

Clevedon Community Bookshop



Good news to start the year! On 31 December, Clevedon Community Bookshop, a general second-hand bookshop, opens its doors. Located in Copse Road, Clevedon, in North Somerset, this new co-operative bookshop has taken over the premises from which Clevedon Books traded. The previous owners, Wendy and George Douthwaite, are continuing to trade on the Internet.

When, early in 2011, they indicated plans to close, a group of people through Clevedon Society of Friends (Quakers) and Transition Clevedon got together to consider ways in which the shop might be saved. Angela Everitt, formerly of ReadingLasses in Wigtown, who had recently moved to Clevedon, knew of the difficulties in developing a sustainable profit-making business and looked for ways to run the Bookshop as a 'not-for-profit' social enterprise.

Researches revealed that, in the UK, over 150 village shops are run as community co-operatives owned by the people of the village. Contact was made with The Plunkett Foundation which supports such shops, and through the Co-operative Business Hub, the Clevedon group was offered support from the Co-operative Development Agency in Bristol to establish the organisational structure, to register the Community Co-operative with the Financial Services Authority, to develop the business plan and to design the system for funding the start-up costs of the Bookshop.

A public meeting was held in September for Clevedon Community Bookshop Co-operative to launch its first community share offer. People and organisations in Clevedon and/or those committed to the objectives of the Clevedon Community Bookshop, were invited to become Members of the Co-operative and, as such, co-owners of the Bookshop, through the purchase of Community Shares at £1 each, minimum purchase ten shares. Buying shares brings with it membership of the Bookshop Co-operative, and a chance to participate in the development of this initiative, as a volunteer worker and through General Meetings. Shareholders must be 16 years of age or older. Each member has one vote regardless of the number of shares owned. Shares may be withdrawn with three months notice, at the same value as purchased. They cannot be transferred or sold.

It was standing room only at the Public Meeting. That night 1650 shares were sold. Now, after wide publicity in the Guardian, the Times, the Independent 'i', through most local papers through the Press Association, and even on the Saturday Radio 4 one o'clock news, the membership of the co-operative has soared to 600 from all over the UK and even as far away as Hong Kong and Japan. £13,000 has been received in share income to fund the setting-up costs; £8500 has been contributed in interest-free loans; a grant of £1500 was secured from Co-operatives UK. In addition, local businesses, solicitors, removal firms,

the DIY shop, and Co-operative members gave a considerable amount of help to renovate and refurbish the premises

As a social enterprise, the Bookshop intends to be sustainable, generating turnover to cover ongoing costs such as rent, rates, stock purchase, heating and lighting etc. Books will be sold on the Internet as well as from the shop. Any surplus over and above ongoing costs, will be ploughed back into the Bookshop to further develop its stock, to improve the shop itself, and to host literacy and literary activities, building upon Clevedon's literary heritage of Coleridge, Southey, and Tennyson. Should a steady pattern of profit emerge, then the Co-operative will consider creating a job, employing a Bookshop Manager.

More details: www.clevedoncommunitybookshop.coop Telephone 01275 218318