

## **BATHFORD VILLAGE SHOP – AUGUST 2007**

### **BEFA MEMBERS VOTE IN STRENGTHENED MANAGEMENT TEAM**

At a lively AGM on 3 July two new members were voted on to the management committee. Roger Boakes and Jane Walker increase the number of directors of BEFA to seven, strengthening our committee. Roger, who's long been a keen supporter of the project, and Jane, who brings invaluable insight from both sides of the counter as volunteer and loyal customer, join five directors of the existing committee who have successfully steered the shop through opening to break even during the first year – something highly unusual for a new business.

With a year's trading now behind us, members were delighted to hear from treasurer Jill Gigg that the first year trading predictions had been exceeded. Fundraising and grants had been gratefully received and used for refurbishment and some set aside as a contingency fund.

The delight in the solid financial results was all the more felt when it was emphasized throughout the meeting that the BEFA Co-operative members effectively own the shop and share a responsibility and voice in how it's run. Members were full of good ideas to improve the shop service even further. This included asking how the shop could be made more accessible to those working long daytime hours. Some of the comments are already being acted upon (see below). Ideas were then discussed for giving BEFA members more opportunity to participate and get involved in some of the interesting challenges that face the shop as it enters its second year of trading.

Guest speaker was Avon Co-operative Development Agency's Kate Whittle who emphasised the rights and responsibilities of members and closed the meeting by posing the question, "ask not what the co-op can do for you, but what you can do for the co-op."

### **FOCUS GROUPS PLANNED FOR THE AUTUMN**

Two main themes emerged from member feedback. The first is the simple question of what we stock. Members warned that we must not rest on our laurels but ensure that we keep up with what the village needs. As a result we have decided that, in addition to the feedback book in the shop, we will put a **product focus group** in place in the Autumn whose goal would be to spend time looking at the product lines and stock of the shop and finding out what members of the community would buy.

A second related question was *just how green is our shop?* With a local environmental charity keen to work with us, members were in support of putting a group together to look specifically at the shop's environmental and social impact.

Starting on **Monday 10<sup>th</sup> September**, both focus groups will meet monthly in the shop at 8pm. Meetings will be fun and relaxed and will offer a good way to get involved in some important issues regarding the shop without having to commit to being part of the

management committee. If you're interested in both themes – don't worry, we've arranged to run the groups closely together as both subjects are related.

So come along on **Monday 10th September at 8pm** to give it a try.

If you think you would like to attend, simply put your name to the sign-up sheet in the shop or else call/leave a message for Margaret (851232) or Louise (07769 686385) to reserve a place. There already is some interest in these groups and numbers may need to be limited.

### **OTHER INTERESTING WAYS TO GET INVOLVED**

Other interesting opportunities to get involved were mentioned by chair Maureen Breeze. For instance an **Archivist** is sought to keep a record of our growing press coverage. A person to look at the shop **Signage** is also sought – in other words someone who can take charge of the various signs that we have around the shop. Many other small jobs have now been identified that would give someone the opportunity to get involved in a well-defined way. Contact our Chairperson, Maureen Breeze (852444) for more details.

### **FAREWELL AND THANK YOU TO RETIRING COMMITTEE MEMBER**

It was farewell but hopefully not goodbye to Jo Jolliffe who stepped down this year from her role as Director. Her hard work and dedication have been a major factor in the shop's successful first year, particularly her role in fund-raising and events' management.

### **WHY NOT BECOME A MEMBER?**

The AGM confirmed again that, along with our manager Paul and the volunteers, the members of BEFA are a vital part of the shop's makeup and it is something we hope to build on in the coming year. Membership has remained level since the shop was opened a year ago. At this point we are urging the community to consider joining at a cost of just £10 to become a lifetime part-owner of BEFA. Forms are available in the shop or you can contact our membership secretary directly for details (Diana Smith on 858964)

Louise Daniels and Margaret Gearty.