

## **Northamptonshire Village Awards - Judges feedback after visit to Evenley**

### **Date of visit Monday 11th April 2022**

We experienced a very warm welcome and appreciated the time of several people who were very enthusiastic and well informed about their village.

We were impressed with the wide range of products displayed in the Barn Owl Farm Shop and their local provenance.

The free delivery service within the parish during Covid 19 restrictions was an excellent community service.

It was interesting to learn that Jersey cows from the farm are exported to royal farms in Dubai and their milk is used to feed racing camels.

If time had allowed us, we would have liked to have spent more time in the farm shop and to have seen the educational facilities upstairs. This appeared to be a very positive business venture in the village with developing educational potential that could be expanded upon in the future.

The Pocket Park is a work in progress and it will be interesting to see how it evolves and becomes more widely used. 7 trees will be planted to commemorate the Platinum Jubilee. Some additional seating and signage may be appropriate as the park develops. The area has been mown for 40 years by a local volunteer.

The Forge Coffee shop was very welcoming. There is an Eco refilling area for food and cleaning products, customers bring their own containers. There is also a book swap box? (was this swap or sales). This was clearly an important and attractive focal point in the village. There is seating inside and outside the shop and several benches around the attractive village green.

The Village Hall was very inviting, well designed, and freshly decorated. It was very clean and well maintained inside and out. The flow around the hall was very good, it was wheelchair accessible and there were Braille signs on the male, female and disabled toilets. The kitchen was extremely well designed and the moveable island was a versatile feature. Many groups meet in the village hall which is very well supported and well managed. A new Heritage bus shelter is planned to replace the existing shelter which is used by children waiting for the school bus.

St George's Church is well looked after by the community. There is a well supported Adopt a Grave initiative to maintain and clean the ancient graves. Volunteers regularly tidy up the Churchyard.

The Church has a 15th Century oak screen in the tower arch.

There is a compost toilet.

There is a book donation box.

Teas are served in the church during open gardens.

Book sales in the church are well supported.

The Village Green is clearly a very well used and maintained village asset which is still used by Evenley Cricket Team and many other activities. In terms of visitors to the village an information or heritage panel may be a consideration for this area of the village.

There are various eco-friendly initiatives within the village including changing the street lights. Recycling bins were considered unsuitable. Consideration could be given to producing a pamphlet on the various initiatives that exist within the community particular for new residents, if this is not already included in the village welcome pack .

There are a number of businesses based in and around the village and significant homeworking now taking place. A future initiative might look to provide increased networking between homeworkers and also existing local businesses.

Neighbourhood and Village Plans had been considered but were not felt to be appropriate for

the village. An initiative had been taken to maintain the gardens around the social housing. A future indicative for the PC to consider might be a local housing needs survey.

The Allotments are very tidy and look productive. There are chickens, manure is donated and delivered from The Barn Owl Farm Shop. There are numerous water butts and compost bins.

The Red Lion Pub has a children's play area which was part-funded by the village. The Red Lion employs local young people. There is a well organised small museum at the back of the pub with interesting displays, some of them depicting the Roman period.

Evenley has a strong community spirit, this is evidenced in part by the many events that are held for the benefit of the residents and to raise funds for the Air Ambulance. These include regular cricket matches, open gardens, book sales, the church fete, and a pantomime. There is also a local fundraising initiative called Evenly Matters which supports various local groups as required . This is a particularly positive means of dealing with local fundraising and should be well publicised both with in the village and as a model for other communities

Evenley produces a good quality quarterly Newsletter free to residents published by the Parish Council and sponsored by Hamptons. There are a lot of activities within the village and for the various age groups not catered for specifically by the village there are activities within Brackley . It is important that all are published regularly in the newsletter , social media or special leaflets .

Evenley Parish Council is planning to install two electric car charging points, one at the Village Hall and one near the Red Lion Pub.

A welcome pack is given to new Evenley parish residents.

Evenley has a discreet support network and offers strong pastoral care.

Claire Travella  
Alan Mayes



