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The Charity Commission
PO Box 1227
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19 August 2014

Dear Sir,

I am writing concerning The Camphill Village Trust, Charity No. 232402 and in particular the Botton Village community. I wrote to the trustees about my concerns on 6th August but have not had a reply. I know that others have had the same experience.

I have donated to the Camphill Village Trust via Botton and have also purchased Botton Village products. Until recently I have been impressed by the way that volunteer co-workers sharing their lives with those with learning disabilities has been enormously enriching for those in need.

I am writing to you regarding drastic changes are being made by the charity. These appear to have been made by the chief executive and endorsed by the trustees. At other Camphill communities the co-workers have been already replaced by employees. The negative impacts have been independently documented in a discussion paper published by the Centre for Welfare Reform. This is ***Regulation The unintentional destruction of intentional communities*** by Bob Rhodes and Richard Davis, published in March 2014. It is available at <http://www.centreforwelfarereform.org/library/by-az/regulation.html>

This paper clearly explains the charitable aims of the Camphill Village Trust and its core philosophy. The paper discusses Botton but it also describes what has happened at Oaklands Park where changes to the structure of shared living have already been implemented. The description of the change from a community to an institution and the examples of the impacts on the lives of those the charity are caring for are truly horrendous.

In the 2013 Annual Report CVT emphasised the importance of co-workers to meet the charity objectives. It says on page 22:-

“The Charity has for many years and continues to use these powers and during the financial year has deployed over 200 co-workers over the eleven communities. These numbers include circa 113 co-workers in the nine English communities. These career volunteers contribute to CVT’s unique life sharing community approach and support the rich environment of family, working and social life. Co-workers are an important way of ensuring the Trust’s objectives of keeping the anthroposophical principles of Dr Steiner alive and

relevant in these modern times, are met, as well as being an integral part of delivering the care our funders contract the Trust to provide.”

I cannot see that anything fundamental has changed since 2013 so recent events are not easy to understand. The charity has told co-workers that they are no longer required but may apply for jobs as employees, living separately from those requiring care, working in shifts and fundamentally changing the ethos of Botton.

A CVT statement given out at a recent meeting in the village of Danby where I live refers to whistle blowing at another community and the requirements of the Charity Commission for the need to make changes to the system of having volunteer co-workers. I have followed up this point by finding and reading your Operation Compliance Report at http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/media/595717/ocr_the_camphill_village_trust.pdf

I can see that there were potential conflicts of interest and a lack of systems in place for approval of payments to co-workers. You report favourably on the recent changes of governance. But the important message from your report is the lack of any requirements for changes to the status of co-workers. I find it worrying that the CVT are misusing your report in this way.

I have read allegations that the charity has changed its constitution by undemocratic means. Details are given on a page of the website created by a campaigning group who are opposing the changes. The relevant page is at <http://www.actionforbotton.org/botton-needs-help>. Please see the section of this page headed “How can they do this?”. I am writing to request that you investigate these serious allegations. I expect that Action for Botton will be able to provide you with much more evidence once you initiate an enquiry. On the charity website there are currently no links for an application form to become a member of the charity, which seems most unusual.

I am deeply concerned as I understand charity money is now being used for legal, public relations and other advice, and on a top down management structure that is enormously detrimental to the beneficiaries.

I wish this letter to be registered as a formal complaint that funds given to support the Camphill ethos are being used to undermine and destroy it and that CVT has now moved so far from its core principles (as set out in its Memorandum and Articles).

I request that the Charity Commission investigate and intervene as a matter of urgency.

Yours faithfully,

Dr S.B.C. Larkin