



Community Pub

CASE STUDY



| The Gun at Ridsdale



The Gun



At Ridsdale

| Introduction

In 2020, The Gun at Ridsdale - a traditional country inn set in the heart of the beautiful Northumberland countryside - was due to be sold to housing developers. The community had already suffered the loss of their post office, local shop, garage and the Village Hall, and local people were determined to prevent the Gun Inn from also closing. In order to save the pub, The Ridsdale Community Group (RCG) was formed with the goal of achieving a community buyout and The Gun is now owned by the RCG - a Community Benefit Society.

It has hundreds of shareholders from all over the world and is run for the benefit of the local community.

John Bassett, chairman of the RCG says:

“The Gun helps the community to thrive and provides amenities that have been missing for many years; it re-vitalises the area and provides opportunities for all ages to come together to overcome loneliness and the feeling of isolation.”

Community Pub

CASE STUDY



| Social Impact

From the start, everyone in the village agreed that the pub should be more than just a pub. It should also be a social hub for meetings, a home for different voluntary groups and an IT hub with free WiFi access and laptops for local families. Some 20,000 hours of volunteer work resulted in a renovated and refurbished pub being created that the community is incredibly proud of.

The RCG believes that if the pub had been lost, there would be no central hub for anyone. “It’s about the fabric of the village and The Gun is the glue that holds this place together. Without that it just drifts ...there are still people in the village who don’t drive, and this is their lifeline, their meeting point.”



To celebrate the Queen’s Jubilee, three villages all came together and everyone was invited to enjoy the different festivities. A wide range of intergenerational activities and events are organised by the RCG and take place on a regular basis. These benefit every age group and include a book exchange, a craft club and a weekly sales and coffee morning to support and promote local traders and micro business owners.



The pub is keen to offer work experience, apprenticeships and part-time employment to several young people, who are all local. They appreciate being given the opportunity to ‘learn and earn’ at the same time.

| Community Resilience

The Scottish Government defines community resilience as: “Communities and individuals harnessing resources and expertise to help themselves prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies, in a way that complements the work of the emergency responders”.

In November 2021, Storm Arwen battered the North East and left a devastating trail of destruction. The Met Office issued a rare red weather warning for wind which saw gusts reach up to 98mph in Northumberland. There was a power cut for 10 days in some villages and the pub became a safe haven for local people.

When a severe snow storm affected the area, the local Police and Mountain Rescue Teams stepped in to rescue stranded people. A central base was needed and the pub rose to the challenge and offered overnight accommodation. Northumberland County Council has funded the installation of a generator, which is invaluable, and electric vehicle charging points have been installed in the car park. A second defibrillator for the village may also be installed at the pub in the future.

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More recently, The Gun has become a Warm Space, which is a place where people can be assured of finding a safe, warm and friendly environment. Visitors can enjoy refreshments, social activity, information and advice and the company of other people.



Overcoming Challenges

Hannah Barrett, senior project manager at the Plunkett Foundation says:

“We are living through a time when rural communities are facing tough challenges, including the widespread closures of pubs. Our figures show community pubs can often provide an answer to these challenges. In rural areas they are a lifeline to the people they serve.

“The issues of isolation and loss of amenities are well known – and community pubs do so much more than just providing a pint. They offer diverse services, from book clubs and drama classes to dementia support groups and lunches for the lonely. They are breathing new life into many rural communities across the UK.”



Lessons Learned

Be sure to maintain what you are offering – high standards and consistency of service - especially when it comes to food and accommodation, both of which are the icing on the cake!

Ensure that you have a well planned calendar of events and contact local businesses and organisations - offer ‘out of season’ promotions with special rates and incentives.

Keep a vigilant eye on your staff cost ratios and overheads – particularly energy!

Keep going!

This case study has been made possible through funding from Scottish Government as a way to inspire community owned pubs about the many ways they can address issues facing rural communities.



Plunkett Foundation

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If you are interested in starting or developing a community pub please contact the Plunkett Foundation - **01993 630 022**, info@plunkett.co.uk or visit www.plunkett.co.uk to find out how we can support you.

The Plunkett Foundation helps rural communities across the UK to tackle the issues they face by promoting and supporting community business. In addition to developing and safeguarding valuable assets and services, community businesses address a range of issues including isolation, loneliness, wellbeing, work and training.

If you share our vision for a vibrant rural economy with rural community business as its heart, why not join Plunkett as a member? Find out more about our membership packages [here](#).