

THE NORTON, COLD NORTON, ESSEX, CM3 6JB – COMMUNITY PUB



BACKGROUND

The Norton, located in the village of Cold Norton, Essex, is a community pub run by a group of volunteers. The pub had been closed for two years and following an unsuccessful planning application to demolish the pub for residential development, 8 villagers got together and agreed a lease option with the owners.

The group refurbished the pub, and with tremendous support from the villagers and the wider local community, around 30 volunteers all gave their time free of charge to redecorate, make good the beer garden, and check the plumbing and electrics.

The pub now operates well, and a small committee oversees the operation to make sure that everything complies with the licensing laws and that the pub is run efficiently and to high standards.

PROJECT SUMMARY

In order to provide a wider range of community meals services, a small grant has been approved by Essex County Council in order to improve and update the kitchen, which will also enable local groups of young people to come to the pub to help with activities and cook for the elderly.

The focus of The Norton is to be a free house which is run and operated by the local community on a voluntary basis. The pub is the only pub in the area that operates as a 'not for profit' organisation and its main purpose is to help to support local community projects and initiatives.

OUTCOMES

The Norton is the only pub in the village and a valuable asset to the community; it provides many services and functions to the benefit and well-being of the villagers. These include a Senior Citizens Luncheon Club with subsidised meals and free tea and coffee, plus papers and magazines so that people stay and socialise. Fortnightly seated exercise classes for elderly people started in April 2011, together with fortnightly Fitsteps Walks starting at the pub.

For those involved, the project has been hard work and required real commitment, but the outcome has resulted in a pub that provides a valuable service for the local community and continues to diversify; putting on events for elderly residents, and getting local children involved in cooking meals.

The local Pub is the Hub adviser, through the Local Community Champions scheme funded by the Big Lottery, worked closely with the community group responsible for running the pub, providing valuable advice and support in order to bring the project to fruition. The adviser was also able help the licensee apply for capital funding from the local authority, which was crucial to the project.

LESSONS TO LEARN

- A small group of hard working and enthusiastic local people had a clear vision for the pub.
- The project was developed with support from a large number of community volunteers.
- The pub is run on a voluntary basis, and a small committee have put a huge amount of time and effort into running this local amenity on behalf of the village.
- A wide range of services are provided for local people at very little or no cost to set up.
- The Parish Council and local authorities were involved and assisted in development through advice and grant support.
- The pub is constantly developing new ideas to meet the needs of the local community.

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