

SAVE OUR POST OFFICE BY SARAH HODGSON

You've probably seen that Felpham Post Office and Village Stores is on the market. I do hope that some young couple buy it to run as a lifestyle business just like previous post masters and mistresses, but what should we do if that is not what happens?

I've been thinking of a potential idea, and I have shared it with some local residents who have received it with enthusiasm – but first let me introduce myself properly.

I was born in Felpham, educated and grew up here before moving away to work. After 50 years away during which I maintained close ties with the village, I have moved back – into a house my grandmother tried to buy in 1943 (the apple doesn't fall far from the tree, apparently!).

I have early memories of the post office. I went to nursery school in Admiralty Road, and by the time I was four I used to walk by myself to meet my grandmother at the triangle at Hayley's Corner – it was the 1950's! On Thursdays I would collect her pension from the Post Office and carry it very carefully back to her. I did a paper round at 12 and bought sneaky packs of cigarettes as a teenager.

My mother, also born in Felpham, continued to live here until 2014. She was a founding member of the local history society, and wrote many local history books, including *Felpham Matters*, which was sold at the Post Office. You might remember her – Sheila Gould, she may well have taught many of you or your relatives.

Like my grandparents and parents before me, I love Felpham. I am passionate that the village should keep its heart, and I believe that the Post Office is an integral part of that.

So now to my idea.

I propose a community project to purchase and run the Post Office and Stores on a full-time basis, renting out permanent cabins in the garden for small local start-up businesses, holiday letting part of the house, maybe a community art space With such a vibrant and diverse community to support in Felpham, the opportunities are endless.

With 1,000 people buying a share in a Community Interest Company for £1,000 each, this could be made possible. And our village has a history of this – the Memorial Village Hall was built in the 1950s with a buy a brick for £10 scheme! Any profits would get fed back into the project or help pay for other amenities needed in the village.

If you are interested in the group that is developing this idea, or being informed of further developments, please get in touch with me – a project like this will only succeed by the strength of the people involved.

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