

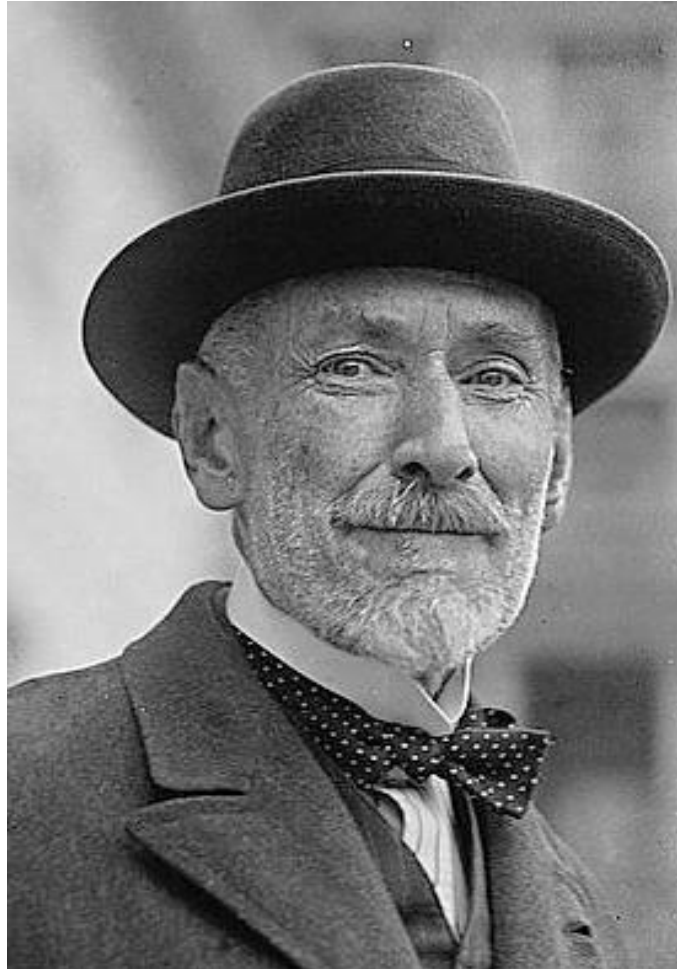


Northamptonshire ACRE 75th Anniversary: Making the most of Community Assets

Thursday 29 July 2021

Chris Cowcher, Head of Policy

Plunkett Foundation



Established in 1919 we're a charity that supports communities across the UK to tackle the issues they face through setting up community businesses.

We provide practical advice, support and training to help communities establish and run successful community businesses with long-term survival rates.

- 17 members of staff, based in Woodstock Oxfordshire
- 50 self-employed Plunkett Advisers & Mentors, based across the UK
- Nearly 500 members

What is a community business?



Plunkett subscribes to a definition of community business, as being a business that is:

- **Locally rooted:** They are rooted in a particular geographical place and respond to its needs.
- **Trading for the benefit of the local community:** They are businesses. Their income comes from things like renting out space in their buildings, trading as cafes, selling produce they grow or generating energy.
- **Accountable to the local community:** They are accountable to local people, for example through a community shares offer that creates members who have a voice in the business's direction.
- **Broad community impact:** They engage with a variety of different groups in their community and deliver impact against a range of different community needs.

Plunkett Foundation support



- Helpline
- Training
- Development advice
- Provision of resources and guides and templates
- “Model Rules” for community benefit societies
- Ongoing business support
- Peer networking
- Membership services



Plunkett Foundation “healthchecks”



An offer of support to open businesses:

- Annual process of ensuring you are progressing
- Review of operations
- Contingency planning
- Staff appraisal / satisfaction
- Volunteer review
- Financial opportunities / challenges
- Planning for the future

Community business sector overview



Plunkett supports:

- Over 800 community businesses – UK-wide
- Shops, pubs, woodlands, bakeries, distilleries, bookshops, community hubs, farms
- 96% long-term success rate (compared with 44% for other small businesses)
- Nearly 3000 jobs created
- 25,000 volunteers involved



In Northamptonshire...



- **6 community-owned shops:**

- Kilsby Village Shop
- Creaton Community shop
- Sulgrave Community Shop
- The Collyweston Community shop
- Cottingham and Middleton Community Shop
- Titchmarsh Village Shop

- **3 community-owned pubs:**

- Fox and Hounds, Charwelton
- Butchers Arms, Green Norton
- The Shuckburgh Arms, Southwick

The starting point



- Responding to closure? New start up enterprise?
- Purchasing the asset? Leasing the asset?
- “Pop up”?
- **Community consultation – Extensive and inclusive** (Community-led plans / Neighbourhood Plans)
- **Steering group – representative of the community**
- Research, learn, respond, amend, develop

Every community is different, but there is so much to learn from the experiences of other communities that have “been there and done it” before you

Community assets come in all shapes and sizes...

**KIRKMICHAEL
Village Shop**

Groceries
Crafts & Gifts
Café
Wi-fi
Fuel
Post Office



KIRKMICHAEL
Village Shop
Café





LADIES



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GENTS







More specific areas to consider

- Model of business
 - Costs associated with your project
 - Managed by the community? Or run by a tenant?
 - Will you need staff or could you run the project with volunteers?
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- Insurances / permissions
 - Lottery rules
 - Alcohol licensing laws
 - To host a post office or not?

Post Offices in community shops



54% of shops offer postal services (Plunkett records)

Post Office models in community shops:

- 51% (101) community-run post offices in shops are designated “community status” branches
- 20% community shops run Outreach Post Offices (39)
- 17% run the Post Office Local model (34 shops)

Governance / legal structures

- Company Ltd by Guarantee? Community interest company? Community benefit society? Cooperative?
- Democratic ownership
- Share investments – Time bound or open
- Asset lock
- Membership of organisation
- Number of directors / management committee members

Committee structure key...

- Common sense
- Different styles/approaches
- A variety of work patterns
- Community involvement
- Contacts
- Regular customers – your eyes and ears!
- **Asking for support is a strength / Access appropriate training**



The Business Plans



1. Your mission, aims and objectives
2. Your organisation
3. Your products, services and activities
4. Your market and your strategy
5. Your competitors
6. The resources you need to start the business
7. Your revenue
8. Your targets, outputs and outcomes
9. The risks that you are facing
10. Your budget

More than a



Services offered by Community Businesses often consist of more than those you would traditionally associate with the central business operation, have you considered or are you providing?:

- Training
- Café facilities
- Libraries
- Health services
- Environmental initiatives
- Local suppliers
- ???

Make sure you have cake!



There is so much inspiration to be seen as a project progresses:

- Intergenerational activity / opportunity
- Growing an idea
- Increasing local service provision
- Implementing environmental initiatives
- Connectivity with the natural environment

Common barriers to progress

- Insufficient infrastructure support
- Volunteer fatigue
- No available premises
- Purchase price / insufficient lease
- Lack of start up finance
- Competition
- Local support



Processes to follow...

- Accountability
- Openness
- Robust management
- Community involvement and engagement
- News and promotions
- Trial new products and systems

The economic impact



- Purchasing from local suppliers
- Creating employment opportunities
- Offering training opportunities to staff and volunteers
- Improving access to other local services
- Raising money for local charities/activities either through fundraising or surplus profits
- Encouraging collective investment via community shares in the local economy
- Supply chain

The social impact



- Inclusivity and reducing local isolation
- Multi-generational benefit
- Cohesive community
- Relationships within the community (business / organisational)
- Access to key services
- Resilient communities
- Health and wellbeing of local residents



The environmental impact



- Management of green spaces and woodlands
- High spec environmental credentials on new builds
- Use of renewable energy / production of renewable energy
- Reduction on travel
- Links to local supplier networks

Building beyond Covid



- Higher levels of interest in Community Ownership of assets
- Campaigns to amend community rights legislation
- Community Ownership Fund
- A more connected and aligned support network

Responding to the “new norm”



- Interpreting different legislation and rules across the UK
- Shielding advice for volunteers and staff
- Upholding good governance
- Short-term cashflow
- Re-profiling business plans
- Fundraising
- Moth-balling operations or dealing with massive increase in custom

Adapting to circumstance



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- New ways of serving customers
- Variable demands on supply
- Eligibility of support available
- Collaborative approaches to service delivery
- Business openings (pop-up and permanent!)
- Running meetings and other social activities online



Credit: Robin Woolgar Photography

Resilience & resourcefulness



- People focussed
- “How can we do more?”
- New partnerships and collaborations
- Customer satisfaction
- Next generation of volunteers
- Rejuvenated support

Any questions?



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