

HESKET NEWMARKET COMMUNITY SHOP LIMITED

8th Public Meeting Caldbeck Village Hall Tuesday 11th February 2025

Management Committee members in attendance:

Philippa Groves (Chair)
Simon Hewitt (Vice-chair)
Martin Woodham (Treasurer)
Michelle Boundy (Secretary)
Martin Nicholson
Helena Davies

Agenda:

1. Welcome
2. Updates
 - a) Current funding position
 - b) Expertise needed
 - c) Future fundraising events
 - d) Operational matters
 - e) Summary of the next steps
3. Q & A

1 Welcome

Philippa formally welcomed everyone to the meeting and set out the agenda. She said that this was our 8th public meeting. Our next public meeting will be held at 7pm on the 29 of April 2025 in Caldbeck Village Hall. We're considering holding our first AGM in June and will let you know more about this in due course.

Philippa began the meeting by thanking the Committee for their efforts in getting to this point. She said that we were very grateful for the ongoing support of all of the current shop team – Andy, Diane, Ann, and Pat – and their tolerance as we popped in and out with visitors.

Philippa and Simon gave the following updates:

2a) The funding position

The Committee's focus since the last public meeting in December has been on securing the final bit of funding to allow us to seal the deal. Although we really didn't want to borrow money if we could avoid doing so, in the absence of the Government's Community Ownership Fund, it now looks likely that we will need to secure a loan to cover our remaining funding gap - the final piece of the jigsaw!

To ensure we can get over the line, we have revisited our business plan and pared down some initial expenses, taken away the luxury of all the bells and whistles, and reduced our contingency fund to an acceptable level. Our revised funding gap is now about £75,000, which is an achievable amount.

To meet this, we are looking at a range of funding options including banks and social investors, like the Key Fund. The Key Fund is a social enterprise that provides flexible loans and grants to help start ups operating in the North of England and the Midlands. The funding they offer comes from a range of social investors such as the Cabinet Office, The National Lottery Community Fund, The Regional Growth Fund, The Joseph Rowntree Foundation, The Barrow Cadbury Trust, Unity Bank, among many others. (Website: <https://thekeyfund.co.uk/>)

We are also looking at offers from individuals who have indicated that they would be willing to help us by providing financial investment. Do come and talk to us if you could offer an investment or a donation. The less we borrow the better. We are investigating all options and hope to have secured funding offers shortly.

We have also been looking at how we might best utilise the whole building. We've had detailed plans produced by a structural engineer who advised us about our options, one of which might be to create a separate entrance. This would allow us to let the residential part of the building to a tenant, creating an additional income stream. However, we must stress that any alterations to the building would have to wait until a later date and could only be done as funding allows. It would be very much part of a 'Phase 2' plan to be undertaken once we have proved that we can run the business successfully!

2b) Help in-kind

The building plans were produced without any cost to us. This was an amazing contribution by a professional engineer who is keen to see our community project succeed, and we are very grateful.

There is some other work we are keen to find expert help in-kind with.

Our structural survey identified a few jobs that will need to be done as soon as possible after we have taken over. These include fixing some guttering, replacing a slate or two, repairing the rendering at the rear of the property, and dealing with some woodworm. We'd love to hear from anyone who thinks they may be able to help us with any of these jobs.

We'd also like to find a conveyancing solicitor to help once we begin the legal process – any suggestions in that respect would be gratefully received.

2c) Future fundraising events

We have a number of fundraising events coming up. This month, on Friday the 28th we have an adventure film night with the London Mountain Film Festival in Caldbeck Hall. Next month we have a ceilidh with the Rhubarb Thieves on Saturday 8th also at Caldbeck, and a talk and supper in Millhouse Hall on Friday 14th of March to hear about the Gosden's walk around the coast of Britain. Tickets for all of these are available at the shop.

Caldbeck and District Gardening Club's annual Potato Day takes place on Sunday the 23rd February from 10am – 2pm at Caldbeck Hall. Entry is £1 on the door and all proceeds this year will be donated to the shop fund.

Helena reminded everyone that they can visit the website for details of all our events and news updates. She asked everyone to join us on Facebook and Instagram.

We are still looking for recipes for our recipe book, which we hope to produce before Christmas. We plan to use these as the basis for 'recipe boxes' to sell in the shop. You can submit recipes online here:

<https://hesketnewmarket-communityshop.co.uk/submit-your-recipe/>

2d) Operational matters

The current plan is that once we have formally made an offer on the shop, and it has been accepted, Andy will serve notice on the Post Office. This will be the trigger for us to apply to take over the current Post Office contract. Our hope is to have a seamless transition of the existing contract from Andy to the community. We are meeting with the area manager from the Post Office towards the end of this month. This is to maintain our relationship and to discuss the next steps as we need to ensure that we don't drop the ball during the transition from Andy being the Postmaster to the community taking over.

Once Andy's given his notice, you'll see members of the Committee behind the counter as we begin to get our heads around the business and all that that entails. You are most likely to see us on a Tuesday – so please be patient!

We can also begin to provide training for our volunteers. This will happen in parallel with the legal process involved in getting from an accepted offer to the point where the community formally takes ownership of the shop.

As well as training relating to the day-to-day operation of the shop, there will be an opportunity, for those who are interested, to be trained by the Post Office on how to use their systems etc. There is no requirement for all volunteers to undertake this training, its only for those who are happy to serve in the Post Office. Some members of the Committee will also take the Post Office training.

The Committee have been working to identify the various volunteer roles and produce role descriptions so that everyone involved can understand what is expected of them. The roles are many and varied, including serving in the shop and/or the Post Office, serving in the tearoom, baking and food preparation, making

deliveries, collecting supplies etc. So, if you haven't already volunteered, now's the time to step forward. Our volunteer application form is on our website here: <https://hesketnewmarket-communityshop.co.uk/volunteer/>

We will also need to identify who would like to do what role and start pulling together a draft volunteer rota so that we can hit the ground running. We'll be in touch shortly with those who have already volunteered to firm up on the details.

We also need to form a 'User Group' and define their role. Those on the User Group will provide feedback on how it feels using the shop from a customer point of view – It will keep us grounded as there may be a danger we get blinded by our own enthusiasm!

In addition to finalising the role of the volunteers, we need to find a full-time paid manager for the shop. This could be two people job sharing. This is a key role, so we need to find the right person, or two, for the job. We have drafted an outline job description and although it's almost there, it needs a little more work. We will not advertise the role until the shop has passed into community ownership.

Once the manager is appointed, we will work with them to identify a coordinator for the volunteers. As the manager and the coordinator will need to work closely together, the manager needs to be involved in choosing the coordinator.

As we get closer to taking over the business, we've been getting to know our main suppliers to fully understand their trading terms and what they expect from us. We have also begun speaking to some new suppliers. We don't envisage much change in the early days – more evolution than revolution! New lines will be added carefully until we better understand the business. That said, we will be exploring alternative supply routes to see if we can buy our stock at less cost.

The tearoom will re-open as soon as we can, certainly within the first couple of months of taking over, as we hope it will provide a good source of income for us. We envisage the offering in the tearoom will be simple – such as tea/coffee, scones, cakes and simple lunches etc. We would like to offer a takeout service and perhaps to use the room for evening meetings etc as appropriate.

2e) Summary of the next steps

- Finalise the funding and seal the deal with Andy
- Work with Andy and the Post Office to coordinate the transfer of the contract and Postmaster role
- Build relationships with the shop's current suppliers
- Finalise the manager job description and define the volunteer roles
- Gather and train our volunteers
- Find a conveyancing solicitor
- Find a maintenance person

3 Q & A

Q1: What did we lose in the business plan to come up with a revised funding figure?

The business plan includes a large contingency fund and 12 months' staffing costs. This was appropriate when we thought we might receive government funding. We expect the business to be able to cover staff costs. Reducing the contingency fund and reducing staff costs to two months gives us an achievable funding target.

A common response from funders has been to come back when we've been trading for 12 months, so there are funds we can apply for once we've been up and running for a while.