Auchencairn village shop consultation

Thank you to everyone who attended the consultation events on January 15th 2022 in the Link Park and the Village Hall. Around sixty people participated; this was a brilliant effort from the village. In addition, people have expressed their views via email, the website, and forms posted in the shop.

The results

- 78 responses in total from 387 residents (20%)
- 69 in favour of establishing a community shop (option 3)
- 4 in favour of seeking new leaseholders (option 2)
- 0 responses for closing the shop (option 1)
- 3 in favour of new leaseholders with a community benefit society as a fallback
- 2 gave equal weight to leaseholder or community shop options depending on business planning

From discussions and written comments

Comments and issues raised on the continuation of the shop and cafe	Response from the Initiative
"The shop currently feels like the heart of the community"	We recognise how important the shop has become to residents and visitors. The positive response to the current shop and café services means we will push forward with plans for these to continue.
"A village with no community facilities is a dying village and Auchencairn is certainly not that"	
"I do 80% of my shopping here"	

Comments and issues raised on the leaseholder option	Response from the Initiative
"…legally far more straightforward and clear cut"	We agree that the leaseholder option could be more straightforward in the short term but must weigh this against long term benefits of other models. Previous experience of attracting new leaseholders met with a very limited response. There is a risk that any lengthy recruitment process could involve a closure of the shop after the current leaseholders leave in March.
"There are many examples of community run enterprises having a poor outcome and private enterprise doing far better."	We recognise that this is a risk. We also know that in the Stewartry – Palnackie, Balmaclellan and New Galloway – there are community enterprises which have worked. For a range of examples across the UK please refer to the Plunkett Foundation.

Comments and issues raised on the continuation of the Post Office	Response from the Initiative
"What will happen to the Post Office?" "The space currently taken up by the PO could be utilised for shop / café" "There are Post Office transactions which can be undertaken at a shop till."	The Post Office is yet to respond to the resignation of the leaseholders. The use of the Post Office has changed considerably since 2005 when it became part of the shop. We are awaiting discussion with the Post Office.

Comments and issues raised on the Community Benefit Society option	Response from the Initiative
"Other community shops in the area – Balmaclellan or New Galloway have a good reputation"	We agree. These businesses are well supported and provide a valuable service to their communities. Discussions will take place with the managers of these shops to understand how they have implemented the model locally. Further support and advice will be provided by the Plunkett Foundation.
"Unlikely there would be any 'profits' if Community owned?"	The current leaseholders have turned the shop/café into a profitable enterprise. **With the same support from the current customer base,** there is no reason for that to change. There are always risks with any business and we acknowledge profit is not a foregone conclusion. The advantage of a Community Benefit Society (CBS) is that it puts profits back into community projects, that is the reason for its existence.
"Are you going to issue shares?	The exact model and process will be decided by the CBS once it is established. Shares may be considered after advice has been sought on the simplest initial model to move forward without interruption to the shop services. Because we own the building, shop fittings and the larger appliances, we are in a very good position and only need funds to buy out the existing stock. We have had offers of help to cover this.

Comments and issues raised on employment opportunities	Response from the Initiative
"Will the manageress position be advertised?"	To provide continuity, the current experienced manager's employment will transfer. However, other part time positions are required and they will be advertised in due course.

Comments and issues raised on communication	Response from the Initiative
"Will there be another meeting?"	There will be no further public consultation events. Progress will be posted on the website and through the "What's on" email when appropriate. The CBS will need to recruit as many members as possible from the community so a campaign and event will be held for that.
"Has information been posted through everyone's doors?"	No. Every effort was made within the time constraints to reach as many people as possible through the website, flyers in the shop, the What's On email and two public meetings. Responses show we have been reasonably successful.

Moving forward

The following volunteers have come forward to form the interim Board of Directors / Trustees of the Community Benefit Society (CBS)

- Brian Jones
- Christine Sankey
- Jan O'Donnell
- Jennifer Green
- Susanna Pallinder

It will be good to have three more people if possible – all talents welcome. Contact Brian Jones 07760 884 113.

With support from the Initiative and the Community Council, they will now work together to establish the legal and financial framework for the CBS for Auchencairn Shop. They will develop a business plan based on the current successful model provided by the shop and café and they will begin discussions with the Post office. They will identify staff resources required, transfer existing staff contracts and recruit additional staff as needed. Using local best practise and advice from the Plunkett Foundation the aim will be to make the shop as successful as possible to serve local residents and invest "profits" in the community.

Once the Community Benefit Society is ready and members are recruited the first full Board of Directors can be voted in democratically.