



pub is the hub

Case studies of community activities by Pub is The Hub in association with other organisations

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Pub gardens help bring people together



Pub is The Hub has joined forces with charity Horticap to provide advice to publicans on how to make best use of their gardens and support people in their local communities.

As we come out of the cold days of winter and head into spring it is time for publicans to start thinking about what action to take with their outdoor areas.

Creating a vegetable garden can be a great way to eat fresh, healthy food, but it can also be a way for publicans to help, educate and offer a social activity for many local people. While growing flowers can add colour, fragrance and additional biodiversity to any pub garden.

Pub is The Hub chief executive John Longden said: "Increasing numbers of pubs are asking for help with launching their gardens and allotments. As well as creating an opportunity to grow their own produce gardens can provide a great social environment to bring people of all ages together.

"We would really like to thank our partners Horticap, who have helped to put together this great advice guide for publicans. It is never too early to start thinking about getting that vegetable patch or wildlife garden started."

Horticap chair Peter Hornby said: "We were delighted to be asked to contribute to this guide supporting pubs to create gardens for their local residents."

He added: "Gardening as an activity supports both physical and mental wellbeing. Whether young or old, fit or less so, gardening as a therapeutic activity enriches lives and is at the heart of everything we do at Horticap."

Horticap is a registered charity, which is about to celebrate its 40th anniversary, and operates from Bluecoat Wood Nurseries, in Harrogate. It aims to provide its students, adults with learning and other disabilities, with a supportive and friendly working environment so that they may enhance their social and communication abilities and develop horticultural skills.

Horticap patron, and famous gardener Alan Titchmarsh said: "I am proud to be their patron and urge everyone who knows the therapeutic qualities of gardening to support the sterling work they do. Using gardening as a means of enriching lives is something I have valued all my life; Horticap is living proof that it can transform lives."

To download the guide [click here](#).



Pub is The Hub partnership in Norfolk



Support for community awards

Pub is The Hub has supported the community pub awards in Norfolk for more than 15 years as part of its partnership working with local councils.

This year Pub is The Hub has supported the search for the Broadland Pub of the Year 2024 and South Norfolk Pub of the Year 2024.

As part of its close association with the region and the Broadland and South Norfolk Business Awards Terry Stork, Pub is The Hub's regional advisor, takes part in choosing the winners of each year's awards.

The partnership started in 2010 with South Norfolk but in 2023 the newly combined Broadlands and South Norfolk council saw the awards become a bigger competition with an evening event at the Norwich Football Club.

Venues are initially nominated by members of the public, with shortlisted finalists judged by local councillors and Pub is The Hub.

Pub is The Hub regional advisor Terry Stork adds: "Pub is The Hub was delighted to support these great awards, which help recognise the wonderful work of great publicans whose businesses are at the heart of their local community."

He added: "This is great recognition for pubs and publicans that go above and beyond in the region. Pub is The Hub is honoured to support these awards and we look forward every year to being involved in the judging."



Pic: ©Simon



A Repair Café helps to build connections at Norfolk pub



The strapline of The Blue Bell Pub & Café in Stoke Ferry, Norfolk is 'More than a pub – a community hub' and with its ever-growing range of exciting activities it has become a social and creative hub for local people.

Among the successful activities that the Blue Bell hosts is a Saturday morning 'Repair Café', which is held twice yearly in the pub's garden and annexe room. with around 16 repairers attending the vibrant event.

Typically attracting around 50 people, the repair cafe, which runs from 10am to 2pm, helps to bring new faces to the pub and drive its food and drink sales, with attendees enjoying coffees, snacks and lunch.

The pub's team provide the repairers with tables, chairs and gazebos for them to set up areas for people to bring their items in need of repair along to. A wide range of services is on offer from the repairers, including electrical repairs, knife sharpening and sewing repairs. Plants and foraged herbs are also on sale.

Jim McNeill, an original founder member of Stoke Ferry Community Enterprise Limited, the Community Benefit Society that owns and runs the pub-cafe, says: "The Repair Cafés have attracted new people to The Blue Bell who have a look around, find out more about what we offer, and come back another time, which is great. They have a strong following too from our regular customers."



He adds: "The Repair Café is also a great way of supporting the local economy. The repairers pick up extra odd jobs from attendees and the pub has also used some of their services, including woodwork and gardening. Lots of people are aware of repair cafes and love the concept, so I would encourage other pubs to embrace the idea. The events create a real buzz and people love having new life given to their items."

Support for home workers

The Blue Bell also hosts a weekly Friday meet-up at its café for home workers. Hosted between 12 and 2pm the aim is to provide an opportunity for those working on their own to connect and network with other home workers.

Jim says: "Some people come in and work from the pub which is where the idea came from. This gives them the opportunity to get out of the house and have a chat with other home workers."

The pub also hosts a monthly book club and a weekly 'Over 60s Lunch Club'. It is also introducing a laptop station to help provide digital services to support elderly locals and those who aren't online at home.

Art group creating friendships

A weekly 'Arts Friends' group is also hosted in the pub's dining room, which has a strong following. This builds on the success of its weekly craft group and monthly craft workshops which are hosted in the pub's community café, which was established with the support of Pub is The Hub.

The pub also provides a regular meeting place where locals can meet members of the Stoke Ferry & District History Group and bring along artefacts, photos and their living memories of the area to incorporate into the group's Community History Archive which is stored in the village primary school.

Supporting act: Pub is The Hub celebrates support of successful project that helped bring live performances to rural pubs



Pub is The Hub is delighted to have provided support to arts project INN CROWD to help bring quality live literature and spoken word performances to thousands of people living in rural areas in England.

Its funding support of INN CROWD projects, during the past three years, has 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.

INN CROWD, devised by partners Applause Rural Touring, Creative Arts East and the National Centre for Writing, started in 2016. The unique arts project has supported hundreds of venues including rural pubs, libraries, social clubs, village halls, art centres, cafes, 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. The shows supported by Pub is The Hub, were hosted in pubs across Norfolk, Suffolk, Kent, Dorset, East Sussex and West Sussex.

Pub inspired performances

The Pub is The Hub supported performances featured some pub-inspired shows, including 'The Regulars' by theatre company Teatro Vivo about pub-goers and bar staff of yesteryear.

Publicans hosting the shows reported feedback from attendees as well as a range of benefits to the pub.

Shows a 'special thing'

Kirsten Webb, publican of The Purleigh Bell in Purleigh, near Chelmsford, Essex, said: "Hosting the shows was a good way of diversifying our entertainment offer. They were a special thing that the team and I looked forward to. The shows were really enjoyed and appreciated by attendees."

Making theatre more accessible

Ian Ballantine, publican of The Kings Head in Orford, Suffolk, said: "The nearest places to us to go to the theatre are some distance, so having a show on at your local pub is a much easier place for local people to see something."

He added: "To have the ability to have art performed in a small and intimate environment is so different to what most people have experienced and gives your customers a unique experience. Our team loved the shows, which were a talking point and helped attract a different audience to just your regular drinkers. They helped spread the word about the pub more widely too."





Positive impact of shows at Dorset pub

Simon Colquhoun, publican of The Gaggles of Geese, said: “The nice thing about the shows is that we were attracting people we wouldn’t normally have had visiting the pub.”

He added: “When money is a bit tight, theatre and performance and something that is affordable is a nice thing for a pub to be able to offer.”

Proud of INN CROWD success

Dawn Badland, executive director of Applause, which runs INN CROWD, said: “We are really thankful for Pub is The Hub’s support which helped so many people in rural areas enjoy exciting and impactful live entertainment locally.”

She added: “I’m really proud of the INN CROWD teams’ fantastic achievements in enabling the wonderful work of some of the UK’s top spoken word and live literature artists to be enjoyed by thousands of pub-goers.”

Pubs adding social value

John Longden, chief executive of Pub is The Hub, said: “It’s been great to support the excellent work of INN CROWD in helping to bring live performances to many rural pubs. The shows helped widen the pub experience for regulars, attracted new customers in and helped to reinforce, once again, how the pub is the natural home for many services and activities to help support people living in their local area.”

Winter Warmers collaboration

Pub is The Hub was also proud to partner with INN CROWD on a ‘Winter Warmers’ poetry initiative, which aimed to bring cheer and hope to publicans, their teams and people in their local communities during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The ‘Winter Warmers’ poetry collection launched in early 2021, with the poems crafted by seven talented poets inspired by pubs and publicans. The collection included a ‘National Poem of Thanks to Our Nation’s Publicans’ written and performed by Alexandra Ewing, the daughter of a former publican.

Go to www.pubisthehub.org.uk for more information

Show time: project results by numbers

3 – Pub is The Hub supported INN CROWD projects over three years

6 – pubs across six counties were supported

67 – shows in pubs were performed

2,278 – the approx number of pub customers who enjoyed the shows*

*INN CROWD Impact Report by Pub is The Hub (Sept 2019)

Publicans urged to 'Make space for music'



Image credit: Cliff Day

Publicans encouraged to 'Make Space For Music' to help support community groups

A membership organisation representing leisure-time music groups across the UK is appealing to publicans to help host groups increasingly struggling to find meeting spaces.

Making Music, who represent around 4,000 leisure time groups and support people to come together in their communities to make or present music, is running a #MakeSpaceForMusic campaign to help find new spaces for music groups, including singing and instrumental groups, to meet for rehearsals, workshops and music learning. The appeal comes due to a growing lack of availability of suitable meeting venues due to closures or rising costs.

Music groups are struggling to find spaces to meet and many are also struggling with increased costs.

Barbara Eifler, chief executive of Making Music, says: "Pubs have always been spaces for music, especially because making or enjoying music is not just a musical, but a social activity. Singing groups, ukulele ensembles, jazz ensembles or jazz and folk clubs in particular love a pub back room or upstairs space. Groups can be 20 up to 140 attendees. Most groups are acoustic, and not all of them are loud. Whatever your pub's space there's a music group to fit."

She adds: "We think music groups can bring great benefits to pubs, including increased footfall and new customers and a reliable regular clientele. Hosting groups is also good for a pub's reputation and a great way to strengthen its place at the heart of a community. If you'd like to host a music group, let them know they're welcome in your own publicity, or reach out to them."

Folk groups fantastic at The Fleece

At The Fleece Inn at Bretforton, Worcestershire, publican Nigel Smith advocates hosting music groups and events to other publicans. The Fleece's activities include hosting a weekly folk group, a monthly folk session, monthly Celtic session, a fiddle weekend and a learn to play the melodeum and singing weekends.

The pub has run a folk night, called 'Fleecy Folk' since 2002, with the night offering a free to attend open session of music and singing, led by a couple of volunteers. The session can see from six to 30 attendees depending on the session focus, but such is the popularity of the group, that the night evolved from being monthly to fortnightly to now weekly.

A monthly folk session is also attended by around 25 to 30 people and a popular Celtic session is also led by a couple of musicians who approached Nigel about hosting it. The pub provides a room for the session and some supper, such as sandwiches. A monthly ceilidh group, hosted through the winter, also sees up to 30 attendees.

Nigel says: "Music is important to the pub. The folk night has become so valued at The Fleece, that when we had a fire in 2004 and temporarily set up the pub in the barn, we ran a weekly folk session and when we reopened the pub a folk session was the first thing we hosted."

He adds: "Because people know about our music sessions, people come and ask if they can run ad hoc sessions."

Spin offs for the pub also include being introduced to musicians who go on to play gigs at the pub.

Nigel says: "Things grow quite quickly from hosting music groups. We started a wassail 15 years ago which now sees 1,000 people come to it, with the folk music a key driver and also now have a big Winter Solstice evening with Morris dancers and folk musicians."



Choir hits right note with locals

At The Rose & Crown in Ashbury, Oxfordshire, Community Hero Award finalists in the Great British Pub Awards 2023, choir rehearsals are hosted on Monday evenings in the pub's function room. The 'Rose & Crooners' choir has around 54 people signed up, with an average of 30 people, across a wide variety of ages, attending weekly rehearsals.

Manager Holly Royle says: "The pub's choir is wonderful and now has its own fundraising concerts for local charities at the pub and village hall and sings at weddings etc in the village church. The choir has raised awareness of the pub and helped attract people in who would have been apprehensive coming in on their own before."

Blues group brings joy to regulars

Another pub which has successfully welcomed music makers is the Tafarn y Plu (also known as The Feathers) in Llanystumdwy, Gwynedd, North Wales. The pub, which Pub is The Hub supported with help and advice and a grant from The Royal Countryside Fund (formerly The Prince's Countryside Fund) to help extend its community garden and allotment area, hosts a regular blues group.

Tegid Jones, co-director of Menter y Plu (the community benefit society who run the pub) welcomed a suggestion from a local harmonica player to host a group at the pub.

He says: "There are lots of sessions and groups in our area around traditional folk music, but not so much on blues. I love blues music and play the guitar so welcomed the idea of a regular group."

The monthly group is hosted on the last Thursday of the month, with a growing attendee base aged from 30 to 60.

Tegid adds: "The group use space in our quieter bar for a mix of playing and chatting. Their music can be heard by customers, and we always get positive comments from customers as it adds to the atmosphere in the pub."

He adds: "Hosting the group has led to other things, as we are now introducing open mic sessions to give the group a chance to perform."

Find out more about the campaign here: [Make Space For Music | Making Music](#)