

GRAND OPENING SPEECH
Given by Fraser Hughes, BADCE Chair
Saturday 6th April 2013

Before I start, I must admit this is the biggest thank you speech I have ever made, but then again I have never won an Oscar. However, I am absolutely delighted to be able to make it. So to start properly.....

Good morning everyone. My first thank you is to all of you for coming along to celebrate the official opening of Broadwindsor Community Stores. And thank you Oliver for joining us. Thanks also to Grace for playing so beautifully for us this morning.

This is definitely a day of celebration and a day to thank all those who have brought it about. If I miss anyone out it is not intentional, it is just a bad habit I seem to have acquired over the years.

19 months ago our shop in the square closed and 250 people met in Comrades Hall and vowed to reopen a shop for the community. Most of you know the trials and tribulations we have been through. I am not going to remind you of them now.

So here we go with the thanks....

I would like to start by asking you to recognise the fantastic work my colleagues on the shop committee has put in. You would not believe how much time and effort has gone in to getting this venture off the ground. So to my fellow committee members you have done a great job. If they look weary that is because they are! For everyone on the committee today is a day of pride and satisfaction of a job well done.

I would like to thank all those people in the village not on the committee who stepped forward and gave their time and effort willingly and free of charge to help us convert and fit out the shop, and help promote it.

Also I must thank the Oldfields, the owners of the Old Telephone Exchange, for being so pleasant and easy to deal with and supporting our vision.

We could not have progressed the project without outside help and I would like to thank Dorset Community Action, West Dorset

District Council, Broadwindsor Parish Council, Broadwindsor Jubilee Group, the Plunkett Foundation and Chalk & Cheese for their advice, guidance and financial help throughout the process.

I would like to thank all the people we met at other community shops for the advice we received during our research and information gathering exercise, and none more so than our friends at Thorncombe.

I would like to thank Sue Williams for bringing her vast experience of local shops to us and becoming our shop manager, a stunning capture, and to Jane Sloman for assisting her so ably. These first weeks have not been easy and we still have much to sort out but I am sure Sue and Jane will come through with flying colours.

I would also like to thank the band of volunteers who have been working in the shop and welcome any more that would like to join us. I can assure you it is fun and the till is not so daunting! We would also welcome to the fold anyone that can offer IT or financial skills.

I would like to thank the pupils of Broadwindsor Primary School for taking part in the Shop Poster competition - you all did very well - and to the Headmaster for allowing us to use the school facilities for tea and coffee after the opening.

And last, but certainly not least, you. Without the support the community has shown from the outset, today would not have happened. Many of you here today turned up to that first meeting. And when the Parish Plan questionnaire was circulated, 97% said you wanted a shop. 200 of you turned up for the Tasting Morning we had with local suppliers.

What is more, with all the turns and twists we faced, you backed the committee every bit of the way. And when we asked you to put your hands in your pockets and raise £30,000 towards the project you did us proud and raised £33,000. Over 200 of you took out shares.

So with that, and the Grant we received from Chalk & Cheese, we are in the enviable position of opening Broadwindsor Community Stores debt free, no loans, no mortgages!

Many of you have been amazed how big the shop is when you get inside and how many lines we stock – over 1,000 already, with more lines and services to come. We are good supporters of local firms and producers and aim to eventually have 30% of our products from suppliers within 30 miles of Broadwindsor.

The shop has drawn generous compliments from customers, who are not just from Broadwindsor, but all the local villages and further afield. Our fame is spreading. In fact they tell us they love it! Our trade is building, but it will take time, and we need your continued support.

Having now managed to get Broadwindsor Community Stores open we want to keep it that way. And the only way to guarantee that is to use it! If we don't and it closes again I'm sure it will be for ever. So the message is ever so clear: USE it or LOSE IT.

Now we are going to ask the winner of the Poster Competition, Ellie Guppy, to cut the ribbon to officially open the shop. Today is a special day for Ellie, not only is she going to cut the ribbon, but it is her birthday. She is 9 today.

[Oliver Letwin kindly presented Ellie with her prize]

Finally, before you make your way to school for refreshments and to see the other posters made by the school pupils, we are going to cut a cake generously given to us by Fancy That Cakes of Beaminster, slices of which you can have at the school. As you can see, it carries the message WE DID IT! And we did!

Well done everybody.

Before you go back home today please visit the shop and see the special offers we have, together with all the other products we stock. Again thank you all for coming and, as so many of you have said, it's good to have a shop back.