



Save The Forester

Public Meeting 15th November 2025 Held at Donhead St Andrew's Church

Agenda



1. Introduction
Who we are
Situation
2. How to secure the Pub
Fight the Change of Use
Status of the Asset of Community Value (ACV)
Form a Community Benefit Society (CBS)
3. Survey results
4. Vision for the pub
5. Voting
Formation of a CBS
Approval of Interim Management Board
6. Open Floor

1. Introduction

Who we are (so far!) Interim Management Committee



Simon Barkham, Chairman PC, Geologist, DSTA

Miranda de Bellaigue, Marketing/Comms, DSTA

Peter Dawson, Lawyer, DSTA

Natalie Everest, Financial Analyst, DSTA

Nick Martin, General Management, DSTA

Alistair Stoker, Dep Chairman PC, Accountant, DSTA

Situation Summary

Where are we now?



- The Forester has been closed since February.
- On the market for £550K
- Serious interest at £400-450K has been rejected
- Owners applying for change of status to **residential**
 - Community group established to challenge application & to seek alternative strategies for saving the pub

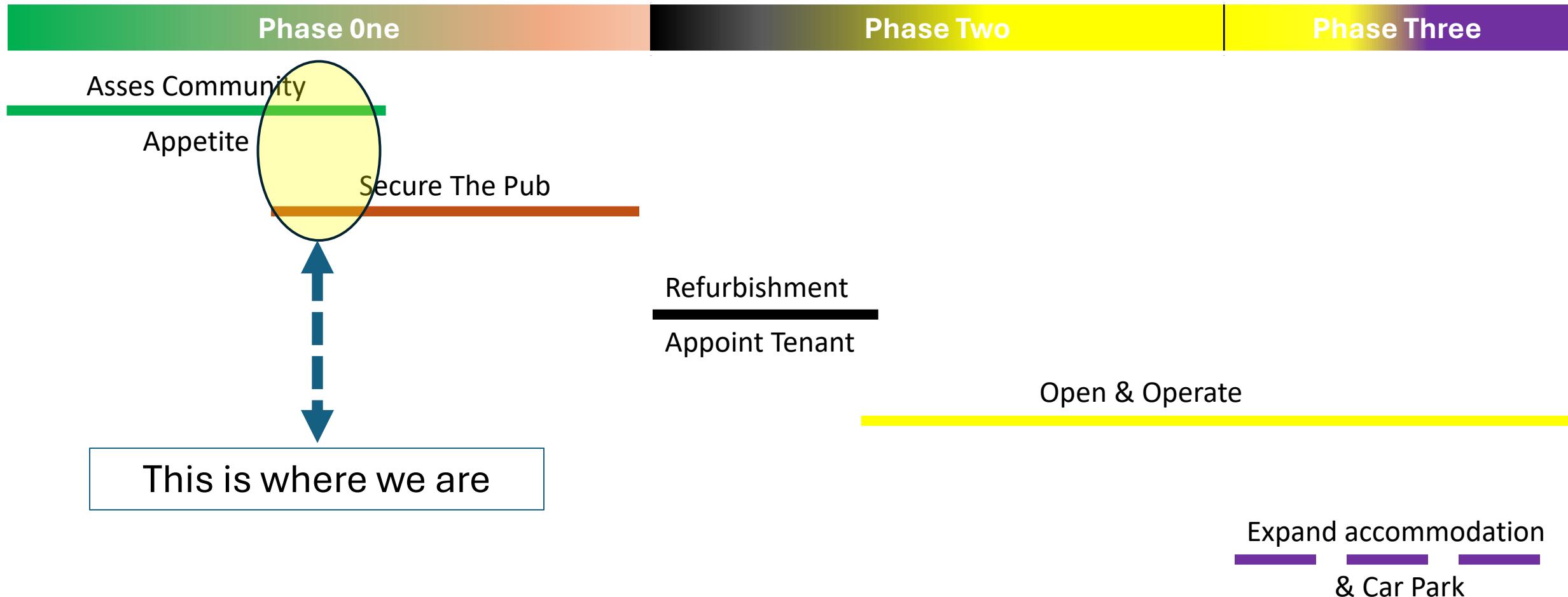
Where do we want to be ?



A commercially viable, welcoming village pub at the heart of today's Donhead community



Campaign - Project Outline



Campaign – Community Appetite/Secure The Forester



Christie For Sale Sign
Individuals voice concerns to PC
Initial contact with Plunkett Foundation

PC informed of a change of use
ThisIsAlfred interview
PC vote to nominate pub as ACV
PC submitted nomination

173 Responses to questionnaire
230 email addresses registered
Membership of Plunkett Foundation
Public Meeting Today
Expect ACV determination
Expect Change of Use determination

August

October

July

September

November

Sounded out community
Community campaign begins with flyers
Donhead Digest distribution
Visited Fox & Hounds & Black Dog

246 objections to change of use
135 Comments in Support ACV
Questionnaire issued
3 visits to survey pub
2 yr Profit & Loss statement
CAMRA advice taken
CBS Documentation initiated
Interim Man Comm formed
ThisIsAlfred interview

2. How to Secure The Pub

How do we get there?



No 1 Priority

Prevent the Council issuing a
change of use to residential

Vendors might consider rejected offers
Or lower price and receive a new offer

✓ **PROBLEM SOLVED!**

Gain Asset Of Community Value Status

Form a Community Benefit Society

Establish Management Committee

RAISE FUNDS TO SECURE THE PUB

No 1 Priority - Fighting the application from Country Inns for change of use from pub to residence



Planning officer must be satisfied that:

1. There will be no detrimental impact on the community



Leaves village with NO ad hoc meeting space -> isolation, loss of employment, Village Design Statement & Wilts Plan

2. The pub has been robustly marketed



Evidenced by 18 registrations of interest, 7 serious viewings, 3 offers it is overpriced

3. The pub is no longer viable



High gross margin in last 2 years, was run successfully for previous 10 years Failure by Country Inns not the market

And one consideration

Community commitment, determination and organisation



**246 objections to planning app
135 comments in support for ACV
Formation of CBS**

Asset of Community Value (ACV) update



- What buildings can be ACV?



Buildings that further social wellbeing

- How does a building become an ACV?



Nomination by recognized community group

- Status of application



135 supporting comments, decision imminent

- What is the effect of being an ACV?



Designation lasts 5 years; 6 week window for community to express interest in purchase (for completion in 6 months)

Community Benefit Society (CBS)



- What is a CBS and why form one?



Limited liability legal entity

- How does it differ from a limited company?



Benefits wider community; managed by elected committee on behalf of members; one member one vote

- Our route to CBS



Support from Plunkett Foundation charity that supports community pubs

- Next stages in formation of CBS



Plunkett can help with FCA application, business plan, share offering & fundraising

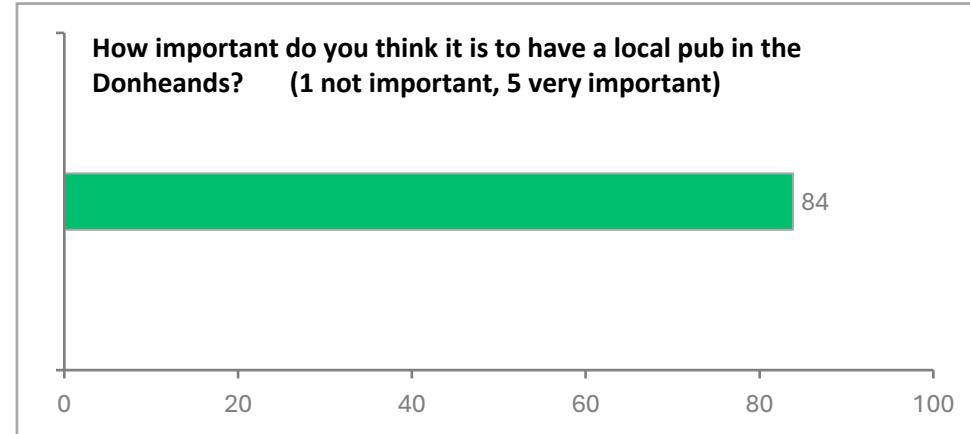


3. Survey Results & Vision For Pub

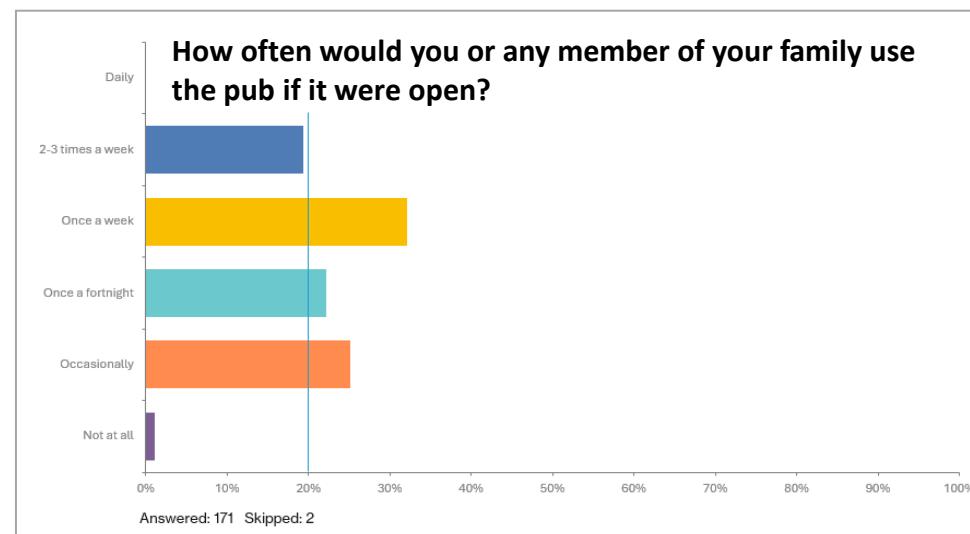


- DATE: 6th October 2025
- 173 responses

Having a pub is important to the community & will play a regular part in many people's lives



On average, respondents give the importance of having a local pub a 4.2/5. Indicating that this IS something that matters significantly

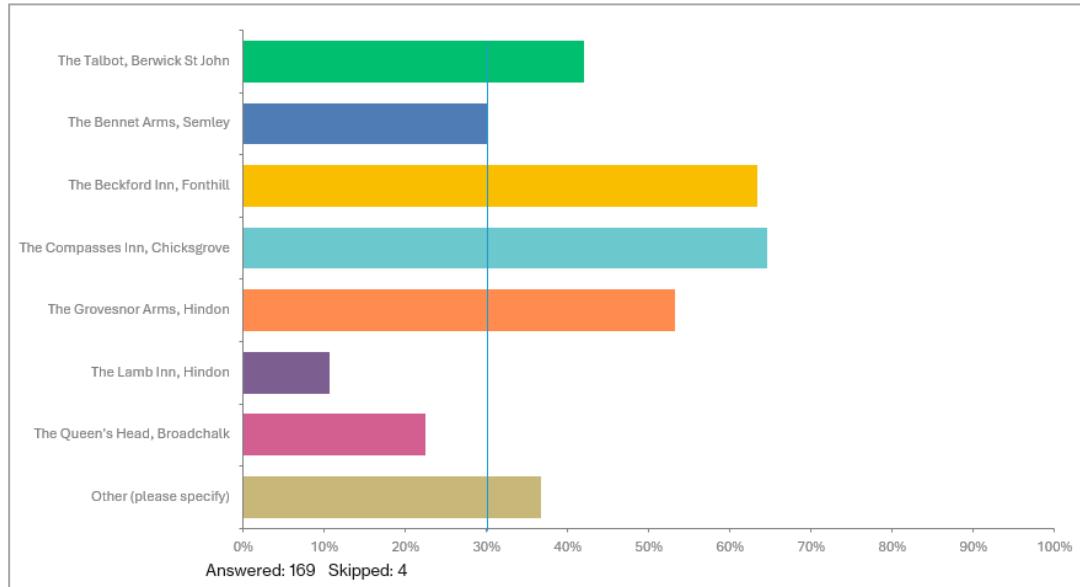


While claimed future behaviour is a poor indicator of actual behaviour, the fact that around 75% of respondents would use the pub at least once a fortnight indicates they expect it to be a regular part of their lives

The Beckford, Compasses & Grosvenor are visited by the majority of respondents. Indicating a willingness to travel 7-8miles (15-20 minute car). The Forester clearly needs to match in order to achieve this appeal

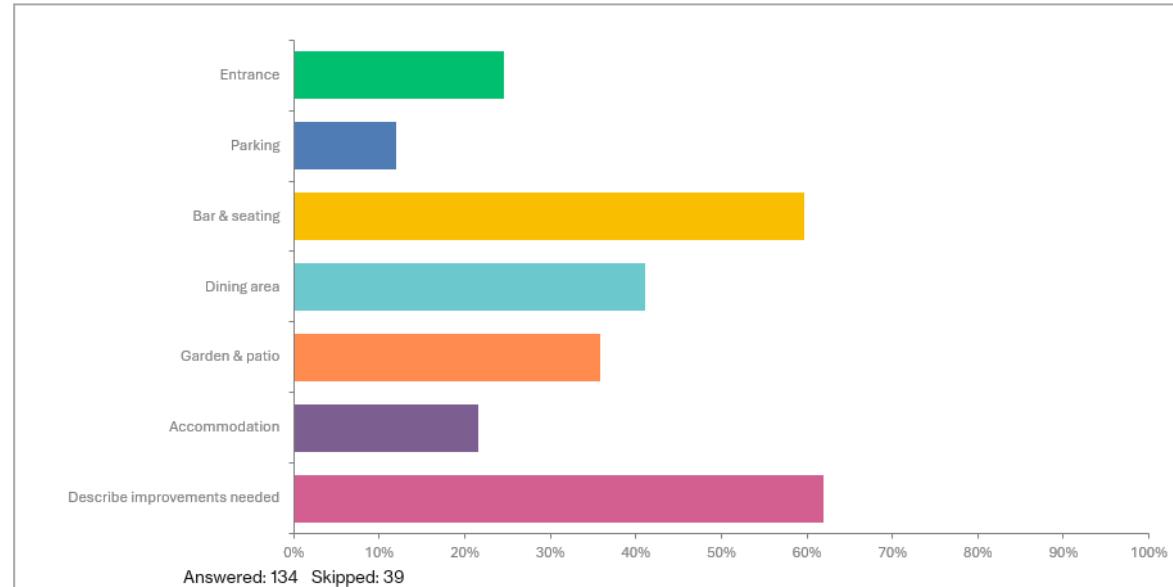


Which local pubs have you been using since the Forester closed?



This indicates that a similar catchment area could be considered for The Forester if it is able to achieve a similar level of appeal in food and ambience

What are your thoughts on how the current state of The Forester could be improved?

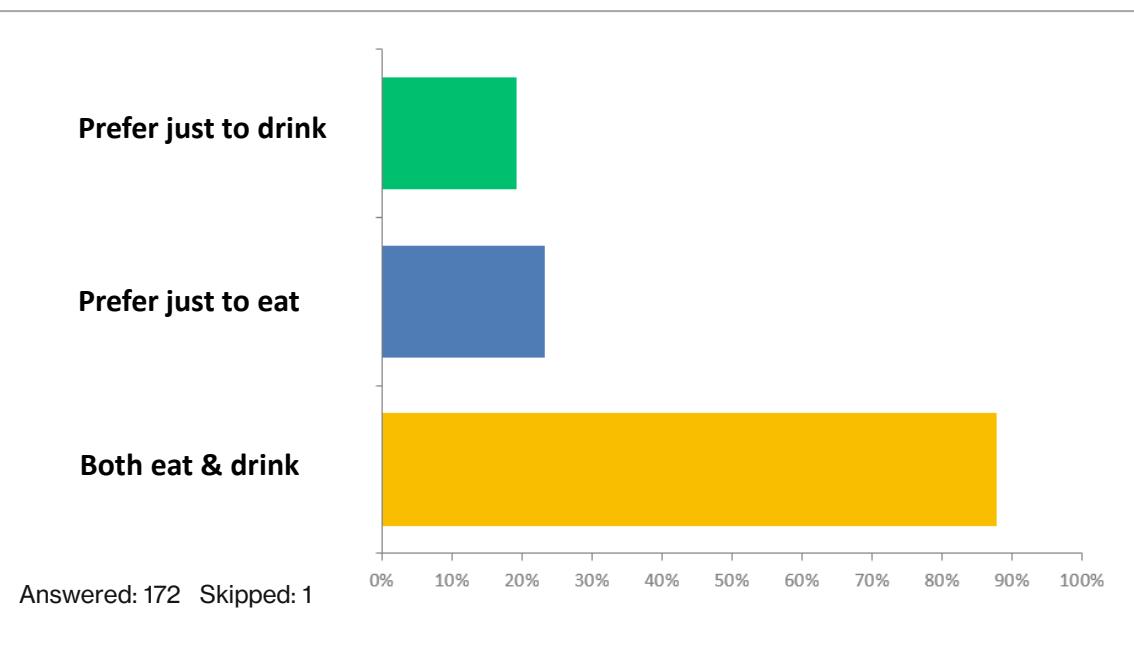


Thoughts on improving the Forester, prioritise the bar & seating areas followed by dining area. Accommodation is a lower priority, but this is to be expected from a local respondent base

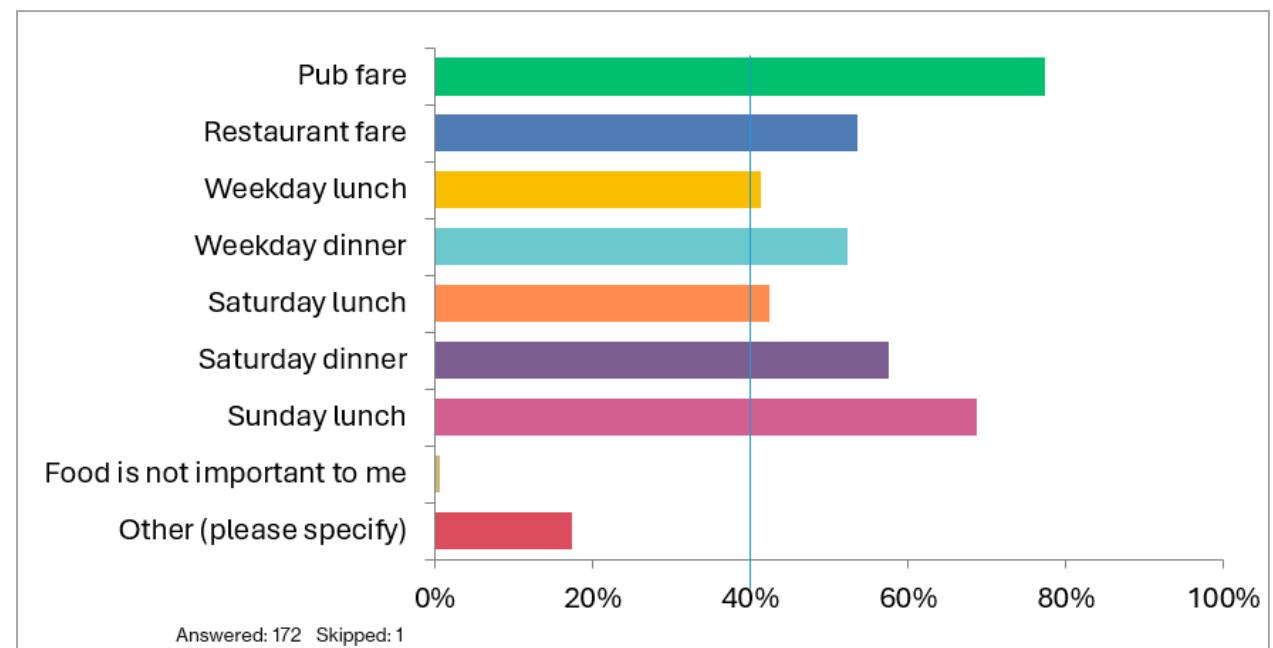
The majority of people want to eat as well as drink at the pub, indicating that the quality of food will be important. This should be a combination of standard pub fare and restaurant food.



If you visited the pub would you ...



What kind of food would you like the pub to offer?

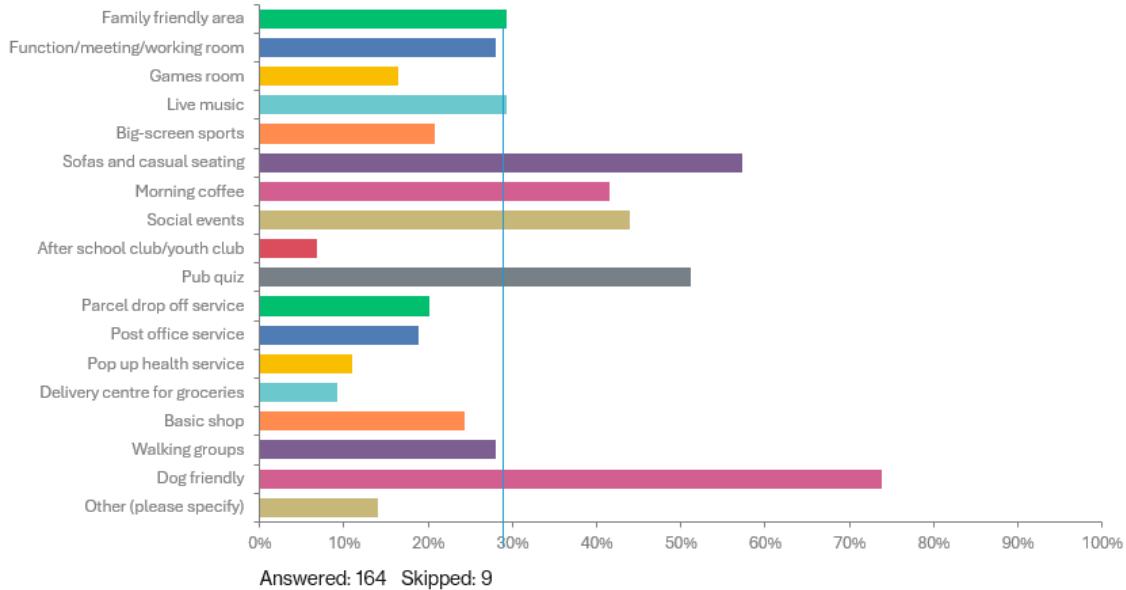


Although Sunday lunch and Saturday dinner are the priority, there is also weekday demand

There is demand for several services in addition to the core pub offering with demand for coffee, quiz nights & social events. There is interest in a broader community role as a work space & social hub.

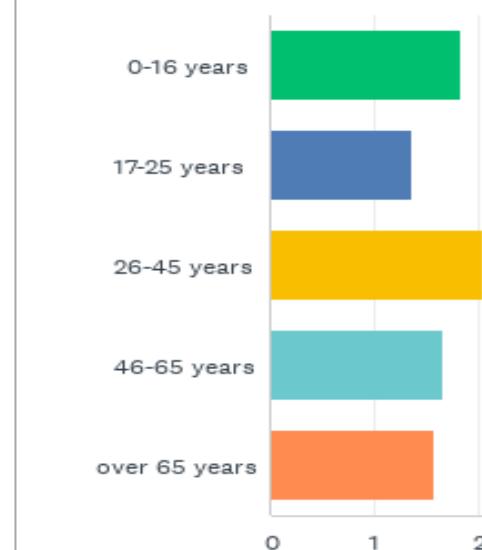


Are there additional services that would you like the pub



The main priority for additional services is to be dog friendly! This takes priority over family friendly! Pub quiz, social events and morning coffees all score well. Importantly it is the breadth of services that the community want.

How many people of each age range are in your household?



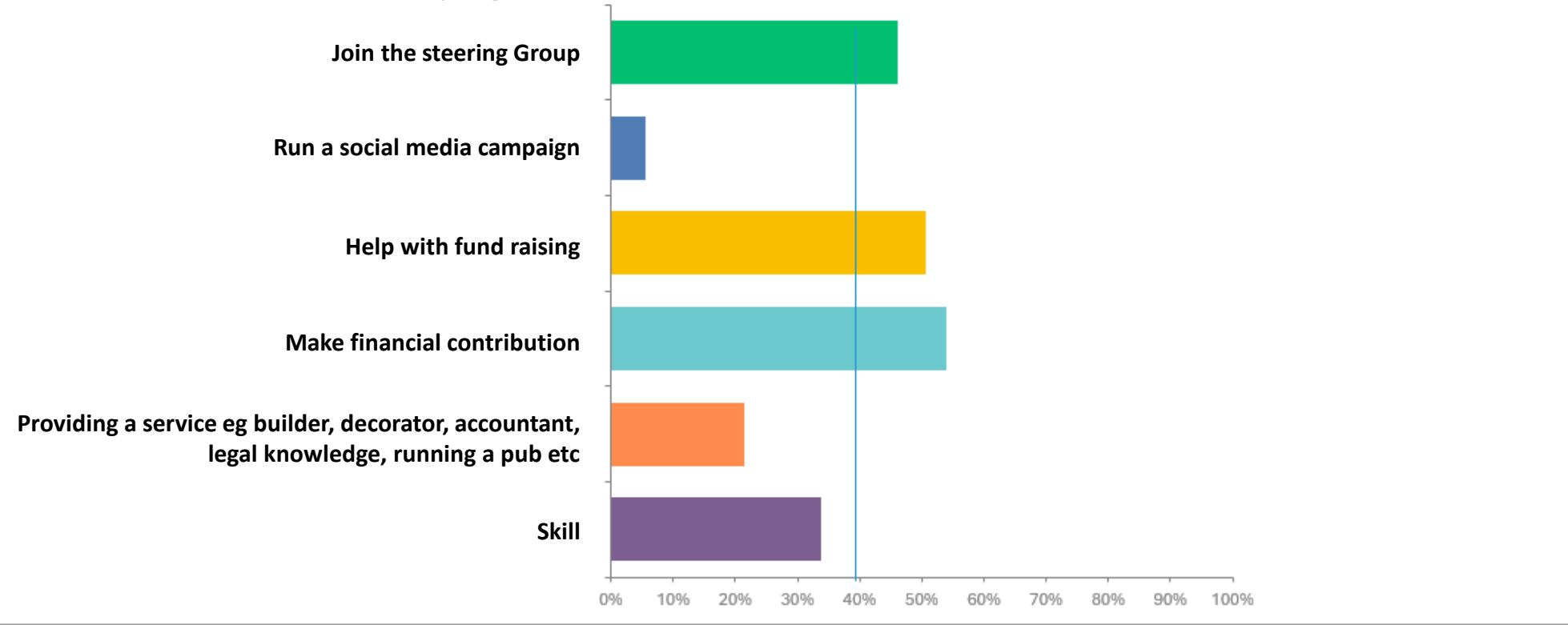
	Av Nos	Total	Responses
0-16 Yrs	2	84	46
17-25 Yrs	1	41	30
26-45 Yrs	2	119	58
46-65 Yrs	2	135	81
Over 65 Yrs	2	133	84
Total Respondents 170			

The breadth of services requested is probably explained by the broad age range reported, this is a healthy demographic for a rural setting.

And finally... over half of respondents expressed an interest in giving practical support to help the Forester become a community pub, with half of these considering making a financial contribution



Q9: Would you or anyone in your household be interested in helping The Forester become a community pub, for example by?



Answered: 89 Skipped: 84

In Summary



- ✓ We received a high level of response
- ✓ The community wants the Forester to remain a pub
- ✓ Going to the pub plays an important role in people's lives and is expected to continue to do so
- ✓ This pub needs to offer a mix of pub and restaurant fare with scope for additional services that could extend its use during the day time and add to its appeal in the evening
- ✓ Potential support is currently at over 50% of the response base

4. Vision

What the Forester could be for us



The Forester: A contemporised classic

- A traditional pub at the heart of the community, bringing us together within the Donheads over selected beers, good wines & high quality simple food, made with locally sourced ingredients. Warm fires in winter, shady garden tables in the summer & dog friendly.
- A comfortable & welcoming space for modern weekday life, whether for morning coffee, a sandwich lunch, a place to work with highspeed broadband, or a venue for games & clubs.
- A destination pub drawing people from neighbouring towns and villages for the reputation of the food and the authentic ambience, with comfortable country bedrooms.



Last words: Community owned Pubs are successful!!!



Community owned Pubs have a phenomenal 99% success rate.

Of 240 community pubs in UK only 2 have NOT succeeded.

Key factors are local commitment, collective ownership and flexible usage.

Next Steps



- 1. We will be approaching the mailing list for initial interest in how much you would be prepared to invest. (subject to fully worked up business plan).**
- 2. Please do come forward with offers of practical help. We are especially looking for immediate help with website design, social media marketing and hospitality experience.**

Acknowledgements



- 320+ of you** who have supported the initiative & offered their services which we will be taking up.
- George Lisle, Tracey Boyd, Ted Martin, Tim Reeve, Michael Farewell, Chef Jason Lewis and Marcus Shepherd** who have surveyed the pub for us.
- Belinda Swallow, Marcus & Henrietta Thorpe, Jeremy & Birdie Hartley & James Hedges** for acting as collection boxes for the completed questionnaires.
- Ewan Guinness and James Scott** for looking at the historic trading numbers.
- Claire Guinness** and all the distributors of the Donhead Digest for delivering flyers.
- St Andrew's Church** for providing us with this location.
- Donhead St Andrew Parish Council** for nominating The Forester as an Asset of Community Value.
- The Parish Councils of Donhead St Andrew & Donhead St Mary** for advertising this campaign.
- Ludwell Stores & Post Office, Semley Village Stores**, for advertising & collecting questionnaires.

5. Voting

Voting



1. All those in favour of the formation of a

Community Benefit Society

2. All those in favour of approving

The interim Man Comm as proposed



6. Open Floor
