

**Here to help**  
**Jane Tabor, left,**  
**and Julia Jenkins**  
**at Broughton**  
**Community Shop,**  
**which has a**  
**thriving cafe**  
**and a post office**  
**counter**

ZACHARY CULPIN/BNIPS



buying anything from a single share to a maximum holding of £5,000, and £51,000 was raised in six weeks.

With the legal structure and funds in place, they tracked down a shipping container to rent. "From that moment, we only had another six weeks to open the shop," Julia says. "We were determined that when West View Stores shut, we'd open the next day. You don't want people developing new shopping habits in the interim."

To achieve this goal, villagers offered their skills, helping to fit out the box and volunteering to run it. Meanwhile, the committee, most of whom had no retail experience, were busy learning the ins and outs of supply chains, staffing and book-keeping. Broughton Community Shop opened its doors in August 2018; despite its limited size, business exceeded all expectations, with a turnover of £245,000 in its first year.

The long-term vision to include a post office and a cafe couldn't fit in a box – but now the shop has a permanent home, thanks in part to funds from a local solar-energy farm. The money allowed the village hall to build a new wing housing an archive of Broughton history – as well

“**It's vital that we cover all price points – some people in the village do their entire shop here**

as a much bigger shop. (The “shop in a box” has now left for a new life in Stoke St Gregory, Somerset.)

The new space, which opened in December, offers a range of local delicacies as well as everyday basics. “Of our 39 suppliers, 22 are within a 20-mile radius,” Julia says. You can buy burgers from the village's herd of water buffalo; Test Brewing beer, made in the stables behind the Greyhound pub; and homemade cheese soufflés from the other pub, the Tally Ho. Also bang on trend is the refillables station, selling loose dry goods, oils and cleaning products with zero single-use plastic.

“It's vital that we cover all price points – Happy Shopper

## DO IT YOURSELF

● The Plunkett Foundation, which celebrated its centenary last year, says the most common methods of funding a community shop are share issues and grants.

● To issue shares, you must set up a legal structure such as a community benefit society: get advice at [plunkett.co.uk](http://plunkett.co.uk).

● Taking over an existing store can be expensive – as well as Broughton's shipping container, shops have popped up in bus shelters and even a dovecote.

● Online systems such as Three Rings ([threerings.org.uk](http://threerings.org.uk)) let volunteers plan and allocate their shifts.

● Train and support helpers so everyone feels valued.

● Know your demographic: listen to customers and order stock accordingly.

● Think local, buy local.

● Aim to be a central part of village life, not just a shop.

tinned tomatoes and Dairy Milk for £1 as well as the posh New Forest Chocolates,” Julia says. “Some people in the village do their entire shop here.”

Broughton is far from alone in facing the loss of its only shop. According to the Plunkett Foundation, between 300 and 400 village stores close each year in Britain. Community shops have a long way to go to replace those – after a surge around the time of David Cameron's “big society” initiative in 2010, new openings tailed off – but the tide may be turning. In 2018, Broughton's store was one of 16 to open, up from four the previous year, and there are now 363 in the UK.

Julia and Jane have 84 volunteers on their books, ranging in age from twenties to eighties, as well as two paid staff who oversee operations and run the post office counter. Their experience shows that the closure of the local shop can be a catalyst for positive change, not another nail in the coffin of village life.

“Part of our vision was to become an essential part of the village,” Julia says. “Within our first few weeks, that is exactly what happened. To see it come to fruition has been extraordinary.”