# Villagers battle to save Llanharry’s last pub amid plans for shop conversion



In the small village of Llanharry, South Wales, tensions are simmering following the controversial decision that allows the only pub in the area, the Fox and Hounds, to be converted into a shop instead of being repurposed for housing. The landlord, Drew Donaldson, has been cast in a negative light by some residents, with one referring to him as the "anti-Christ" of the community. This moniker reflects deep frustrations that emerged during a heated planning process, following the pub's closure in early 2024 due to financial difficulties.

The closure of the Fox and Hounds has prompted significant backlash from the local populace, who view it as detrimental to village life. Before its closure, Donaldson had issued a stark warning, suggesting that the community needed to "use it or lose it," indicating that dwindling patronage alongside rising operational costs had left him with no viable option. His earlier plan to convert the pub into residential housing faced staunch opposition, with locals united against the proposal as they fought to maintain the community hub. Despite their initial success in blocking that move, they now find themselves grappling with the reality of an impending shop in its place.

Community spirits were high initially, culminating in protests where over a hundred villagers gathered for the “Save the Fox” campaign. But their attempts to sway the planning committee fell short, as they were ultimately outvoted. Local councillor Barry Stephens has weighed in by suggesting that villagers should have shown more support during the pub's operational days, questioning the sincerity of the protestors. He remarked, “The Donaldsons worked very hard to try and keep the business running,” emphasising the challenges faced by rural pubs that provide essential services like food and family activities.

Supporters of the pub's preservation argue that its closure represents a significant loss to the social fabric of Llanharry. Eifion Edwards, a community member involved in the campaign, has been pivotal in gathering support and highlighting the pub's importance as a gathering place. He pointed out that a pub serves as more than just a drinks establishment; it acts as a vital meeting point for locals, fostering both economic and social transactions. According to local government policy, protecting village pubs is critical to retaining community identity, particularly in rural areas such as Llanharry.

The narrative surrounding the Fox and Hounds is not unique; it mirrors a growing trend across the UK where many rural pubs face the threat of closure and conversion amid economic pressures. Other communities have experienced similar battles, with organisations and residents rallying together to prevent local pubs from disappearing. For instance, in Great Wolford, Warwickshire, campaigners have raised significant funds to challenge planning decisions affecting their last pub, emphasizing the need for community ownership and management as viable solutions to the challenges faced.

Donaldson’s justification for closing the Fox and Hounds echoes a broader reality where many rural pubs struggle to attract sufficient patronage to remain viable. He recalled hosting events that attracted minimal attendance, rendering the business unsustainable. As community advocacy grows, some locals are inspired by successful cases elsewhere, dreaming of a future where the Fox and Hounds could once again thrive under community ownership.

While Donaldson’s plans for the shop may be moving ahead, the fight to retain the essence of Llanharry’s social life is far from over. Villagers are determined to explore the avenues available to either reclaim the pub as a community asset or ensure that its successor retains the spirit of togetherness that the Fox and Hounds once offered. In the face of change, the fate of the pub stands as a poignant reminder of the complexities involved in preserving community identity in the modern economic landscape.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 4, 6
2. Paragraph 3
3. Paragraph 5
4. Paragraph 5
5. Paragraph 6
6. Paragraph 7
7. Paragraph 8

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/> - Residents of Llanharry, South Wales, have initiated a vigorous campaign to prevent the Fox and Hounds pub from being converted into housing. The pub, a vital community hub, closed in early 2024 due to financial challenges. A Facebook group titled 'Keep the Fox and Hounds as a community pub' has garnered 689 members, with 123 individual objections and a petition with 560 signatures opposing the conversion. Supporters argue that the pub's closure would negatively impact the village's social fabric and economic growth, especially given the limited public transport options to nearby establishments. Potential buyers, like the Valiant Pub Company, emphasize the pub's commercial viability and its potential to thrive with proper management. The planning application's outcome is pending, with objectors eager to voice their concerns in committee meetings. The current landlord closed the pub citing rising operational costs and insufficient patronage, leading to the decision to shut down in January 2024. The community's response underscores the pub's significance as a cherished asset and its role in the village's identity.
3. <https://ttspress.com/article/page/walesonline/news/wales-news/isolated-welsh-villages-something-truly-30813107> - In Llanharry, Rhondda Cynon Taf, residents mobilized to prevent landlord Drew Donaldson from converting the Fox and Hounds pub into housing. This led to a heated planning meeting where villagers successfully opposed the plan. Donaldson stated that the pub's closure was due to declining demand and rising costs, emphasizing the challenges of maintaining a village pub in the current economic climate. Despite the closure, community members like Eifion Edwards remain hopeful, drawing inspiration from other communities that have successfully taken over their local pubs. Edwards believes that Llanharry could be the next to own the Fox and Hounds, highlighting the community's strong desire to preserve the pub as a central gathering place. The Planning Policy for Wales supports efforts to protect public houses, especially in villages that have lost such provisions, reinforcing the community's stance against the conversion. The campaign reflects a broader trend of communities striving to retain their local pubs as vital social hubs.
4. <https://www.savethefoxandhounds.org.uk/> - The Save the Fox & Hounds Campaign is dedicated to preserving the Fox and Hounds Pub in Great Wolford, Warwickshire, which faces potential closure. The pub, dating back to the 17th century, was once a thriving community hub offering food and accommodation. The campaign seeks to raise funds for legal costs to challenge the owners' planning appeal, which granted permission to convert the pub into two houses. Supporters are encouraged to donate to the GoFundMe campaign to prevent the pub's closure and maintain its role as a central gathering place for the community. The campaign emphasizes the pub's historical significance and its potential to once again serve as a successful destination pub with proper management and community support.
5. <https://www.stratford-herald.com/business/warwickshire-campaigners-raise-8k-as-they-fight-for-future-9403501/> - Campaigners in Great Wolford, Warwickshire, have raised over £8,000 to challenge the Planning Inspectorate's decision allowing the conversion of the Fox and Hounds pub into two homes. The decision was unexpected, especially after the Stratford District Council planning committee previously voted to refuse consent for the conversion. The funds are intended to cover legal costs for a statutory review of the decision. The campaigners argue that the pub remains a viable business and that its closure would negatively impact the community. They highlight the pub's history and potential for revival with the right management and community involvement. The ongoing efforts underscore the community's commitment to preserving the pub as a vital social and economic asset.
6. <https://www.stratford-herald.com/news/fight-goes-on-to-save-warwickshire-village-pub-after-plannin-9401546/> - After the Planning Inspectorate granted permission to convert the Fox and Hounds pub in Great Wolford into two homes, campaigners are seeking a statutory review of the decision. The pub, closed since 2016, was previously denied planning consent for conversion by the Stratford District Council planning committee. The campaigners argue that the pub remains a viable business and that its closure would harm the community. They point to similar cases where community efforts have successfully preserved local pubs. The ongoing battle highlights the challenges communities face in protecting their local pubs from conversion into housing and the importance of such establishments in village life.
7. <https://www.foxandhoundsllanharry.co.uk/> - The Fox and Hounds pub in Llanharry, South Wales, is currently closed. The establishment thanked its customers for their support over the years. The closure has sparked community concern, as the pub was a central gathering place for locals. Efforts are underway to prevent the pub from being converted into housing, with residents mobilizing to preserve it as a community asset. The pub's closure has highlighted the challenges faced by rural establishments in maintaining viability and the importance of community support in sustaining local businesses. The situation reflects broader issues affecting village pubs across the UK, where declining patronage and rising costs have led to closures and conversions into residential properties.