

The Mortimer Community Benefit Society

Membership Strategy

Introduction

A community benefit society (CBS) is a member owned organisation that is run primarily for the benefit of the community at large, and that reaches beyond its membership.



The Mortimer Community Benefit Society was set up with the aim of purchasing The Bell Inn in Yarpole and reviving it for the benefit of the local people and visitors to the area. The Bell is the only pub in the parish and had been closed since May 2018. The Mortimer CBS Limited was formed as a limited-liability Community Benefit Society in June 2018. It is registered with the Financial Conduct Authority; registration number 7793. Generous support and guidance was provided by the Plunkett Foundation.

The Mortimer CBS aimed to maximise investment from the local community in order to generate sufficient funds in a short time period before the pub was potentially sold at auction. Over 200 individuals and organisations have now purchased shares in the Society, the majority of whom are from the local parish of 350 households. The Bell at Yarpole was purchased by the Mortimer CBS in September 2018, underwent extensive renovation largely by volunteers, and reopened under new tenants in February 2019. It is now operating as a successful business.

The Mortimer CBS seeks to engage its members and to continue grow its membership. This will help to raise more funds to further improve the property and reduce the dependence on loans. Shareholders and the local community are actively encouraged to participate in a wide variety of ways to support the aims of the Society.

The Plunkett Foundation Rules set out the way in which the Society is owned, organised and governed. They can be viewed on the Society's website www.themortimerCBS.org or requested from a member of the Management Committee. The MCBS is managed by a committee, presently of ten members, all of whom automatically stand down at each Annual Members' Meeting before seeking re-election by the membership.

Membership

Membership is open to any person over the age of 16 purchasing at least the minimum number of shares. Members do not need to live in the parish. The Society is a democratic organisation governed by a Management Committee that is elected by and from the Members. It operates on the principle of 'One Member One Vote' regardless of the number of shares owned by the individual. Individual share value is £50 with a minimum holding of £250. A single gift share may be purchased for £50 with no voting rights.

Share purchase brings with it membership of The Society and gives the Member the opportunity to be actively involved in a valuable community asset which seeks to provide facilities and services for all those within the community, including older and less mobile people, and those experiencing social isolation.

The main source of funding for the purchase of The Bell was generated through the sale of shares in The Mortimer CBS Limited. Further information on share purchase and the Business Plan is available on the Society's website www.themortimerCBS.org.

Many residents have links to family members and friends in other areas. The opportunity to purchase shares in a traditional English village pub with a history stretching back centuries will appeal to many people.

Benefits of a large membership

- Generates sufficient funding to purchase, maintain and improve the property without long term reliance on loans or interest repayments
- Provides a large pool of individuals to offer practical help, advice and information and assist in improvements to the property and garden on a voluntary basis where possible to minimise expenditure. Many volunteers have enjoyed their shared experiences, developed new skills and made social connections in the process.
- Increases number of regular customers at The Bell and attendance of special events held there, thereby supporting financial viability of the business
- Creates greater attendance and community involvement at public meetings to vote on significant decisions regarding use of funds or development of the property or land
- Contributes to the overall direction of the project and provides feedback on progress
- A larger base from which to draw committee members, thereby supporting effective and balanced governance of the MCBS
- Generates further share purchases and donations from friends, family and neighbours

Communication methods used to engage local community as widely as possible

Regular articles in The Parishioner - local monthly newsletter

Display materials in St Leonard's Church, Yarpole

Noticeboard posters at The Bell and six locations within the parish

Public meetings held in St Leonard's and The Bell to engage and inform locals of proposals and assess degree of support for project

Survey to assess support for project at early stage and estimate fundraising by share purchases (questionnaire returned by 145 households out of 350 in parish). Results published and displayed.

Pack distributed to all households in parish including Share Prospectus and Share Application form

Information about the MCBS included in Welcome Pack distributed to all new residents in the parish

Phone contact to encourage those who had pledged to purchase shares

Creation of consensual emailing list and regular email updates to shareholders and local community

MCBS email account (themortimercbcs@gmail.com) monitored regularly. Responses to comments, queries and complaints provided promptly and consistently and forwarded to appropriate committee member when necessary. Agreed Key Lines policies followed by all committee members.

Website (www.themortimercbs.org) provides information on background to the MCBS, contact details of committee members, key documents, news updates, FAQs, links to share purchase and donations, link to The Bell at Yarpole website (www.thebellatyarpole.co.uk)

MCBS Facebook and Twitter accounts

Face to face engagement around parish by committee members and sharing of feedback at committee meetings

Minutes of committee meetings available from Secretary/Chair

Annual Members' Meeting to be held in September

Regional/national communications used for key events and campaigns to raise awareness and generate wider support for the project via:

Print/online media (Hereford Times, Shropshire Star, regional papers, national newspapers)

Specialist publications (The Morning Advertiser, local CAMRA magazine)

Local radio (BBC Hereford and Worcester, Free, Sunshine radio)

Regional TV (BBC Midlands Today).

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Community Engagement sub group

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