



pub is the hub



Pub is The Hub: Social Value

This second evaluation report measures the social values delivered by individual publicans and their pubs helping to provide a range of vital services and activities in their local community areas.

Based on Pub is The Hub projects in 2022/23/24



Prepared with
advice and support
from Cornwall Rural
Community Charity



Social Value
Engine



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Welcome

This report and analysis, conducted by Gemma Finnegan of Cornwall Rural Community Charity, is both an evaluation of Social Value and Community Cohesion from publicans and their pubs. It includes an academically focussed review with individual recommendations, case studies and background information on the pub industry and its many unique varieties of trading today.

These various parts will make a long read and it may take time but you need to remember that whilst a pub may appear to be a simple business on the surface, it is full of complexities which is why so many of us love them and the social role they play for their communities and customers in their local areas.

There is a growing recognition today on the emphasis on sustainability and the impact of local responsibility and services on communities and the environment. It is now such an important factor not only to local areas but to employees and funders. Individual publicans and their pubs can be wonderful ambassadors of this social impact.

Enjoy the read and support the services, activities and companionship that can be provided by a publican and a pub connecting with their community to help create both social value and economic growth.

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Pub is The Hub



Executive Summary

This latest evaluation was commissioned to understand the true success and value of PiTH projects with publicans currently providing local services and activities, since 2022 in our post Covid-19 world.

From our first Pub is The Hub (PiTH) evaluation report, published in 2021, (The Social Value of Pubs and Publicans Providing Services in their Communities) it was established that the social value created during Covid-19 by the publicans and PiTH supported projects was an impressive range. The reality of the Covid-19 lockdowns meant that some of the pubs helped deliver a range of community services and being funded through the PiTH Community Services Fund were the only people supporting vulnerable, rural communities.

It seeks to:

- **Understand** the specific model and the underpinning theory behind it, determining if there remains significant social value being created by pubs and whether they remain the valuable hub of their individual communities.
- **Determine** if wider health, wellbeing and social problems are now being more effectively addressed through the delivery of Join Inn Last Orders for Loneliness activities and projects funded through the PiTH Community Services Fund.

This academically focussed evaluation was independently undertaken by Gemma Finnegan of Cornwall Rural Community Charity (CRCC) working with the Social Value Engine (page 32), with support from the Building Capabilities Fund of the National Lottery Fund.

CRCC are an organisation dedicated to supporting and strengthening Cornwall's Communities to improve quality of life. CRCC is part of a network of 38 RCCs across England, all sharing the aim of enhancing rural communities. RCCs are represented at a national level by ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England).

The audience for this social value report typically includes a wide mix of internal and external stakeholders and individuals who have an interest in the social, environmental and economic impact of the work of PiTH.

With the majority of the projects being delivered within local rural and other remote or deprived communities the audience may be seen as closely tied to both the local and regional impacts but within the national delivery framework of PiTH.

It is essential the findings are effectively shared and communicated with audiences up to a national level, as detailed below – particularly relevant to those with a potentially strong Environmental Social and Governance ambition that involves both social and economic commercial values.

Primary Audiences:

Local Community Members - Residents and community groups who are directly affected by or benefit from the projects.

Local Authorities, Councils & Regional Mayors - Interested in the project's contribution to overall community development, wellbeing, and alignment with local strategic goals and priorities.

National, Regional, Local and Individual Pub Owners and Brewers, Trade Associations and the variety of industry focused organisation.

Funding Bodies & Grant Providers - Who want to see measurable impact and return on their investment - whether financial, social, or environmental.

Project Partners & Collaborators - Charities, or local businesses involved in or supporting the project.

Policy Makers, Government Departments and Politicians - Especially those focused on rural, suburban and deprived areas development, health, infrastructure, or economic regeneration.

Publicans, Volunteers & Project Staff - Helps them see the results of their efforts and stay motivated or engaged.

Secondary Audiences:

Media & Local Press - or public awareness and recognition

Future Funders or Donors - who might consider supporting similar initiatives

Academics and Researchers - particularly those studying rural development or social impact

Social return on investment (SROI) is the methodology for measuring values that are not traditionally reflected in financial statements, including social, economic, and environmental factors. It's not just about numbers – it's about capturing real-world impact in a meaningful credible way. SROI is the methodology approach used by the Social Value Engine (page 32) that has been used during this evaluation process. Traditional frameworks do not holistically capture the social impact of enterprises (*Banke-Thomas et al. 2015*).

SROI is a way that enables the social enterprise sector to better understand the wider impacts of service delivery and quantify that value in a monetary term (*Millar and Hall 2013*). SROI was developed from social accounting and cost-benefit analysis and is based on seven principles.

The principles of SROI are a set of core guidelines that ensure the measurement of social value is credible, consistent and meaningful. They form the foundation for good practice when conducting the SROI analysis.

The seven principles are:

- 1 Involve Stakeholders
- 2 Understand What Changes
- 3 Value the Things that Matter
- 4 Only Include What Is Material
- 5 Do Not Overclaim
- 6 Be Transparent
- 7 Verify the Result.

These principles help keep SROI ethical, rigorous and stakeholder-centred.

The Social Value Engine was developed by Rose Regeneration and East Riding of Yorkshire Council in response to the Public Services (Social Value Act 2012) which requires public bodies to think about how they can also secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits. They identified over 150 fully

researched proxies which have been used to robustly measure and evidence impact through the SROI process.

Their totally independent approach involves relating project outcomes to improvements to the sustainable development. They do this by grouping the proxies into the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations.

Evaluation Findings

PiTH's long-term impact can be the creation of a positive cycle of thriving pubs contributing to vibrant communities, which in turn support sustainable businesses.

Empower publicans and individuals to contribute to stronger communities, which further empower local individuals.

SROI whilst indicative, strongly suggests that new services and activities generate significant social value.

They indicate that for every £1 currently invested in PiTH type projects there is an average substantial social value return of £8.28, in terms of improved community cohesion, job security, wellbeing, access to cultural events and local services, increased social action and more resilient communities.



Summary of Evaluation

The evaluation has examined the significant social impact of projects delivered through PiTH and the administration of its Community Services Fund. It has delved into the unique operational model, the underlying programme theory, and the substantial social value generated by its approach.

The findings underscore the vital role that pubs, particularly in a rural or deprived setting, can play in fostering resilient, connected and thriving communities.

PiTH's project success has been underpinned by several key factors: strong collaboration partnerships across the pub industry and with local advisors with deep industry knowledge; a lean and efficient operating model; and an innovative strategy that has evolved from a focus on essential services to encompass a holistic approach to community wellbeing.

Moreover, PiTH's operational assumptions – recognising the pressing time constraints on publicans, the need for agile funding, the existence of a digital skills gap, and the innovative potential of community-focussed services – have shaped a highly responsive and effective programme.

In conclusion, PiTH type diversification exemplifies how a relatively small organisation, through strategic interventions and a deep understanding of community, and real industry needs, can catalyse significant positive change quickly. By empowering pubs to become more than just places to drink, diversified pubs are helping to create a future where rural, and other, communities are not only surviving but thriving, with pubs at their heart. The model offers a blueprint for sustainable rural and other development that can be replicated and scaled, ensuring that pubs and publicans continue to play their vital and unique role in the social and economic fabric of life for generations to come.

Summary of Key Recommendations

These recommendations are aimed at enhancing the impact and sustainability of diversification work, as well as addressing the broader challenges facing pubs and local communities today.

Policy and Decision Makers

- Recognise the wider social and economic Social Value of Pubs and Publicans:
- Provide Targeted Funding For Local Services Provision
- Support Digital Inclusion
- Reduce Regulatory Burdens for Publicans
- Promote Collaboration
- Support 'Appropriate' Rating Relief for local services provision

To the Wider Hospitality Industry and Trade Associations

- Share best practice
- Continue to support pubs
- Collectively working together to advocate for policy changes that will benefit pubs and their communities

To Rural Communities

- Engage with Local Pubs and Publicans
- Volunteer, Offer time and skills to support local pubs diversification efforts

To Pubs

- Embrace Diversification, proactively explore opportunities to diversify your local services or loneliness initiatives
- Develop Digital Skills: to enhance pub's online presence, marketing, and ability to access online resources and funding
- Build Local Community Partnerships: with your local community groups, other local organisations, and residents and local and national brewers
- Measure Your Impact: This information can be invaluable in demonstrating the wider benefits of the value of individual pubs

Background to Report/Pub is The Hub

Pub is The Hub (PiTH) is a not-for-profit, free advisory and project guidance organisation that through experienced regional advisors help support individual publicans and their pubs to diversify and provide essential services or activities for their local community areas. The priority and focus is on helping combat a loss of services and address issues of isolation by supporting publicans as individual businesses to do what they do best in developing community cohesion.

Small grants are made available, when possible, to support individual publicans in alignment with PiTH and local authority priorities to kick start rural community pub-located services. The grant is a 'fund of last resort' where no other local funding exists and is supported by donations or other third-party contributions.

Join Inn – Last Orders for Loneliness (JILOFL) specifically looks to support publicans and their communities to become better connected via activities, helping local people feel less isolated and in the process helping alleviate Loneliness. It encourages pubs and their communities to develop activities that promote a sense of belonging, focussing on individual need to build stronger communities

Founded by His Majesty King Charles III when he was HRH The Prince of Wales, Pub is The Hub was established as a 'not-for-profit' advisory organisation in 2001. It works independently with publicans and pub owners to connect and support their local communities, particularly in rural or deprived areas, by diversifying their businesses to provide or host services or activities. These can help overcome social isolation and in addition, can create employment and supplier opportunities.

In the first 2020 evaluation post Covid-19 it was established that the average social value created by the publicans was £9.24 for every £1 spent. There is the detailed explanation of social value on investment and the methodology used to calculate it later in this report on [page 32](#). This significant level of social value does reflect that the original analysis was carried out in a unique set of circumstances.

In the process of social value calculation deflators are deployed to reflect that no activity is ever carried out in a vacuum. By this we mean that no outcome is ever solely achieved by one single action or activity – human customers like pubs are complex and there are always multiple factors involved in anything we learn, change or engage with.

CRCC completed this initial impact evaluation of the Community Services Fund, with support from the Building Capabilities Fund of the National Lottery Fund. PiTH was keen to measure the social value of projects where it had directly supported publicans in order to amplify the wider role pubs can play in UK society.





However, as people will well remember, the outbreak of Covid-19 occurred in March 2020 and as of March 20th all pubs had to close. The previous evaluation thus looked at what publicans, pubs and PiTH had been able to achieve over the initial first lockdown periods despite significant challenges and a very uncertain future.

During lockdown, these multiple factors were significantly reduced due to the restrictions put in place to keep vulnerable people safe from what was, at the time, an unknown pandemic. This meant that in reality some of the pubs delivering a range of services and funded by PiTH's Community Services Fund were the only people supporting vulnerable, rural communities to access food through village stores, larders, home deliveries, and takeaways as well as ensuring that people did not become too isolated or lonely. It was anticipated that there would still be a great deal of social value being created by pubs supported by PiTH in 2022-24 but that it would reduce from the peak lockdown period of 2020.

The range of community needs that the Community Services Fund projects address will be discussed in the "programme theory" appendix of this report. At this

juncture it is felt necessary to comment on the wider context of the pub and hospitality industry in 2022-2024 and is included later as an Appendix 2.

This second evaluation was commissioned to understand the social impact delivered by the Community Services Fund that PiTH administered in 2022-24. It also includes analysis of collaborative projects undertaken with other organisations. The evaluation seeks to understand the specific model that PiTH adopts and the underpinning theory behind it and what social value and cohesion was created by this approach.

PiTH's innovative approach offers a sustainable model for rural, remote or deprived areas' development. By empowering pubs to become multi-functional community hubs, this is not only creating more resilient and connected communities in today's environment but also inspiring the survival of these vital businesses. The organisation's ability to quickly adapt to changing needs, embrace new partnerships, and champion the social value of pubs has positioned it as a key inspirer in rural and social revitalisation.

"I live in the pub but I also live the pub."

Mair Arthur, Publican,
White Cross Inn, Groeswen, Caerphilly

The Importance of Diversification

Most pubs in the UK tend to be either rural, suburban or high street managed retail categories totalling approximately 39,740 pubs in England and Wales and 3,574 in Scotland. These are run in a variety of different ways from individual tenancies or leases, free houses or managed/franchised or retail, often run by larger branded groups (see Appendix 1). However, of all free houses and tenanted local pubs in rural areas, 84% are run as SMEs. (Small, individual businesses.)¹

Many of these areas are predominantly rural, where services are still declining rapidly, but also there are now remoter urban or other deprived areas of need. Local services and activities can in fact be the hidden glue that helps bind the community together and make a place better to live, work and invest in.

PiTH is not trying to preserve pubs just for emotional or sentimental reasons. A pub providing services and activities, as well as being a hub, can be more of a public home for connecting locals together. Before a pub can provide diversified services, it must be financially viable. It must also be able to cover its costs, especially repairs which can be significant in an older building. It is hard work and takes special commitment.

Good responsible local publicans and their pubs are able to do what they do best in building connections with local people, delivering these essential services or activities which may have been lost, or needed, but which may also encouragingly help to overcome feelings of loneliness or isolation and health issues in the local community. Life can also be very different for publicans running their own business when it is also their home. As a publican in Groeswen near Caerphilly recently commented: "I live in the pub but I also live the pub."

A good pub itself is a wonderful, warm and welcoming environment on which to build strong local relationships. This helps provide an overall sense of wellbeing but also helps to improve the local economy. Pubs can also be a key element in supporting and accommodating both local and overseas visitors.

Helping these small businesses to diversify does create a significant hidden amount of collective social value which acts as the supportive foundation for general economic development on a wider scale. As all this is driven by the individuals running the pub, recommending and supporting, the need to widen and diversify the role of the individual pub. An inspirational publican may help provide or host a range of services or activities which could have been lost or are now needed in local areas.

Whilst a pub compared to say a library building, local hall or religious premises may seem to be very different identities, they are offering local people either as customers or visitors a welcoming place to spend time which is not home or work related, serving the community and respecting people from all walks of life.

Economic impact

The role of the diversified local pub creating social value does help contribute to a more vibrant sustainable local economy, fostering not only economic gains for many Government Department initiatives but also helping ensure the vitality of local areas across the whole United Kingdom. The two, economic and social values need to trust and support each other because of these hidden benefits.

It was found that diversifying local pubs can make a significant contribution to the UK's general economic fabric. For example, currently nearly 20% of the UK's population reside in rural locations supporting over half a million businesses.²

To that we could also add remoter urban and other deprived areas of need. If supported they could be a bedrock of improvement and confidence to the national economic income as well as social wellbeing. This is a crucial role and currently unintended consequences of services closing can be like a "pickastick effect" when one type of closure leads to another and another. These losses in local areas need to be prevented if we are going to see both local and economic improvements and tackle mental health issues and foster a general improvement in the feeling of wellbeing and togetherness.

Funding

It is appreciated these are currently very tough trading times and sometimes the individual pub market appears like an unloved sector. There is vast potential to support local communities if only more small-scale funding could quickly be made more easily available.

Over the last 24-years simple diversification schemes have often struggled to find early-stage funding and need advisory expertise. This prompted the launch of PiTH's Community Services Fund in 2013, with encouragement at that time from Diageo and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

¹ CGA

² Rural Services Network

This was subsequently followed by support for part-time advisors from the National Lottery Fund and the creation of the Join Inn - Last Orders for Loneliness campaign in 2019 to support the creation of simple activities to help overcome loneliness and isolation in local areas.

PiTH has currently completed over 280 projects throughout the UK with 214 helped directly through the Community Services Fund. However, they currently have over 40 projects in 23 counties which can only be dealt with on a piecemeal basis as and when they have the funds available. (It is believed there is potential to inspire around 1,000 diversification schemes which over 3 years would cost circa £5.4m but create over £30m of Social Value in communities. This is why one should never underestimate the impact of good pubs and publicans.)

The local publican and pub, together with local breweries, can be the heroes in helping drive and maintain social and economic wellbeing in many local communities. If only they can receive simple and small amounts of funding to create the hidden Social Value which is appreciated emotionally within local communities giving a community area confidence and trust. So often this is lacking in remoter decision making or with today's depersonalised technology which may lack the specialist knowledge or local experience.

Community Services Fund (CSF)

The Community Services Fund is supported from various donations and has been helping pubs to connect and sustain their communities since 2013, when it was created with the help of Diageo and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. In that time over 214 projects have been delivered by the fund, as well as many other local initiatives. (See Appendix 4 for examples)

PiTH offers free advice and support to publicans who alongside their communities, may be looking to relocate, reopen or establish new services or activities to help in their local community areas. The main objective of a CSF Grant (when no other funding exists) is to help support local services.

The impact has been to leverage a further £2.49 for every CSF £1 invested with an average grant made being £2,543. PiTH Advisors have dealt with 1,495 enquiries, advised 914 potential pub schemes with 281 progressed as projects and over 40 currently restricted awaiting funds.

Policy makers too often treat the UK as part of a single, homogeneous urban unit and overlook the needs of rural or other smaller communities. Over the last 20

Social Value

Identifying and effectively measuring social value has been a complex process and more complicated academically than it may sound. The Social Value Engine (the UK's only accredited solution to accurately and transparently measure social value) was used to measure and evidence value throughout this evaluation process,

In the most simple terms, Social Value is the added value an initiative brings to society – how it makes life better for people and places. Social Value refers to the wider positive impact an activity, project or organisation has on people, communities, and the environment – beyond just financial or economic returns. It is about creating benefits that improve quality of life and contribute to long-term well-being.

Key Aspects of Social Value found to be delivered by PiTH type projects:

- **Social** - Strengthening communities, improving health and wellbeing, reducing inequalities, increasing access to services
- **Economic** - Job creation, skills training, supporting/boosting local businesses and supplier opportunities, (e.g. farming and local trades.)
- **Environmental** - Promoting sustainability, reducing waste, enhancing green spaces

years there has been an inexorable trend in a reduction of services being delivered in rural areas. Well run pubs and inns can return to being the centre or hub of community life that they often played in the past. They are returning to host a more cultural and wider interpretation of hospitality which has meaning beyond the usual drinks, food or entertainment offering and improving their wider perception.

CSF and JILOFL projects appear to be increasing social interaction and greater participation in community life leading to reduced social exclusion amongst some of the most vulnerable. The range of projects reach out to varying disadvantaged groups such as people aged over 65, young families and those without transport or other services.

PiTH advisors worked in the pub trade - invaluable insight

Relationship focussed - advisors develop relationships with publicans - greater trust

Willing to experiment and support pubs to innovate

Nature of grant is targeted - helps focus on achieving desired outcomes

Nature of grant is researched - which ensures robust process in allocating funds

Feedback gathered by PiTH team demonstrates outcomes, always proportional to the capacity of publicans (not onerous)

Activities supported are targeted to meet the identified needs of the community where the pub is located

Funds are matched funded by publican - ensures level of commitment

Team is really dedicated. As an organisation, PiTH is committed to serving rural and other communities

PiTH Programme results as described by PiTH advisors and wider team

A Collaboration Project with The INN CROWD Travelling Theatre and Poetry

Between 2016-2023 the INN CROWD project facilitated more than 64 touring shows with more than 455 performances at more than 269 venues. The unique arts project supported hundreds of venues including rural pubs, libraries, social clubs, village halls, art centres, cafés, tap rooms and breweries around the country to host exciting and inspiring spoken word, poetry and storytelling performances, reaching and engaging with a wide range of audiences. PiTH supported INN CROWD with funding for pub projects over 5 phases.

The shows supported were hosted in pubs across Norfolk, Suffolk, Kent, Dorset, East Sussex and West Sussex. Its funding support of INN CROWD projects, during those past three years, helped 67 pubs, across six counties, to host live shows, helping to bring live performances to many people who struggle to access live theatre due to their rural location or affordability.

In this following section we set out the programme theory. This links ideas together to explain the underlying programme assumptions. The focus here is on the ‘problem’ and the reasons for proposing the diversification approach as a solution. It is important to clarify the principles on which the programme is based in order to understand the credibility of paths by which the impacts are produced.



Clarifying Programme Theory

- 1 Problem or Issue Statement:** Describe the problem(s) your programme is attempting to solve or the issue(s) your program will address.
- 2 Community Needs/Assets:** Specify the needs and/or assets of your community that led your organisation to design a programme that addresses the problem.
- 3 Desired Results (Outputs, Outcomes and Impacts):** Identify desired results, or vision of the future, by describing what you expect to achieve near and long term.
- 4 Influential Factors:** List the factors you believe will influence change in your community
- 5 Strategies:** List general successful strategies or “best practices” that have helped communities like yours achieve the kind of results your program promises
- 6 Assumptions:** State the assumptions behind how and why the change strategies will work in your community

Social Problems Statement

Here we describe the wider health, wellbeing, and social problems that the PiTH's Community Services Fund and activities from Inn Crowd address which were explored with a range of stakeholders.

These are:

- Health & Wellbeing
- Impact of Covid-19
- Transport
- Access to services
- Digital exclusion
- Demographic of rural residents

Health and Wellbeing

Limited Healthcare Access: Rural and many deprived areas often have fewer healthcare facilities, including hospitals, GPs, and dentists, leading to longer travel times for appointments and emergency care. Specialist services are particularly scarce, requiring residents to travel long distances.

There is a significant shortage of healthcare professionals in rural areas. Recruitment and retention are challenging due to factors like isolation and limited career progression opportunities.

Social Isolation and Loneliness: Sparsely populated areas and limited public transport can lead to social isolation, particularly among older residents and those with mobility issues. This can have a significant impact on mental health and wellbeing.

The Campaign to End Loneliness found that rural residents are at increased risk of loneliness due to factors like limited social interaction opportunities and dispersed communities.

Digital Divide: While improving, broadband and mobile phone coverage can still be patchy in some rural areas, limiting access to telehealth services, online support groups, and other digital resources that can improve health and wellbeing.

Impact of Covid-19

Lockdowns exacerbated social isolation and loneliness, particularly for older and vulnerable residents by closing the forums where people meet and connect.

Access to healthcare was further restricted during the pandemic, with some routine appointments being delayed or cancelled.

Many local community support groups and activities were suspended, further reducing social interaction opportunities or replaced by depersonalised new technology.

In 2023, it was found that rural residents waited an average of 100 minutes for an ambulance to arrive if they were considered a Category 2 emergency (e.g. heart attack or stroke). This is nearly 3 times as much time as the average urban resident.³

Typical challenges faced by rural communities⁴

- Around 25% of rural residents are aged 65 and over, compared to 17% in urban areas. This has implications for healthcare needs, social care provision and the workforce
- Only 57% of rural residents lived within 15 minutes of a bus or rail services
- Over 3,000 post office branches closed across the UK. While not exclusively rural, a significant portion of these closures were in rural areas
- Around 6,000 bank and building society branches have closed since January 2015 – at a rate of around 54 branches each month. A significant amount were in rural or smaller towns that serve rural areas
- 819 libraries have closed in the UK. Although not all of these libraries were in rural areas, closures in areas with poor public transport links will affect residents disproportionately
- Rural households spent nearly £500 more on fuel than those in urban areas
- People in rural areas earn 7% less than those in towns and cities

Transport

Limited Public Transport: Rural areas typically have infrequent and limited bus services, with some areas having no service at all. This makes it difficult for residents without cars to access essential services, employment, education, and social activities.

Bus services have been cut significantly in recent years, with rural areas disproportionately affected.

³ © 2025 Guardian News & Media Limited ⁴ Rural Services Network

Car Dependency: Due to limited public transport, car ownership is essential for many rural residents. However, the rising cost of fuel, particularly in 2022, placed a significant burden on household budgets, especially for those on low incomes.

Rural, remote and deprived households spend a higher proportion of their income on transport compared to urban households.

Concerns about the safety of public transport may have led to a further decline in usage post-lockdown.

Access to Services

Decline in Support for Local Services - 'As in the pickerstick effect': Many rural areas have seen a constant decline in essential local services like shops, post offices, banks, and pharmacies in recent decades. This forces residents to travel further for basic necessities, adding to their costs and time burden.

The closure of local services can have a significant impact on the social fabric of local communities by losing the joint support network and simple forms of communication and meeting.

Digital Exclusion: While some online services can provide an alternative, the digital divide means that not all rural residents have access to or are comfortable using them. This can further exacerbate inequalities in access to using essential services particularly by the elderly or retired.

Demographics of Rural Residents

20% of the population live in rurally classified areas with over half a million rural businesses which is 23% of all registered businesses. (*Delivering for Rural - A Roadmap to Rural Success, RSN*)

Lower Incomes: Average incomes in rural areas are often lower than in urban areas. In 2021-2022, the average weekly income for households in rural areas was £629, compared to £678 in urban areas. 54% of rural residents are said to be financially vulnerable. (*Financial Conduct Authority*)

Employment opportunities in rural areas are often limited to lower-paid sectors like agriculture and tourism. Rural residents earn £1,600 less a year than urban. It was found that people in rural areas earn 7% less than those living in towns and cities. (*ACRE*)

Hidden Poverty: Rural poverty is often less visible than urban poverty. The dispersed nature of rural communities, coupled with a culture of self-reliance, can make it difficult to identify and address.

ONS Mapping Issues: The Office for National Statistics (ONS) uses various geographical levels for data analysis. However, these levels are often too large to capture the nuances of rural deprivation. Smaller areas like villages or hamlets may experience significant poverty that is masked when aggregated with larger, more affluent areas. This can lead to underestimation of rural poverty and inadequate targeting of resources.

Rural residents in England and Wales face a unique set of challenges related to health and wellbeing, transport, and access to services. These challenges were amplified by the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent cost-of-living crisis. The demographic makeup of rural areas, with an older population and often lower incomes, contributes to these disparities. Furthermore, current methods of measuring deprivation often fail to capture the full extent of rural poverty. In fact rural services and farming seem to be going through the same feeling of abandonment with funding in urban areas being 41% more than rural.



Community Needs and Assets

Here we specify the needs and assets in the community which led to the PiTH Community Services Fund support. The target population are residents (of all ages but mainly focused on those over 18 because of the pub environment) living in a rural or deprived area of England and Wales.

The pubs supported by PiTH type schemes are in communities that typically have one, or a number, of the following **needs**:

Barriers to accessing Local Services: Initiatives to support the viability of local shops, post offices, and other essential services are vital for maintaining vibrant rural communities.

Social Connection: Addressing social isolation and loneliness requires investment in community facilities, activities, and support networks.

Improved Public Transport: Affordable, frequent, and reliable public transport is essential to connect rural residents with services, employment, and social opportunities.

Enhanced Healthcare Access: Increased provision of healthcare services in rural areas, including GPs, dentists, and mental health services, is crucial. Telehealth solutions can also play a role in bridging the gap.

Digital Divide: Expanding broadband and mobile coverage, along with digital skills training, is essential to ensure that all rural residents can benefit from online services and opportunities. 50% of rural voters do not get 4G mobile coverage on all networks indoors. (*Rural Services Network*)

Targeted Poverty Reduction: More granular data analysis is needed to accurately identify and address rural poverty. Policies should be tailored to the specific needs of rural communities.

The local communities typically have one, or a number, of the following **assets**:

The Role of Pubs in Supporting Rural and Local Communities

Social Hubs: Pubs, with good publicans, are often the social heart of rural communities, providing a place for people to meet, socialise, and combat loneliness. They host events, clubs, and gatherings that contribute to community cohesion and quality of life and happiness.

Pubs are particularly important for older residents and those living alone, providing a vital, welcoming source of social interaction but also a safe and supervised environment.

Providers of Essential Services: Some pubs have diversified their offerings to provide additional services, such as:

Village stores: Selling groceries, newspapers, and other essentials, particularly valuable in areas where the village shop has closed.

Post Offices: Acting as community post offices, providing essential postal or banking services.

Community cafes: Offering daytime meals, snacks, and drinks, creating a welcoming space for all ages.

Local libraries: Hosting book exchanges or small libraries.

Meeting Spaces: Providing rooms for community groups, meetings, and events.

Digital Hubs: Offering free Wi-Fi and computer access, helping to bridge the digital divide.

Green Spaces: Offering allotment and green community garden spaces

Community/Cooperative Operated Pubs

PiTH, through its specialist advisors, has helped community operated and owned pubs in two ways, initially when communities are looking at the responsibilities and risks involved in taking on the pub; it provides advice as to the types of organisational structure and the styles of operation and challenges involved. At this stage they do discuss how to diversify the core business and introduce innovative solutions to local challenges which when suitable are supported.

Over the past 20 years there are estimated to be approximately 200, (2024) community operated/owned pubs out of a total of 43,314 pubs in the UK.*

At this stage PiTH guides them to other organisations more specialist on the process of the co-operative/community purchase model of business premises such as Plunkett UK or Cooperative Societies. It is a capital intensive and a daunting proposition buying, repairing and refurbishing a closed pub and subsequently then dealing with further maintenance as well as sharing the running as a viable trading operation which today is hard work with onerous responsibilities for those involved.

* see Appendix 1 on page 42

Knowledge Sharing

Best practice and experience is shared with individual communities often putting them in contact with others who may have diversified in a similar way to their proposals, as well as making available the knowledge and expertise of PITH's local advisors with a variety of projects.

Flexibility

All pubs and their communities, (particularly rural) have different priorities and types of people who will use examples to meet their challenges in their own way.

At this time advice is provided to help them design a local solution and assess its long-term viability.

A pub owned through a community will know that unless they support its use, its longer term viability may always be at risk.

Influential Factors

Influential factors are resources and/or experience barriers, which potentially enable or limit programme effectiveness. Enabling protective factors or resources may include funding, existing organisations, potential collaborating partners, existing organisational or interpersonal networks, staff and availability of volunteers' time, facilities, equipment, and supplies. Limiting risk factors or barriers might include such things as attitudes, lack of resources, policies, laws, or location as well as repair condition.



Facilitators

The influential barriers and facilitators for a pub diversification programme are:

Barriers:

- Longer term promotion of projects is difficult due to the short-term nature of the funds available to secure to administer to pubs. This means that strategic planning to amplify the impact that such projects create can then have to be restricted.
- It is challenging to secure core funding that covers any essential, ongoing operational costs, advisory staff, and administrative overheads, which are essential for sustaining and providing consistent support to pubs despite being independent.
- A constant need to apply for new grants and funding can divert resources and energy away from project delivery and support for pubs. PiTH has historically relied on a mix of funding sources, including government grants, charitable trusts, corporate sponsorships, and individual donations. Managing this diverse portfolio of funding is complex, but is probably similar to balancing the running of an individual local pub.
- Government priorities can change quickly, making it difficult to align PiTH's work with current funding streams and relevant departments. There may be a perception that the pub sector is not a priority for government funding today compared to other areas like health, social care, or education, despite the hidden social and community value that pubs uniquely and collectively provide in holding an area's identity together.
- The impact of Covid-19 had to be navigated and mitigated – for the local pub trade. It is worth refreshing one's memory to the realities of this period, even though a relatively short time ago. It can be difficult to remember the different restrictions of that time which not only impacted the delivery of PiTH funded programmes but has left a legacy of financial debt in many sectors of the pub trade at a time of huge economic change and upheaval.

Engagement strategy

The PiTH engagement strategy is centred on meeting publicans where they are. This approach involves taking the time to understand each businesses' needs, unique circumstances and priorities. By building on intuition, trust and rapport, advisors can better assess and support publicans in their journey towards developing and delivering meaningful community focused projects to provide local services.

Their prior industry background allows advisors to build rapport quickly and instils a level of confidence in suitable publicans to have a go.

The successful completion of the projects can be partly attributed to this thorough engagement strategy leading to a 96% completion rate and 77% of participants providing employment, training, or further education.

This strategy not only enhances individual outcomes but also fosters a supportive community environment, promoting long-term success and well-being for all involved in the local area.

Innovation Strategy

PiTH has tried to balance itself as an independent, influencing force in revitalising local communities by harnessing the power of pubs to address evolving local needs. At the heart of its success lies an innovative strategy that goes beyond the traditional role of the pub, encouraging and supporting publicans to reach out and transform these vital social hubs into 'multifaceted community centres'. This approach has not only helped many rural pubs but has also fostered more resilient, connected, and vibrant communities who understand a publican's local importance as well as a sea change in awareness of the social impact role by pub owners.

From Essential Services to Holistic Wellbeing

The initial focus, aligned with prevailing policy drivers, centred on supporting pubs to incorporate essential services like post offices and community shops. This was a crucial first step in areas where such vital services were disappearing, leaving a void in the community fabric. These early initiatives demonstrated the potential of pubs to act as more than just drinking establishments, proving they could successfully integrate essential retail or other services, thus sustaining their businesses while meeting clear community needs.

However, PiTH's vision has continued to evolve, driven by a proactive approach to "horizon scanning" – identifying emerging challenges and opportunities in local areas. Recognising the growing concern around social isolation, loneliness, and mental wellbeing, particularly in sparsely populated regions, has broadened the scope to encompass a more holistic approach to community wellbeing and cohesion.

JOIN INN – Last Orders for Loneliness

A prime example of this innovative approach is the Join Inn - Last Orders for Loneliness initiative. This programme acknowledges the pub's inherent role as a social hub and leverages it to combat isolation. By encouraging pubs to host simple events, social gatherings, and activities that foster connection, publicans are helping to create welcoming spaces where people of all ages can come together, build relationships, and combat any negative impacts of loneliness.

Furthermore, PiTH has forged creative partnerships with other organisations such as Creative Lives and The INN CROWD (Applause) travelling theatre, a project that brings high-quality live performances or cultural events to rural pubs. This collaboration not only enriches the cultural life of rural communities but also attracts new audiences to pubs, further enhancing their role as vibrant social centres.

These innovative partnerships demonstrate PiTH's commitment to exploring new and creative ways to support both pubs and the wider community.

The Power of Diversification

PiTH's core strategy revolves around supporting pubs to diversify their offerings, moving beyond the traditional model of simply serving drinks. By providing expert advice, facilitating access to funding, and fostering a network of support, encourages publicans to develop and implement innovative services tailored to the specific needs of their local communities.

This might include:

- **Digital Hubs:** Providing free Wi-Fi, computer access, and digital skills training to bridge the digital divide.
- **Community Cafés:** Offering affordable meals, snacks, and a welcoming space for people to gather during the day.
- **Meeting Spaces:** Providing rooms for local groups, clubs, and organizations to meet.
- **Health and Wellbeing Services:** Hosting activities like yoga classes, support groups or even providing space for visiting healthcare professionals.

A Model for Sustainable Rural Development

Resources include the human, financial, organisational, and community resources a programme has available to direct toward doing the work.

Sometimes this component is referred to as Inputs. Resources for the PiTH programmes are listed on page 26 and concisely in the logic model.



Assumptions

Assumptions are the how and why identified change strategies will work in the intended communities. The PiTH team have made several key assumptions in designing and delivering the PiTH programme, which underpin their strategies for achieving positive change in communities:

Small, Agile Funding is Key

Assumption: Small pots of funding, often unavailable to local pubs through traditional routes, can be strategically deployed for significant impact. This allows for an agile response to immediate community needs and opportunities.

Implication: PiTH's focus on providing smaller grants (often a few thousand pounds) enables them to support a larger number of pubs and projects, quickly addressing

diverse needs without being bogged down by lengthy, complex funding applications. It also recognises that large grants are often not suitable for smaller pubs who would not meet the criteria.

Publicans are Time-Poor

Assumption: Publicans, especially in rural or deprived areas, are extremely busy running their businesses and have limited time to dedicate to complex applications, reporting, or time-intensive projects.



Implications

Streamlined Processes: PiTH has developed streamlined application and reporting processes that are robust yet proportionate, minimising the administrative burden on publicans.

“Ready-Made” Solutions: recognises that some pubs easily benefit from being able to provide “ready-made” solutions, like hosting touring performances or arts and crafts activities. These require less time investment from the publican whilst still delivering significant community benefit and value.

Targeted Support: advisors provide hands-on support and guidance to publicans throughout the project lifecycle, helping them navigate any challenges and reducing the time commitment required.

Digital Skills Gap Exists

Assumption: Not all publicans possess strong digital skills. This can hinder their ability to access online resources, apply for funding, or market their services effectively.

Implications

Analogue Support: PiTH offers “analogue” support options, including phone calls, in-person visits, and paper-based resources, to ensure that all publicans can access their services regardless of their digital literacy.

Digital Skills Development: While providing analogue support is encouraged and facilitates digital skills development where appropriate, recognising the increasing importance of online presence and digital tools for pubs.

For more on Assumptions see [page 26](#)

Case Study: The Star Inn, Vogue, Cornwall

Micro-library, take-away food service, bike shed

Publicans Rachel and Mark Graham have always put the community at the heart of their pub – The Star Inn at Vogue, Cornwall.

The couple have run the Punch lease for around 20 years in this small hamlet in the parish of St Day, three miles from Redruth. The pub is located in a former mining area and the parish is at the heart of the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape (a World Heritage Site).

Diversifying is a central part of the pubs offer. The couple have introduced various schemes to support the community, some with funding help from Pub is The Hub and others with their own funding.

Over the years the pub has diversified into a number of services with a micro library, a work club, take away food, hairdressers and an IT access point.

It was as far back as 2013 that they heard about Pub is The Hub and jumped at the idea of adding a community library to their comfortable TV room. They received a small grant from the Community Services Fund in November 2013 which they used to install shelving, a computer terminal and signage outside the pub. Books were installed by the end of November and the library was open by December 2013.

At the time Cornwall Council's library service was involved ensuring that the books on shelves were regularly updated and books requested online by The Star Inn's library members delivered at least once a fortnight. The library is still running today, with people still borrowing books, but without the support of the library service.

Since establishing the community library Mark and Rachel were inspired to look at other opportunities to deliver services to the local community.



In April 2017, they started their take-away food service, giving the locals the opportunity to pre-order delicious freshly cooked food to be enjoyed in their own homes. The food take-away service remains a popular service in this small community today.

The Star Inn is on a route of the Cornish cycle path. In recent years the pub introduced a bike shed, with the support of Pub is The Hub, allowing the local community and customers to safely lock and store their bikes whilst in the pub or pub gardens. The publicans still have more plans to open a caravan and camping club at the venue.

The pub also offers friendly space and a warm welcome for people to get together and socialise.

Rachel Graham said: *"We have a friendly bunch in here. Many of the older generation come in to visit and have a chat to the locals."*

Pub is The Hub regional advisor Reg Clarke said: *"The Star is well known as a local pub that will go the extra mile to help the community. These publicans have been at this pub for more than 20 years and the customers and community really support their efforts."*

Case Study: Tafarn y Plu, Llanystumdwy, Gwynedd

Community allotment

The Tafarn y Plu near Gwynedd in North Wales has placed supporting the community at the centre of its ethos.

With increasing concerns about social isolation and the impact on mental health the pub is focused on providing opportunities for people to share experiences, meet new friends and make connections.

The Tafarn y Plu, which is over 200-years old and is also known as the Feathers Inn, is located in former Prime Minister David Lloyd George's home village of Llanystumdwy.

The pub has diversified its offer by extending its community garden and allotment area to help local residents get together to help combat loneliness and isolation and develop horticultural interests.

Volunteers from the village gave over 70 hours of their time to help the pub develop its garden.

There are now opportunities for more volunteers, including those with mobility issues and the elderly, to be involved in the upkeep and maintenance of the gardens.

This will provide opportunities for people of all ages to get together to build relationships and combat loneliness in a healthy, outdoor environment.

The garden's sensory and wellbeing area provides a calming, therapeutic area, which can offer enjoyment to people including those with disabilities or dementia.

This type of garden allows people to connect to nature, engaging the five basic senses of sight, smell, sound, touch and taste while tapping into the principles of mindfulness.

As well as the community garden the pub is used for many other social and community activities. Clubs and societies such as the book club, darts team, weekly tea and cake afternoons, IT group, learn Welsh Group, table tennis and the monthly clothes exchange all take place at the pub thereby helping people connect and overcome isolation.

The Tafarn y Plu was purchased by local residents in August 2019 who set up a community benefit society called Menter y Plu.

The community group also purchased the nearby chapel Capel Tabernacl (Capel Bach) when it came up for sale in 2020. This building, which is now self-catering accommodation, sleeps six people and allows the pub to offer another service as well as generating a valuable income stream.

Publican Siôn Jones said: *"This community garden gives local people the chance to grow their own food in a safe and friendly environment. The raised beds, along with the new accessible pathway, means the project can include everyone from older people with mobility issues, to the disabled to young children."*

Wales Regional Advisor for Pub is The Hub Malcolm Harrison said: *"This community garden is an ideal place for people of all ages to get together and socialise. This pub is the hub of its local community that is helping people form friendships and connections in a healthy, outdoor environment. This can really help with the major societal issues we are facing of loneliness and social isolation, particularly in remote and rural areas in Wales."*



Case Study: The George, Bethersden

Community café and hot food provision

The George stands at the centre of the village of Bethersden in Kent. It has been a drinking establishment since the 17th Century, becoming a licensed pub in 1841.

For decades it was the focus of village life with locals referring to it as 'the heart of the village.' The historic freehouse closed during the second lockdown in 2020, as the pub owner decided on a career change. A group of village residents launched a campaign to buy the pub, setting up The George Community (a Community Benefit Society) in August 2021 and successfully took over the pub in February 2023.

By Summer 2023 the pub had reopened. Part of the consultation process with villagers highlighted a need for the pub to provide a wider offering to the community and opening a café was considered an ideal way of achieving this.

A Pub is The Hub grant supported the opening of the new community café, which has proved to be a bit hit with all types of customers. It provides an opportunity for people living alone, parents and toddlers, families, and groups to meet and socialise in a relaxed environment and welcoming space.

A selection of games and puzzles are available for children to play with and there is a secure garden area with outdoor games for when parents and carers want to enjoy their coffee or tea and cake outside on the pub's terrace.

Soon after opening it became clear that there was a major demand for the community café and that there needed to be an increase in its food offer to include hot items.

A second Pub is The Hub Community Services Fund grant provided for kitchen equipment items, including a grill, which

meant that the café was able to provide a wider food offer to those living locally.

The George opens as a café between 10.30am to 4pm daily, offering delicious homemade cakes from village bakers Avril and Barbara.

Michele Sadler, community officer for The George said: *"The café has been a great success at bringing new customers into the pub as well as reconnecting the village as a whole, and helping people locally to overcome loneliness and isolation. There is a warm welcome for everyone at The George Café."*

Tim Tempest, regional advisor at Pub is The Hub, said: *"This pub is truly at the heart of its community. The popularity of this community café has meant major expansion of the hot food offer. This café is also a hub for villagers to come together and provides an opportunity for more social interaction in this rural area."*

A recent visitor to The George said: *"We are so pleased that it is becoming the focal point of the community again and the 'go to' meeting point for people."*



Photo: Gregallenphoto.com

Latest inspirational projects:

Case Study: White Cross Inn, Groeswen, Caerphilly

PA system and community events

The White Cross Inn in Groeswen, near Caerphilly, is a small pub with a big heart. The pub, which dates back to 1750, is situated in the tiny village of Groeswen on a hill with sweeping views over the town of Caerphilly.

Publican Mair Arthur, who has run the freehold since 2011, has worked hard to make the pub the beating heart of the local community. She says it is a 'pub for people' and is proud that it is a hub where people may 'enter as strangers but they leave as friends.'

Mair ensures the pub supports its local community by running a variety of events to help bring people together, raise money for charity and tackle social isolation.

The purchase of a new PA and music system, with the support of Pub is The Hub, has helped to support the pub's busy calendar of social and fundraising events.

The pub's team is using the new system to support existing events and also host new ones, including open mic nights for young musicians and local groups, such as for local farmers, for talks and meetings.

The White Cross Inn is also the meeting place for many local groups that help support people to socialise including Knit and Natter, local beer group the Beer Bellies Club, the Wacky Wanderers walking group as well as sports teams including darts and cricket. It is also a regular stop off for walkers, horse riders and cyclists.

The PA system is also being used to support its fundraising events, which have included Wig and Wine nights, Pretty in Pink nights, vintage tea parties, golf events and charity race nights to coincide with Ascot. The pub also has a charity book shelf which recycles peoples' old books at 50p each. The hundreds of pounds raised from the books sale has been donated to various charities.

Publican Mair says: "This pub is a place for people to meet and form friendships. It is a very special place. This new



PA and music system will enable us to run more events supporting the local community and raising more money for charity."

"It is so important that people can come here to have that conversation and social interaction that is so important for tackling feelings of loneliness."

Pub is The Hub regional advisor Roger Belle said: "Mair and the services and activities that The White Cross Inn provides have always had a real impact on people in the local area and the new PA system helps to continue this and has already been put to good use which is wonderful to see."

He added: "These events and charity fundraising really show this pub is at the hub of its local community. The warm welcome at the pub along with these events is crucial in helping many locals to overcome social isolation especially in such a rural area."

Case Study: The Duck, Stanhoe

Village store and café meeting area

Putting the needs of the community at the heart of The Duck has been the ethos of publicans Rachael and Jeremy Parke since they took over the pub in August 2023.

The Duck, which has been a pub since the 1700s, is situated in the small Norfolk village of Stanhoe, which has a population of around 200 permanent residents.

The publicans have already established a thriving trade at The Duck which serves as not only a local pub but a destination food venue. Jeremy, originally from North Norfolk, is the pub chef who has a passion for local, traceable and sustainable produce for which he has won many local and national awards. Rachael is responsible for the front of House ensuring the smooth running of the business.

There are few local amenities in Stanhoe apart from the pub and village hall. Rachael and Jeremy soon realised there was a need for a village store to support both local people and visitors to the area as it is four miles to the nearest shop and there is limited public transport. Members of the local community were overwhelmingly supportive of the idea and the publicans contacted Pub is The Hub for help.

The store was opened within a garden room in the grounds of the pub in October 2024.

The village store named 'Stanhoe Stores' stocks a range of essentials such as milk, bread and household items but also supports local suppliers with produce including meats, cheeses, chutneys, chocolates, fresh breads and pastries. There are plans to extend the range of products on offer after feedback from customers and they are set

to launch a range of recipe kits, designed by Jeremy, for people to cook at home.

Within the store there is also an intimate seating area where customers can enjoy a coffee or tea and cake. This is already proving a popular meeting spot with people who are already popping in for a chat and some social interaction.

Publican Rachael Parkes said: *"We have had so much support from local residents for the village store. The log burner seating area is proving to be very popular with people popping in for a chat, a coffee and to read the paper in a relaxed environment."*

"The store is an essential service that is helping villagers get their provisions without having to travel many miles to the nearest shops. We are dedicated to supporting other local suppliers which will help boost the local economy."

Pub is The Hub regional advisor Terry Stork said: *"Rachael and Jeremy have already established The Duck as the hub of the village. This is a pub that has a fantastic food offer and has something for both locals and visitors to the area."*

"Offering vital local services such as a village shop is so important to rural areas. Stanhoe Stores is not just a place offering those important essentials but it is already a meeting place where people can get together and connect which helps overcome social isolation."



Case Study: The Halfway, Tal-y-coed

Village store and meeting area

The Halfway, Tal-y-coed, describes itself as a “traditional Welsh country pub with a twist.”

Situated halfway (hence its name) between the historic market towns of Abergavenny and Monmouth in Tal-y-coed, near Llantilio Crossenny, this 17th century coaching inn is a home from home for members of the local community.

The area has a population of just over 730 people and limited services with no local shop or public transport links to nearby more populated areas. The nearest supermarket is over a 20-minute drive (40-minute roundtrip) and the road can be closed in bad weather.

This is a rural community where many people including farmers, live and work alone, meaning they have little opportunity for social interaction.

Publicans Rhiannon Metters and Jason James are passionate about ensuring the pub is the hub of this rural community. They realised that people in the area had a lack of services and places to meet and asked Pub is The Hub for help.

Members of the local community were supportive of the pub offering more services. As a result, The Halfway has launched a new village store inside an area of the pub, which stocks a range of essentials from bread, milk, cheese, bacon, honey and ham.

There are plans to eventually move this into an outbuilding for more space and to stock more products from local suppliers.

They have also erected a new marquee, supported by Pub is The Hub, which is being used as community hub to support social interaction, community cohesion and promote health and wellbeing. The marquee will be the centre of a range of community events, including a new produce market.

The marquee and village store will also support local businesses and the rural economy by providing an outlet for local farmers, producers, crafters and other enterprises.



Rhiannon has a background as a youth worker and she wants to help bring young people together.

The village shop will also be used to provide opportunities to create partnerships with schools and youth service providers to ensure young people are given an insight into local produce, reducing carbon footprint and how the shop can help to support the rural economy.

Rhiannon said: *“We are situated in an isolated rural community with the pub being the social hub of the area. It is so important that we support local people ensuring they are not feeling isolated and alone. We are very passionate about making sure this is a pub for everyone in the area.”*

“The village store here in this isolated rural area is such a support for people in the local community with the marquee enabling us to run more community events supporting both local people and suppliers.”

Pub is The Hub regional advisor Roger Belle said: *“These publicans are the real heroes of this local community and have made the pub the hub of this rural village.”*

“Offering the services and activities to support people in this area of Wales is proving to be a lifeline to overcome social isolation and loneliness.”

Case Study: Pentre Comrades Club – Getting creative at community hub session

At The Pentre Comrades Club in Pentre, Rhondda, publicans Denise Roberts and Helen Roderick are using the creative community box as an activity at one of the club's weekly community hub sessions.

Publicans Denise and Helen have run Pentre Comrades Club for 30 years, which is located in a former coal-mining village where many services have closed down in the last 20 years including schools, shops, day centres and libraries.

The venue has evolved from its club roots, with a full pub licence and is open to the general public. It has been developed into a community space that is used for far more than social drinking.

The club runs two 'Community Together Hub' sessions a week. They run from 10am to 2pm and attract around 50 to 60 people to each session. Tea and coffee, cake and toasted sandwiches are available at the sessions which cost just £2, with the elderly attendees enjoying coming together for a chat, socialising and a warm space during the winter months.

The sessions also include a book and DVD swap and regular visits from outside services such as blood pressure testing and performances from choirs.

Denise said they have the box available for attendees to take part in craft activities at its Tuesday sessions of the 'Community Together Hub'.

"The box is a great addition to our community hub sessions with elderly locals. It gives them another thing to help them engage with each other around."



The craft box activities build on a knitting project the hub attendees took part in, knitting squares to create a community blanket.

Weekly Monday craft sessions for older children using materials from the craft box have also been introduced.

The club already has a good focus on crafts with arts and crafts one of the activities offered during its weekly 'Family Hub' sessions during the school summer holidays.

"The creative community box has also helped inspire me to offer more creative activities here such as candle, soap making and glass painting workshops", added Helen.

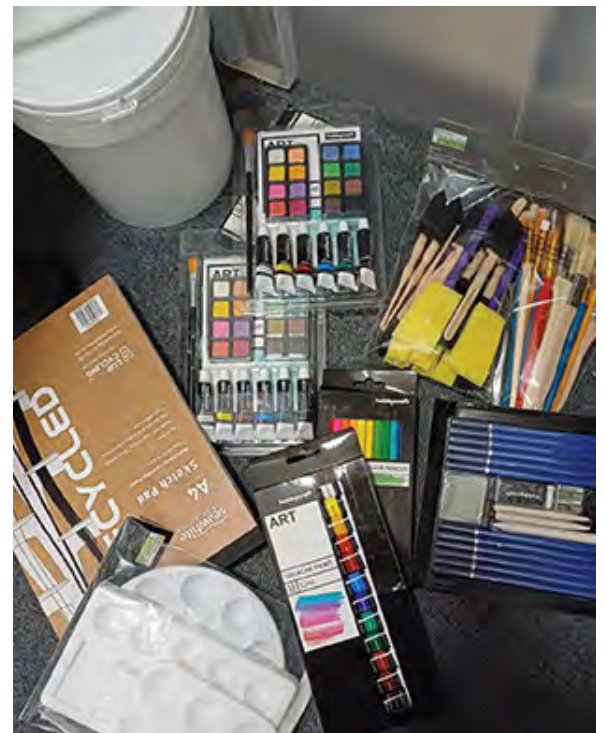
Crafty project: Welsh pubs use craft boxes to support local people to get creative

Pub is The Hub teamed up with Creative Lives, www.creative-lives.org, a charity that champions community and volunteer-led creative activity.

Pubs received community craft boxes which has been made possible through a grant from The Royal Countryside Fund.

The creative boxes are simple for publicans to use in their pubs as they are based around self-led craft activities, with each box containing a range of craft materials and ideas for how customers' can use them.

Materials in the craft boxes feature basic drawing tools including paper, pens, charcoal and pastels, watercolour and acrylic paints, as well as origami materials, air drying clay (which has proven helpful for some people with arthritis) and weaving materials.



Case Study: Tafarn Yr Heliwr, Nefyn – Creativity for secondary school children

At community-owned pub The Tafryn Yr Heliwr, located in the small rural town of Nefyn, Gwynedd, after school art sessions are being hosted with the creative community box.

The pub provides a range of support and developmental opportunities for local people – from activities helping to improve health and wellbeing, to tackling loneliness and teaching new skills, so activities using the craft box fit in ideally with the pubs' focus.

Monthly after school art sessions for secondary school children have been hosted based around activities which utilise materials from the craft box. A group of around six young people, a mix of boys and girls, have been

attending the sessions which have included clay and tile mosaics and a session on painting watercolours with a young, upcoming local artist.

Bethan Evans, the pub's company secretary, said: "The box has a great variety of equipment which is useful for different activities. The activities give the young people something to do in the evenings, where in rural areas there's often nothing much on for them."

Impact of these Assumptions on PiTH's Strategy

These assumptions are not just theoretical; they directly shape PiTH's strategy in several ways:

- **Accessibility:** The programme is designed to be accessible to a wide range of pubs, regardless of their size, location, or the publican's experience level but recognising the needs of the local community area.
- **Responsiveness:** PiTH can respond quickly and effectively to emerging needs and opportunities in communities.
- **Sustainability:** By focusing on practical, achievable projects and supporting the burden on publicans, increases the likelihood of long-term success and sustainability.
- **Innovation:** The programme fosters innovation by empowering pubs to develop creative solutions tailored to their specific context.

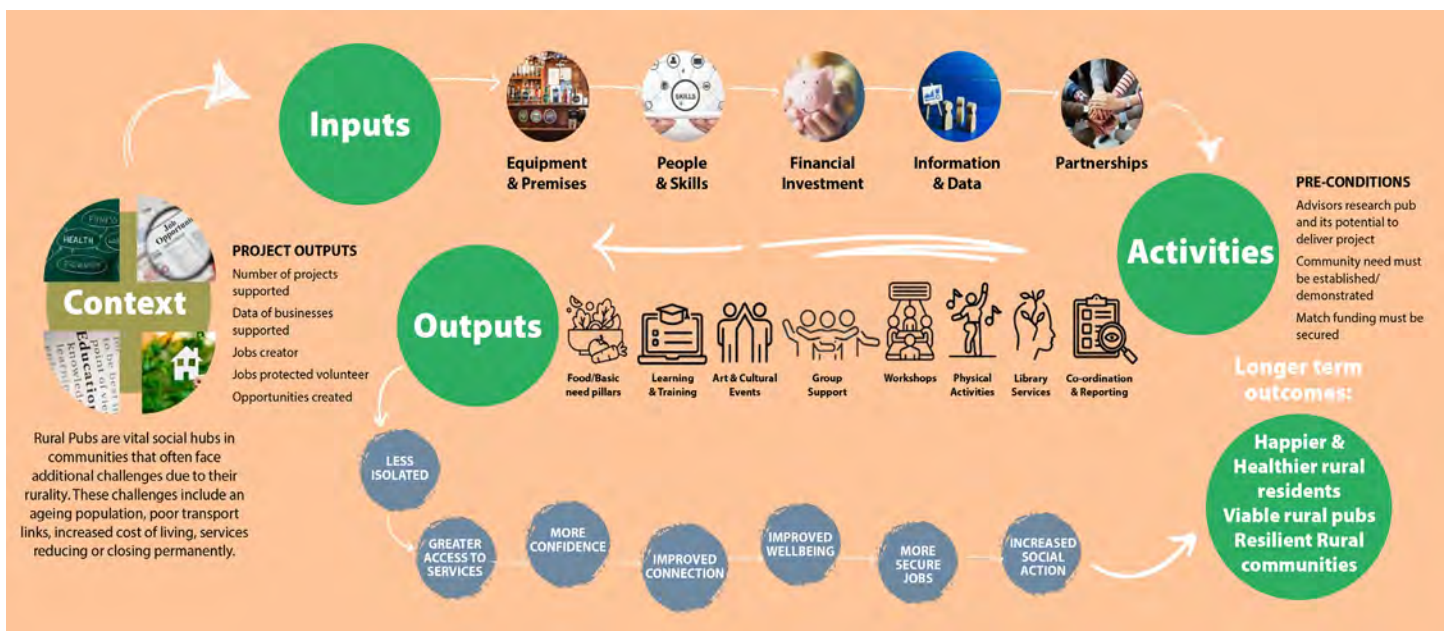
Resources and Inputs

The small CSF grants are available to support individual publicans in alignment with PiTH and local authorities' priorities to kick start rural community pub-located services.

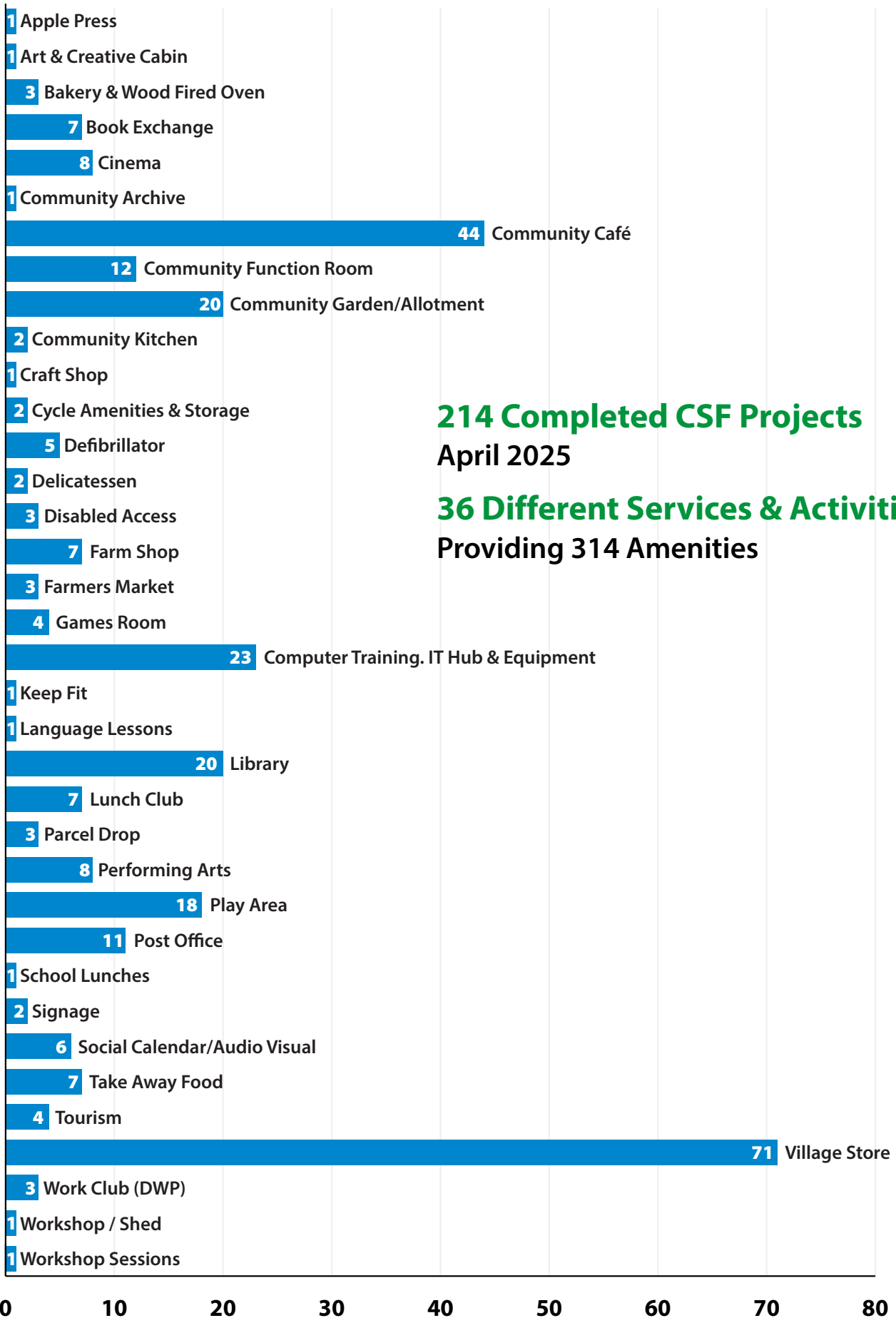
In addition, it is often able to match fund and leverage funding from publicans, owners or other third parties as a result of the CSF support. The grant is a 'fund of last resort' where no other local funding exists, and helps to widen the benefits in the local economy by providing additional rural services from the pub.

Description	Cumulative costs
PiTH Funding	36%
Match Funding	57%
PiTH Volunteering Hours	7%
Total	100%

Inputs over period of analysis

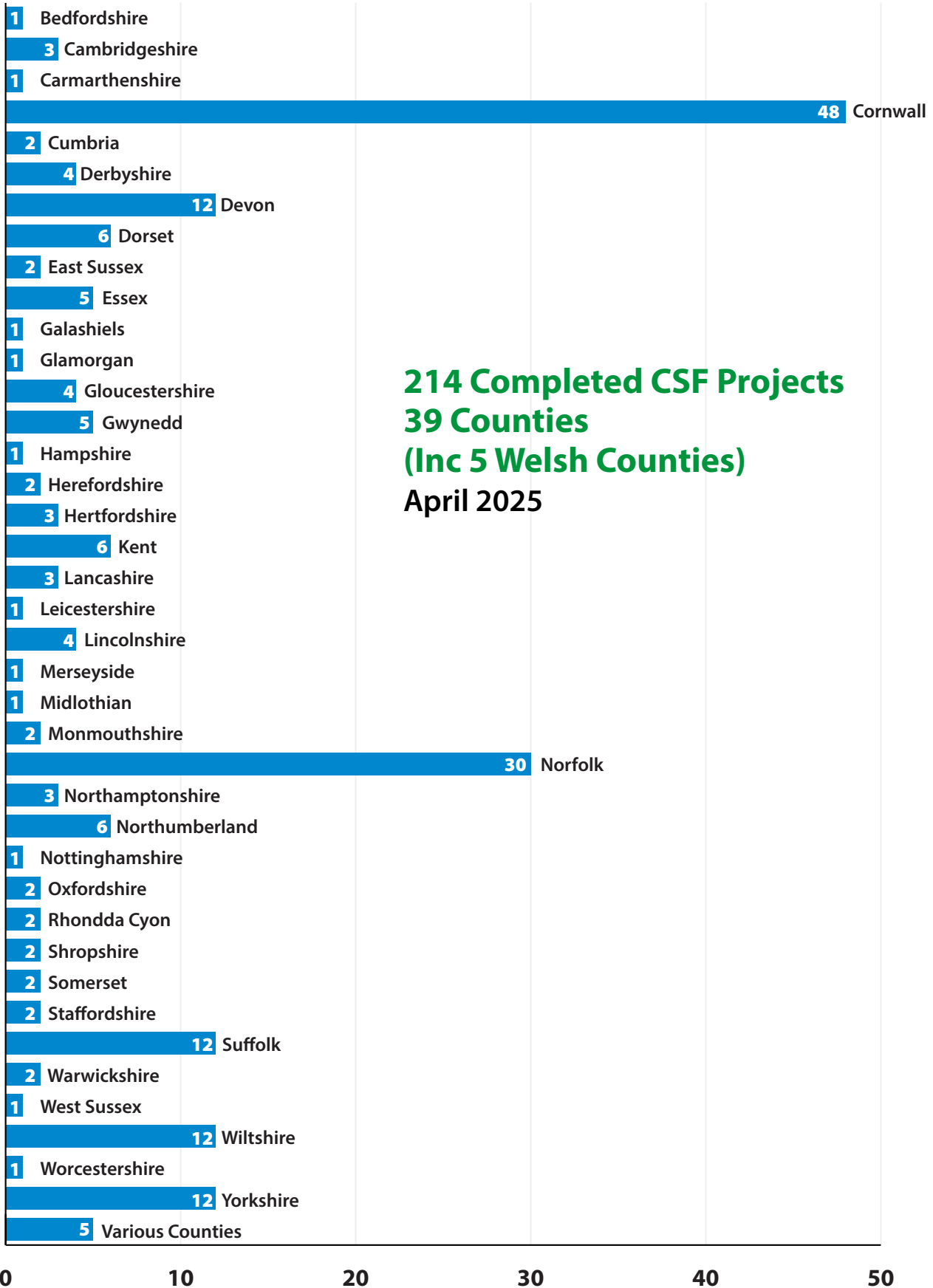


PiTH Logic Model



**214 Completed CSF Projects
April 2025**

**36 Different Services & Activities
Providing 314 Amenities**



Outputs

Outputs are the direct results of programme activities. They are usually described in terms of the size and/or scope of the services delivered by the programme. They indicate if a programme was delivered to the intended audiences at the intended "dose." A programme output, for example, might be the number of classes taught, meetings held, or materials produced and distributed, programme participation rates and demographics.

Outputs 2022 - 2023	
Output	Project output achieved
Number of projects rural residents reached*	4403
Number of projects funded by Community Services Fund	25
Number of Inn Crowd performances supported	67
Number of full time jobs created	12
Number of part time jobs created	21
Number of full time jobs protected	12
Number of part time jobs protected	8
Number of community owned businesses supported	6
Number of free houses supported	3
Number of tenancy pubs supported	5
Number of brewery managed pubs supported	2

** Estimated number of people reached based on ONS data and pub and brewery data insights*



Outcomes

Outcomes are the specific changes in attitudes, behaviours, knowledge, skills, status, or level of functioning expected to result from programme activities and which are most often expressed at an individual level. Outcomes for the Trelya (the Cornish word for change) programme are listed below and in the logic model.

Shorter term outcomes for participants (achieved within duration of programme):

Individuals and their families

- Rural Residents have increased social contact
- Rural Residents have increased access to support to meet their needs
- Rural Residents have increased skills and confidence

Pubs and their staff

- Pubs and their staff are able to safeguard jobs
- Pubs are able to diversify their income streams

Rural communities

- Communities are more networked and can respond to their own unique challenges
- Rural communities have more services available locally

Medium term outcomes for participants (after completion of the programme):

Individuals and their families

- Residents are less isolated
- Residents have increased connection with local community
- Increased employability

Pubs and their staff

- Local jobs are more secure
- Pubs are able to become more viable businesses

Rural communities

- Rural communities are resilient
- Rural communities are more viable

Long term outcomes for local residents, pubs and wider communities (sustained 12 months after project completion)

Individuals and their families

Sustained Reduction in Social Isolation: Building on the medium-term outcome of “Rural Residents are less isolated,” the long-term impact will be a sustained reduction in social isolation for rural residents. The increased social contact and community connections fostered by pub-based initiatives will have lasting effects on individuals’ well-being, reducing loneliness and improving mental health.

Improved Overall Wellbeing: Increased social connection, continued access to support services, and enhanced skills and confidence gained during the project will contribute to improved overall wellbeing for individuals and their families. This can manifest as better physical health, greater resilience to stress, and a more positive outlook on life.

Greater Independence and Empowerment: Individuals, particularly those who were previously isolated or lacking in confidence, will experience greater independence and empowerment. They will be more likely to engage in community activities, access services, and contribute to local life, leading to a greater sense of belonging and purpose.

Improved Prospects: For those projects that did support increased employability, this could lead to improved long-term prospects.

Pubs and their staff

Enhanced Sustainability: The medium-term outcome of “hubs are able to become more viable” will translate into diversified sustainability in the long run. Diversified income streams, increased customer base, and improved community engagement will contribute to the long-term appeal of the pubs’ wider support.

Increased Job Security and Creation: As pubs become more sustainable and potentially expand their services, this increases job satisfaction for existing

staff and may even lead to new job creation within the pub and related community initiatives.

Strengthened Role as Community Hubs: In the long term, pubs that have delivered projects with PiTH's support will be recognised as vital community hubs. They will be seen as more than just businesses; they will be integral to the social fabric of the community, contributing to its identity and overall well-being.

Increased resilience: Pubs will be able to adapt to future challenges and changes in the economic climate due to their increased resilience and adaptability.

Rural communities

Thriving and Vibrant Communities: The medium-term outcomes of 'rural communities are resilient' and 'rural communities are more viable' will lead to thriving and vibrant communities in the long term. These communities will be characterised by strong social connections, a diverse range of local services, and a proactive approach to addressing local challenges.

Increased Social Capital: Long-term, communities will benefit from increased social capital. This refers to the networks of relationships, trust and shared values that enable communities and publicans to function effectively together. Strong social capital contributes to community cohesion, resilience, and overall wellbeing.

Improved Quality of Life, Wellbeing, Happiness and Trust: The culmination of these long-term outcomes will be an improved quality of life for residents of rural communities. This will be reflected in better access to services, stronger social connections, a more vibrant local economy, and a greater sense of belonging, pride and trust in a local area.

Important considerations

External Factors: It's important to acknowledge that external factors, such as economic downturns or changes in government policy, can still impact the long-term success of these projects which need to be viable long term.

Ongoing Support: While the goal is for projects to become self-sustaining, some may require ongoing support or periodic "refresher" interventions from PiTH or other expert advice.

Data Collection: To accurately measure these long-term outcomes, ongoing data collection and evaluation will be crucial and essential.



Overall Impact

PiTH's long-term impact will be the creation of a positive cycle: Thriving pubs contribute hugely to vibrant communities, which in turn support sustainable pubs.

Empowered publicans contribute to local needs and stronger communities, which further empower individuals to come together.

Background Summary to Measuring Social Value

Social Return on Investment

What is Social Return on Investment (SROI)?

Social return on investment (SROI) is a methodology for measuring values over a time period that are not traditionally reflected in financial statements, including social, economic, and environmental factors. Traditional frameworks such as cost-effectiveness analysis (CEA), cost-utility analysis (CUA) and cost benefit analysis (CBA) do not holistically capture the social impact of enterprises (Banke-Thomas et al. 2015). SROI is way to enable the social enterprise sector to better understand the wider impacts of service delivery and quantify that value in monetary term (Millar and Hall 2013).

What are the principles of SROI?

SROI was developed from social accounting and cost-benefit analysis and is based on seven principles (Nicholls et al. 2009). These are described in full here. The principles are:

- Involve stakeholders
- Understand what changes
- Value the things that matter
- Only include what is material
- Do not over-claim
- Be transparent
- Verify the result

What are the stages of SROI analysis?

Nicholls et al. (2009) / Social Value UK inform us that carrying out an SROI analysis involves six stages:

- 1. Establishing scope and identifying key stakeholders.** It is important to have clear boundaries about what your SROI analysis will cover, who will be involved in the process and how.
- 2. Mapping outcomes.** Through engaging with your stakeholders, you will develop an impact map, or theory of change, which shows the relationship between inputs, outputs and outcomes.
- 3. Evidencing outcomes and giving them a value.** This stage involves finding data to show whether outcomes have happened and then valuing them.
- 4. Establishing impact.** Having collected evidence on outcomes and monetised them, those aspects of change that would have happened anyway or are a result of other factors are eliminated from consideration.
- 5. Calculating the SROI.** This stage involves adding up all the benefits, subtracting any negatives and comparing the result to the investment. This is also where the sensitivity of the results can be tested.
- 6. Reporting, using and embedding.** Easily forgotten, this vital last step involves sharing findings with stakeholders and responding to them, embedding good outcomes processes and verification of the report.

The Social Value Engine

The Social Value Engine (SVE) was created and developed through a partnership between Rose Regeneration and East Riding of Yorkshire Council. They identified over 150 fully researched proxies which are used to robustly measure and evidence impact through the Social Return on Investment (SROI) process.

This is separate major refinement; in many cases, SROI impacts were based on weakly researched or abstract proxies, which can bring the process into disrepute.

Their totally independent approach involves relating project outcomes to improvements to the sustainable development. They do this by grouping the proxies into the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations.



Social Value Proxies

Social Value UK (who developed the social value methodology and deliver accredited training and quality assurance) describe their use of proxies as:

The SVE uses this range of accepted proxies that are research based and come from sources such as academically peer reviewed research, government reports and surveys. They are used to calculate the individual social value of a project with established proxy values from a range of services/projects that have delivered the same or comparable outcomes as the project or service being considered.

Project Outcomes considered:

- Improved wellbeing of rural residents
- Increase in feeling you belong in your neighbourhood/community
- Improved community cohesion
- Improved access to local services
- Increased access to cultural events locally
- Increased skills and knowledge as result of participation in training
- Increased employment/job security
- Increased social action
- More resilient rural communities

Some outcomes have not been included for several reasons

- **Unintended Outcomes:** Certain outcomes were not anticipated, and as a result, the necessary metrics to capture their impact were not in place.
- **Lack of Suitable Proxies:** For some outcomes, appropriate proxies to derive a social value calculation were not available. This made it challenging to quantify their impact accurately.
- **Recommendation for Future Development:** It is recommended that these metrics and proxies be developed in partnership with academic institutions to ensure robustness and reliability.
- **Risk of Double Counting:** Some outcomes were very similar in nature. To avoid the risk of double counting, a conservative approach was taken, and these outcomes were not included.

Rationale for choosing proxies

The rationale for choosing the proxies were carried out in consultation with the PiTH team, stakeholders and feedback from participants of the programme. The proxies were identified as a rural resident, rural pub or rural community outcome.

PiTH has a maturing data collection system with a range of demographic, feedback, engagement and outcome metrics being collected. The strength of their impact management practice allows us to have confidence in the robustness of outcome measures.

Some assumptions had to be made due to the proportional level of data that projects submit as part of their grant agreement. From a data collection point of view an evaluator would always ask for more but it must be recognised that a balance has to be struck when supporting time poor businesses and publicans with what are, in reality, micro grants, to ask for proportional levels of information in return. More data requires more capacity which requires appropriate remuneration to publicans/project coordinators.

“In SROI, agreed financial proxies are used to estimate the social value of non-traded goods to different stakeholders. Just as two people may disagree on the value of a traded good (and so decide not to trade), different stakeholders will have different perceptions of the value they get from different things.”

The Social Value Engine

The proxies used for this evaluation are detailed below:

PROXIES – NET SOCIAL VALUE			
Outcome & Net Social Value	Proxy Source	Proxy	Hyperlink
Improved Community Cohesion £326,479.45	Power to Change	Feeling of belonging to a neighbourhood	The Economics of Community Asset Transfers
Improved Job Security £80,593.91	ONS	Employment gained - average increase in income	Earnings and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, seasonally adjusted
Improved Wellbeing £33,286.68	West Yorkshire Combined Authority	Cost of a community wellbeing programme with a network approach	Evaluation of the Work Wellness Project
Increased access to cultural events locally £23,413.49	Royal Albert Hall	Average cost of attending a live music performance	Royal Philharmonic Orchestra
Increased access to local services £1,254,194.55	Welsh Parliament	Value of undertaking a part time course for work	How are cost of living pressures affecting rural communities?
More resilient rural communities £101,376	Gov.uk	Average Cost of a Resilience Hub	Evaluation of the 2021-22 Funding Pilot for Local Resilience Forums
Increased social action £26,442	Power to Change	Regular attendance at voluntary or local organisation	The Economics of Community Asset Transfers

Social Value - SROI in 2025

Social Return on Investment

£8.28

Present Value

£1,783,368.21

Global Development Goals (GDGs)



United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

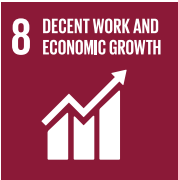
Placing work within the global narrative context of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offers several benefits, especially for organisations like PiTH and the social value created by local pubs. Here are some key advantages:

- **Broader Impact:** Aligning with the SDGs highlights the programme's contribution to global challenges such as poverty, inequality, and climate change. This demonstrates a commitment to making a positive impact beyond financial returns.
- **Enhanced Credibility and Trust:** Projects that align with the SDGs are often viewed as more credible and trustworthy. This can attract investors, partners, and customers who value sustainability and social responsibility.
- **Long-term Sustainability:** Focusing on the SDGs encourages long-term thinking and planning. This helps ensure that the project remains viable and beneficial over time, addressing both current and future needs.
- **Innovation and Leadership:** Integrating the SDGs into project goals can drive innovation and position the project as a leader in sustainable practices. This can differentiate the project in a competitive market.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** The SDGs provide a common language and framework for engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, including governments, NGOs, and the community. This can lead to stronger partnerships and collaborative efforts.
- **Holistic Evaluation:** Moving beyond traditional ROI analysis to include social and environmental metrics provides a more comprehensive evaluation of the project's success. This can reveal additional value created by the project that might otherwise be overlooked.



ENSURE HEALTHY LIVES: AND PROMOTE WELL-BEING FOR ALL AT ALL AGES

Figure 6 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 3



PROMOTE SUSTAINED, INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH, FULL AND PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT AND DECENT WORK FOR ALL

Figure 7 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 8



REDUCE INEQUALITY WITHIN AND AMONG COUNTRIES

Figure 8 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 10



MAKE CITIES AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS INCLUSIVE SAFE, RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE

Figure 9 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 11

UN Sustainability Goals	
3. Good Health & Wellbeing	£80,330.60
8. Decent Work & Economic Growth	£77,868.52
10. Reduced Inequalities	£1,211,782.17
11. Sustainable Cities and Communities	£413,386.91
Total	£1,783,368.21

Figure 9 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 11

Deflators: What would have happened anyway?

Based on a detailed consideration of the context and nature of the operating environment of PiTH projects, the gross value of each impact was “deflated” to take account of:

Deadweight – the extent to which the outcome would have been achieved without the programme - what would have happened anyway?

Attribution – the extent to which some of the credit for the outcome ought to be attributed to other organisations - who else helped to deliver an outcome?

Drop Off – the extent to which the outcome will diminish over time - how long does an outcome last? This deflator considers things such as health and environmental factors that might negate an outcome.

Leakage - how much of the impact has been delivered outside of the impact area? Were all the recipients of the programme the intended target audience or was it in a wider catchment area?

Displacement - What proportion of the outcome was moved or displaced? For example, did completion of the programme mean that an individual was removed from another service provider?

We based our assumptions on the deflators on the following rationale:

PiTH have developed an impact management plan that captures feedback from participants and stakeholders which allows for excellent insight into the impact of their services, however, at this time it does not allow us to make wholly qualified judgements on deflators due to the system not being designed to capture the nuance of each deflator. This can be easily remedied by the inclusion of a range of questions that could be inserted at the referral and end point of a project’s journey. This additional request for data does need to be considered as requiring further capacity from publicans and this would need to be compensated.

As this is an indicative SROI where specific deflator data is not available we have used the Additionality Guide Fourth Edition 2014 from Homes & Communities Agency linked here.

The Additionality Guide provides guidance for setting deflators based on previous programmes that have been analysed. It allows for making a decision about deflators based on the type of initiative the project/programme you are looking to evaluate is closest to in nature.



Conclusion

This evaluation examined the significant social value impact delivered by the administration of the Community Services Fund plus the INN CROWD and other collaboration projects. It has delved into pub's unique operational models, the underlying programme theory, and the substantial social value generated by this approach. The findings underscore the vital role that pubs and publicans, particularly in rural settings, can play in fostering resilient, connected, and thriving communities.

Despite operating within a changing and challenging environment marked by the lingering impacts of Covid-19, the cost-of-living crisis, and a challenging hospitality sector, publicans have demonstrated a remarkable ability to achieve positive outcomes for individuals, pubs, and local communities. The "perfect storm" of economic pressures, energy crises, and workforce shortages has led to some pub closures and reduced services, impacting the social fabric in many areas. However, the CSF's innovative model, which empowers pubs to diversify their offerings and become multi-functional hubs, has proven to be a powerful antidote to many of these challenges.

The evaluation confirms that local diversification support work is firmly aligned with pressing community needs. The focus on combating social isolation, improving access to essential services, bridging the digital divide, and enhancing overall wellbeing resonates deeply in local areas where these issues are often amplified.

By supporting diversification initiatives ranging from community cafes and digital hubs to creative arts programmes or social events, it has enabled pubs to become vital focal points for social interaction, service provision, and community resilience. If funding is quickly available for local publicans to react and expertise and support is on hand.

The social return on investment SROI analysis, whilst indicative, strongly suggests that diversified pub project type activities generate significant social value. The proxies used in this evaluation, which also link PiTH's work to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, further highlight the broader impact of the organisation's efforts.

They indicate that for every £1 invested in projects for diversification, there is a likely substantial return in terms of improved community cohesion, job security, wellbeing, access to cultural events and local services, increased social action and more resilient communities which benefit many Government departments and local authorities.

PiTH's success has been underpinned by several key factors: strong collaboration partnerships across the pub industry and with local authorities, trade associations, through One Voice and the Rural Services Network; a team of experienced advisors with deep industry

knowledge; a lean and efficient operating model; and an innovative strategy that has evolved from a focus on essential services to encompass a holistic approach to community wellbeing. Moreover, PiTH's operational assumptions – recognising the time constraints on publicans, the need for agile funding, the existence of a digital skills gap, and the innovative potential of community-focussed services – have shaped a highly responsive and effective programme..

In conclusion, Pub is The Hub diversification exemplifies how a relatively small organisation, through strategic interventions and a deep professional understanding of community, and industry, needs, can help catalyse significant positive change quickly. By empowering pubs to become more than just places to drink, diversified pubs are helping to create a future where rural, and other, communities are not only surviving but thriving, with pubs at their heart. The model offers a blueprint for sustainable rural development that can be replicated and scaled, ensuring that pubs and publicans continue to play their vital and unique role in the social and economic fabric of local life for generations to come both for residents and visitors.



Summary of Recommendations from Cornwall Rural Community Charity

These general recommendations are based on the findings and analysis presented in the report. They are aimed at enhancing the impact and sustainability of diversification work, as well as addressing the broader challenges facing pubs and local communities today.



Policy and Decision Makers

Recognise the wider and economic Social Value of Pubs: Acknowledge the unique and vital role of many pubs in local communities, not just as businesses but as social hubs and supporters of both local suppliers and farmers that contribute to wellbeing, social cohesion, and community resilience. Incorporate this understanding into relevant policy frameworks, such as those related to rural development, planning, and licensing.

Provide Targeted Funding For Local Services Provision: Increase funding for initiatives that support the diversification and sustainability of rural pubs, recognising their role in delivering essential services and addressing social challenges. Consider a dedicated fund for all rural pub diversification, and other rural businesses, accessible through streamlined application processes. Ring-fence core funding for organisations like PiTH who have a demonstrable track record of success supporting local areas.

Support Digital Inclusion: Invest in digital infrastructure and skills training programs specifically tailored to the needs of rural communities and businesses, including pubs. Ensure that funding programmes are accessible to those with limited digital skills.

Reduce Regulatory Burdens for Publicans: Explore ways to simplify planning and licensing regulations for pubs seeking to diversify their services, while maintaining appropriate safeguards and ensure they are not penalised by rating increases to the service facilities provided.

Promote Collaboration: Encourage greater collaboration between local authorities, pub-owning businesses, community services organisations like PiTH to support thriving rural communities, with pubs at their heart, (e.g. Rural Services Network)

Rating

- Most pubs rating valuation is derived from the fair maintainable turnover (FMT) at the valuation date. From there a range of percentages are applied depending on the type of pub, profitability, the mix of trade, running costs and other factors.
- With a publican prepared to diversify and provide services and activities within their community, it is important any such 'community services trade' should not unfairly impinge on the adoption of a FMT.

- In most cases any additional income will be outside the domain of the public house trade and will be either not profitable or minimally profitable. Any increase in normal trade would be reflected in the traditional FMT level.
- The provision of relief for Public House diversification, to avoid penalising the provision of social facilities, was referred to in the Valuation Office Agency – Valuation of Public houses 2021 Section 7.6. This is recommended for continuing.

To Local Communities

Engage with Local Pubs and Publicans: Actively participate in initiatives and events organised by local pubs, recognising their role as services hubs. Provide feedback and suggestions to help pubs better meet the wider needs of their community.

Volunteer: Offer your time and skills to support local pubs and publicans in their diversification efforts. This could involve helping with events, providing administrative support, or contributing to community gardens or other pub-based initiatives.

To Pubs

Embrace Diversification: Proactively explore opportunities to diversify your local services and become a multi-functional hub. Engage with PiTH and other support organisations to access advice, funding, and best practices.

Develop Digital Skills: Invest in developing your digital skills to enhance your pub's online presence, marketing, and ability to access online resources and funding.

Build Local Community Partnerships: Forge strong relationships with your local community groups, organisations, and residents to understand their real needs and collaborate on initiatives that benefit the wider community.

Measure Your Impact: Track your pub's social impact by collecting data on customer numbers, service usage, and community feedback. This information can be invaluable in demonstrating your value to funders, local authorities, and the wider community including Government Departments.

To the Wider Hospitality Industry

Share best practice: Encourage opportunities with staff for collaboration and knowledge sharing between pubs who have successfully delivered locally focussed projects with a sense of pride in the industry.

Continue to support pubs: and similar rural services initiatives, to ensure they have the capacity to provide a wide range of support to a diverse range of pubs and other outlets.

Advocate: Work together to advocate for policy changes that will benefit pubs, such as ensuring fair business rates or a cut in VAT and for taxation recognition of the many welcoming social benefits created.

“The lesson for pubs, I believe, is that you can't take the community for granted. It's not sitting there ready to hammer down your doors. It only really comes alive when you do something to make it happen”

Phil Mellows, Industry Commentator



Appendices

1. Pub Numbers
2. Market Commentary
3. Location of Projects
4. Project Types and Local Jobs
5. Rating
6. Join Inn – Last Orders for Loneliness

Photo: Gregallenphoto.com

APPENDIX 1: Pub Numbers

Courtesy of CGA

LOCATIONS				
Region	Approx. Total Pubs	Rural	Suburban	High Street
All GB Pubs (Excl. Northern Ireland)	43,314	14,116 (33%)	15,127 (35%)	14,071 (32%)
England pubs	37,178	11,814 (32%)	13,207 (35%)	12,157 (33%)
Scotland pubs	3,574	1,049	1,190	1,335
Wales pubs	2,562	1,253	730	579

Approx. Tenure Numbers (England)	Approx. Total Pubs	Independent Free Houses	Business Tenancies	Managed Houses
Rural pubs	11,814	4,745 (40%)	5,271 (44%)	1,798 (15%)
		Freehouses & Tenancies 10,016 (84%)		
High Street pubs	12,157	4,939 (40%)	2,872 (23%)	4,346 (35%)
Suburban pubs	13,207	3,779 (29%)	5,898 (45%)	3,530 (27%)

- 84% of Rural Pubs are either individual SMEs or Free Houses.
- 68% of all GB pubs are rural or suburban.

On Licensed Premises

The total number of on licensed premises in GB , excluding Northern Ireland, is approximately 99,868, a reduction from 116,063 since the analysis in 2020.

Of these 43,314 are GB pubs representing 43.4% of licences.

Other types of hospitality represent 56,554 premises (56.6%) such as hotels, lodges, inns, casual and formal dining restaurants, competitive social entertainment venues, bars, night clubs and social clubs. All of which have varying levels of contact with different types of individual customers.

Off Trade Premise

Sales in supermarkets or off licences are referred to as off trade premises.

APPENDIX 2: Market Commentary (April 2025)

The pub industry in England and Wales has faced a “perfect storm” of challenges in 2022-2024. Coming on the heels of devastating Covid-19 lockdowns, pubs were then battered by soaring energy costs, rampant inflation affecting both their costs and consumer spending power, and significant increases in the National Living Wage. These factors have combined to create an exceptionally difficult operating environment, leading to pub closures, reduced hours, and significant pressure on profitability facing the majority of small local businesses.

The energy crisis, fuelled by the war in Ukraine and global supply chain disruptions, saw energy costs for businesses skyrocket. Unlike domestic consumers, businesses were not initially protected by a price cap. While support was later introduced, it was not deemed sufficient for many pubs. Many pubs experienced increases of 300-500%, and in some cases even more.

Pubs are energy-intensive businesses providing a warm welcoming environment. They rely on refrigeration, lighting, heating, and cooking equipment, all of which saw massive cost increases. This significantly increased their overheads at a time when margins were already being squeezed.

Many pubs were forced to make difficult choices, including reducing opening hours, turning down heating, and increasing prices. These efforts were deemed insufficient in many cases. Some pubs were offered new energy contracts at more than ten times the rate of their previous contract. In November 2022, it was discovered that 70% of pubs thought they would be forced to close over the winter. (*The Morning Advertiser*)

Inflation, which reached a 40-year high in 2022, impacted pubs in multiple ways. The cost of goods like food, beverages, and cleaning supplies increased significantly. This forced pubs to either absorb these costs (reducing their profits) or pass them on to consumers through price increases. Food price inflation hit a 45-year high in April 2023. Wholesale gas prices increased by 550% by April 2022.

Inflation also eroded consumer purchasing power. With household budgets squeezed by rising costs for essentials like energy and food, discretionary spending on things like eating and drinking out declined. This resulted in lower footfall and reduced revenue for local pubs. It was found that 42% of people were going out less in the last quarter of 2022. It was also reported that 32% of people were spending less when they go out.

The National Living Wage (NLW) has seen significant increases in 2022 and 2023. In April 2022, the NLW increased by 6.6% to £9.50 per hour.

In April 2023 it increased a further 9.7% to £10.42 and is due to rise in April 2025. While positive for employees, these increases significantly raise the wage bills for local pubs, which are often heavily reliant on staff paid at or near the minimum wage. Pubs, already grappling with energy and inflation costs, find it difficult to absorb these wage increases. This further squeezed their already thin profit margins. Some pubs may have been forced to reduce staff hours or even lay off staff to manage their increased wage costs, potentially impacting service quality.

Many pubs took on significant debt during the Covid-19 lockdowns to survive. This included government-backed loans, rent arrears, and deferred payments to suppliers. The repayment of these debts became a significant burden in 2022-2023, particularly as revenue was still recovering and other costs were rising. Many businesses used their cash reserves to keep afloat during the pandemic.

The pandemic led to a significant exodus of workers from the hospitality industry. Many found more stable or better-paid work in other sectors. This created staffing shortages for pubs as they reopened, making it difficult to operate at full capacity and maintain service standards. There was a 210,000 shortfall of workers in the total hospitality sector in 2022, with 115,000 of these being front of house staff.

Consumer habits changed during the lockdowns, with a greater emphasis on home entertainment and delivery services. While many people returned to pubs, some behaviour shifts persisted, impacting footfall and spending patterns. It was found that 60% of people were not going out as much after the pandemic as they did before.

The combination of these challenges may have led to a significant increase in the closure of rural pubs and the long-term impact on the economy, health, education, behaviour and wellbeing should not be underestimated.

- Nearly 300 pubs closed across England and Wales in 2024 – an equivalent of six a week.*

* British Beer and Pub Association.

- Many were forced to reduce their operating hours or close on certain days of the week, or cut back on their food offerings to reduce costs.
- The sector saw job losses as individual pubs struggled to cope with rising costs and reduced revenue.
- The challenging operating environment made it difficult for pubs to have confidence to invest in their businesses, hindering their ability to adapt and innovate for the local community.
- Yet pubs are often the vital social hubs in communities, particularly in rural areas. Their closure has a significant social impact, reducing social interaction and community cohesion and local confidence.

The outlook for pubs in the short term still remains challenging. While inflation and energy costs show some signs of stabilising, they remain at elevated levels. Consumer confidence remains fragile, and the full impact of the economic downturns is yet to be felt. Mitigation measures such as targeted government support, such as further business rates relief, VAT reductions or a more

robust energy support scheme specifically designed for energy-intensive businesses, could help pubs navigate these challenges but lie outside the scope of this report. However, mitigation factors such as diversification of revenue streams, community engagement, as well as industry collaboration are touched on as potential solutions that organisations such as PiTH is able to offer through the Community Services Fund, JOIN INN – Last Orders for Loneliness and other creative and innovative projects. By understanding the social value that the types of projects these activities support the creation of PiTH will be in a stronger position to advocate for the positive role that pubs play in community life.

Continued recognition and support from the government for the whole sector, combined with innovation and adaptation by the whole industry, will be crucial to ensuring the long-term survival of this unique and vital part of British culture and community life. Good pubs have evolved for the past 600 years and with appropriate recognition and support and diversification of local services and activities can do so in the future.



APPENDIX 3: Location of Projects

Community Services Fund Completed Projects

England (203)

Scotland (2)

Wales (10)

01.04.2013 - 12.02.2025

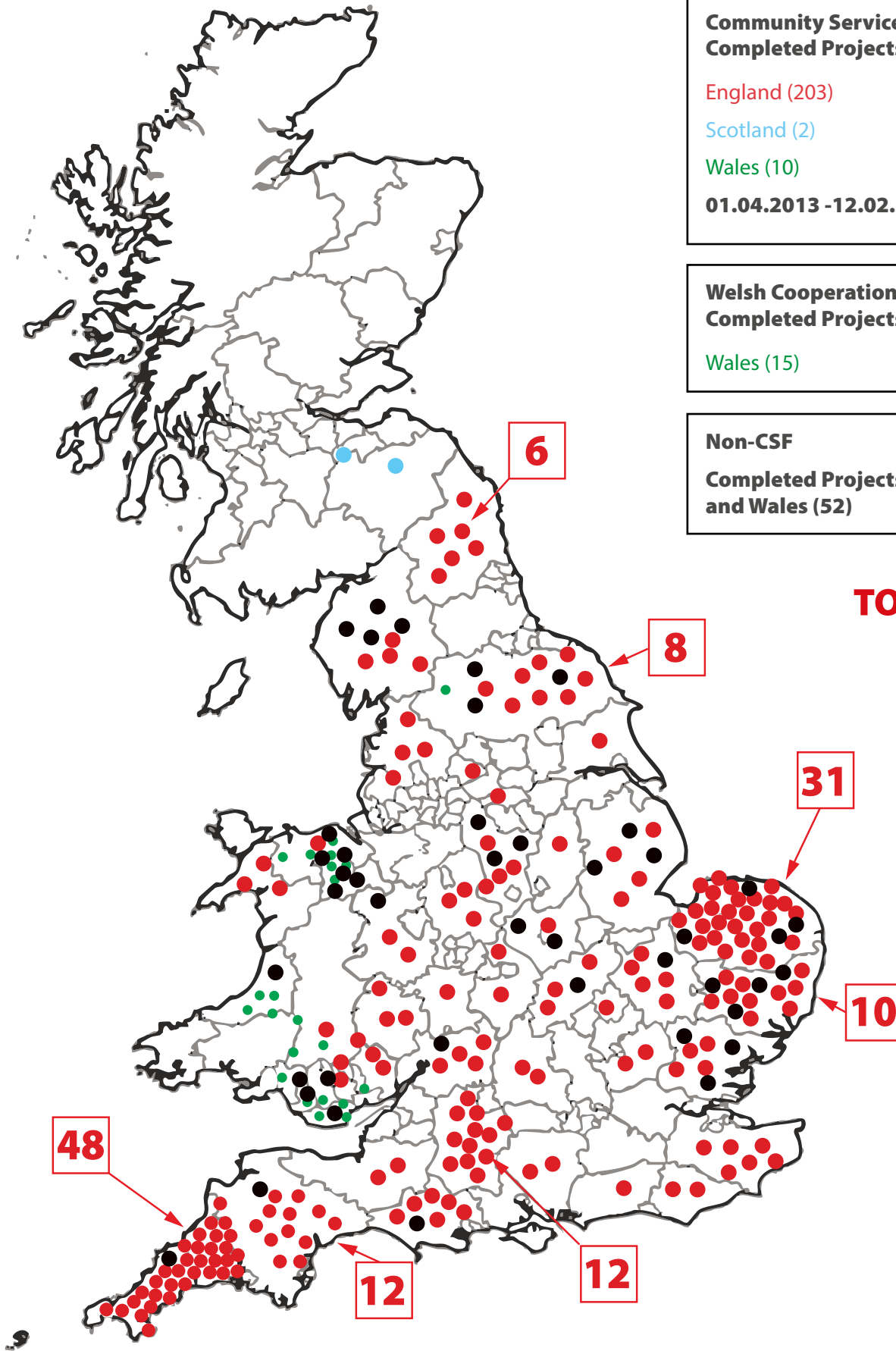
Welsh Cooperation Project Completed Projects

Wales (15)

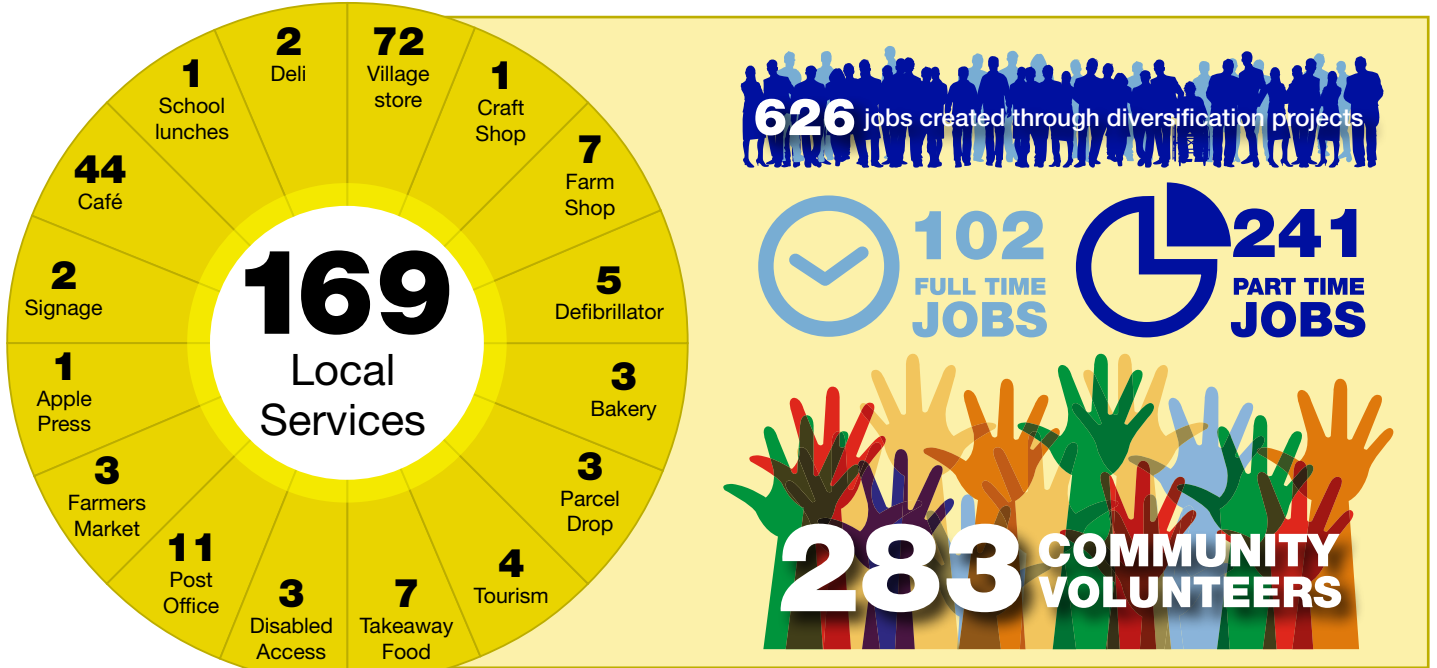
Non-CSF

Completed Projects England and Wales (52)

TOTAL 282



APPENDIX 4: Project Types and Local Jobs



*Travelling Regional Theatre Performances - 50 pubs over 6 counties, over 207 shows.

APPENDIX 5: Rating – Local Taxation April 2025

Rates are levied on public houses, with the basis of valuation set out in Schedule 6 to the Local Government Act 1988. The Rateable Value shall be taken to be an amount equal to the rent at which the hereditament might reasonably be expected to let from year to year.

Most pubs' rating valuation is derived from the fair maintainable turnover (FMT) at the valuation date. From there, a range of percentages are applied depending on the type of pub, profitability, mix of trade, running costs and a range of other factors.

Focusing on pubs that are involved in widening the services or activities they offer, predominantly, but not entirely in rural areas, there are several issues which need to be considered.

1. The current approach is to take a % of turnover. There is a range of values to reflect profitability, running costs etc. The full range needs to be used by the Valuation Office (VOA). In our experience they tend to use only the upper two quartiles for Band 3 (community pubs). The whole range must be considered.
2. The addition of services or activities to a pub in the community should not impinge on the adoption of the FMT. In most cases any additional income will be outside the domain of the public house and is either not profitable or minimally profitable. It may reflect in the trade of the pub through "normal" income by encouraging users of the additional services to support the pub in its traditional mode. There are precedents and instructions from the Licensed Property Valuer, dating back to the formation of Pub is The Hub, that such income is not included in the FMT.
3. There is a shift in the licensed property sector to fewer but better quality pubs with higher turnover. The local pub may often be driven by providing the operator with a "way of life". The licensee is seen as a satisfier rather than a maximiser in terms of running the business. This needs to be reflected in a valuation.
4. The removal of allowances ie from 75% relief to 40% relief in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement is said to be causing additional hardship and an escalation of costs which have been compounded within this. The rise in National Insurance and the minimum wage is reported to disproportionately increase expenses within all industries dependent on people. This fact could be reflected in the Approved Guide to the valuation of licensed premises for the 2026 Revaluation.
5. The higher the turnover, the greater the rateable value. Whilst higher rents generally reflect higher turnovers, too little reflection is given to outstanding licensees who may drive this turnover. The "reasonably competent operator" criteria needs to be carefully considered in the initial valuation and trade figures not blindly used to arrive at a valuation. A "stand back and look" approach also needs to become second nature in the valuations for a revaluation.
6. There is a danger that hospitality may be seen as an overall cash cow for government finances, without recognising the important individual role of the local publican and pub. On a macro tax level it contributes over £15 bn in taxes and accounts for 11% of employment. In the area of Business Rates, research carried out and provided by the British Beer and Pub Association (BBPA) shows that the sector could be paying excess in relation to both its size and profitability. They have shown that Hospitality accounts for 11% of all business rate payments despite contributing only 3% of eligible income.

Being more specific to public houses and bars, they account for 0.4% of total UK turnover but contribute 2.1% of the total paid in business rates. If the sector were paying an average business rates to turnover, the BBPA believe the total bill would be £130m and not £637m.

This suggests that the Approved Guide to the valuation of Public Houses which is agreed prior to the commencement of each Rating List may require a downward shift in the percentages that are used on the turnover of public houses in arriving at the rateable value.

To illustrate the additional costs from the Autumn Statement of October 2024 we have examined the impact on one of the leading and best run pub operators. They estimate that additional National Insurance and minimum wage increases will cost around £8m. The last full years accounts for the 12 months ending 31 March 2024 showed a profit of £20.5m. Thus, the additional taxes would have taken almost 40% of that profit.

For an industry that contributes around 7% of the GDP that increase could be unsustainable. The increase in costs estimated will also certainly be mirrored by the individual licensees in local community pubs that Pub is The Hub assists to diversify.

APPENDIX 6: JOIN INN - Last Orders for Loneliness

Make a difference to someone's day and help tackle loneliness in your community

JOIN INN Last Orders for Loneliness



Pubs, and the people who run them, have always been at the heart of communities, both urban and rural, creating places for sociability and companionship. However, there are still over nine million lonely people in the UK, lacking the connections in life that matter to us as human beings.

That is why we want you to 'Join Inn' with Pub is The Hub to help tackle the causes of loneliness, creating more connected, friendlier, and stronger communities where the pub is the hub.

This Join Inn – Last Orders for Loneliness looks to:

- Raise awareness of increasing societal loneliness within the UK, and the role pubs can play in improving quality-of-life within their communities.
- Build sustainable partnerships with others engaged in the loneliness debate, enabling more pubs to 'Join Inn' and help their communities.
- Recognise the social value of pubs already making a difference and help others become 'Join Inn Community Connectors' with practical help and support to address local needs with local solutions.

We don't have all the answers but we have inspiration from great pubs, ideas and helpful tips on our website at:

www.pubisthehub.org.uk/join-inn-last-orders-for-loneliness

So, keep in touch by emailing enquiries@pubisthehub.org.uk and read about some of the initiatives that pubs and their local communities are doing to make a difference to peoples' lives.

Ultimately, our aim is to make a difference to someone's day through small acts of kindness that, over time, help reduce loneliness within the communities we serve.

Understanding loneliness and its impact on people.

Firstly, it is important to recognise that loneliness is not the same as being alone, nor is it just the preserve of the elderly, although older people are still more likely to suffer chronic loneliness than younger people.

In 2018, the BBC undertook an on-line survey called the 'Loneliness Experiment'. Psychologists from three British universities highlighted several findings from the data collected and concluded that:

1. Young people are the group who feel loneliest
2. People who feel discriminated against are more likely to feel lonely
3. A third of people often or very often feel lonely
4. People feel ashamed about feeling lonely
5. People who feel lonely have on average lower levels of trust in others
6. People who feel lonely have more online-only friends
7. People who say they often feel lonely report poorer health

"Lonely is not being alone, it's the feeling that no one cares."

Anon



Loneliness and social isolation are different but related concepts. Social isolation can lead to loneliness and loneliness can lead to social isolation. Both may also occur at the same time. People often describe loneliness as having no one to talk to; feeling disconnected from the world; feeling left out; sadness and feeling misunderstood.

For some people it may be an event that triggers feelings of loneliness, for others it is their individual circumstances.

Loneliness has many different faces and causes:

- **Emotional loneliness** associated for example with a bereavement, a relationship break-up which results in the loss of a close confidante or intimate partner.
- **Relational or social loneliness** often triggered by retiring, changing jobs, leaving school, or starting university, where established social networks through work colleagues or college friendships may be suddenly severed
- **Collective loneliness** where someone just longs for a group or community of people to share common activities and interests.

As someone running a pub it's important to recognise that just bringing people together to address social isolation and increase the number of social contacts is not an end in itself – to combat loneliness, it is the quality and sustainability of the relationships created that is most important.

THANK YOU

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Thank you everyone!



Cornwall Rural Community Charity (CRCC) is an organisation dedicated to supporting and strengthening Cornwall's Communities to improve quality of life.

cornwallrcc.org.uk



Inspired by His Majesty King Charles III in 2001 when he was His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales. Pub is The Hub and Join Inn Last Orders for Loneliness operate as "not for profit" organisations dedicated to improving community services and activities from local pubs.

pubisthehub.org.uk