

The Shop

At Bromsberrow

Newsletter - December 2024

It has been a while since our last newsletter was published in February 2024. Here is a roundup of what's been happening this year.

Like many companies and organisations, 2024 has been challenging for the shop, but we are pleased to report the success that we have had since September in obtaining local authority grants, which are helping us to make improvements and also support our running costs. The Forest of Dean (FoD) District Council has awarded £1850 for the shop to make improvements to the Snug. In the new year we intend to use the money to buy new furniture and flooring to make the room into an attractive café. We have already bought a new coffee machine that serves every type of coffee you can imagine! It's a proper bean to cup machine that uses fresh milk to make drinks that rival any high street coffee shop.

A further grant of £500 from the FoD has gone towards improving the wiring in the gallery behind the shop which has enabled us to install patio heaters to make the space more useable in the colder months for events and community lunches.

The FoD Community Safety Fund has paid for the installation of our new 'street' lights in front of the shop and a solar powered light at the gates to the business park. Between them they make for a much brighter and safer environment at night.

Lastly, we heard from Gloucestershire County Council this month that our application to its Thriving Communities Fund was successful. The council has awarded us £3,750 towards our running costs.

The above injections of cash, coupled with a significant reduction in our energy costs in September and a cheaper telecoms contract mean that the shop's budget should look a lot healthier going into 2025.

Voluntary Group of the Year

We were extremely surprised and honoured to be given the Forest Voluntary Action Forum (FVAF) Voluntary Group of the Year award 2024 in the FVAF Grassroots Category. It was announced at an awards ceremony in Cinderford on the evening of 17th September and was attended by representatives from our volunteers and committee members. This is a great accolade to receive and shows that what we do on a day-to-day basis is being noticed. Soon afterwards we were pleased to receive a visit from the new MP for the Forest of Dean, Matt Bishop. He took great interest in everything that goes on here at the shop and expressed his support for the service we provide and what we do to bring the community together.

Events

We have been busy this year running events that support the shop financially and offer opportunities for our community to meet and socialise. Our pub quiz nights always seem popular. We have run three this year, but our biggest commitment was to share in the organisation of the village fete on 7th September with the village hall committee. It involved a lot of hard work, but it was well received by the large numbers who attended. Many people were happy to see it return after several years of being without one.

New Shop Plans

The shop's management committee have been discussing the idea of building a new shop for at least three years. Our current building is far from ideal. In 2024 matters progressed to the point where a piece of land was identified for a new building, however the clock is against us, and the government-backed Community Ownership Fund, which we had hoped to use to pay for the bulk of the costs, closes next March. This would not allow us the time that we would need to put a bid together. The committee decided in November to put aside the thought of a new shop, enabling it to concentrate on ways of improving what we already have.

If you have any ideas for making the shop better, or if there are things that you would like it to sell, please tell any of our volunteers.

Christmas Gift Shopping

Hopefully you have seen the display of crafts and artwork from the many different sellers in our gallery, some of whom are here just for the month of December. It really is looking good and it's a great opportunity to buy unique gifts, or just treat yourself.

Opening Hours

The committee agreed at its meeting on 20th November to adjust the shop's opening hours. It now closes on Wednesdays at 12.00 noon as we were finding that very few customers were visiting after this time. But as we get the new Snug up and running, we hope to extend our Saturday opening to 2.00 pm if we can.

Dry Cleaning

The shop's committee has taken the decision to stop taking dry cleaning: it wasn't a service that many people were using and the admin work involved outweighed the benefit to the shop.

Community Lunches

Don't forget that every two weeks we serve a three-course cooked meal on Mondays for anyone who wants it. You can eat in the shop, or we can deliver to those who find it difficult to come to the shop, although eating in is a chance to meet up with others over a delicious meal. All the food is freshly cooked in our own kitchen and prices are only £7 for two courses or £9 for three.

Newspaper Rota

You can order your regular daily newspaper for collection from the shop. The papers are brought from Ledbury every morning by our brilliant volunteers. Unfortunately, one of our volunteers is no longer able to commit their time and so we are looking for someone else to join the rota. If you can offer your help one day a week, we would be really grateful. Please let any of our volunteers know if you can offer your time, or indeed if you would like to find out more about being a volunteer in general. It's a great way of giving back to your community and enjoying the satisfaction it provides.

Finally, everyone who works at the shop would like to thank you, our customers, for supporting us, and we wish everyone a Happy Christmas and New Year.