

Whitley Stores

Working
together
for a new
village shop

SHAW  WHITLEY
COMMUNITY HUB

Dear Members and Volunteers,

As you know, following the closure of our shop at 116 Top Lane in December, we have been pursuing several options for reopening in new premises within Whitley or Shaw. We are delighted to be able to share with you a concrete proposal for moving forward with a new Whitley Stores to build on the success of our year and a half of operation.

The plans outlined in this brochure relate to establishing a community shop in a cabin within the car park of The Pear Tree Inn, on Top Lane, Whitley at the invitation of the Pear Tree landlords, Jackie and Adrian. The shop will be run by Shaw and Whitley Community Hub.

We plan to be open 7 days a week, provisionally 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday and 10am to 4pm on Sundays, but with hours to be fixed according to demand and volunteer availability. We are extremely grateful to Jackie and Adrian for coming to us with the offer of space to operate alongside them. They have experience in a previous pub of working together with an adjoining farm shop and in fact many community shops around the country operate successfully from local pub or village hall car parks.

As before, all profits will be put back into the community business, which will be staffed by volunteers, and any surplus used for the benefit of the wider communities of Shaw and Whitley through grants awarded to local groups or projects. In the longer term, we hope to be able to support a paid member of staff to operationally manage the shop.

We are a Community Benefit Society, registered with the Financial Conduct Authority. We are also a member of the Plunkett Foundation, a national charity that supports rural communities to set up and run community enterprises such as ours. We have been and continue to be advised by their experts. In common with other Community Benefit Societies, the Shaw and Whitley Community Hub is governed by a set of rules, which can be found on our website.

You will find in this document a description of the planned new shop proposal, a 'roadmap' of what is required to make this a reality, and some preliminary financial plans for the set-up and operation of what will be a larger shop than we had before.

We really want to ensure all our members support our way forward and feel fully engaged in our next steps. We therefore welcome your feedback on these initial plans.

One of our first and most pressing tasks is to submit a planning application for the site and we would be particularly interested to hear from anyone with any professional experience who might be able to support us with this.

We're excited to be moving forward with this new phase of the Whitley Stores journey and to have your support as we work to reopen the shop.

Nathan

Chair, Shaw and Whitley Community Hub
chair@shawandwhitleycommunityhub.org



Our Mission

To establish a community owned and run shop which can be an essential service and focal point for Shaw and Whitley, providing a range of fresh local produce and everyday essentials such as newspapers, bread and milk. In addition, the shop will be a social centre for the villages, offering volunteering opportunities and a space for locals to meet.

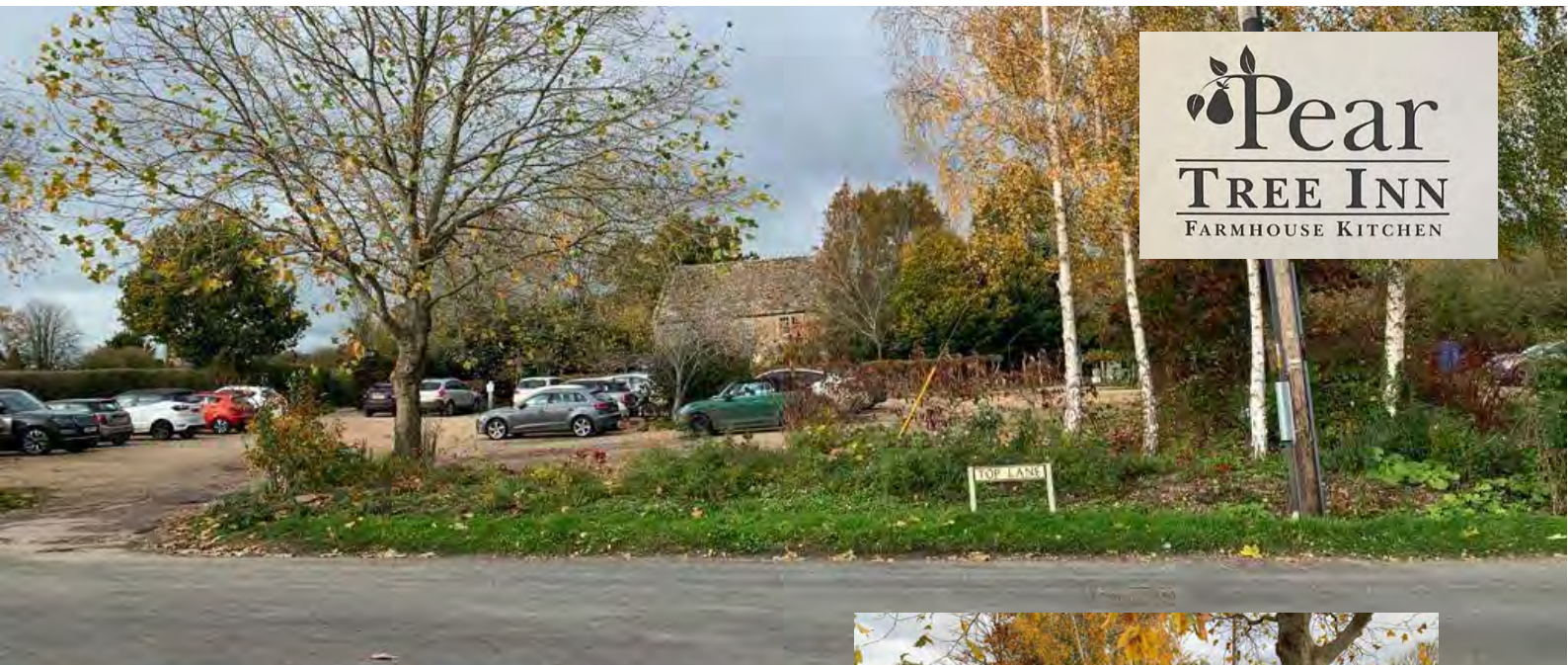


“Shaw and Whitley very much needs its own shop and we have enjoyed volunteering in Whitley Stores: meeting customers, new and old, and those who are new to the village who seek advice and information; making friends and chatting to lonely people who otherwise would not see anyone during the day ... All the volunteers are enthusiastic and work well as a team, fill in for others at short notice and are a happy, friendly bunch of people. We like doing something for the community of Shaw and Whitley and are pleased any profits are going to local good causes.”

Bob and Cecily



WHERE WILL THE NEW SHOP BE?



The proposed location for the new shop is along the front edge of the Pear Tree car park, in the space behind the flower bed on the right-hand side as you enter. It has been calculated that this position will have the least impact on the Pear Tree parking, taking up just two existing parking spaces. It also gives Whitley Stores a really visible position from the road, which will help to attract passing trade.



This keeps the shop in the established 'eye of the village', with easy access for pedestrians and plentiful parking for delivery vans and any customers who come by car.

We plan to operate out of a portacabin, but clad in timber for greater visual appeal, in a style similar to the samples below and with the design input and approval of Jackie and Adrian.



The proposed site has water and electricity supplies already in situ and it will be straightforward to install drainage in this location. There will be some ground works involved in preparing the site and foundations.

We are exploring the feasibility of installing solar panels on the roof to reduce electricity costs and a slight upstand in the cladding as shown will help to disguise these.

It's important to note that these plans are all subject to planning permission, but we are now in a position to prepare plans for submission of a planning application.

Our Offering

The size of the proposed portacabin is 30ft x 10ft. This is about twice the size of the area we had in the previous premises. This will allow us to stock a broader range of the items that sold well in the previous shop, benefit from improved profit margins by purchasing some items in larger quantities, and possibly expand into new product areas that we could not previously accommodate, such as cheaper refill options for household cleaning products, or a proper range of fresh fruit and vegetables to complement the seasonal Village Veg offering.

We plan to include space in the shop for a table and chairs, where customers can sit and chat with one another and with the volunteers. However, we will not sell food or drink for consumption on the premises.

With more space, we might be able to look again at the possibility of being a parcel drop-off point or offering some of the other amenities that were popular in our original survey before opening. We remain committed to trying to secure a visiting mobile Post Office to Whitley, though this is proving more challenging than anyone ever expected.

Rent

Discussions with Adrian and Jackie have formulated a plan for a limited rent, starting at £100 per month for the first year, then increasing to £200 and £300 over Years 2 and 3. This is a significantly lower financial liability than the shop's previous commitment and will enable the new shop to become established and sustainable. Electricity and water will be metered at point of entry and paid for according to usage.

Location

Subject to planning approval, the shop will be situated as indicated on the plan to the right. Anecdotally, this Pear Tree location is greatly favoured over other potential village contenders by our existing volunteers and many of our regular customers: as the centre of the village, with a good outlook and visibility to passing trade.

Landlords

Jackie and Adrian, members of Shaw and Whitley Community Hub, are keen to strengthen community links between the pub and the villagers and see the opportunity of hosting the village shop as one part of this commitment. The effects of Covid continue to ripple through the hospitality industry, together with rising costs and a diminishing labour pool, and we hope that our businesses will be able to support one another with reciprocal special offers, and building on the already established support of Whitley Stores to go from strength to strength.



Jackie and Adrian have experience of sharing their site with a shop and of working closely and harmoniously with a separate entity of that kind, and both we and they are committed to establishing a strong and successful working relationship. The two businesses will be stronger together.

Set-up

Power and water are already in place in the corner of the car park where the shop location is proposed. These will need to be routed into the cabin, and waste water from the shop piped into the sewerage system.

Access for installing a portacabin in this location is clear and straightforward. Some groundworks will be required to establish firm pad foundations for the building.

We will need to add to our shelving stock in order to fill the larger area and will achieve this with a combination of DIY shelving and possibly some further shelf units purchased to match the existing furniture.

We have offers of help for installing an electricity meter and connecting the supply, plumbing and external cladding of the building and are in discussions regarding solar panels and their supply and installation. That the building should look aesthetically pleasing is a prerequisite of the landlord, so we are budgeting accordingly for timber to clad the exterior.

We intend to purchase a second-hand portacabin that is already insulated, equipped with windows and appropriate doors, wired internally and with a handwash basin and possibly also WC in place. These are reasonably plentiful at an affordable price, and we will source something appropriate once planning approval is granted.

Planning

There are lots of considerations in assessing the likely success of a planning application on this site. These include distance from the highway, car parking, impact upon the local area, neighbouring or overlooking properties, location in the purlieu of a listed building, the fact that the proposed structure is a temporary building, and the community aspect of the application. The building's aesthetic will be a key planning consideration and we are seeking advice to support us in our application.

If any of our shareholders or volunteers have professional experience in planning law or the planning process, we would be most grateful to hear from you.

Running the Shop

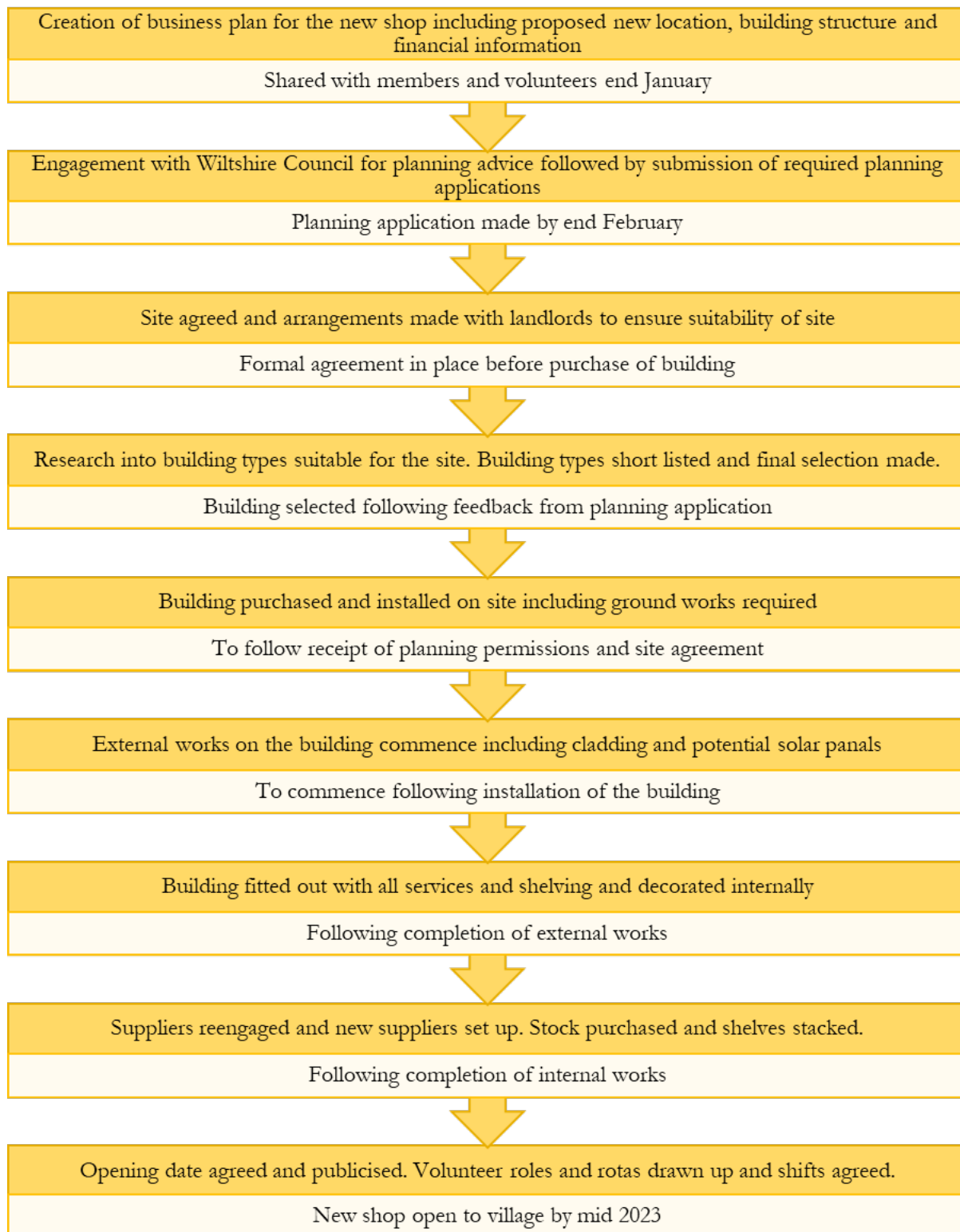
Just as before, the shop will be volunteer-run, with the backing of the steering group. We have had positive feedback from our existing team of volunteers, who almost unanimously are keen to return behind the counter in our new incarnation.

We will need two volunteers on duty at all times going forwards, so there will be more opportunities for existing and new volunteers to get involved.

With our own front door we will be able to set our own opening times to suit our customers and staff availability, and this might mean opening slightly earlier or later to accommodate villagers who work during the day, perhaps closing over lunch or at other quiet times.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Now we have narrowed down our location search to one site, we can press ahead with planning and practicalities. This flowchart shows the key processes and milestones between now and opening the new shop.



SHOP LOCAL, SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY

When you use Whitley Stores you will not just be 'shopping local' and supporting our many local suppliers, but also supporting your own community and helping to fund local projects with the profits. You are helping to guarantee for yourself convenient access to a comprehensive range of products and services, you are supporting those villagers with reduced mobility who find it difficult or impossible to venture further afield for their shopping, and helping to reduce isolation by supporting a venture that offers volunteering opportunities and social interaction for customers, too. You are both enhancing the rural economy and achieving a positive environmental impact.

We have prepared a business plan, which this document outlines. Our financial projections show that with the villagers' support the business will be sustainable, provided that we ensure we are responding to what you, the village communities, have told us you need.

We go into this reborn venture with valuable knowledge gained from our 18 months in the previous premises, both in understanding what sells and what does not, but also with the experiences of running a team of volunteers, dealing with our many suppliers, working with a landlord and with the feedback of our customers and volunteers.

Your initial investment in our community enterprise remains in place as we seek to relaunch in our proposed new premises. Community Shops offer a multitude of benefits to the mental and physical well-being of the volunteers helping to run them, to locals who use the facility, and also, in great measure, to the heartbeat of the village itself.

At the end of our first year of trading, we were able to award small financial grants to three local groups: Whitley Art Group, Whitley Cricket Club and the Parents and Friends of Shaw School.

It is often claimed that properties in villages with a thriving local shop are valued at around 5 per cent more than similar properties in areas without the same facility. Our research backs this up, with local estate agents agreeing that "A village shop draws people into an area, making it an attractive place to live" and "Good local facilities always assist in a sale".

We're excited to be working with Jackie and Adrian at the Pear Tree Inn to create a vibrant and sustainable community venture in the heart of Whitley, that will enhance village life.

Our shareholders will remember that as a new start-up business, investors in Shaw and Whitley Community Hub Limited may be able to obtain tax benefits under the HMRC Seed Enterprise Investment Scheme (SEIS). A plan for and evidence of business growth are required to gain HMRC approval for this, and we anticipate that this move to larger premises will help us to secure this.



FINANCING THE NEW VENTURE

After a year and a half of trading in our original premises, we feel confident that we have a model that works. Our turnover in our first year was £55,000 and with a larger shop area we hope to be able to increase this in our new location, starting with a target of £65,000, rising to £75,000 in Year 2 and £85,000 in Year 3. In line with actual figures from last year, gross profit has been estimated at 22% of turnover: community shops typically generate a gross profit of between 20 and 24%.

Set-up costs

We aim to be able to fund the set-up costs from our existing reserves, with support from additional grants, and we have already submitted some grant applications towards this and depending on the level of grants awarded, we will be able to retain more of our reserves or purchase a better appointed cabin.

There is power, water and drainage already in the corner of the car park where we will be sited, making the installation of utilities straightforward. Some groundworks will be required in order to provide adequate foundations, together with external landscaping to provide steps / ramp up into the shop as required.

Current balance	£24,000
Purchase of Portacabin	£4,000
Transport and siting works	£2,000
Groundworks and utilities	£1,000
Timber cladding	£4,000
Exterior landscaping	£1,000
Signage	£500
Shelving and internal furnishings	£1,000
WiFi set-up	£500
Heating / Aircon installation	£2,000
Stock	£4,000
Reserves / Contingency	£4,000

We will look to purchase a second-hand portacabin with windows that is already insulated, floored and fitted with lights and sockets. As a food handling business, it is also important to have hand-washing facilities as a minimum and possibly a WC for customer and volunteer use. Initial research shows available cabins at around £4,000, but we will not look in earnest until planning permission is granted.

Running costs

We will start with a rent of £100 per month, rising to £200 per month in Year 2 and settling at an ongoing figure of £300 from Year 3. This will allow us to grow our revenue steadily and sustainably.

Projected running costs show that we are working towards employing a part-time manager from part-way through Year 1, working alongside a team of 'super volunteers' to take on some of the tasks currently performed by the Steering Group. The part-time manager role salary has been estimated at the National Living Wage of £9.50ph, for 10 hours a week, plus National Insurance, but this role will only be feasible if we can achieve our revenue targets.

Power is set to remain a major expense. We have agreed with the Pear Tree that we will pay for our electricity at a consumed kWh level, at the same rate per kWh that they are billed. Based on the consumption of our existing appliances, a proposed heating and air conditioning unit, and miscellaneous items such as till, lights etc, we have estimated our first year's power costs to be c. £5,000 (calculated at the Pear Tree's assumed rate of 50p/kWh from October tbc).

Subject to planning approval and financing, we propose to install 8kW of solar panels to provide some of our energy from Year 2. The capital expenditure is too great to include this in the initial set-up. These panels will reduce our annual power costs to c.£1,500 and we hope to access grants to support the purchase and installation of these.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Turnover	£65,000	£75,000	£85,000
Cost of Sales	£50,700	£58,500	£66,300
Gross Profit	£14,300	£16,500	£18,700
Salary	£2,811	£5,847	£6,080
Rent	£1,200	£2,400	£3,600
Credit Card Fees	£601	£644	£729 (1.3% of 2/3 transactions)
Banking	£500	£550	£605
Power	£4,781	£1,481	£1,481 (Reducing in Y2 with solar)
WiFi	£360	£396	£436
Accounting	£1,000	£1,100	£1,210
Insurance	£1,000	£1,100	£1,210
Waste	£600	£660	£726
General / admin / IT	£1,400	£1,540	£1,694
Repairs	£0	£500	£550
	£90	£283	£378
Refrigeration	£2,000	4 x refrigeration units @ 1,000 kWh/annum	
Heating / Cooling	£2,281.25	5kW unit running at average 1.25kW for 10 hours a day	
Misc Electric	£500	Unit price of electric assumed = 50p	
	£4,781.25		

Whilst these figures show little more than breakeven at each year end, they are conservatively calculated, assuming 10% year-on-year inflation and a pessimistic electricity rate of 50p / kWh.

WHAT DOES WHITLEY STORES MEAN TO THE VILLAGE?

In September, 2020, we distributed 547 surveys – to each household in Shaw and Whitley – to gauge the level of interest in retaining a shop in the village and to explore the services and produce villagers would like to see. 79% of survey respondents rated having a village shop as Important or Very Important.

Village shop basics, such as Bread, Milk and Newspapers, all figured highly at >65% each.

Whitley Stores was designed to stock these importantly rated items from this survey and sold a wide variety of daily essentials, fresh breads and meats, local produce and seasonal offerings.



“I found the convenience of Whitley Stores very useful, especially for things like milk, bread, butter etc. i.e. the staple foods that it is so easy to run out of.”



In our first year of operation, Whitley Stores sold 10,779 newspapers and magazines 3,280 stamps, 2,970 pints of milk, 2,785 bakery items, 3,978 eggs, 1,932 sausages and 1,556 cans of pop. Our gift table showcased the work of local craftspeople and we made 1,065 sales altogether in this category. Our medicine selection saved the day for people on a number of occasions, including the grateful parent who had travelled from Seend and was delighted to find that we stocked Calpol. We were thrilled to support community events by running the bar tent at the CAWS Jubilee Fete and the barbecue at the Shaw School Summer Fayre.

VOLUNTEERING AT WHITLEY STORES

Community Shops are largely staffed and supported by volunteers. Our fantastic team of helpers served in the shop and also provided support in the background to ensure the smooth running of the store. Our volunteers told us that it was a very enjoyable and rewarding thing to do which not only really benefited the community, but the volunteers, themselves, too.

Here are some thoughts from our community shop volunteers:

“Whitley Stores was truly the heart of the community. People came not only to support us financially, but to meet friends, make new friends, share problems and joys and left feeling part of a special community.”

“I enjoyed my shifts in the shop, it felt like it was connecting the community and a central part of the village.”

“This wonderful asset was the central hub where locals were not only able to shop and collect papers but where in some cases it was the only chance they had to meet and chat to another person.”

“As a volunteer I felt I was playing a small part together with a group of similar minded people who were invited to serve in our village shop. I have enjoyed volunteering and meeting people in the village and beyond who I had not met before. Thank you.”





“I feel quite strongly that Whitley needs a village shop, hence the reason I volunteered. I’ve enjoyed trying to make myself useful, albeit only 1 shift per week due to other commitments, but Whitley Stores gave me the pleasure of meeting other volunteers and villagers, and this continues when collecting my paper and drinking hot chocolate with new friends at the Reading Rooms on Saturday mornings.”

We are keen to hear from anyone who would like to join the list of volunteers, be part of a new Operations Team to oversee the day to day running of the shop or join the SWCH Steering Group. There are volunteer roles that can be done from home or that do not require you to be operating the till, including stock control, ordering, some simple admin, managing the volunteer rota etc. Please do get in touch if you would like to find out more.

Supporting our Volunteers

Whitley Stores will have a volunteers’ handbook that is made available to existing and potential volunteers. This will clarify the expectations of volunteers, explain more about the Shaw and Whitley Community Hub and provide essential information for all volunteers. In addition to this, an updated Operations Manual will detail all shop procedures, including daily routines, dealing with till problems, ordering and more.

The SWCH steering group will regularly monitor its volunteer programme and seek to ensure feedback from volunteers informs the development of the society. Volunteer drop-in sessions and occasional social events will provide volunteers with an opportunity to meet members of the steering group and to come together with other fellow volunteers.



GROWING OUR MEMBERSHIP

Shaw and Whitley Community Hub is a Community Benefit Society, a member-owned organisation that seeks to provide benefits for the community it serves.

The benefits of our society of having a large and engaged membership is:

- Having a larger number of people who have a financial interest in the running of the enterprise and who are more likely to use it regularly.
- A greater number of people who attend AGMs and committee meetings and positively contribute to the overall direction of the business.
- A more accessible pool of people to draw on when committee numbers are falling, or when more volunteers are needed to help run the business.

The SWCH rules require it to have a membership strategy to ensure 'membership' remains at the heart of the enterprise, whereby the society continues to grow membership and engage its members.

We will seek to grow our membership year on year, beyond the current 175 members who originally invested in our society.

Anyone over the age of 18 years old can apply to join our society as a member by investing the minimum sum of £10 into our society. Our membership application form is available on our website.

MEET THE STEERING GROUP



Nathan Hall has lived in the Shaw & Whitley community with his wife Claire since 2004 and has seen his now teenage sons, Evan and Finn grow up here. He has worked in NHS Management since 1997, and currently leads national improvement programmes for NHS England. He has previously been a Governor at Shaw Primary School, chaired the Board that established the Academy Trust of Melksham and has provided mentoring support to young people. Nathan was born and brought up in the South Wales valleys, where he developed his interests in sport, music and the outdoors.



The vibrancy of our village is extremely important to **Alison Candlin**. She'd been a city girl before moving to Whitley in 2008 to be close to family in Corsham, but has discovered a passion for the surrounding open spaces and for being part of a tight-knit and supportive community. Alison works from home as a marketing professional and writer, so spends more or less all of her time in the village or walking the family spaniel around it. She lives here with her three boys and husband, John. She was Chair of Shaw School PTA for three years, does her utmost to support local businesses and feels passionately that a good village shop is an essential part of the tapestry of rural life.



Charlotte Yates has lived in the village for 12 years with her husband and 2 daughters. Both daughters attended Daisychain nursery and then Shaw school where Charlotte was treasurer of the school PTA for a number of years. Charlotte enjoys living in Whitley and spends time appreciating her local area while out walking her dog. Charlotte is a keen supporter of the community attending local events and frequenting the Pear Tree and she feels strongly that a village shop should be at the heart of a village. Charlotte works for a local Pharmaceutical company in Chippenham where she leads a team of research scientists.



Dominic Szanto has lived in Shaw and Whitley for 15 years with his wife – a local artist – and daughter. He works for an international renewable energy developer, managing investments in offshore wind projects. In addition, he is a Trustee of Wiltshire Citizens Advice. Away from work, Dom's interests are politics, football, and travelling. He describes himself as a keen musician whose enthusiasm is unencumbered by talent.



Originally from Yorkshire, **John Lister** spent many years living overseas and travelling all over the world with his work in construction and project management software before settling in Whitley, just 10 miles from his University town of Bath, in 2008. He now manages a software consultancy in Leeds from the office at the bottom of his garden. John is Group Scout Leader at 1st Broughton Gifford and Holt Scouts. In his spare time, John can usually be found in his woodworking shop or knocking up a tree house. He's the person all his friends turn to for DIY advice (and tool hire).



Martin Moorshead and his wife Jo moved to Whitley in 2013 being the perfect mid-point between their family homes near Bath and Chippenham. Their two children have since progressed through the Reading Rooms Toddler Group, Beeches Pre-School, and Shaw Primary School. Having worked from home on occasion in the past, and far more frequently in recent times, he has strengthened his view that a local shop and community hub are essential parts of village life. Outside of work Martin can often be seen running or cycling the lanes and trails around the village, although he says this is mainly to justify indulgence at the Pear Tree rather than for the enjoyment of keeping fit.

Thank you for taking the time to read this brochure. We hope we can count on your support and look forward to working with the villages to create a vibrant community hub that will benefit everyone in Shaw and Whitley.

Shaw and Whitley Community Hub Limited is a Community Benefit Society registered with the Financial Conduct Authority (Registration Number 8571)

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