



Save The Forester Community Update 26th July 2026

Did You Know that The Forester has a (tenuous) link to North Korea

From Local Pub to Pyongyang: The Extraordinary Journey of The Forester:

Most pubs have a few good stories behind them — but The Forester has one that crosses continents, involves two world leaders, Russian engineers, and even a nuclear-proof Mercedes.

The Forester was an Ushers' Pub, part of the Wiltshire Brewing Company in Trowbridge. When Ushers collapsed in 1999, its brewing equipment was put up for sale. What happened next still feels like something out of a spy novel.



In 2000, the entire brewery — every brick, tank, pipe, and pump — was purchased for £1.5 million by none other than Kim Jong-Il, Supreme Leader of North Korea. The buildings were dismantled brick by brick, the equipment cut apart by Russian and North Korean engineers, and together with 20,000 kegs were loaded onto ships at Avonmouth. Their destination: Wonsan, and eventually Pyongyang, where it was reassembled as the Taedonggang Brewing Factory.

British authorities delayed departure to ensure the equipment couldn't be repurposed for chemical or biological weapons and that nothing was concealed in the fermentation tanks — a reasonable precaution given North Korea's earlier attempt to smuggle two MiG fighter jets out of Cuba inside a shipment of sugar. And as if that weren't enough,

the ship made a detour en route to pick up a Mercedes truck modified as a one-seat nuclear shelter for the “Dear Leader.”

Within just 18 months, the brewery was rebuilt in Pyongyang and began production in 2002. It launched seven beers — draught, black, and rice varieties, all at 5.7% — simply named Beer Number One, Beer Number Two, and so on. The deal earned Kim Jong-Il a new nickname: **Kim Jong-ale**.

According to North Korean folklore, the women of Trowbridge forced the Ushers brewery to close down in protest as the men were apparently always drunk from drinking beer all day.

Where We Stand on the Pub Acquisition

Our formal offer — based on the Red Book Valuation and independent Condition Survey — was submitted on 13th May. Discussions continue around an acceptable purchase price, however there has been little to report and we are still some way away from reaching an agreement. However we feel it is important to keep you informed even when progress has been limited. We will call a public meeting once a purchase price has been agreed.

We are preparing our objection should the owners appeal the Change of Use decision. Wiltshire Planning and the Plunkett Foundation remain fully updated. Plunkett have kindly offered to write in support of our offer.

Fundraising Momentum

Pledges now stand at **£601,300 from 166 supporters** — an extraordinary show of belief in the project.

Once a sales agreement is in place, we’ll launch a coordinated social media and crowdfunding campaign to widen our reach. Early responses to grant applications are encouraging, and we’ll continue applying.

Business Planning & Finance

A specialist in community business accounting has rebuilt our Profit & Loss, Balance Sheet and Cash Flow into one integrated model, giving investors confidence in the numbers.

Local hospitality professionals have reviewed our tenancy forecast and offered invaluable advice. Their input strengthens our belief that future tenants can run a thriving, sustainable business.

We’ve engaged local solicitors and are considering applying for the Community Shares Standard Mark.

Tenants & Future Operations

We’re speaking with search agencies and learning from other successful community pubs. Several expressions of interest have already come in. We’ll follow these up once a sales agreement is secured — and if you know someone who might be a great fit, please encourage them to send a CV.

Refurbishment & Renovation

The Historic Building Advisory Service (Tisbury) has completed a full schedule of refurbishment works. Local tradespeople are reviewing the plans. This means we'll be ready to move quickly once the pub is secured.

How You Can Help Right Now

1. Funding

- If you haven't pledged yet, please do — every pledge counts.
- Spread the word to friends, colleagues, and businesses.

2. Publicity & Social Media

Help us show strong community backing:

- Follow us on Facebook and Instagram
- Visit and share www.supporttheforester.org

Engagement on these channels strengthens our case with investors and grant bodies.

3. Pub History & Stories

- Do you have memories or anecdotes about The Forester? We'd love to share them — they help bring the pub's legacy to life and we can add them to our new history section on the website, thanks to Chris Hart for researching and writing it and David Curlless for his excellent work in building and managing the website.