

# Community Led Housing - Get Inspired

## The Green Dragon, Exelby - community pub and cottage



### Background

The local pub in the village of Exelby in Hambleton was very run down, but in 2016 people from the community came together to try and save it. The Exelby Green Dragon Group was formed with the purpose to buy the business and revitalise the space as a vibrant pub and community focal point.

With a successful application to Hambleton District Council, The Green Dragon was officially listed as an 'asset of community value' and the community came together to mount a bid for the property, forming an official Community Benefit Society to help achieve this.

### Getting started

Despite the pub's new status and being on the market, it took two years of negotiations and funding before the pub was officially purchased.

When a deal was finally struck with the owners, around £400,000 was needed to fund the purchase and renovation of the pub and

adjoining cottage. Hambleton District Council was able to provide £45,000 from their Community Housing Fund. Additional funding came from a £50,000 grant from Plunkett Foundation and a £50,000 loan with the Key Fund. The final £250,000 was raised by issuing shares at £500 each. The interest in the community share scheme was phenomenal, helped along by the first investor, local MP Rishi Sunak. Whilst the majority of the shareholders were local to Exelby, investors came from far and wide, including the New Forest and even Fairfax, Virginia! Although 123 people signed on in time for purchase, the scheme now has 150 shareholders.

Initial targets were met within three months of the shares being opened and the purchase of the land was made official in October 2018.

### Community led housing

The determination of such a small community of less than 150 people was incredible. It is estimated that, collaboratively, around 500 miles were walked, delivering 15,000 leaflets and newsletters to raise the profile of the

project, as well as maintaining a presence in both traditional media and social channels. With the purchase of the pub complete and sufficient funds raised, the community came together to renovate the pub and improve the facilities. Tenants were quickly found and the pub re-opened in December 2018, having been closed since May.

Since then, the derelict cottage attached to the pub has been restored and revitalised with help from the Community Housing Fund. A local housing needs survey completed by the Rural Housing Enabler for Hambleton, showed a clear need for affordable housing in Exelby and, despite being a challenging project, works were completed on the two-bedroom cottage in May 2019. The new home has been let at an affordable rate ever since.



Exelby's community with Rishi Sunak MP outside the Green Dragon pub

## Community impact

The project has brought the whole community of Exelby together, with local people thinking even more about how to make the community a

*"I think everyone's lives have changed forever and our world has changed completely. It's shown us how much we need to work together. Exelby Green Dragon Community Pub Ltd embodies the spirit of co-operation firmly embedded in the local area and attuned to local needs."*

**John Walker, Secretary.**

better place to live and work. The new and revitalised pub has truly become a hub for community activity and engagement with a local deli and shop being added to the pub. As a Community Benefit Society, the community have been able to create a small charity fund to help fund local community based activities and organisations, such as Exelby Book Club, Exelby Gardening Club and the village Christmas celebrations to name a few.

## What does the future look like?

The community are continuing to go from strength to strength, despite the recent setbacks of Covid-19. Exelby Green Dragon Community Pub Ltd recently completed work on a community garden and safe space that adjoins their new carpark. The hope is for the area to be a safe and welcoming place where all ages can come together and encourage co-operation and participation in group activities. The space includes a community vegetable patch, a book swap, a bike library with access to free facilities and a seated 'Safe Space.'

In September 2021 the pub opened a room kitted out to help those working from home and offer a space for local groups to meet up.



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Led Homes  
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For inspiration, information and advice with your community led housing project, contact Community Led Homes North Yorkshire & East Riding:

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