

## The Heart Beats On

Did you know there are over 300 community shops in the UK? Six of them are in Herefordshire and two just a few miles away in Alfrick and Bishops Frome. All of them have access to professional, legal and financial advice thanks to The Plunkett foundation ([plunkett.co.uk](http://plunkett.co.uk)). This national organisation supports the development of community-owned shops and is making sure that every step we take on the way towards a new Heart for Cradley is a positive one.

We are currently working with our Parish Council to confirm meeting details so everyone who wants – and who does not want – a new Cradley shop and café, can gather and vote on a final list of options for the way forward. Please look out for posters, facebook messages and visit the website so you can let friends and family know about any news.

In the meantime, here is some more information about the range of Community Shops that can be found in the country. The Plunkett Foundation's 'model' has a high success rate. In the last 20 years only 13 shops have closed, and none since 2012. This is a success rate of 96% which compares favourably to the five-year 47% failure rate of small businesses as a whole (Office of National Statistics).

Every shop is unique. Some have been established in old shops, some in new eco-builds and one in a converted loo. Eardisland's has been created from a converted dovecote and to visit Yarpole's you *have* to go to church.

What every shop has in common is a passion to offer local people products they need in a place they want to visit - and a small army of volunteers. The most successful shops often employ a management team but crucially, they have the determined support of their local community – as investors, volunteer 'helpers' and of course customers.

Take Alfrick as an example. After the old village shop shut, local people pulled together and in 2012, opened a community shop in a porta-cabin. The shop has a part time manager (20 hours a week) who is paid. The rest of the staff are volunteers from the local community – a total of 60 out of a community of 500 people. The shop is thriving and there are now plans to create a permanent building on the site.

With over 400 commercial village shops closing each year, community shops are filling a very big gap and are playing an incredibly important social role. They allow people to connect with their neighbours and meet people they do not often see. They offer opportunities for all members of a community to be involved – from young to old - and they enable rural communities to have a say in their future. If you happen to be passing close to Monmouth or Cheptow in the next few weeks, consider visiting Brockweir's outstanding community shop – it is inspiring to see how much local people have to offer each other ([bandhvillageshop.co.uk](http://bandhvillageshop.co.uk)).

Our new Heart could be as straight forward as a new green space for us all to enjoy. Or – it could be as creative as a shop and café that has Friday pizza evenings, pop-up restaurants, community breakfasts, fruit and vegetable-growing space and a nature walk.

The choice is yours.

Visit [heartofthevillage.co.uk](http://heartofthevillage.co.uk) or [facebook.com/cradleyHoV](https://facebook.com/cradleyHoV) for the very latest news. You can also talk to any one of the Heart of the Village Team – but please remember we are all volunteers and would be very grateful if you have a specific experience to offer this project:

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