

Nenthead Shop Report

Marzia Aloisio

Survey

I conducted an informal survey in Nenthead. A survey was already carried out at the beginning of the project, asking about villagers' shopping habits in the old shop. This information is still very relevant, however I was asking about the effect of the shop and Post office closing in Nenthead and what the villagers think about having a shop in the new premises and what new products and services they would like. I was met with an overwhelming support for the project. A summary of the points brought up during the short interviews follows:

- Since the shop closed the village seems dead - it is more difficult to meet people walking about in the village and keep up with acquaintances.
- The things most missed about the shop are the everyday goods and services. Lots of people mentioned newspapers, everyday groceries (milk, bread, tea, sweets), and being able to pay the bills and take money out from the Post Office. At the minute most have to go to Alston for these things, even if its only a pint of milk they need. There are a couple of people who run errands for the older villagers who find it difficult to get about.
- The new premises are welcomed by a lot of the village, as the need for a shop is so great.
- The shop was used by all villagers, including other businesses like the Heritage centre, passing trades men and builders, the local school and so on. They are all potential customers.
- Since the shop closed many villagers who previously took it for granted now realise what a life line it was for the village. If it does reopen, many villagers would make a point of using it more.
- I mentioned the new services we are thinking about starting in the new shop, the most popular being is the seated area with tea and coffees. Also some people are interested in an ordering system in the shop, linking it with other businesses in Alston. These people did not use the old shop for many of their groceries, but if they could order specific things (e.g. organic goods, baked goods from the Moody Baker, etc) and have them delivered they would definitely use the service. The public access computer didn't generate much enthusiasm as people who do use computers already have one at home or in their place of work. However it might still be an idea worth pursuing, especially for the tourists and cyclists.
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- The feeling amongst the shareholders is that the steering group is doing an excellent job in pursuing the venture despite the sale of the first shop falling through.

Their support is still strong, evidence of that is the fact that only one shareholder has asked for their money back.

Post Office Update

Tracey Stevenson, the project manager from the Post Office came to assess the costs involved in setting up a branch in the new location. She was very optimistic about the project and gave us a good idea of what changes are needed to the premises. She recommended suppliers and builders for building the strong room and gave us accurate costings on things such as equipment and installations. She also said that financial help is available from the Post Office and we should discuss it further with Ray Jefferson.

The things that remain to do now cannot be done unless there is absolute certainty that the Community shop will open. Builders and tradesmen will have to be contacted and all equipment bought and installed; building for the strong room for the Post Office will need arranging; suppliers, both Penrith Coop and local shops, will have to be contacted and accounts opened; advertising for the opening of the shop will need arranging. However without a more concrete timescale none of these things can be started. The steering group and I will still keep in touch and work together on any further developments.