

ACTION FOR BOTTON

MAJORITY OF BOTTON VILLAGERS PETITION CAMPHILL VILLAGE TRUST TO STOP THEIR FORCED SEGREGATION

Campaign group Action for Botton has confirmed that 80% of the learning disabled Villagers living in the Botton community near Whitby have now signed a petition urging North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) and Camphill Village Trust (CVT) to let them continue to share their homes with the volunteer Co-workers who live and work alongside them.

The signatories represent the overwhelming majority of the 95 Villagers* who have themselves organised and put their names to a petition which states: **“We, the undersigned, want to keep shared living with Co-workers in Botton, where we can choose to share our homes with volunteer Co-workers.”**

The Villagers created the petition in response to a leaked CVT proposed “Property Consolidation Strategy” document which campaigners claim shows that CVT are planning to move Villagers from their homes, without their agreement, specifically in order to separate them from their Co-worker families.

Andrew Faulkes whose daughter is a resident at Botton said *“CVT have ignored representations by families and disabled Villagers made in meetings. Now let's watch them ignore a petition, too. ..”*

Also in response to the leaked document the Botton Parents Group, representing 78 family members of Botton residents, have written to North Yorkshire County Council asking them to confirm that there is no plan to force the Villagers to move against their express wishes and urgently requesting confirmation from the local authority that the plans detailed in the document will not be implemented.

Like the majority of residents relatives' I am very concerned by CVTs actions, especially as I only received a reply to many emails when I raised a safeguarding complaint with CVT management” says Sue Hurst, sister of a Botton Villager “Whilst the other issues I raised about my brother's future care remained unanswered I was assured that my brother wasn't going to be moved, and that I would be consulted if any changes were to take place in his living arrangements. Unfortunately, due to their previous conduct, I find I cannot believe anything that management tell me and feel I have no option but to seek assurances from the local authority.

In addition individual Villagers and their families had already sent letters to CVT advising them that they would consider any attempts to move them to be harassment, and many have made previous complaints to the Police and NYCC of harassment against CVT managers for similar treatment, where they feel they have been misinformed and their choices have been subverted and / or ignored.

In the last year CVT management has undertaken various actions and issued a series of letters, under a variety of unsubstantiated pretexts, threatening with eviction those Co-workers who have so far refused to abandon their current volunteer status and become paid employees.

Action for Botton believes the controversial changes will completely destroy the unique 60 year old Botton community by forcing the vocational Co-workers to either become hourly paid, shift working employees living separately from the learning disabled Villagers or face eviction from their homes. The changes also mean that the learning-disabled Villagers who had chosen to live in a family-like (shared-life) setting with the comfort and reassurance of Co-worker house-parents, will instead be forced to live isolated lives completely segregated from the able-bodied.

Neil Davidson, chair of Action for Botton, said: *“The Villagers who have signed the petition represent an overwhelming 80% of those at Botton and we urge CVT and NYCC to now take their views into account. In CVT’s jargon the Villagers are described as ‘pws’ - people we support - and so we are calling on CVT to do just that, take their opinions into account and cancel these plans.”*

LETTER FROM FAMILIES TO NYCC

We are writing to express our deep concern that there are plans underway to move our family members from their homes, as detailed in the leaked PCS document (attached). This document indicates that around 30 of the learning disabled residents in the Botton community are to be abruptly moved from their houses without any kind of impact or risk assessment against their express and clear wishes.

As you are aware it is the overwhelming desire of the learning disabled residents at Botton village to remain in the houses they live in with their co-worker families in a shared-life situation as they have chosen to do. They are clear that do not wish to be moved and they do not want care support workers.

In light of this disturbing document please can you confirm that you will not agree to any such plans by CVT to move residents against their wishes either by force or deception?

Yours faithfully
Signed on behalf of the Botton Families

EXAMPLE OF LETTER FROM RESIDENT TO CVT

1. I am aware that CVT has plans to move me from my current home to a new house.
2. I have a tenancy of my current home and I am not prepared to move.
3. I instruct you not to make any preparation for any move without first notifying me and my relatives of the plans.
4. I regard the fact that CVT is making these plans without considering the impact on me or the others I live with as threatening and it is causing me anxiety.
5. I am not prepared to move and intend to continue living in my current address. Any attempt to tell or persuade me to move without involving due process of law by way of a formal notice to quit and full information to and involvement of my (parents/next of kin) will be harassment and will be reported accordingly.

6. Any pressure on my co-workers will be seen as harassment and unlawful denial of Family Life (Human Rights Act);

7. I am aware that you intend to replace my Co-workers with support workers I will not accept this change in accommodation or care support arrangements.

---ends---

Notes to editors

The PSC documents can be viewed on the following link along with associated correspondence;
<http://www.camphillspecialschool.org/documents/BottonDoc01222015.pdf>

The residents' petition can be viewed on the following link;
<http://www.actionforbotton.org/cms/tinyMCE/plugins/moxiemanager/data/files/Residents%20Petition%20re%20Coworkers%20Jan%202015.pdf>

(*Some Villagers are elderly and in the Botton residential care home and some Villagers were felt to lack the capacity to sign the petition as they would not understand its meaning.)

About Camphill Botton Village

The Camphill Movement was started over seventy years ago by German/Austrian Jews fleeing from the Nazis at a time of great persecution of the disabled. They did this to give learning disabled adults the chance

1. to live closely with the land and in a beneficial environment,
2. to live in a community where all are equal, irrespective of their abilities
3. to have a meaningful and fulfilling working life

CVT was founded in October 1954 to support the first adult community of Botton Village, which was started by Villagers, their families and volunteer Co-workers as an 'intentional community' in 1955. The formation articles of incorporation expressly specify that the charity's purpose is to establish a community into which the disabled can be incorporated in order that their lives be fulfilled according to the above principles.

http://www.actionforbotton.org/files/CVT_Mem_Arts_highlighted.pdf

The community was therefore formed to include and support people with a wide range of disabilities. Those with learning disabilities live with the volunteer (unwaged) Co-worker families in shared family-like households so that they can each be supported to participate in all aspects of community life including fulfilling and meaningful work.

<http://www.actionforbotton.org/Botton-Village/living-together-in-Botton>

Fundamental to the movement is sustainable farming, and as a result CVT has grown to be the single largest holder of bio-dynamically farmed land in the UK with Botton in particular winning awards.

<http://www.gazettelive.co.uk/news/local-news/honour-for-botton-group-3780507>

The entire community shares all the work in running the sustainable community, according to their abilities and wishes and for the benefit of all. Everyone agrees to these principles when they join the village. The result of this has set a world-leading standard in terms of community living, with Botton village famously leading the way in sustainability.

The community has been based for the last sixty years on vocational volunteer Co-workers receiving no salary, living modestly, pooling resources, having their needs met by the community.

http://www.actionforbotton.org/files/Three_Perspectives.pdf

Since its foundation, the Village has been widely recognised as an exemplar of a sustainable, inclusive community and has been much copied, inspiring over a hundred communities of the Camphill movement

world-wide - 75 separate Camphill Communities worldwide and 36 in the British Isles, nine of which are currently CVT communities that grew out of the original site at Botton.

Popular for its caring and inclusive values, Botton Village has attracted generous donations and support from the public over the years with supporters keen to make sure that this unique way of life is continued. Much of the property owned by the charity was offered by the Macmillan (publishing) family, and/or built, bought and/or renovated with the help of donations intended for the purpose of supporting the remarkable community that is Botton that donors know, admire and are keen to support.

Four years ago the appointment of a new management team at CVT heralded a catastrophic departure from Botton's founding structure and values, with management making repeated attempts to undermine the ethos and core caring principles of Camphill and ignoring the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the charity. Links to more details on this are below;

<http://www.actionforbotton.org/Hijacking-a-charity>

http://www.actionforbotton.org/files/Summary_of_alleged_abuses_by_CVT_Management_Final.pdf

Pressure group Action for Botton has been set-up by stakeholders including friends, families, former Co-workers and Co-workers to oppose these changes. For further information see

www.actionforbotton.org and

http://www.actionforbotton.org/files/Camphill_Values_v2.2_short_1.pdf

Interviewees

Please contact the press office if you would like an interview with any of a wide range of stakeholders including;

Campaigners from Action for Botton including the chair

Co-workers (anonymously) and former Co-workers

Legal experts

Accounting experts

Parents and family members of the residents

Learning disabled residents

Links to additional information

Learning disabled residents speaking about their preferences and of being harassed and intimidated

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SW5pSTXj2ck&feature=youtu.be>

Independent report that outlines the devastating effects of these changes on other CVT communities. *The unintentional destruction of intentional communities* by Bob Rhodes and Richard Davis, published in March 2014. It is available at;

<http://www.centreforwelfare-reform.org/library/by-az/regulation.html>

Contact Information

Action for Botton

Neil Davidson – Chair

email: action@actionforbotton.org

Press

National Kay Clark

Tel: 0845 833 8292

Email: kay@tru-pr.co.uk

Regional Richard Graham

Tel: 01765 640736

Email: richard.graham@rgpr.co.uk