

Bathford Enterprise for All (BEFA Ltd)



Bathford Village Shop *A Community Co-operative*

Report to the Annual Parish Meeting, April 2007

With almost one year of trading behind us we have drawn together what we see as our top highlights of the past year, and as we move into our second year, some future directions.

Highlights May 2006 – April 2007

1. **We're open!** The most important highlight is that we have successfully traded for 1 year. Those involved in the takeover and renovation of the shop a year ago all feel an immense sense of pride and relief that the shop is not only running but flourishing.
2. **We're flourishing.** Original projections have been exceeded by some 25%. Business has taken off more quickly than was expected. After the initial show of interest, sales dipped during the summer but quickly peaked in December and have remained healthy since.
3. **Happy volunteers.** We are lucky to have a good base of happy volunteers. Approximately 3,500 volunteer hours have been clocked up since opening. The general sense that volunteering is a positive, sociable experience has been a particular strength.
4. **Product Range.** We now have upwards of 2000 product lines and have managed to generate a broad appeal with our stock, from less expensive basics, to the more expensive organic, Fairtrade and wholefoods.
5. **Coffee Area.** The small coffee area has proved very popular and has helped to fulfil our original desire to see the shop as a sociable 'hub' for the community.
6. **We're Local.** Local cards and arts and crafts as well as our locally sourced produce all help to confirm the claim that we're a local outlet keen to create links with our local suppliers and cut down on 'food miles'.
7. **Community Events.** The shop opening in July followed by the Garden Party fundraiser at Sycamore House was a particular high spot of the year for Bathford. The oldest

members of the village cut the ribbon with help from Don Foster whilst the youngest members sat close by in their buggies. Delicious afternoon teas at Sycamore House finished off what was a great day for the community.

8. **Funding Support.** A key highlight was in early 2007 when the news came that we had been awarded a substantial grant from the Esmée Fairbairn foundation to cover some of the salary costs of our part time manager, which in addition to our grant from the Co-operative Group, proved a vital source of capital. A further boost came in October when we were nominated as one of the beneficiaries of the Chairman of Bath & North East Somerset Council's fundraising events.
9. **Time out to plan.** In February the committee spent a morning apart from the usual business meetings, to review progress and undertake some strategic planning for the future. A business plan covering the next 2-3 years is in the process of being completed.
10. **Customer Involvement & Service Oriented.** We see ourselves very much as service oriented and responsive to our customers. We aim to carry a product range to suit all members of the community. New products can be sourced based on customer requests and goods can be ordered. There is a home delivery service for those who can't get to the shop easily (this is financed with help from the Bathford Consolidated Charities).
11. **Community Support.** From the early weeks in May 2006, when customers patiently stood in line with full baskets whilst volunteers got to grips with our complicated till, to July 2006 when our 200+ co-operative members had the chance to elect their management committee, through to the Autumn when harvest donations from the local allotments poured in, the support and goodwill from the community and local organisations has been second to none.

This community support has to be the real highlight of the year.

Future Directions, April 2008

As we move into 2008, the focus will be on consolidating and developing. Our hope is to become self-sufficient without the need to rely on external funding and undertake as much fundraising. We wish to continue to develop our service to the community and sustain the project. Significant energy and effort has been invested by the committee and the shop manager in the past year and we are now planning to assist them by recruiting a part-time assistant manager to lend a general hand, as well as to help support and develop our volunteers.