

Thank you for coming and waiting until the end of the evening!

My name is David Lewsey, and I am the treasurer of Cockfield Village Group

It is with great pleasure that I stand before you today to share the remarkable journey of Cockfield Village Group Limited. Two years ago, fuelled by a shared vision and the unwavering support of Plunket UK, a charity dedicated to preserving community assets, our group was born. Registered with the Financial Conduct Authority, we adhere to their rules as we strive to create positive change in our beloved village.

Our Vision: A Desirable Cockfield

Cockfield, our cherished village, is already a desirable place to call home. The evidence lies in the new houses sprouting up around us. However, bricks and mortar alone do not sustain a community. We recognise the need for essential services and facilities that will not only enhance our quality of life but also secure our village's long-term future.

Inspiration from Community Success Stories

As we embark on this journey, we draw inspiration from the success stories of community-owned pubs across Suffolk (Battisford Punch Bowl, Duke of Marlborough – Somersham). These establishments have become vibrant hubs, fostering community spirit and providing essential services. Our opportunity lies in creating a similar facility—one that will serve as a beacon of community engagement, while safeguarding the existing village shop and post office.

The Plough and Fleece: Our Ambitious Goal

Our original intention was to buy the historic Plough and Fleece, transforming it into a community hub. Imagine a space where locals gather for coffee, socialise and make new friends, and where community can flourish. The Plough and Fleece would house the village shop, the post office, and a welcoming community café/social space.

Challenges and Progress

Our journey has not been without challenges. Delays, negotiations, and uncertainties have tested our resolve. But in January, an independent valuation and viability survey paved the way. On April 17, 2024, we made an offer to purchase the Plough and Fleece, and now we find ourselves in a critical negotiation stage.

Last November, we took over the village shop, and its success is a testament to our community's spirit. Volunteers—our unsung heroes—have rallied, and I extend heartfelt gratitude to each one. Special thanks to Sarah, who has led this project with dedication. Barbara and Ralph, thank you for allowing us to stay in our current space as we seek an alternative location.

The Heartbeat of Our Village: The Community Shop

The village shop's continued viability depends on two factors: volunteers and community support. We can always welcome more volunteers, and I encourage everyone to frequent our community shop. Share your ideas, suggest product ranges, and let's keep this vital resource thriving.

Our Bold Plan: A New Home for the Shop and Post Office

Our vision extends beyond the shop. We plan to move it, along with the post office, to the Plough and Fleece site. Picture a bustling social space—a community café where friendships flourish, and ideas take flight. But should the pub purchase falter, we remain committed to finding an alternative location.

Gratitude and Funding

Our journey is fired by generosity. Private donations, grants from the Parish Council, Babergh Council, and the Royal Countryside Fund—totalling £15,000—have bolstered our cause. Last month we completed an application for a grant from the Community Ownership Fund and wait for the decision, hopefully by the end of May. We continue to seek other grants, including, the National Lottery Fund, Babergh Council, and the Coop Share Booster Fund.

Your Pledge Matters

When funding decisions loom, community support speaks volumes and is a clear sign that the community are invested in the success of the project. We invite you to pledge your commitment to our future community share offer. Our target range is £150,000 to £200,000—a collective investment in Cockfield's heart and soul. Thank you to everyone who has completed a pledge form and as at 16th May we have pledges totalling £58,000

A Share Prospectus and Our Sustainable Future

Plunkett UK has agreed to fund a professional advisor to review our business plan and assist us in the creation of the documentation for the community share offer. Once this review is complete, we plan to issue a share prospectus next month and this will include details of the community share offer and the business plan demonstrating our financial sustainability. Together, we'll build a legacy that transcends generations.

Stay Informed

Visit our website at cockfieldvillagehub.co.uk for updates and information. Connect with us on Facebook and Nextdoor, and please take a look at our website cockfieldvillagehub.co.uk We will include regular updates in Greenlinks and look out for information on the village notice boards and in the village shop.

In closing, let us forge ahead, united by purpose, and create a Cockfield that thrives—a village where community bonds grow stronger, and dreams find a home at the Cockfield Village Hub.

Any questions

Finally, please have a read through the website and if there any questions please contact us via email at cockfieldvillagegroup@gmail.com .

Thank you.