

## Agenda item 7

### For information – Update on Share Shop

Author: Anne Hills, Trustee, Share Frome

#### What is Share Frome?

Share Frome is a social initiative originally established by Edventure in association with Frome Town Council, Sustainable Frome, and The Cheese & Grain. The first of its kind, the idea for Share Frome was born in early 2015. The motivation was to reduce the carbon footprint of the town, by enabling borrowing instead of buying new, reducing material production and landfill waste. This in turn would save members money and space in their homes, as well as providing a community space for people to donate, volunteer, connect and build skills.

The set-up of the shop was undertaken by a group of eight young people in just two months, as part of specialist training in community entrepreneurship, run by Edventure. Much help was given by the local community in the form of advice, expertise, time, donations, opinions, and enthusiasm!

Originally operating under the wing of Edventure, Share became a self-contained organisation in March 2022 and obtained charity status (Share Frome is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation - CIO Number 119869) in September 2022. There are 4 trustees - Anne Hills, Andy Jones, Will Gunby and Frances Krige.

#### Benefits to the community

To provide an idea of the benefits to the community, here are some stats relating to activity in the 2022/23 financial year:

- The total financial value of items borrowed was £157,240
- This borrowing saved our members £127,295 in avoiding new purchases
- An estimated 107,802 kg (rounded) of new material use was avoided (per unique borrower of each item) representing an avoidance of:
  - 15,204 kg of fossil fuel use
  - 11,960 kg of biomass use
  - 9,089 kg of metallic ore use
  - 71,549 kg of non-metallic mineral use

This link provides further detail of impacts on material usage: [observablehq.com](https://observablehq.com)

- Just before we had to go into hibernation at the end of May 2024, we had increased our membership by 83% year on year (the majority of the new members being concessionary members on a low income)
- Our turnover was up by 67%

## The latest situation

The premises that Share has operated from, at zero rent, for the last nine years, is owned by Lloyds Banking Group, part of the larger space containing the Halifax branch next door. When it was decided to close the Halifax branch, Lloyds Banking Group gave Share notice to quit. As there was no certainty around when we would have to vacate the premises, the trustees took the decision to cease lending items at the end of May 2024. Since then, we have secured storage space for our items and gone into 'hibernation' until such time as we can find a space, at very low or preferably zero rent, to operate from.

## What does Share need?

Our town centre location was great in that it provided a literal 'shop window' for Share. But it also had its downsides - there's no parking, or even the space to stop in a car near to the shop to pick up or return large items. Ideally, Share will find premises in Frome, for free or as little rent as possible, with access by car, a minimum of 800 sq. ft (75 sq. m). We would like to offer a delivery service to members who do not have access to a car.

We have several membership options - supporter memberships, pay as you go, and a concessionary membership for those on a low income, as well as business membership. The additional borrowing fee per item is calculated based on the cost to purchase the item originally, again with discounted fees for concessionary members. Our membership and borrowing fees cover the salaries of our Library Assistants, the utility bills and insurance.

We have a large band of volunteers who help in the shop and fix our items, carry out PAT testing, and repair things for members. Ideally, we would also employ a Library Manager, responsible for fundraising, marketing and Library Operations, and a Volunteer Coordinator.

Once operating premises have been secured, we can then start fundraising to cover these additional operating costs.

We ask Frome Town Council to assist us in finding suitable operating premises to enable Share Frome to come out of hibernation. I have already been in contact with the Deputy Town Clerk who has offered to help broker contact with property owners.