

HESKET NEWMARKET COMMUNITY SHOP LIMITED

9th Public Meeting

Caldbeck Village Hall

Tuesday 29th February 2025

Management Committee members in attendance:

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

Agenda:

1. Welcome
2. Updates
 - a) The good news
 - b) Future fundraising events
 - c) Help in-kind
 - d) Operational matters
 - e) Volunteers
 - f) The AGM
 - g) Summary of the next steps
3. Q & A

1 Welcome

Philippa formally welcomed everyone to the meeting and set out the agenda for the 9th public meeting.

She began by telling everyone that we were actually there in terms of funding, which raised a huge cheer! Philippa said that the Committee have carried out tremendous work on behalf of the community and they should be thoroughly commended - they are an amazing team!

Our next public meeting will be our AGM. This will be held at 11am on Saturday the 14th of June in Caldbeck Village Hall. It will be followed at noon by a Big Lunch. We will send out notifications about the AGM and the Lunch and ask people to let us know if they plan to attend both as we'll need to know numbers.

Philippa and Simon gave the following updates:

2a) The good news

The Committee are pleased and proud to share that we have secured the funding required to purchase the shop and have formally agreed a sale price with Andy. Both Andy and ourselves have instructed our solicitors, and we are in their hands now to go through the conveyancing process.

We didn't really want to do it but to secure the funding to go ahead with the deal we had to borrow the last £60,000.

We explored a range of funding options and were fortunate to secure several offers from corporate and private investors. We chose to accept a loan offer from a private investor who offered flexibility with repayments. By revisiting our business plan, we kept the borrowing to the minimum required to complete the sale and provide a small cushion for our first few months of trading. But our aim is to pay the loan off as soon as possible.

We've submitted our application to the Post Office for a transfer of contract from Andy to the community and expect to hear the outcome within a few weeks. All being well, we will be full steam ahead with the purchase and expect to take over the running of the business at some point in the summer.

2b) Future fundraising events

Our fundraising will continue. The main focus of our fundraising activities over the next couple of years will be on repaying the loan. We plan to run a few events each year to support the shop, and hopefully you will continue to support us with these.

It's safe to say that we've already decided to make the Ceilidh an annual event, as it was so much fun!

Our next big fundraising event is a pop-up café in the shop for the Bikers' Weekend at the end of May, and we're grateful to Andy for allowing us back in the tearoom to do this. We'll be open on the second bank holiday in May, being Saturday and Sunday the 26th and 27th, from 10am-5pm. If anyone would like to help serve or bake cakes, then please get in touch with Philippa. We'll need to organise our volunteers into time slots so we make sure we can cover the whole weekend.

We plan to have a Big Lunch event after the AGM on 14th of June. This showcases local food and produce. Please get in touch with Philippa if you would like to be involved – depending on the weather we may need help with BBQs and baking, and we should be able to supply the ingredients. We're hopeful we can secure some funding for this as part of the Council's Great Big Green Week (7th to 15th June this year). This is the UK's annual celebration of community action to tackle climate change and protect nature. To play our part, we plan to focus on reducing waste when we reopen the tearoom, to start with introducing smaller portions, cutting down on the use of plastic and promoting a refill service for household products.

On Tuesday 24th of June we will host an Antiques Valuation Day with local auctioneer and valuer Paul Laidlaw. So, dig out your treasures and bring them along. Tickets for this event will be on sale soon and there will be teas and coffee on offer on the day.

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/>

Finally, can we remind everyone that they can visit the website for details of all our events and news updates, and do please join us on Facebook and Instagram.

2c) Help in-kind

As we mentioned last time, 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. Now that we are in the position of taking out a loan, we really don't have any spare funding left over to pay trades to do these jobs.

We are grateful for the offers of help we've already received from local handy folk, and we'd love to hear from anyone else who may be able to help with these jobs. So, if you are a dab hand with a paintbrush or happy to muck in and help, please let us know. We'll have a working weekend or two to get these jobs done.

2d) Operational matters

Our search for grant funding continues. We have explored many funds already and a common response is had we bought a building yet? We're hopeful that we'll be able to access more funding streams once we have secured the premises for things like tearoom equipment or a year's funding for a manager for example, and we're not giving up on this.

As you may have seen, several Committee members have started their training in the shop on Tuesdays. Unlike Andy, we don't automatically know what everyone comes in for yet and it will take us a while to learn the ropes. We haven't been let loose on the post office till yet, that requires formal training which will happen once we've taken over the Post Office contract.

As mentioned last time, 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 don't plan to advertise for this role from Day 1 – there will be a transition period while we all take on the day-to-day running of the shop from Andy, Diane and Ann. We're not sure yet how long this transition period will last or what exactly it will look like, and we want to understand the business better before we appoint a paid person/people to run it.

Diane has offered to be on hand and support us while we learn the ropes and ensure a seamless transition. Andy has also offered to stay involved and look after the papers and deliveries while he prepares his new home. As always, we're very grateful for their continued support.

2e) Volunteers

We can't stress enough how important volunteers will be to the success of our community shop and post office, particularly in the first year and during the transition from Andy's ownership to community ownership. The more we can spread the knowledge of how to run things the better.

We have arranged a volunteers' drop-in meeting at Millhouse Hall on Wednesday the 4th of June from 6pm – 9pm. We are asking anyone who would be able to contribute even one hour a week to come down and let us know your skills and how you would like to help so we can start to build a rota. Committee members will be on-hand to answer any questions you might have about what needs doing and how we plan to organise.

We are also very keen to identify anyone who would like to receive training to operate the Post Office till. This training will be offered in-house and probably take place during the first couple of weeks of community ownership. Anyone who wants to serve on the Post Office till will need to do this training, but not everyone who volunteers in the shop will need to do it, as there are many roles to carry out.

We're also looking for a few people to join a shop user group. This informal role will provide feedback to the Committee on things like customer experience, the range of good stocked and suggestions for other ranges that might do well in the shop. If anyone is interested in this role, please do let us know.

2f) The AGM

This will take place on Saturday morning, 11am on 14th of June. It will be similar to our public meetings, with some additional business we need to conduct. Everyone's welcome to come along, but only members will be able to vote, and we'll hand out voting cards as you come in.

We'll send out an agenda towards the end of May. There are two main items of business.

The first is for the membership to review and agree the accounts for the year ending 31st March just gone. We will produce the accounts, which will be reviewed by a qualified auditor and sent out to all members along with the agenda and other papers ahead of the meeting.

The second item of business will be to elect the Committee. As per our Rules, at our first AGM all members of the Committee will stand down. Existing members of the Committee will have the opportunity to stand again and can put themselves forwards for election.

While we feel we have a good mix of skills, experience, capacity and enthusiasm on the current Committee, it will always be beneficial to have committee members with specific experience of running a similar customer-focussed business, whether that's a shop, post office or tearoom. We would also welcome people with an accountancy

background and experience of financial management, whether that's book-keeping or financial modelling.

We would like to invite anyone who feels they have such relevant experience to get in touch with Philippa or Simon as soon as possible.

2g) Summary of the next steps

- Secure the Post Office contract
- Complete the purchase of the premises and business
- Continue to build relationships with the shop's current suppliers and identify any new potential suppliers
- Gather and train our volunteers
- Plan for our first 100 days

3 Q & A

How much did we borrow and what were the terms?

We borrowed £60,000 at 4.5% APR over 10 years. As mentioned, this is a very flexible agreement, and we hope to repay the loan as soon as possible.

When do we expect to complete the purchase?

We hope to complete before the end of the summer.

Does the completion have to coincide with the transfer of the Post Office contract to community ownership?

We don't want to be in the position of buying the shop without having the Post Office contract. Equally, it's not likely Andy would want us to be running the Post Office from his building. Ideally, the contract transfer will happen around the same time as we complete the purchase.

Is the transfer of the Post Office contract a 'done deal'?

The short answer is no. The Post Office have been very supportive and are making all the right noises, but you never know. Our application is being reviewed at the moment and hopefully all will be well.

Who are our solicitors?

We've appointed Penrith-based solicitors, Arnison Heelis.

Where does the responsibility for the Post Office sit?

With a private contract it sits with the Postmaster, so it's currently with Andy. We've applied to transfer the contract to the Society, not any individual member of the

Committee. So once transferred, the contract will continue irrespective of who the Committee members are.

The shop manager(s) will be responsible for implementing the contract and managing the shop and post office, but ultimately the Committee are accountable for the proper running of the Post Office contract.

Are the members of the Committee insured?

We are covered by Directors' Indemnity insurance taken out with Zurich Insurance, which indemnifies the Society against financial and administrative liability. We will review this when we complete, to make sure it's fit-for-purpose for when we begin trading.

Are all the Committee members going to stand down at the AGM and not stand up again?

No - we will send out an agenda and papers ahead of the AGM, and this will contain the names of those standing for election.

Any co-opted Committee members must stand down at their first AGM and can then stand for election. As this is our first AGM, we all need to stand down before seeking election. We plan to stagger our terms of service across one, two and three years so that we won't have this situation again, where all members are standing down at the same time.

The usual term of service on the Committee is three years and members are eligible for re-election for three consecutive terms. After that, they can't be re-elected for 12 months.