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**24 April 2015**

Dear Ms Wright,

I am writing to you as a concerned voting member of CVT and also the father of a beneficiary of the Trust.

My daughter Tracey has been a long time resident of Skylark House in Botton Village (BV) hence my particular concerns at the developments taking place during the past four years . It encompasses the period commencing when you took up permanent employment with CVT which coincided with the appointment of Huw John as CEO up to the present day.

I have a dilemma and that is understanding why you ever chose to advise and subsequently become an employee of a Charity which has at its heart and in its Memorandum of Association the following objects and powers :-

*...the establishment and maintenance of communities in the form of villages, residential houses ..... in which beneficiaries live and /or work and/or to which they otherwise resort with persons providing support .*

*Provide to or procure for , beneficiaries the benefits of family life in all its aspects .....through anthroposophical, social, philosophical, spiritual and religious practices following Steiner Principles.*

The reason I say this is for the past 16 years based on the documentary evidence that I have acquired, the only viable conclusion that I can draw is that you have devoted your life to changing the objects and powers outlined above.

I believe that I am right in this conclusion but this letter is intended to give you a chance to explain if I have got it wrong.

In August 1999 you co-authored a Working Draft entitled “Proposed Goals for Botton Camphill Village” At that time you were associated with a Company called New Leadership Limited. That was the start of your long journey to radically altering and ending the house community/shared living and vocational co-worker model. **Q.1 -WHY?**

The vocational co-worker is the heart and soul of BV Camphill life following Steiner Principles.

My daughter Tracey depends 24/7 all year round on her co-worker house mother Claire Griffiths.

At the time when you took up permanent employment with CVT the AGM minutes were released and the published accounts (2010/2011) recorded the following :-

*in relation to the balance sheet the Charity has Net Assets of £92m and £15-16m of net current assets which represent the ability to pay debts . This is a strong balance sheet and puts the Charity in a good position to face upcoming challenges.*

Up to that time all communities had Local Management Committees with the vocational co-workers basically running and organising the Communities.

The whole Charity was a success story but years before 2010/2011 the documents I have in my possession appear to indicate that you had already set your heart on changing it. **Q.2 - WHY AND WHAT IS YOUR MOTIVATION?**

In 2010 you were a member of a core group entitled the Vocational Co-worker Status Meeting ( VCSM). At that time you were an Independent HR consultant to CVT. It was a group formed to create an updated understanding of the status position of co-workers and how best to treat their engagement as vocational workers in relation to modern management and governance necessities .

The groups work resulted in the production of a document called “Three Perspectives” . It was launched internationally in 2011 in Finland and was intended to be a genuine attempt to create a format which could be used for dialogue between CVT and the Charity Commission (CC).

This document was abandoned by CVT and not used as a basis for negotiation with the CC. **Q.3 - WHY?**

When the vital “co-worker fund” negotiations took place between the CVT and the CC you refused to allow any of the co-workers to attend and put across their point of view. **Q.4 - WHY?**

You even went into the meeting without a preferred approach from CVT. It was in my opinion complete capitulation of the co-worker model. **Q. 5 - WHY?**

In 2010 Tom Blake, with your agreement made the statement that in order to survive in the modern social care context CVT had to undergo strategic change. He said that this change must include

*Ending the house community /shared living and vocational co-worker model.*

Steve Briault the Chair of Trustees of The Mount Camphill Community confirmed your intentions in a letter to Felicity Chadwick-Histed where he explained :-

*The specific issues raised by the Charity Commission to which you refer –levels of co-worker benefits, reporting and monitoring of these, and addressing conflicts of interest – are all perfectly soluble (again, as current practice at the Mount demonstrates ) without imposing employment...*

**Q.6 -Why** are you so committed to the policy that CVT has to undergo strategic change?

**Q.7 -** Did you not realise that serious legal opinion was stating that you were acting in breach of charity law?

According to Hubert Picarda QC a vastly experienced charities specialist who, quite literally, wrote the book on charity law, identified 8 breaches of trust by the trustees one of which he identified as :- *Abandoning or procuring the abandonment of the existing model of care – the family or household model – in favour of a bureaucratic model in which Steiner / Camphill principles are not promoted or preserved.*

In September of 2013 I together with a number of signatories wrote a detailed letter of concern to the CC. It ran to 20 pages with 50 No. annexures. The CC commission passed it to CVT for comment.

Through the freedom of information act I received a heavily redacted copy of your response which stated:-

*We will not respond at length or address the many factual inaccuracies*

This statement turned out to be extremely misleading and when I challenged you the response I received was:-

*We appreciate that large parts of your letter were quotes from other documents and would have no concern about their accuracy (with one exception relating to the document on co-worker costs) however in many instances we clearly would have a different interpretation.*

Your response to me varied considerably from the one offered to the CC.

**Q. 8 -**Did you not realise that your response was likely (and on one interpretation intended) to mislead the CC.?

Since 90% of your reply to the CC was redacted I am naturally left wondering just how accurate the rest of your comments were.

Would you care to set my mind at rest by sending me an unredacted copy of your email to the CC dated 18 October 2013 11:49? **Q.9 - IF NOT WHY DO YOU HAVE THE NEED FOR SECRECY?**

In your recent Witness Statement you made a powerful comment in describing BV :-

***The overall picture is one of systemic institutional failure in the model at Botton. A general manager was employed as a consequence of these concerns....***

It is again necessary to ask whether you realised that these were seriously misleading statements and half-truths and if so were they intended to be so or is there another explanation

You are described by a former trustee as ***no longer practicing as a solicitor*** and therefore coming from that background it is reasonable to assume that your choice of words would be carefully selected in order to maximise your point of view.

You failed to mention that the General Manager who was appointed in November 2011 was dismissed in January 2012.

You identify so called concerns in financial and care management .

As far as financial management is concerned you failed to mention the North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC ) Internal Audit R 2012-13.Reference 28200/076 .This was a report commissioned by NYCC to evaluate progress made by BV in addressing issues raised in the 2011 report. In the introduction it mentions fundamental financial weaknesses being discovered.

In the review of the newly installed Sage 50 accounting system it noted that :

***However it is not yet fully operational as an accounting package . Brought forward figures have yet to be entered, there are no budget figures in the system and there will not be any until the next financial year.***

This is certainly a ***systemic institutional failure*** but it is not created by the co-worker model. It is created by the incompetence of your senior management team headed by Huw John who were responsible for the implementation of the change in the system.

However it should be noted that the CVT auditors were nonetheless able to sign off the charity accounts in the previous year without any reference to fundamental weaknesses in the BV accounting system.

As far as care management is concerned you also failed to mention that the 4 areas of concern previously identified in November 2011 by the Care Quality Commission (CQC )were quickly resolved and the Review of Compliance by the CQC dated April 2012 issued a clean bill of health in all areas .

I find it quite extraordinary that you continue to malign the co-worker model at every opportunity even when the documentary evidence cannot support it.

**Q.10 - Why do you do it?**

It is no exaggeration to state that your influence on CVT policy has been huge and that the dramatic change in direction that has taken place in all communities in respect of the co-worker model over the past four years can be laid firmly at your door.

Your influence in CVT is neatly summed up by a previous chair of CVT –Chris Cook who states :-

***Frances Wright had previously worked as an independent consultant for CVT on fairly regular basis for some time and her skill and knowledge in HR matters is recognised and appreciated by many people in the charity who work with her. When Huw John was appointed as the chief Executive it was decided by the Board of Trustees to formally employ Frances Wright full time and she now reports to her current line manager Huw John.***

In June 2011 in a Briefing to all communities CVT/NYCC announced that the BV Local Management Committee (LMC ) had been stood down on a temporary basis. It has never been reinstated and no explanation has been given nor thanks extended to the many who have given years of volunteer service. The management of BV was subsequently assumed by a General Manager appointed in November 2011 reporting direct to the CEO Huw John.

This catastrophic management decision formed a major part in the subsequent decision by HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC ) to regard BV Co-workers as having employed status.

Based on information supplied by CVT HMRC wrote :-

***Since 2009 the co-workers work under the guidance of CVT managers so there is a clear line of supervision. They are accountable to their line manager. They receive regular supervision.***

As head of HR I find it inconceivable that you did not play major part in this decision to radically change the management structure of CVT and ultimately the co-worker model. A management structure that had successfully existed healthily and financially strong for five decades **Q. 11 - WHY?**

There were certainly alternatives available as explained by Steve Briault from The Mount Camphill Community but it would seem you were blinded to such considerations.

In the past 4 years under your guidance as head of HR the charity has achieved the following milestones :-

- In August 2014 the CVT trustees received a letter of no confidence from 211 signatories calling on all of the trustees to make way for a new group of trustees.
- Also in August 2014 the Delrow Community wrote to the Charity Commission enclosing an Opinion from Hubert Picarda QC citing 8 No. Breaches of Trust by the management and Trustees and requesting an investigation.

- In December 2014 Bindmans acting for 3 villagers issued a letter before action citing a breach of human rights
- In February 2015 Co-workers together with family relatives from three communities viz. Botton Village , Delrow Community and Grange Village issued a letter before action citing a claim that CVT management and trustees were fundamentally altering the nature of the Charity and its communities.
- Also in February 2015 the Rt Hon Norman Lamb MP the Minister of State for Care and Support wrote to Robert Goodwill MP saying *We know that many people such as ??? ( name of a villager in BV like Tracey ) feel happier and safer in intentional communities, and we fully support these communities when they offer choices and good quality care. I can assure you that a key aim of the Government is to put people with learning disabilities and the families who care for them in control of their care, including where and with whom they live.*
- In March 2015 Baroness Hollins rose in the House of Lords to make a statement in respect of the Mental Capacity Act and made specific mention of Camphill Village trust and the fact that it appears that financial decisions are driving changes without the inclusion of residents in best interest decisions.
- Also in March 2015 An Early Day Motion No. 924 was Tabled in the House of Commons by Caroline Lucas MP

Never in the history of the Charity has so much resistance been lodged by so many people to the policies that you are determined to push through. **Q.12 – WHY ARE YOU SO DETERMINED?**

On the face of it the only logical conclusion is that all these people are totally misguided and wrong and that the Frances Wright long time policy and solution is the **only** way forward.

You are now not far from reaching your target in BV by driving out the remaining co-workers who refuse to accept contracts of employment.

Due to BV's unique isolated and rural location it cannot survive without volunteer co-workers living there 24/7 and they are irreplaceable. It simply remains a matter of time before BV collapses financially.

You of all people with your considerable knowledge in HR will have long realised that you would never be able to source sufficient experienced social workers on the local labour market to replace care workers like Claire Griffiths with 20 years' experience of taking care of Tracey and villagers like her.

I wish to make it clear that I do not hold you responsible for financial matters. However I do hold you responsible for your unremitting attacks on the co-worker model for no logical reason. The resulting financial implications become what is known in Insurance parlance as “consequential losses” It is simply a loss resulting from your disastrous policy to change the co-worker model. These sorts of losses are uninsurable.

In the past 4 years I have attended many family forums and the question on 95% of the lips of the families and relatives present was “how have we got ourselves into this mess?”

I firmly believe that the documents that I have in my possession provides the answer to that question.

**You truly are the power behind the throne.**

One final question. **Q. 13 - Were you responsible for the due diligence in respect of the appointment of Huw John as CEO?**

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brian Knight', with a stylized, cursive script.

Brian Knight

CC Felicity Chadwick–Histed Chair of Trustees.

Mr Brian Knight  
43 Gainsborough Drive  
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28 April 2015

Dear Mr Knight

**Your letter of 24 April 2015 to Frances Wright**

We are in receipt of the above letter. Due to its highly personal nature and overtly hostile tone, the charity will not be responding. Whilst we recognise that emotions are running high, this does not excuse attempts to bully individuals who work for us.

I also note that you have used Camphill Village Trust members' email addresses without permission. We believe doing so is likely to have breached the Data Protection Act 1998. We would therefore ask you not to repeat this misuse of people's contact details.

We have made the Information Commissioner's office aware of this issue and will be informing members whose contact details continue to be abused of their rights to complain to the Information Commissioner.

Yours sincerely



Huw John  
Chief Executive

