

# Localheroes

As Pub Is The Hub announces expansion, we remember why pubs are so crucial to their communities.

**CRUCIAL SUPPLIES:** Pub retailer Michael Dee (right) and chef Matthew Brown provide drinking water at The King's Head



**“We’re in a customer service industry – when bad things happen you go above and beyond the call of duty”**

**H**opes of balmy weather to buffer the start of the smoking ban were more than dampened by this summer’s floods. But it didn’t break the resolve of the great British pub, as many people turned to their locals for food and shelter.

A moat of water surrounded the hill upon which **The King’s Head in Norton**, near Gloucester, sits, leaving its outdoor area waterlogged. The floods had even swept vehicles from its car park but luckily didn’t reach the pub itself.

While other businesses shut up shop, **The King’s Head** stayed open for stranded locals and commuters, even when its water supply was turned off. Ironically, the pub was full despite losing its restaurant bookings for the weekend.

“The place was converted into a bunkhouse,” recalled pub retailer Michael Dee, who helped organise several rescue missions in the village.

### **Comfortable**

“We were up until 2.30am making sure people were comfortable and then in the morning we made bacon butties and cups of tea. We’re in a customer service industry – when bad things happen you go above and beyond the call of duty.”



**ARMS OPEN:** Doug Davies of The Old Farmers Arms, which stayed open during the flooding

Michael and his team were told they could continue serving food and drink as long as they provided environmental health officers with a full risk assessment. This involved a detailed operation with extra staff, bottled water, plastic glasses and sanitary supplies. Michael’s plan of action was so watertight that the council rolled it out to other businesses in the area.”

**The Old Farmers Arms in Bishops Cleeve** provided its community with a much-needed lifeline as the floods hit Tewkesbury and the surrounding villages. The pub sheltered about 60 locals throughout the worst of the crisis. And staff served drinks on crates while water poured in from under the doors.

Pub retailer Doug Davies said: “A party of local retired ladies was in on the Friday, the day it all started. Although only 29 of the 44 made it, we carried on with the booking.

“We just got on with it. We kept the bar open for as long as we could and put people up for the night.”

Two days later Doug closed the food-led pub for three weeks while



builders restored the interiors and fitted a drainage system outside. “I could have closed earlier but people needed us,” he added.

## **pint and a postcard**

**Pub Is The Hub will help save many more community locals thanks to new funding.**

Five hundred pubs in far-flung villages are set to benefit from post office projects in the near future. As well as attracting new trade, these businesses will be paid monthly by the Post Office and earn a commission from the services provided.

To find out how Pub Is The Hub could help put your business at the heart of its community, visit [www.pubisthehub.org.uk](http://www.pubisthehub.org.uk) or call 01423 568987.

**Are you involved in a Pub Is The Hub project or have you helped your community recently? We want to hear from you. Call the Eagleye newsdesk on 01926 338811.**