



Media release

12 October 2020

### **Norfolk village launches vital new community shop and cafe**

More than three years of work by a committee of determined locals came to fruition last Monday (5 October 2020) with the opening of The Walled Garden Community Shop and Café in Little Plumstead.

Funded by a combination of grants, fundraising, donations and a community share offer, which together have raised almost £250,000, the project has also received support from the Plunkett Foundation, which helps rural communities facing difficult times when village stores close.

Adrian Nagle, Chair of the community group, said: “Our village store closed in 2016 so, since then, getting to our nearest supermarket has meant an eight-mile round trip. The idea of the shop and café came about through local social entrepreneur Robert Ashton, and a survey showed there was huge local support for establishing a shop in the village once again.”

The shop and café have been built within the Victorian walled garden that formerly served Little Plumstead Hall and then latterly Little Plumstead Hospital. Until the 1990s, the garden was maintained to a high standard, mainly by patients from the hospital, but it fell into a state of disrepair before being acquired by the parish council. The community group is leasing the site from the parish council and aiming to restore the walled garden to its former glory. The café’s outdoor terrace has already become a popular place to observe the early stages of the garden’s restoration.

Adrian continues: “It’s been a huge undertaking, made more complicated by needing to clear the garden, get the Victorian walls restored and build the shop and café from scratch – all alongside meeting funding deadlines and being faced with a pandemic.

“We came up against several setbacks and there were times when we began to doubt whether we’d actually do it, but it’s all finally come together in the last few months. It’s even more important in light of what’s happened this year as it means vulnerable people won’t need to travel so far to get groceries, and the café is a place people can get together for a coffee and a chat so they won’t feel so isolated.”



The shop is being supplied by Nisa Retail (part of the Co-op Group), as well as stocking many locally sourced products, with the café offering hot drinks and locally produced cakes and pastries initially. The shop and café have two paid members of staff who are being supported by volunteers.

Liam Buddle, shop and café manager, said: “I’ve worked in retail for many years but this is a new challenge for me. We’re really reliant on volunteers and so grateful to everyone who’s come forward so far to help out. It’s a big learning curve for all of us so we’re starting off with a limited café menu and hoping to expand as things settle down, as well as introducing more local produce in the shop.

“It’s a fantastic facility and we hope it’ll be well used by the community.”

If you can offer any time to volunteer in the shop, café or garden, find out more at [www.thewalledgardenshop.co.uk](http://www.thewalledgardenshop.co.uk)

- ENDS -

#### **Further information (media only)**

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#### **Notes to editors**

£100,000 of the project’s funding to date has been awarded by the Broads Local Action Group through the EU LEADER Programme.

The project has the backing of Broadland District Council and the parish council, as well as a £60,000 grant from Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust who run the nearby Broadland Clinic.

A community share offer raised £26,020 through 72 members purchasing shares of £1 each.

An initial grant of £15,000 was received from the Bright Ideas Fund, funded by Power to Change, which aims to give community groups in England the support necessary to start setting up their community business.



The Co-op's charity, the Co-op Foundation, which provides interest-free loans and grants to organisations looking to grow sustainably-funded community spaces across the UK, has awarded a grant of £10,000 and an interest-free loan of £50,000.

Funding has also been received from: A legacy left by a former Little Plumstead Hospital patient; Pocket Parks; The Geoffrey Watling Trust; a crowdfund in association with Aviva; and a donation from The Ivy Child Charitable Trust.

### **About LEADER**

An initiative managed in Norfolk by Norfolk County Council, LEADER ("Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale"), meaning 'Links between the rural economy and development actions', is a 'bottom-up' approach which enlists the energy and resources of local people who come together as an empowered group to develop an area.

This funding is from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) delivered via Defra ([http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/index_en.htm)). In the UK this fund is managed by the Rural Payments Agency and distributed via the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE).

The overarching aims of the programme are to:

- Contribute towards improving the environment and the quality of life in rural areas
- Strengthen the rural economy by helping micro and small businesses to create and sustain employment within the area
- Improve competitiveness, particularly in the agriculture and forestry sectors

More information can be found at [www.norfolklags.co.uk](http://www.norfolklags.co.uk)

### **About Co-op Foundation**

- Co-op Foundation is the Co-op's charity, helping communities UK-wide work together to make things better.
- Co-op Foundation is the leading charity tackling youth loneliness in the UK. By 2021, its Belong programme will:
  - Connect and empower at least 7,500 young people to take action to tackle loneliness
  - Strengthen local youth services that provide vital support and opportunities
  - Engage at least 25,000 young people in a national conversation that breaks down the stigma of youth loneliness.



- Co-op Foundation provides interest-free loans and grants to help eligible organisations improve local spaces that strengthen communities, and grow their incomes so they can sustain these spaces longer-term.

[www.coopfoundation.org.uk](http://www.coopfoundation.org.uk)