

# Y Cross Cas-lai CBS Ltd



## Transcript of General Meeting

27<sup>th</sup> February 2024 at Mathry Community Hall, Mathry SA62 5HD

### **Cris Tomos (Chair)**

A shareholder [Clive Hampton] asked if only founding directors can appoint new directors within the first year.

Another shareholder [Sharon Williams], who had distributed correspondence to attendees prior to the opening of the meeting, claimed that any directors elected at the general meeting would “not be legally appointed”. After debate a decision was made by the directors and secretary to proceed with meeting and any challenge should be dealt with retrospectively if members felt necessary.

### **Geraint Evans (CBS Chair)**

Right. Well, I'll take a deep breath. First of all, I hope that you all will do the same.

In welcoming you here this evening, I want to spend a few moments reflecting on what we have achieved together over the last 18 months in the name of Y Cross, Cas-lai, and then we will consider what we have yet to accomplish and look at the next steps on our journey. So let's take a moment to reflect.

With your support, we have secured over £210,000 in shareholdings from over 200 people. Community members and supporters further afield. That's amazing.

A small group of us, including some former committee members, worked really hard to secure Grant funding of £244,250. Another way of saying that is a quarter of a million pounds coming from central government to a small little village in West Wales.

We all worked hard together to arrange many really successful community fundraising events. We have bought our pub for the community with fantastic volunteer help. We refreshed it and got it reopened in November.

At the core of this has been a small team of passionate, dedicated and talented local people who have devoted so much of their time, energy, skills and expertise.

Voluntarily. Yes, voluntarily.

Over the last 18 months to save our pub for the community of Hayscastle.

And they certainly deserve our thanks for what they have contributed to all our benefits.



Sadly, over for many months now I have spent hours every day, and I'm not joking, every day, two to three hours dealing with a vendetta against the board of directors and committee members, you may snigger but I was the one that you had to take it.

**Kay Hampton (intervention from the floor)**

And I would ask you respectfully to allow me to have my say this evening.

**Geraint Evans (CBS Chair)**

Mrs Hampton, a few months ago, you whispered in my ear, "you had nothing more to say to me. You weren't going to even acknowledge me". Please, please don't go back on your words.

**Geraint Evans**

Going back to the bombardment of vicious communications, even in the middle of the night, either by e-mail, social media, or from a very active, relentless rumour mill that is spreading much disinformation, bringing peoples good names into disrepute, causing personal offence and bringing anguish and pain, it has been relentless. This has at times had the feeling of a mob being whipped up into a frenzy. I am so sad at the hurt and division it has caused within our community. As you will be aware, as Chair, I am also responsible for the well-being of members of my committee. I have a duty of care towards them, and if I am accused of looking out for them, then I am guilty as charged. It's part of my role, it's part of any chair's role.

The whole situation regarding the club is very raw and has caused and is causing immense harm to individuals well-being. In the world in which we live, divided by hatred and war. We need to be looking out for each other, not tearing each other apart.

Yes.

I will remember stronger together.

Mewn undeb mae nerth, being our watchwords.

When we started out on this journey together 18 months ago. Let us resolve to be a united Community as we move forward. Together. Together to achieve our goal of safeguarding across. For the benefit of those who come after us.

Geraint sat down unable to continue.



### **Tomos Evans (Continuation of Chairman's statement)**

I know what you are thinking, he's not a director, he's not committee member but I'm shareholder and I'm also his son and if you please, just listen to a few words that I've got to say after what's been a relentless few months.

*Tomos was challenged by some shareholders for speaking. Cris Tomos intervened and clarified if Tomos was continuing on behalf of Geraint.*

### **Geraint Evans**

Yes, the words, the words my son is going to say are words that I failed to say myself.

### **Cris Tomos**

So he's saying on behalf of the chairman.

### **Tomos Evans**

Being a farmer, my dad is not particularly. It's still part of the same item. It's still part of the statement.

I just I think it's important for people to understand, of course that you know, you've all seen everyone seen what's been posted on social media in recent weeks and of course wider in the community. I've heard from people.

Yeah. And I yes, that's because that's because of the impact that all this has had on my dad and he's a farmer. He's farmed the land in Hayscastle for so many years now, as have 4 generations of a family before.

Him.

He's not one that likes to talk about his feeling. He's not particularly open about that, and in recent weeks and months, he's been a shadow of his former self.

He's been wary of even talking to people in the village for fear of being accused of lobbying or of harassing them.

I know him better than any of you do in this room. I know his faults. I know his flaws and believe you me. If anyone's going to call him out for them, it's gonna be me and I can do it all the time.

But I can tell you for one thing.

He believes in justice, in fairness, in doing the right thing and in making positive changes for his community. For our community, all of us in this room, we all have some role to play in the communities. Those of you here this evening know just how hard it is in the farming industry right now.



That's why partly I chose a different path, but my dad joined the save our pub campaign with so many of you here tonight to were part of that initial group of directors to do something positive for the community.

But also to lift his head out of the day-to-day sort of his work and to improve his well-being overall as well. All of you here tonight, I'm sure, will be aware that Hayscastle has lost so many community amenities over the years. Things like Laura's shop, for example, or the Hayscastle Cross garage run by Tom and Heather.

Now all of these provided so many services to the Community, which is why we've all got together as I can see, so many of you former directors here tonight, which is great to see you all came together, didn't you? We all came together to save the pub.

I will remember those words stronger together mewn undeb mae nerth, and I think if we can all now as we move forward with the project, please unite. And please, let's be kind and choose to be kind to one another as we go about our ways.

Thank you.

### **Cris Tomos (Chair)**

So Geraint has handed me an envelope and he wants me to read it out.

With the officers and committee Y Cross Cas-lai CBS, dear all, I will write to you today to give notice of my intention to resign as chairman and director of the Y Cross Cas-lai CBS with effects from the first committee meeting following the general meeting of 27th of February.

In order to facilitate a proper hand over to the new Chair, I have recently been unwell and as part of my recovery plan have been advised by medical professionals to reduce my workload to support returning to full health.

Now is the time for me to focus on my well-being following my psychological trauma that I have experienced as a result of the actions of some members of the Community for several months now, a vitriolic vendetta has unfounded claims and comments have been directed and at specific members of the committee, including myself. I have never experienced such vicious animosity and venom them throughout my years.

The toll on the welfare and well-being of directors in particular,

cannot be underestimated? The recent hospital stay and time

spent to bring have given me an opportunity to reflect on my priorities, having sacrificed countless voluntary hours to progress this project to the detriment of my farming, business and family life. I now have to put my health and well-being and that of my



family, first from the outset of the ambitious project, I have contributed to my utmost to supporting the Community purchase of the pub and ensuring that it remains a Community asset. I have wholeheartedly supported the founding director's vision of developing the pub further to create a community pub and help to which we are all welcome to come into, although stepping down as a director of Y Cross at this time, I shall remain a member of the committee and will continue to work towards developing a truly inclusive, welcoming pub and Community hub. In that capacity, look forward to seeing what future, what the future holds for Y Cross. I truly appreciate, appreciate the efforts of all supporters and hard working committee members and directors, all shareholders and members of the Community who have supported us on our journey over the last 18 months and thank you wholeheartedly for your commitment and efforts towards accomplishing our goal.

Geraint Evans

**Cris Tomos (Chair)**

I'd like to thank Geraint for the words and explanation and outlining the reasoning and all the hard work that you have put in as chairman to this project.

And moving forward on the agenda I have been asked the Chair, would we swap three and four around so the Community Hub director would like to say a few words.

**Jayne Evans (Community Hub Director)**

Yes, I have. Thank you. We have recorded them so that I can share them with you all.

Nowaith dda.

So much has happened since the spring of 2023, when we as founder, committee members and directors of across CBS published our share offer document, which outlined our exciting vision for developing across as a Community pub and hub.

Since that time we've been busy building networks with other community hubs across Pembrokeshire. We've had letters of support from national organisations and have seen the establishment of an over 60s exercise class and Wednesday walking group.

Tonight, I'm really delighted to be able to announce that

we have been awarded £29,911 in grant funding from the SPF Sustainable Communities Fund for the Calon Cas-lai community project, to enable us to progress our work further with developing the Community hub.

Yes, news to put a smile on people's faces. But sometimes, those with the biggest smiles hide the deepest of pain. So whilst I'm speaking with you this evening, I also want to take the opportunity of sharing some facts with you.



Firstly, let's deal with my co-option as a director of Y Cross CBS. I was invited to become a director by the former vice chair of across CBS on behalf of the sitting directors at the time. My absolutely immediate response was to say - no way. Following further requests from the former vice chair, I reluctantly agreed to allow my name to go forward.

Interestingly, there was only one female director on the board at the time. The other six, apart from one being retired men. Not much gender balance going on there, eh?

For clarification, the current chair, Geraint, having declared an interest, took no part in the sessions or the vote which followed.

A few months later, after resignation of a core group of founder directors, those very same former directors started demanding, by e-mail, that I stepped down.

I didn't, of course, for three reasons.

- 1) My appointment was within the rules. If you'd like to have a check. It's clause 97 C.
- 2) They were the very ones who directed me to the position.
- 3) I won't be threatened or bullied by anyone.

Despite a concerted and determined smear campaign by this group of former directors trying to do their worst, I continued to do my best.

Now this is all very boring stuff, I know. But this boring stuff is just some of what we've had to deal with over recent months. Having to waste our time on rubbish? Yes, sometimes literally, and taking us away from focusing on our core business.

There's been plenty more rubbish too. Facebook claims about financial interests. Yes, I certainly do have a financial interest in across. Just like all shareholders, I wanted Y Cross to succeed.

Comments by some people on social media over the last fortnight have caused huge damage to our brand.

Who would want to come and visit a pub with such a toxic reputation.

Our keyboard warriors could cause the value of all of our shares in Y Cross to plummet, yes. Their own too, if they could only see it. This behaviour has the potential for bringing across CBS into disrepute.

And I'd like to share a special message tonight with all of those hard working social media warriors, including the Facebook poster formerly known as Charlie George.

Who posted, amongst other things, 'clowns' and 'a twisted bunch of degenerates'.



With further comments claiming 'we couldn't run a piss up in a brewery' and that we are f\*@king this up'.

Here's a message for you all, I am not your slave. I'm a volunteer with family and work commitments.

With a group of people voluntarily putting in very many hours daily to try and do a good thing for our community. What a shame that you didn't roll up your sleeves to help in recent months.

When we really needed everyone on board. It really saddens me.

And I have a message too for the anon.cymru group, who have been sent in regular emails without being man enough to share their names. How's that for transparency?

If you represent Cymru then it's not the Cymru that I am proud to live in. It's not my Cymru.

And just one more clarification. We've been accused of not going to the pub. The truth is. We cannot go to the pub. Having been subjected to verbal abuse or being actively ignored by people we thought of as friends, turned their backs and ignored us.

There is no welcome for us there.

You've already heard that Geraint has become ill as a result of all of this, and no, this is not, and I quote, a ploy to play the victim as one of the former directors stated at the beginning of January.

So just for that former director's information, here is Geraint's hospital band and his hospital admission record. (physical items displayed). And this gentleman is supposed to be a decent human being. It beggars belief.

In closing, I would just like to share this message. This was a project built on optimism and opportunity that it has caused so much division is really devastating for our community.

Now there has to be a time for healing.

Now is the time for us all to smile again.

Digon yw Digon

Enough is enough.

**Cris Tomos (Chair)**

OK, I've been handed a letter now by.





## **Shirley Bevan**

I don't know who these people are because none of this information is on their website to say.

### **SUMMARY**

It was explained that the information about directors was contained within the share offer documents on the website and the following directors were pointed out and introduced to those who did not recognise them.

Geraint Evans – Chair

Jayne Evans – Community Hub Director

Jacqui Archer – Secretary

Jon Archer – Operations Director

André Reemers – Director

## **Cris Tomos (Chair)**

Well, I'll, I'll just read this letter.

The Secretary, Directors, committee and shareholders, please accept this letter as notice of my resignation of Community Hub Director of Y Cross Cas-lai CBS effective from a general meeting on February 27<sup>th</sup> 2024.

Having been involved with the project from the outset,

it is now time for me to step back from direct responsibility and

put the burden on other's shoulders. The level of incoming abuse, communications and several months has been a totally debilitating unsustainable and unacceptable on all levels, I am burned out and now need to focus on trying to restore some harmony my life. I will of course continue as a volunteer committee member, specifically to support the development of the Calon Cas-lai Community project. I also look forward to supporting the development of a network of Community pubs across Pembrokeshire. It has been a privilege to serve alongside fellow volunteers on this project and the sheer scale of what has been achieved is incredible. Thank you for your professionalism, integrity, loyalty and dignity. The way you have conducted yourselves in the face of unwarranted circumstances and vitriolic abuse has been exemplary.

I look forward to returning to life with my family and friends and recovering from the psychological trauma of this experience. Wishing Y Cross Cas-lai Community Benefit Society every success in the future.





Pob dymuniad da

Jane Evans.

**Cris Tomos (Chair)**

Now returning to the agenda on the screen, the Operations Director statement and if you would introduce yourself as the director Jon.

**Jon Archer**

Good evening everyone, my name is Jon Archer I am the Operations Director.

Dear Chairman, regrettably, I wish to share with you, the committee and shareholders, that since before Christmas I found myself at the receiving end of a vicious, organised and deeply defamatory campaign.

Former directors and members of the Society have been relentlessly and deliberately peddling false claims within the community, whipping up hate and encouraging people who don't know me to sign a petition calling for my removal.

I'm am just a volunteer.

With reckless disregard for the truth, they've put me and my wife in fear of our safety.

Their campaign was embellished with threats of fines and imprisonment and yet, when our stakeholders engage with us, they repeatedly tell us it all looks perfectly fine. We don't need to get involved in your project. You know what you're doing. You clearly have tremendous amount of knowledge and passion, they wished us well.

Our official stakeholders didn't threaten to imprison us, didn't question our capability or intent and they were not one bit interested in our out of date business plan.

The Sweeney did not come screaming into Hayscastle looking for the bad guys. And when the ex-directors fed the pub manager fake data and e-mail addresses to complain to our government grantors, they wrote back telling him that they were not interested about his grievances or his complaints.

Other external parties, they've been truly horrified at the language and the behaviours emanating from this group and observe this to be the worst example they've ever seen in the voluntary sector.

The pub has enjoyed repeated success thanks to exemplary efforts and the skills of those at the helm to deliver the vision determined by the whole community. But enough is enough. When my wife's personal safety becomes a matter for group of 8 angry men to openly debate how they cause harm to her, flatten her with a killer punch, it's time you all knew the truth.



Shawn Smith, the pub manager, was part of this group of men. Their correspondence and mail exchange was frequent. The micromanagement claim was entirely fabricated. They formed a secretive anon.cymru group to harass and bully members of the society with wild and unsubstantiated claims with the sole purpose to crush their victims. Their concerted efforts were carefully orchestrated to cause maximum and persistent impact. Each action delivered covertly, usually through their many pawns.

They clutched at straws to achieve their goal, devised negative communications to local and central government agencies, and attempt to fulfil their own doom and despair agenda of no change. But they were also reckless, reckless with their communications, leaving behind them an audit trail. A trail the length of the Teifi.

They put the whole project at risk.

It's quite a read (raises a binder full of evidence).

Unfortunately, the victim of this appalling course of behaviour is the pub, it's staff, all our volunteers, the committee and you, our shareholders and community, who invested your time, your money and your effort to leave a legacy for our future generations.

At the heart of these, but these are the ex-directors. Orchestrating this campaign is Jeremy Bowen and Mike Hillier, both hell bent on achieving their objective of ripping apart those that lead the society and suffocating the very life from the project.

Ian Breslin, Tom Taylor, Clive Hampton have all targeted my wife with malicious and threatening communications.

### **Clive Hampton**

I beg your pardon I have never ever, ever said anything derogatory about your wife, ever, retract that statement, please. Unless you have witnesses and evidence.

### **Jon Archer**

Would you like me to publish it?

### **Clive Hampton (ex-director)**

Yes.

### **Jon Archer**

Thank you. If someone could minute that, I will do so.

Threatening communications, whether directly or carrying from behind their false e-mail and Facebook personas, AKA Brian Bedford.



## **Kay Hampton**

He's been Brian Bedford for buying and selling using that name for years. Everyone knows that.

## **Jon Archer**

The committee gave feedback to the pub manager that he should get the kitchen refitted before pushing out new menus.

We needed first the facilities in place before raising the expectation of food service within the Community.

Tom Taylor coined the phrase 'worst of micromanagement, yet the comments and the decisions had nothing to do with me.

I've not engaged with Shawn Smith since the 22nd of November, when he was reasonably asked to allow the Society access to the pub by supplying a spare key.

However, despite no contact with Shawn for over a month, a letter of resignation appears on the 19th of December, citing micromanagement from Jon Archer.

The pub manager regularly posted company data, including commercially confidential data to Jeremy Bowen, Mike Hillier, Tom Taylor (a shareholder with no right to receive such data). He often bypassed his own employer. he was in reality working for this group, fulfilling their agenda and not that of the society who we represent in the interest of the Community and the shareholders.

In return, these individuals provided the pub manager with constant Ideas, Initiatives, counsel and field further damage to myself and other society members, along with the promise of future employment. Once the board had stood down. "Hang in there", Jeremy would reassure Shawn.

Is anyone here from Pembrokeshire CAMRA?

Steve Brady?

**Steve Brady (Pembrokeshire CAMRA Secretary)**

Yep

**Jon Archer**

Steve Brady. I don't know why you're stalking me.

**Steve Brady**

I'm not stalking you. First of all, let me make quite clear that Pembrokeshire CAMRA is not involved in either side.



Secondly, I did write an e-mail because I was wound up to do so.

**Audience**

By who? By who Steve?

**Steve Brady**

The e-mail wasn't originally intended to be sent to the person that it was and I then wrote saying I've only heard one side of the story, and I've only heard one side of the story until tonight. There's a lot of stuff here I didn't know, if I had known, my impression might well have been different.

**Jon Archer**

Well, what I'm going to ask you, Steve, is why are you contacting my previous employer and my previous colleagues?

**Steve Brady**

I have not contacted your previous employer, other members of CAMRA might.

**Jon Archer**

Well, I'm asking CAMRA.

**Steve Brady**

Nobody with CAMRA's approval has contacted your previous employer. What did happen is that it was stated that a suggestion was made that you had not in fact won a silver award for the Champion winter Beer of Britain.

CAMRA does take false claims of awards seriously and you can appreciate why. We checked and I'm pleased to confirm in front of this group that you did in fact win.

**Jon Archer**

So why were you asked to check Steve?

What other members of the board, were you also asked to check any of their credentials?

**Steve Brady**

It was said in the pub

**Jon Archer**

Said in the pub, doesn't that say it all, gossip, rumour.

**Steve Brady**



Yeah. The problem with that is people claiming CAMRA awards that they haven't won bringing CAMRA into disrepute. I'm pleased to say, that you did win an award and I'll say it publicly.

**Jon Archer**

And I'm disappointed to stand in front of this group of people having to ask the question about why I was investigated by CAMRA for false claims.

I wish to proceed.

**Steve Brady**

I wish to pass on my congratulations. It was actually a very nice beer.

**Shawn Smith (former Pub Manager)**

May I ask questions about the key....?

**Jon Archer**

No, can I finish my statement, please. Questions at the end please.

At the end of the day, someone only needed to ask me. They didn't need to ask my former employees, employers or colleagues. They just needed to ask me.

**Steve Brady**

I wish that you'd been at the meeting. There were a lot of things said and would have been a very different note, I did not know.

If only one side talks and if only one side goes to the pub and only one side tells me I only know what I'm told.

I'm quite happy to say that I apologise

I far as I'm concerned, CAMRA representatives support the pub, we support the Community pub. One question....

**Jon Archer**

But they don't support the Society and the Operations Director. That's what comes across by you signing that petition and you digging into my past to find out whether I'm credible, whether I'm a credible candidate and whether I'm truthful in my statements.

**Steve Brady**

Entitled to find out whether these people are making claims.

**Cris Tomos (Chair)**

So we have three people now on the Zoom. Somebody else has come in.



## **Jon Archer**

So having closed the pub due to false fire safety concerns, the pub manager removed all of the master and spare keys from the key safe, along with all of the cash takings and took them home and then made himself unavailable away with the family for a few days.

On hearing that the chairman was ill, Mike Hillier writes to the group, stating that Geraint Evans being a broken man is just a ploy. I know the chairman to be a man of great character and it's through your deceitfulness along with the others, that caused his ill health.

I saw the state he was in. How low can you go? How badly can you treat a willing volunteer in pursuit of your own agenda? How dare you make light of a man that you put in hospital.

Be ashamed.

It's been a privilege to serve this community alongside you as volunteers. This project and sheer scale of what we have achieved is incredible. Thank you to the board and the Committee for your continued professionalism, integrity, loyalty and dignity. The way you've conducted yourselves is exemplary.

However, given the appalling behaviours of the individuals, the detriment to my own health and reputation, the impact on my wife's safety and well-being, I have decided to resign as director as Operations Director with immediate effect.

As is customary, I will remain in post as director till the 1st board meeting scheduled for the 12th of March 2024 and will fall back as a committee member as long as a successful transition can be completed.

I look forward to stepping back from full time work on this project, returning to life with my family, friends and the opportunity to recover from this whole experience. I wish Y Cross Cas-lai Community Benefit Society every success in the future.

Diolch yn fawr.

## **Cris Tomos (Chair)**

Announces receipt of another letter from a committee member.

To the chairman, secretary and directors of Y Cross Cas-lai CBS 20th of February. Dear all, please accept this letter as notice of my resignation as a member of Y Cross Cas-lai CBS committee effective from the general meeting 27th of February. The level of



incoming abuse communication in several months has been totally debilitating and sustainable and unacceptable on all levels. The continual unsubstantiated allegations against the director, the committee members have given me no alternative other than to resign. It's been a privilege to serve alongside you as volunteers on this project and the sheer scale of what has been achieved is incredible. Thank you for your professionalism, integrity, loyalty and dignity.

The way you have conducted yourselves has been exemplary. I look forward to returning to life for my family, friends and business and recovering from this experience, wishing you wishing Y Cross Cas-lai CBS every success for the future.

Diolch yn fawr, Judith Roach.

Now on the 5th item of the agenda.

Which is to conduct the election of directors. So during this process, there's an opportunity for people to put their names forward who were current shareholders and from the green Papers that you've had. There are there were four names that came forward, so if anybody, if you haven't put your votes.

A proposal was received to have the four candidates for the position of director working together to organise an AGM. This proposal was unopposed.

A further suggestion was made that the nominees for committee members would also assist with arrangements for the AGM, alongside existing committee members.

A board meeting was scheduled for 12 March 2024 at which an AGM would be arranged.