

Statement for Gosfield Community Shop

Please may I introduce myself for those of you that don't know me, My name is Isla Gill, I am currently the Chair of Gosfield Community Shop. This post I have held since September 19. The shop as you are aware was taken over by the current group of volunteers in Late August 19. With no capital the parish council lent us £3000 to cover initial stock and insurances with hard work and sheer determination the shop opened up within the week an continued to trade. We have repaid our loan to the parish council in full and are making a healthy profit within our first year.

May I point out to you at this stage, the entire business model is run by volunteers including the committee. Our current building is loaned to us with the view that we return the building back once our permanent home has been built.

Our turnover for the year has hit £185k, we have accounts which are well managed and balanced daily with a clear vision and plan on how our funds are spent and what we stock. During COVID-19 our volunteers went above and beyond to ensure we have fully stocked shop, we are open 7 days a week. We have improved the current shop with new fixtures and fittings, fridges, freezers, ice cream freezers, signage. All of these items will be moved to the new premises. We have a healthy 20k currently in our bank account ready to take the building from its first fix stage to a complete shop.

Our volunteers and community are everything to us. At the start of lockdown we had 48 volunteers, this reduced to 8 overnight. We continued to remain open, gained extra volunteer helpers who were furloughed and flourished into a community asset that the village really couldn't live without. Our highest takings on one particular day during lockdown totalled £1600. Yet our footfall remains similar.

We have given back to the community, our shielded volunteers received gifts at easter, we shared sweets with children and were home delivered to lift spirits. The food bank collection point was moved to the shop when the church closed due to COVID-19. We have worked alongside the parish council also during lockdown to assist with any shielding residents. We are so much more than a shop, the social aspect that we offer to our customer and volunteers alike. A friendly face, an offer of help and sometimes just an ear to listen. This has never been so important as it has been this year.

The location of the shop is key to its success, located in the parish owned car park, giving ease of access for all. The playing field is a busy hub during weekends with senior and junior football taking place. We are well located for children and carers using the park. Many use the car park facility to collect/drop pupils to school using the shop in the process.

Although the funding for the project will be managed by the Parish council, the shop committee will work closely with them and be involved in the build. Currently the community benefit society has been set up and we are part of the Plunkett foundation that supports local non-profit enterprises we have yet to set up and sell shares for this as we believe as a committee that we need a permanent home and a guaranteed future before this progresses any further.

On behalf of the committee, the volunteers and the wider community I really hope that this evenings committee find favour in the application before them, this is a long term project and benefit to all concerned. I thank you for your time.