

# Save the Somerset Arms

## Public Meeting April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026 - Key Points

Following the last public meeting, Semington Pub Action Group (SPAG) has made a huge amount of progress. Perhaps the most important step was forming the Semington Community Benefit Society (The Society). This is the way in which the pub will be purchased. This is a one-off opportunity to save the only pub in our village, the historic Somerset Arms.

The Society is a legal entity which is owned by the members, each member will be a shareholder, and each shareholder will have one vote irrespective of the numbers of shares they own. It will be transparent with a committee elected by the members.

This will allow The Society to buy, renovate and open the pub – owned by the community.

### Update

The Society has been busy in the background making sure all the important documents and structures are in place.

- We are completing a business plan detailing all the key areas shareholders will need to know - This will include why and how we will buy the pub, including condition reports and surveys and financial projections. It will include details of the proposed offering and refurbishment plans and costs. It will be a key document for members making sure they are clear about all the plans and risks.
- We have joined Plunkett UK who are offering a variety of experienced professionals to support and help us to buy the pub. (Plunkett UK is a national charity which supports people in rural areas to set up and run a wide range of businesses in community ownership)
- We have created a website to keep people informed about progress – [www.semington-cbs.co.uk](http://www.semington-cbs.co.uk)



- The Society has opened a bank account.
- We have arranged valuations and surveys (thanks to the Parish Council for their financial support)
- We have also started a Crowdfunder campaign running for people who would like to donate to support the professional fees, survey etc we are having to undertake.
- We have created articles for the press, parish magazine and have conducted several interviews for TV and local radio.
- We also distributed leaflets outside the Trowbridge Odeon where cinema goers had just watched 'Mother's Pride' a film that echoes our story.

### Next Steps

To buy the Somerset Arms we need to know two key things.

#### ***How much will it cost?***

#### ***Can we raise the money?***

We need to know how much money we can raise before the share offer happens later in summer. This is the *Pledge stage*; it's planned for late April. The pledge is quite simply asking everyone in the village and the local region, to be absolutely honest and say how much money they are prepared to invest in the shares - although it is non-binding. Access to your pledge information will be limited to a few members of the management committee of The Society. Other successfully purchased community pubs have followed this path.

The amount indicated through the pledge gives The Society confidence and credibility to negotiate with the vendor, Wellington Pub Company, knowing that the money required can be actually raised.

We need to make sure everyone in the locality is aware of the Pledge and has the opportunity to respond. We will need to widely publicise it at every opportunity. We will be using the Parish Magazine, our website, social media, local press, radio, beer festivals, events and links to local clubs and businesses, so that everyone can make their pledge. Of course, word of mouth is the most powerful way of spreading the news, so please tell friends, family and work colleagues about our plans.

We will need a large band of volunteers to help with leaflet drops around Semington and local villages, also, we will be handing out leaflets to members of the public in local towns. It is essential everyone knows what is happening.

When we have successfully negotiated a price and our offer has been accepted we will create the share offer to raise the funds.

### **Negotiation**

We will undertake surveys and valuations to ensure that shareholders' money is appropriately used and that we have considered the risks and issues before entering into negotiation with the vendor.

This is likely to occur during the summer. When we have an agreed purchase price we will then move onto the next stage, which is the actual share offer.

### **Share Offer**

This is when we *actually raise the money* to buy the Somerset Arms.

The share offer is likely to last between 4-8 weeks it is currently planned for summer. This is the most critical phase on which the success of the entire campaign rests. We will be looking to repeat the publicity we will have undertaken during the pledge stage and once again we will be calling on volunteers to help us spread the message as widely as possible.

Shares will be £1 each, with a minimum investment of £250 and a maximum investment of £50,000 with the exception that 16-18 year-olds will be able to buy a minimum of £100. Each shareholder becomes a member of the Semington Community Benefit Society Limited and is entitled to one vote, irrespective of the level of investment, so each shareholder will own part of the pub and have a say in how it is run.

The share offer will be subject to the Community Share Standard Mark, an externally assessed quality standard designed to reassure shareholders. Plunkett's are supporting us through this process. The business plan will be part of the share offer and will address the plans for the future of the Somerset Arms along with providing answers to key questions.

Normally people buy shares in a company as an investment because they hope that the share price will increase, or that they will receive regular dividends. The shares that will be available through The Society to finance The Somerset Arms are a little different, they are to ensure the pub is saved for the future and for the benefit of everyone in the community.

We will go ahead and buy the pub when we have raised the required capital through the share offer.

If we are unable to raise the required amount, the campaign will end, we sincerely hope this does not occur.

### **Refurbishment, Opening and Offering**

Buying the building is the start of the most exciting phase of the project when we refurbish and repair the pub ready for trading. We will need lots of volunteers, irrespective of skills to physically get involved in getting the pub back into shape. We will need professional tradespeople, but we aim to use as many volunteers as we can to keep costs down.

When the pub is operational it will have a tenant taking full responsibility for the running of the pub. Obviously The Society will have clear guidelines with regards to the offering etc, and the tenancy agreement will include our joint vision for the pub going forward.

Thank you, your support is so important. Please keep in touch by checking into the website

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