



<http://www.naylandcommunitycouncil.org.uk/PostOffice.html>

Update from Save Our Post Office Campaign 31st October 2016

An Executive Management Committee of eight members is now in place with Maggie Ryan as Chair and Simon Carter as Vice Chair. Simon reported that progress is being made in our plan to secure the products and services of our village post office in preparation for the retirement of the current postmistress. In September we had an exploratory meeting on site with the Post Office Field Agent to examine the implications of taking on the Post Office; to identify the potential costs of transfer and make an initial assessment of the work needed to ensure the Post Office can continue to operate from its current base. We will be eligible for some funding from the Post Office to cover the cost of essential works they will insist upon.

We have also met with a representative from the Plunkett Foundation who will guide us in the formalities of establishing the legal entity we need to actually take on the Post Office business. Plunkett Foundation is a charity which aims to alleviate rural poverty and social exclusion by helping communities set up and run community co-operatives. Community co-operatives can come in many forms: shops, pubs, bakeries, farms, community hubs, farmers' markets, woodlands, broadband projects – the list is endless! Plunkett Foundation has supported the establishment of more than 340 community shops throughout the UK.

Community Co-operatives are businesses, but they trade primarily for the benefit of their community. They are controlled by the community, and they have open and voluntary membership, actively encouraging people to get involved by becoming members. They do this by offering shares in the co-operative, the cost of which are set at a level that the majority of people will be able to afford. We intend to establish up a Community Benefit Society, set up on a one member, one vote basis, rather than one share, one vote. This is important because it means that all members have an equal say in how they want the co-operative to be run, regardless of how many shares they've bought or how much money they've invested. In this way, it will be a truly democratic form of business in and for our community.

Our next steps are: by the end of this year to establish and register the Community Benefit Society; to complete due diligence on and engage in more formal talks with the Post Office and the Postmistress to agree how we can take on the Post Office business; to determine exactly what works need to be undertaken to the premises and how they will be funded; to agree the business plan. In early 2017 to action the business plan and determine our fundraising needs. By Easter 2017 to issue the Community Share Offer and invite the entire community of Nayland and Wissington to become a part of this exciting community enterprise. When fully funded, to actually acquire the Post Office business, complete the conversion works (the Post Office will be closed for a couple of days whilst all that takes place) and then launch our Community Enterprise.