



Definition of Community Pubs

Synopsis: This paper provides a definition of community pubs. This definition will form the basis of future campaigns to support, protect, and promote community pubs.

Introduction

For many years one of CAMRA's stated objectives has been to support community pubs. However, during that period, we have not established a definition for what a community pub actually is.

Are definitions important? Our history suggests that they are. The establishment of a clear definition for real ale was a major milestone for CAMRA and gave legitimacy to our Campaign. Definitions do not have to be explicit and prescriptive, but they do need to allow and demonstrate a common understanding. We have no specific definition for "good beer", but we share a working understanding of what we mean by good (quality) beer, without which selection of entries for the Good Beer Guide (GBG) would be impossible. The analogy of the GBG is relevant, since the primary campaigning objectives of the GBG are to promote the benefits of good (quality) beer, and to encourage more pub licensees to serve good (quality) beer. In a similar manner, a positive strategic objective for the support and promotion of community pubs would be to promote the benefits of the facilities and activities which many community pubs offer, and to encourage pub licensees to offer a wider variety of those facilities which we associate with community pubs.

Definition of a community pub

So what might be a working definition of a community pub? Our view is that "all pubs are community pubs to some degree but some pubs serve communities better than others", that is, our view of community pubs is inclusive but qualified. Our working definition that a community pub is "a licensed hub which encourages social interactions and puts something back into the communities it serves". By "encourage social interactions" we mean discussions and conversation between customers, whether those customers be family, friends, acquaintances or strangers. By "put something back" we mean to offer some facility or undertake some action which is of benefit to a community, without any motivation based on direct financial benefit to the pub.

By "community" we do not necessarily mean a group of people living in a specific geographical location. A community is a group of individuals with something in common: neighbourhood of residence, workplace, hobbies and mutual interest are a few obvious and relevant examples. The members of a community have some interest in common: something which enables them to identify, one with another. Each person is likely to belong to many different communities, some important, some unimportant, some with a strong sense of identity, some with very little. People establish personal identities in relation to the communities to which they feel they belong. Membership of a community often implies some responsibility for other members. Communities have a capacity for mutual care and support in distress or when problems arise, and the way that communities respond to the threatened loss of their pub is an example of this.

In the appendix of this document is a definition of a community pub provided as a variety of examples of ways in which some pubs either "encourage social interactions" or "put something back". It is important to note that a community pub, strictly speaking, does not have to sell real ale.

How might this definition of a community pub be used to support and promote community pubs? The details of the approaches that might be considered will be explored as part of the consultation on this proposed campaign, but the parallels with the Good Beer Guide promoting "good (quality) beer" and the Pub of the Year competition promoting good pubs both seem very relevant. Also many of the features and facilities listing in the definition are already included in WhatPub, and WhatPub could be a very effective method of supporting and promoting community pubs. A definition of a community pub and of communities is also very helpful in the support of ACV nominations.

Examples of facilities offered and activities undertaken by a good community pub

CAMRA considers that “all pubs are community pubs to some degree but some pubs serve communities better than others”, that is, our view of community pubs is inclusive but qualified.

A community pub is defined as “a licensed hub which encourages social interactions and puts something back into the communities it serves”.

A community does not have to mean “local residents”. The term community is commonly defined as “A group of individuals with something in common”. This “thing in common” might include where you live or where you work or some hobby or mutual interest. The community of a city centre pub might include the workers of nearby offices and shops. Also, a pub does not have to serve a single community, and many pubs serve multiple communities.

Below is a list of examples of the ways in which a pub might encourage social interactions and put something back into communities.

This list is explicitly not prescriptive. These are only examples of some of the things which a good community pub might consider doing. No community pub would ever do all of these things, but clearly the more that a pub does, the more effectively it will be in serving its community, and the more that the community will support the pub with its patronage, and therefore being a good community pub makes sound commercial sense.

- A good community pub might
 - operate extended opening hours, and be open at times which might not be peak times for the sales of food and drink, but which will enable the pub to be used during the daytime by local groups such Mums and Tots groups, Senior Citizen groups, Townswomen Guild etc.
 - run other types of events which encourage social interactions including quiz nights.
 - sponsor a local youth football team, or other local community groups.
 - organise collections for local charities or organise fund raising events for local charities.
 - if it is in a rural area provide facilities otherwise often lost to a village community such as a village shop or a post office.
 - organise tables and chairs in a communal arrangement to encourage “social interactions”, in contrast to a restaurant which typically organises tables to isolate groups of customers from each other
- A good community pub is inclusive and aims to appeal to all sectors of society and provides an environment where everyone should feel welcome and feel comfortable
- Providing a dart board is good, but organising a darts team to play in a local league is better (and the same applies to other pub games including pool, crib, pétanque etc).
- Providing live music concerts by professional musicians is good, but also organising open mic and sing-a-long sessions is better.
- Organising beer festivals is good, but donating all or most of the proceeds to a charity, and especially a local charity, is better.
- Providing a meeting room is good, but making this available free of charge to local clubs and societies is better.
- Providing notice boards displaying information about the pub are good, but allowing them to be used to advertise local events and services is better.
- Having a pleasant garden is good, but also having play facilities for local families is better, as is organising events in the garden e.g. an Easter Egg Hunt.