

HESKET NEWMARKET COMMUNITY SHOP LIMITED

10th Public Meeting Caldbeck Village Hall Tuesday 4th November 2025

Management Committee members in attendance:

Philippa Groves (Chair)
Simon Hewitt (Vice-chair)
Martin Woodham (Treasurer)
Garry Hobson

Apologies received from:

Michelle Boundy (Secretary)
Martin Nicholson

Agenda:

1. Welcome
2. Briefing from the Chair
3. Updates:
 - a) Grant funding
 - b) PO Training
 - c) Building relationships
 - d) Plans for the shop
 - e) Utilising the whole building
 - f) Meeting with Volunteers
 - g) Recruitment
3. Q & A

1 Welcome

Philippa formally welcomed everyone to the meeting and set out the agenda for the 10th public meeting. She gave apologies from Michelle and Martin Nicholson who are both unwell.

2 Briefing from the Chair

Philippa informed those present that we had hit a 'bump' in the conveyancing of the sale of the property, which in turn meant that we could no longer have everything in place ready for the proposed transfer of the Post Office contract on the 11th November.

She explained that while this was disappointing, it was always going to be challenging to coordinate the two processes so that the community had ownership of the building and business ahead of the transfer of the Post Office contract. The risk associated to taking over the Post Office contract ahead of the completion of the conveyancing process was one that neither Andy nor the management team were willing to take.

Although the conveyancing process is now progressing well, the soonest alternative date the Post Office could offer for the transfer of the contract to the community is the 3rd February 2026. This date is now fixed as the date the community will take over the shop and post office and is almost exactly two years to the day from when we began our fundraising to save our village shop and post office.

Philippa went on to thank the team members and post office volunteers who had completed their online training, a new date has already been set for the MC classroom training dates in January. She also thanked Paul & Karen Chuter who helped clean the area outside the shop over the last weekend.

Garry was thanked for his work researching a new till and card payment system for the shop which will eventually make things a lot easier for staff, volunteers, accounting and stock control. Those attending were also shown the new shop sign which will replace the one above the door on completion.

Philippa said we needed to start to think of ideas to utilise the rest of the building to bring in extra income and would hand over to Simon for more details

In conclusion its only 12 weeks till we do take over and still lots to do, thanked everyone for their forbearance adding that we are all disappointed.

3 Updates

Simon gave an overview of what the management committee (MC) had been doing over the past few months and outlined the next steps. A summary of which are shown below:

a. Securing grant funding

The management committee have successfully secured new grant funding in the region of £25K. £6K in grant funding has been received to support the purchase of a new point of sale system, signage and general improvements, with the balance due once the purchase of the building has been completed. The search for grant funding continues.

b. Completion of Post Office Training

Three members of the MC have successfully completed their online Post Office training as have several volunteers. Three members of the MC will undertake three days of classroom training in January. Simon also thanked the volunteers for taking the time to complete their training.

c. Building Relationships

Visits have been made to several other successful village and community shops over the past few months. We have been well received by the owners of these shops, and they have been very willing to share best practice. The MC intend to cultivate strong working relationships with other shop owners and work together where there are benefits of doing so.

d. Plans for the Shop

Simon outlined some proposals for the future offering of the shop, these included; Having a broad offering to include a basic range of goods with alternative more specialist offerings to provide choice and value for money; a clear pricing policy so that customers are fully informed; accepting card payments; a new point of sale system (till) that will provide good management information and ease of payment; to keep the offering from the coffee shop good quality and simple before building a more comprehensive offering.

e. Utilising the whole building

The ownership of the building opens more doors to grant funding, and the MC are continuing to explore options. The overall building is very large and full of potential uses to benefit the community, utilising the building to generate additional income will also play a key part in securing the future long-term viability of the shop. Suggestions on how best to utilise the building would be welcome. Once options have been considered, plans can be drawn up that in turn will support further grant applications.

f. Meeting volunteers

Meetings with volunteers are ongoing and we have a good range of people willing to undertake a number of tasks. Planning is now in progress to build the volunteer rota. More details will be shared once the planning is complete.

g. Recruitment

The advertisement to recruit a manager for the shop received a good response with six excellent candidates selected for interview. A short list of two has been drawn up with an offer to the strongest candidate going out soon. More details to follow. Simon thanked Mike Bauer for his input in drafting the contract of employment.

4 Next Steps

Over the next few weeks, the MC will be concentrating on the following:

- a. Developing options and plans to utilise the whole building.
- b. Apply for more grant funding as opportunities arise.
- c. Introduce the volunteers to the shop and post office between now and February to gain hands on experience.
- d. Continue to build relationships with owners of other successful village shops.
- e. Continue to build relationships with suppliers.
- f. Induction of our new manager.

5 Q & A

Q. When do we envisage starting to pay the new manager?

A. The MC plan to commence paying the manager on, or slightly before, the community take ownership of the shop.

Q. Can the MC share plans of the whole building so that ideas can be generated?

A. Plans can be shared but not until ownership of the building transfers to the community.

Q. Will deliveries continue once the community take over the business?

A. Yes, deliveries of groceries and papers will continue as normal after the takeover.

Q. Will the volunteers still be needed for the shifts they have committed to in November and December?

A. We will be in contact with the volunteers shortly to offer training and volunteering sessions between now and February.

Q. Will new manager reside in the flat above the shop?

A. No, none of the candidates expressed an interest in doing so. Furthermore, due to the EPC rating of the property, the MC would be unable to offer a long-term lease on the flat without undertaking remedial work to improve the EPC rating.

Q. Who will be the official key holder if the property is unoccupied?

A. A member of the MC will be a named key holder. Also, the MC has had an offer to do the same from a person living in the village.

Q. Will Diane Benson (Postie) still get her coffee in the mornings?

A. Yes!

Comments from the floor:

- The delay will mean that we miss the Christmas post!
- When considering plans for the building, the MC need to be aware of potential parking and disturbance of neighbours issues.
- The MC need to check the insurance implications of volunteers using their cars for deliveries if mileage payments are to be made.
- There was a good tip on how to deal with the planners.....!
- David Absalom proposed a round of applause in appreciation of the work done by the MC.