



Community Pub

CASE STUDY



I The Yew Tree

Avon Dassett, Warwickshire



I KEY DETAILS

Community pub	Tenanted
Shareholders	135
Share price	£50 each
Price paid for Freehold	£370,000
Finances	Through the MTAP programme: £40K grant from Plunkett, £40k loan from The Key Fund (an additional £20,000 from The Key Fund secured).
Total Raised in Community Shares:	£300K
Opening date:	8th December 2017
Population served	The population of the village is 213 but people come from other villages: overall the catchment area is about 2500.



I About The Yew Tree

This rural village pub, 5 miles from Banbury was bought by the local community when all other community spaces had been lost. With Plunkett's support, the Avon Dassett Community Benefit Society opened The Yew Tree to the community in December 2017, but their journey hasn't all been plain sailing...

I How did the group buy the pub?

The Yew Tree was put up for sale in 2015 and bought by people who immediately applied for planning permission for a Change of Use to residential. The community registered the pub as an Asset of Community Value (ACV) with the local council, and the planning application was eventually withdrawn.

In 2016, the pub was on the market again: the Avon Dassett CBS had formed by this time and sprang into action, becoming Members of Plunkett, getting a valuation on the property and launching a community share offer. Successful in applying for the More than a Pub's (MTAP) grant and loan package and in raising the rest of the finance needed, the group finally were able to buy the pub.

I Stormy seas

With no hospitality experience within the committee, the group decided on a tenanted model and began looking for suitable tenants to run The Yew Tree. This proved to be one of the most challenging areas of the project, and the group experienced the disappointment of a succession of tenants and chefs which for various reasons didn't work out. Finally, in April 2020, the tenants were gone and the pub was empty for the duration of the Covid lockdown.

I Opportunity

With the pub closed, and the community in lockdown, the group decided to use the time to redecorate and lift the mood of the inside of the pub, as well the community. Floors were stripped, designers brought in, and the group decided on a motoring theme. A huge effort of refurbishment took place, using local volunteers and tradespeople in the pub and the garden, including details such as window boxes and hanging baskets. By 5 minutes to opening time on the 4th July 2020, it was finished!



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! Social impact

The village has about 200 people, with a significant number of elderly people, some recently widowed and many who don't drive. It is poorly connected by public transport, miles from shops, and over the years the two churches have been mothballed. Apart from the pub there is no community meeting space. The pub is crucial to the community spirit in the village: as the group says **“it makes a difference to absolutely everything”**.

The pub's ethos is 'welcome to your living room', and its charitable purpose is social cohesion. There is a walking group monthly which finishes at the pub for lunch and has really made people feel part of a social group. The new chef is using meat from a local Banbury butchers and the pub is switching its beers to more local breweries, remaining a Free House. It also sells local honey from a village beekeeper and has a new wine list in and there is excitement in the village about the new Monday Pie Night, Steak Nights and Sunday roasts.

All staff at the pub are now paid employees, so the pub has created employment in this rural location for younger people to earn money and gain skills without having to travel.



! Open again!

Run by a mixture of volunteers and paid staff the re-opening was a success: the pub looked great, was Covid-compliant and was selling ice-cream out its smoking shed and tapas prepared by volunteers in their own health & safety certified kitchens. The group began once again to look for a suitable tenant.

! The right person for the right pub

The group advertised on Facebook after trying other avenues, and eventually interviewed a fantastic, enthusiastic tenant who even came in as a volunteer during the period of negotiations. He took over on 4th September 2020. A new chef is also in place; there are big plans for Christmas, and the pub is busy even on weekdays.

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And what's the future for The Yew Tree?

The community is full of ideas and there's great interest in rejuvenating the annual summer Soap Box Derby with its finish line outside the pub! There are plans to investigate becoming a mail order drop off spot or central delivery point, host beauty technician services on the first floor or even to use the outbuildings for a community cinema!

Plunkett's role

The Yew Tree has been involved in a number of Plunkett Foundation's activities since the community group's inception. The group received a grant of £50,000 and a loan of £50,000 under the More Than A Pub programme in addition to a bursary and specialist business adviser support funded through this scheme.



Wherever you are in the UK, if you are interested in starting or developing a community pub please contact the Plunkett Foundation - **01993 810730**, info@plunkett.co.uk or visit www.plunkett.co.uk to find out how we can support you.

The Plunkett Foundation helps rural communities UK-wide 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](#).

This case study has been made possible through the More than a Pub programme, funded by Power to Change and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

