

THE PUNCH BOWL, BATTISFORD, STOWMARKET, SUFFOLK, IP14 2LQ - COMMUNITY PUB



BACKGROUND

The Punch Bowl Inn serves the village and outlying settlements of around 1,000 residents. In 2009 it closed, and the Battisford Parish Plan demonstrated interest in its re-opening, together with the provision of a shop.

Working with the Parish Council, a small working party researched the possibility of re-opening the pub, and in 2010 a plan was submitted to the Regulator of Community Interest Companies, which set out the intentions of the project and demonstrated the benefits and opportunities sought for the local community.

Long negotiations took place with the owner, and after a concerted effort a lease was secured on the property and the pub re-opened in May 2011 as the Battisford Punch Bowl Community Inn. It is intended that the pub is run by the Community, for the Community, and profits will be ploughed back, for the benefit of the community. No part of the profits can be taken by the Directors of the Company, or anyone else in the community, and the conditions of the lease give flexibility about future developments and could possibly provide the basis for the provision of other retail services, such as a shop.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Punchbowl was in a reasonable state of repair but needed a considerable facelift and internal re-think as to how the pub would operate. Food was to be an important part of the operation and internal alterations were carried out. This has linked the two rooms while at the same time creating a separate dining area as well as a newly located bar with a direct link to the upgraded kitchen. In addition, the local Gardening Club have cleared and re-planted the area to the rear of the pub, which now includes an outside drinking patio, lawn area and planted borders. Sixty members of the local community volunteered to carry out the works on the pub, and their enthusiasm has been maintained. The Committee also made the important decision to employ an experienced licensee/manager, who now lives with her family in the pub.

OUTCOMES

This is a wonderful example of how the closure of the village pub and its subsequent regeneration has brought the community together. Overall the project has created remarkable goodwill including suppliers, for example Adnams Brewery, Emo Oil and the Clydesdale Bank, who have caught the vision and been very supportive, and not least Suffolk County Council and Mid-Suffolk District Council who have supported the project with grant aid.

The local Pub is the Hub adviser, through the Local Community Champions scheme funded by the Big Lottery, advised on the project from start to finish, providing valuable support to the group taking over the pub and helping develop their new ideas for community initiatives. The adviser also worked closely with Suffolk County Council to help secure grant funding.

LESSONS TO LEARN

- The belief expressed by local people in the village plan of the social and community value of the village pub.
- An enthusiastic and professional group of local people working closely with local authorities.
- The availability of a small amount of public grant funds to enable the project to proceed.
- Careful research and contact with those involved in successful community pubs around the country.
- Valuable local employment, with the creation of three full time and various part time jobs in a rural community.
- Opportunities for further development with the possible ability to create a village shop in future.

PROJECT CAPITAL COSTS (EXCLUDING VAT)

Total project capital costs are difficult to ascertain because of the amount of free time contributed by the community. However, the following grants were received:

Suffolk County Council grant contribution	£10,000.00
Mid-Suffolk District Council grant contribution	£10,000.00

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