained how they re-opened the pub which had been closed for some time and then set up a butchers and farm shop in an barn behind their pub. 18 months later they employ 15 local people and buy from nine local suppliers with bookings for pub meals now three weeks in advance. Lesley said: "We wouldn't have had the confidence to go ahead without Pub is The Hub. They advised us and helped us to complete the application forms for the funding we received from the Rural Gain Grant."

At The Prussian Queen in Saltfleetby, landlord, Christopher Appleby opened a shop inside his pub in 2007 after the village shop closed down a few months earlier. Following some advice from Pub is The Hub, the shop is set up so that he and his barstaff can serve customers in the pub and the shop at the same time and he added: "Customers often have a quick drink when they pop in for a pint of milk!"

John Longden, Chief Executive from Pub is The Hub added: "We've had a super reaction today from licensees who attended with at least 17 pubs coming forward to say they are interested. We'd still love to speak to any other good licensees in Lincolnshire who are considering the option of diversification – and even those who have never thought of it before. We are ideally placed to advise on ideas, funding and carrying what we aim to be around 30 projects through to completion.

"We are very grateful to the County Council, Community Lincs and the Big Lottery for their continuing support."

Anyone who would like to know more about the scheme in Lincolnshire can go to www.communitychampions.org.uk or telephone **01423 546165** for more information.

