# Villagers despair as Llanharry’s last pub becomes a shop despite community protests



Villagers in Llanharry, South Wales, are dismayed following the decision to convert their only pub, the Fox and Hounds, into a shop. This decision comes on the heels of a protracted planning battle that saw the pub's owner, Drew Donaldson, initially seek permission to transform the establishment into residences. Rising operational costs and dwindling patron numbers led to the pub closing its doors in December 2023, prompting local residents to rally against plans for its redevelopment.

The Fox and Hounds had long served as a vital community hub, cherished for its welcoming atmosphere and various amenities including a log fire and a children's play area. However, many patrons had not come through the doors frequently enough to sustain its business viability. Donaldson has candidly expressed his frustration over the apparent disconnect between community support and the pub's financial struggles, remarking, “If there are 600 or more people in a group opposing what I’m trying to do, why were those people not supporting the pub when it was open?” His lamentation illustrates the challenges many rural pubs face in maintaining profitability amidst changing social habits.

Community members had previously echoed their concerns around the transformation of such a significant venue into housing, arguing it would irrevocably alter village life. Initially denied planning permission for residential conversion, they had aimed to acquire the pub to manage it as a community asset. This pursuit of community ownership was met with renewed hope when they successfully objected to his first proposal. But the new decision to change the premises to commercial use has left many feeling despondent.

More than 100 villagers protested the latest planning decision, brandishing a banner reading "Save the Fox". Local officials such as Councillor Barry Stephens have defended the landlord, suggesting that the community had insufficiently supported the establishment when it was operational. He explained that, despite investments in amenities like a children's playground and a chip shop, public patronage had dwindled significantly. “I've seen what happens. The people do not support the pub or the club,” he stated. Stephens' remarks have sparked further debate among villagers regarding the ownership and responsibility of local establishments.

Prominent figures, including local Labour Senedd member Huw Irranca-Davies and MP Alex Davies-Jones, voiced their disappointment, underscoring the cultural and social significance of the pub. In a joint letter, they lamented, “A shop doesn't offer the same social or cultural value as a pub”. This sentiment reflects broader concerns about the erosion of community spaces in small villages, particularly as economic pressures increase.

Historically, Llanharry has faced economic challenges, particularly after the decline of its iron mining industry, which has limited the availability of such community-focused venues. The village—home to just over 3,500 residents—has seen the Fox and Hounds become something of an emblematic institution, representing local heritage and communal spirit. As one long-time resident put it, “A pub isn’t just a pub. It’s a meeting place and it’s crucial.” This underscores the emotional weight that such communal spaces hold for many residents.

Campaigners are now fostering a sense of urgency, pledging to rally further support for their cause. Eifion Edwards, one of the active participants in the protest, stated, “People really care here. We want our pub back.” The grassroots support indicates a collective awareness of the importance that such venues hold for social cohesion, and their potential decline, he argues, poses a threat not just to village identity but to the vibrancy of local life itself.

As discussions continue and emotions run high, the fate of the Fox and Hounds serves as a poignant reminder of the challenges that rural communities face in preserving their traditional social venues. Without concerted community effort to engage with local patronage and support, these cherished spaces may become increasingly rare, potentially eroding the rich tapestry of life in small villages like Llanharry.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
2. Paragraph 1, 2, 3
3. Paragraph 1
4. Paragraph 1
5. Paragraph 1
6. Paragraph 1
7. Paragraph 1

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14727321/Landlord-village-pub-wins-permission-turn-shop.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.carmarthenshirenewsonline.com/nationalnews/local-community-rallies-to-save-llanharrys-last-pub-the-fox-and-hounds-from-residential-conversion/> - A community campaign in Llanharry, Wales, is underway to prevent the Fox and Hounds pub from being converted into housing. The pub, a vital community hub, closed in early 2024 due to rising costs and declining patronage. Residents argue that its conversion would harm village life and hinder economic growth. The planning application is under consideration, with objectors eager to voice their concerns in committee.
3. <https://www.foxandhoundsllanharry.co.uk/> - The Fox and Hounds in Llanharry, Wales, was an independently owned pub known for its traditional setting, real ales, and family-friendly environment. It featured a log fire, a children's play area, and a large beer garden overlooking the local football park. The pub closed in early 2024 due to financial challenges and declining customer numbers.
4. <https://camra.org.uk/pubs/fox-hounds-llanharry-170238> - The Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) provides information about the Fox and Hounds in Llanharry, Wales. The pub, which closed in early 2024, was known for its lounge area with a log fire, spacious bar, separate dining room, and a large family-friendly garden with a children's play area. It also had a large car park and was accessible by bus from Bridgend and Talbot Green.
5. <https://www.tripadvisor.com/Restaurant_Review-g552071-d2550575-Reviews-Fox_and_Hounds-Pontyclun_Rhondda_Cynon_Taf_South_Wales_Wales.html> - The Fox and Hounds in Llanharry, Wales, was an independent pub serving British pub food, including vegan and vegetarian options. It offered a large selection of real ales, changing every couple of days, and was family-friendly, dog-welcoming, and wheelchair accessible. The pub featured a large beer garden and children's play area, with ample on-site parking. It closed in early 2024.
6. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Llanharry> - Llanharry is a village in Rhondda Cynon Taf, Wales, with a population of 3,643 as of 2011. Historically linked with iron mining since Roman times, the village experienced economic decline after the closure of its mines and ironworks. It now has limited amenities, including a corner shop and a hairdresser. The Fox and Hounds was the only remaining pub in the village before its closure in early 2024.
7. <https://www.savethefoxandhounds.org.uk/> - The Save the Fox and Hounds Campaign is working to prevent the closure of the Fox and Hounds pub in Great Wolford, Warwickshire. The pub, dating back to the 17th century, was a successful destination pub with a B&B. The campaign seeks to raise funds for legal costs to challenge the owners' planning appeal, which was allowed by the Planning Inspectorate in December 2024.