

The Boot, Orleton – Community Bid Public Meeting

Minutes of inaugural public meeting

Held at 6pm on 20th December 2017, at Orleton Village Hall.

This was a public meeting to discuss a possible community based bid for the Boot Inn, Orleton.

The meeting was held in Orleton Village Hall and attended by 77 people (although one had to leave before the end).

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1. This was the inaugural public meeting to discuss the future of the Boot Inn, following its closure earlier in the year, and to ascertain whether there is a desire to try and retain the Boot Inn as a pub within Orleton village.
 2. The start of the meeting was delayed due to technical issues with the overhead projector. As those issues could not be resolved, John Alderman spoke without the benefit of presentation slides. The contents of the slide deck which could not be shown at the time, is included in these minutes at Appendix A.
 3. John Alderman outlined the current position:
 - The Boot has been a pub in the heart of the community for many years.
 - The Neighbourhood Development Plan has identified the Boot as a community facility with a high level of support.
 - The Boot has been closed since June 2017.
 - The property is for sale, but is being marketed at a price that appears to reflect the development potential of the site rather than its business value as a public house.
 - There is a real risk that change of use could be sought and, if that were to be successful, the Boot might never reopen as a pub.
 4. John Alderman then described some of the support that is available, if the meeting attendees wished to try and pursue a community based bid to purchase and operate the Boot:
 - The charitable Plunkett Foundation (www.plunkett.co.uk) supports people – particularly in rural areas - in setting up and running community co-operatives. This covers many types of initiatives, including pubs.
 - We have offers of support from experienced professionals in the licence trade.
 - There are many templates available from successful community bids elsewhere in the UK.
 5. John Alderman also outlined some basic precepts:
 - The community can make a commercial bid to buy the Boot (and has a right to make such a bid, since the pub was listed as a Community Asset) but the owner is under no obligation to accept such a bid.
 - If the community chooses to mount a bid, participation will be open to anyone who wishes to join, with everyone having an equal vote.
 - Any community bid will be framed within a model using a registered, limited liability, organisation. It will be regulated by – and use a financial model approved by – the Financial Conduct Authority.

- The business plan will be written on the basis that a tenant or manager will be appointed to run the Boot (with appropriate oversight); it will not be run 'by committee'.
- The business plan will be a commercial proposition (paying staff commercial rates) and will not adopt unfair competitive practises (such as volunteer labour).

6. The meeting then took questions and comments from the floor. There was considerable support and several suggestions of individuals and organisations who might be of assistance. There were also a number of questions clarifying some of the points covered by John Alderman in his earlier presentation.

7. When all attendees had had an opportunity to comment, there was a vote on whether those present wished to pursue a community bid to purchase the Boot Inn. The attendees were overwhelmingly in favour of pursuing a community purchase.

8. John Alderman had anticipated that there would be support to progress with a purchase bid. He informed the meeting that he has contacted the Plunkett Foundation, which has confirmed that we are eligible for £2,500 of funding to assist in starting the community bid process.

9. One of the essential initial steps is to elect officials – at a minimum a Chairman, Treasurer, and Secretary. It was stressed that the initial appointments of these officials are to cover the development of the community proposition and business plan. As part of the process to review and approve the overall bid, the community will be able to appoint new officials if it wishes.

10. The meeting voted in the following officials:

- Chairman: John Alderman
- Treasurer: Bob Williams
- Secretary: Jon Best

11. Bev Jenkins volunteered to assist with developing the community bid and was endorsed by the attendees.

12. Given that the Plunkett Foundation has confirmed funding is available, John Alderman will be contacting a valuer (recommended by the Foundation) who will work at a reduced rate and will also produce an extended report that can form the basis of a commercial; business case.

13. John Alderman will also contact the liquidators and estate agent associated with the sale of the Boot Inn, in order to arrange access to the property in early January 2018.

14. The date of the next meeting will be confirmed, but is planned to be held by the end of January 2018.

Jon Best
December 31st 2017

Actions

20171220-01 **JA** : Communicate to the Boot Inn liquidators, the community's intention of mounting a bid to purchase the Boot.

20171220-02 **JA** : Arrange an appointment to access the Boot Inn in order to obtain a valuation and an assessment of the condition of the premises and any necessary work. (The aspirational date is January 8th 2018.)

20171220-03 **JA** : Submit an application for bursary support to the Plunkett Foundation.

20171220-04 **JB** : Compile an email mailing list from the supplied details of attendees.

Appendix A – Presentation Slides

Public Meeting Wed 20th Dec 6 to 7pm Orleton Village Hall



A Short meeting to discuss a possible community based bid for the Boot Inn

Objective of meeting

First – many apologies for the short notice

To facilitate a Community based bid with objective of retaining the Boot Inn as a pub / restaurant at the heart of the village

From the Neighbourhood Development Plan

9.19 The residents of Orleton parish greatly value both the individual and range of community facilities and services within Orleton village. These include its Primary School, its pubs, the village hall, playing field, play area, GP surgery and the village shop. At least 9 out of 10 of Orleton parish residents expressed support for each of these and for many it was nearly 100%. In terms of new facilities that might be provided the suggestions that these might include a village green and allotments received luke-warm support. The support suggests that any funds accrued through development should be concentrated upon ensuring the retention, improvement and operation of existing facilities.

Support of local services and ideally in village jobs - both pubs, shop, bus service etc. etc. Use them or lose them !

Status

Freehold property, with the Grade II listed buildings and environs, trading as successful pub for many many years

Boot Inn has been put up for sale with Sidney Phillips <http://www.sidneyphillips.co.uk/fulldetails.php?prn=40823>

“Highly successful C16 village inn
Bar/two restaurants
Three bedroom owners accommodation
Feature beer garden/large car park
Set in 0.52 of an acre
Currently closed”

Several bids are understood to have been made. However it is now believed all to have been rejected having been considered inadequate due to 'development potential' of property

Status cont.

Asset of Community Value (ACV) raised by parish council, superseding the CAMRA 'form' bid, with 21+ local signatures, that had been underway due to rumours of impending closure. This gives a right to bid (not to buy) and is in place for 5 years but can be renewed

As a commercial solution, with the Boot remaining as a viable business, was the preferred solution and with a known experienced interested party this option was allowed to run its course

Business owning the pub has been put into voluntary liquidation after ceased trading in June

Two weeks ago, after ascertaining from the agents that the pub was still for sale, asked for access to the building to get a commercial valuation and sight of books to allow business plan to be formulated with aim of a bid on behalf of the community to be made

What now ?

We could be running very tight on time but I believe this could be best opportunity to retrain the Boot as a Pub in the village in perpetuity

Form a community company, suggest this to be based on model's available from the Plunkett Organisation (part of the co-op movement with the

Plunkett Foundation a charity founded in 1919 and represent a network of over 500 rural community co-operatives

<https://www.plunkett.co.uk/about-us>

- Organisation has to and will be open to everyone who wishes to join – not just those with deepest pockets with all members having an equal vote
- Will be regulated by the FCA, with limited liability and some models have methods of repayment and even potentially dividends
- Choice of model will be included in the business plan

Who will run it ?

Offers of support / involvement from experienced licence trade professionals available

- Nigel Burge formally ran “15th Century Drewe Arms in the beautiful thatched village of Broadhembury (featured in the Michelin Eating Out In Pubs Guide 2011, The Good Pub Guide 2011 & Alastair Sawdays's Pubs & Inns Guide 2011)” prior to his retirement . He is willing to advise on and to run initial re-opening until re-established
- Nick Davis of Hobsons (who re-opened Boot when it was closed in 1996)
- Will not being run by a ‘committee’ a tenant or manager will be appointed who will run it as a business reporting to the membership
- We will not be unfair competition – we will employ people at correct rate and not utilise volunteers for the bar, restaurant, cleaning etc.
- Fabric and major infrastructure programmes will be responsibility of the membership

A Possible Plan

Do we wish to pursue community purchase ? **Open discussion to follow**

Elect initial 3 (to ideally 7) officials - Chair, Sec and Treasurer min so a legal company can be set up to bid

Take names and contact of initial members - 'pledge form'. This is non binding, has no initial cost but will allow firm evidence of support to be gauged for business plan development. This information will be confidential with only elected officers having access to the details

After this meeting and prior to Christmas break confirm intention to bid with administrators and agents and again request access to building and trading details

Form working groups both for bid and plan for long term

Actions

- Confirm setting up of Community organisation to try to purchase pub
- Open membership / pledge form
- Elect first officials - min Chair, Treasurer, Secretary
- Set up working groups – Membership, Business plan, Operations, Communications ...
- Confirm interest of community with administrator and agents – request again access, ideally 2nd week of January 2018
- Join Plunkett organisation – apply for bursary support, face to face advice, select appropriate legal structure
- Date / time of next meeting

Finish

**Close of meeting - thanks to all and again apologies
for the short notice**

**Off now to support local business at the Bakers
Arms, as soon as tidied up the hall !**

Happy Christmas and New Year

**Contacts for further details and especially for confidential
confirmation of interest and support**

John Alderman 01568 780566 john.alderman5@gmail.com

Jon Best 01568 711908 jon@crumbling-mansions.co.uk

Bob Williams 01568 780498 thebeedub@gmail.com

Appendix B – Brief CV of elected officials

John Alderman

John is a retired research scientist. He undertakes consultancy work in micro and nano technologies, and owns a holiday let in Orleton village. John has expertise in running multidisciplinary groups, international project management, grant applications, and obtaining funding.

Bob Williams

Bob was formerly an officer in the Royal Navy. He subsequently worked as a regional manager for a computer manufacturer before founding his own software company of 100+ employees, supplying bespoke accounting/admin systems to a variety of business sectors. He has since acted as Financial Director or Chairman of a number of successful business startups.

Jon Best

Jon is a specialist in information technology with extensive experience across both Government and commercial business sectors. Jon has been involved in significant solution deliveries for major national and international organisations.

Bev Jenkins

Bev was an Environmental Health Officer with the Local Authority for 20 years, specialising in microbiology, Health and Safety, Food Hygiene, legislation, and training in all afore-mentioned areas. She has experience dealing with public houses, hotels, factories, retail outlets and other food-related establishments - including brewery-owned public houses. Bev has lived in Orleton for over 20 years and now teaches at a local school.