



## **Run by the Community for the Community**

### **Introduction**

Located in the heart of the Somerset village of Roadwater, just inside Exmoor National Park, Roadwater Village Community Shop provides an essential retail and post office service for local residents and visitors. We stock a wide range of food, basic household goods, stationery and newspapers, plus locally produced organic fresh vegetables, preserves, dairy products, bakery items and cards, supplied by over 20 local businesses. Situated beside the recreation ground and village hall, the shop serves as an information centre, with a friendly welcome which is especially valued by elderly or less mobile residents who have difficulty travelling outside the village.

### **Brief history and achievements**

There has been a shop at the current premises for over 200 years, run by a succession of private owners. In early 2015, the village was shocked by the untimely death of the popular and well-respected owner and made a rapid decision to take over the shop rather than lose it. A limited company was established, pooling local skills and expertise. A share offer raised money to purchase the business and begin operating the shop from June 2015. Volunteers and staff worked hard to learn new skills and turnover has steadily increased.

In early 2017, recognising that a private buyer was unlikely to materialise, we formed a Community Benefit Society (CBS) and within a year had raised the money to buy the freehold property, through shares, donations and grants. The generosity of the community reinforced our faith in their support and commitment to the shop. Everyone who buys shares automatically becomes a member of the CBS, with equal voting rights regardless of shareholding. Currently we have almost 300 member/ shareholders.

### **How we operate**

The shop operates with a mix of paid staff and volunteers and a volunteer manager. The CBS exists for the benefit of the community, so that if profits are sufficient, we can allocate funds to nominated local causes. There is a real sense of community ownership and pride in the shop, with many people contributing in different ways. We aim to be an inclusive enterprise that is responsive to community needs, promotes Green practices, enhances local tourism, provides job and work experience opportunities and supports development of local businesses.

**Our Vision:** A sustainable shop, owned and run by the community, serving everyday shopping needs of residents and the wider rural community and enhancing the life of the village by acting as a social and information hub.

### **The Future: Our 3-Phase Strategic Plan**

1. Acquisition of the building freehold and shop business; undertaking essential building repairs; consolidation of business planning and systems; review of business practices and philosophies.
2. Major refurbishment and redesign of the shop layout, including an extension to house a café and community hub and energy improvement measures, including solar PV panels.
3. Further improvements to the building externals and grounds; improvement of business efficiency.

With Phase 1 achieved, we are now fundraising for Phase 2. Plans have been drawn up and we have applied for planning permission. Meanwhile, in keeping with our core philosophies, we continue to work on measures to reduce our environmental impact, support and involve local businesses and improve day to day services. We are always open to ideas and suggestions. [www.roadwatercommunityshop.co.uk](http://www.roadwatercommunityshop.co.uk)