

Villagers to take on running of shop and post office

A SMALL Sutherland community is rallying round after learning that its only shop and post office is to close.

The seaside village of Embo is in the throes of setting up its own convenience store, staffed by volunteers, along with an outreach post office service.

Spearheading the initiative is the Embo Trust, a charity set up with the aim of providing new facilities for the 300-strong community.

Dave Hannibal, who has run Embo Post Office and convenience store for the last 15 years, is retiring at the end of March.

Catriona Grigg, secretary of Embo Trust, said: "Dave has served the village well and will be sadly missed. You always knew you'd feel cheerier after a trip to his shop!"

With the nearest grocery stores and post office a six-mile round trip away at Dornoch, it was decided action

was needed. A meeting was held on Wednesday to update local people on the steps that had been taken.

Those present were told that the village's football team had agreed to a committee room in its pavilion being used as a shop and post office.

The long-term intention was to locate the new store in the former Embo Primary School which is currently being renovated. Ownership of the school has been transferred by Highland Council to the Embo Trust.

A £2000 grant had been secured from the East Sutherland and Edderton ward discretionary fund to cover the costs of applying for change of use and installing security cameras and other items.

Mrs Grigg said Mr Hannibal had donated various items including his tills, sales counter, chill cabinet, fridge unit and shelving. His suppliers had agreed to continue as normal.

She added: "Dave closes on 29th March, so we will be flitting over to the pavilion in time to open the next day for newspaper sales."

She said the trust was collecting names for volunteers to man the shop on two-and-a-half hour shifts. Seventeen people had volunteered so far but the list was still open.

Mrs Grigg said Dornoch sub-postmaster Graham Sawyer had agreed to provide an outreach service at the new shop on Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 9.30am to 1pm.

She said: "He will be able to provide the same services as we've enjoyed up until now but there will be a gap of a least six weeks between the present post office closing and the outreach service starting."

Mr Hannibal, who was present at the meeting, was thanked for his services to the village and presented with a card and a cheque.