



Action for Botton
The Vicarage
Danby, Whitby
YO21 2NQ
action@actionforbotton.org

25th June 2014

Mrs. F. Chadwick-Histed
Chair of Camphill Village Trust
The Kingfisher Offices
9 Saville Street
Malton
North Yorkshire
YO17 7LL

Dear Mrs Chadwick-Histed

Thank you for your letter of 20th June, which was not apparently written by you but of which you must be aware. We appreciate your Charity taking the time to respond in detail and we have made some very minor amendments to our leaflet but do not believe that anything you say alters its main thrust. Only serious consideration and immediate action on this letter could do that.

If even a part of what you say is correct, you must be aware that you are presiding over a management and public relations disaster and one which will cause real damage to the charity and all concerned. To outsiders it seems incredible that there have been no attempts to manage the changes that, you say, are legally required. Management of change is a specialist field of which our members have some expertise and at its core, in this sort of situation:-

1. You should, at the outset, be frank and open about the problems, whether they are legal, tax or financial. You should share the core documents and information so that there is no doubt as to the accuracy of your assessments.
2. Prior to making any decisions (even if those decisions seems to you to be inevitable) you must engage the other stakeholders fully and listen to them.

3. You then consult with them about ways of proceeding thereby empowering and engaging them in the process and enabling all to work together towards an agreed outcome.

What you must not do is to regard stakeholders as objects who do not need to be consulted but can be controlled, manipulated and intimidated with surprise ultimata and bamboozling technical language about threats that are not substantiated. We suggest that your only recourse now is to back-track and start the process again, this time being, in your words, "clear and transparent". A round table conference with a professional coordinator (accepted and trusted by all stakeholders) needs to be called to look together at the risks, challenges and the ways they can be met together. If what you say is true (rather than a smokescreen to hide true intentions, as many believe), then

You have nothing to fear from this process and the fact that there are no alternatives to your proposals will become clear. It will then be possible for all to work together to put solutions in place.

If you insist on proceeding on your current course then you need to be aware of the strength of feeling and the love for the old caring/life-sharing model. Your rejection of the suggestion in this letter will, we fear, reinforce both the toxic atmosphere your actions have created and the prevailing conviction that you are a top-down, controlling organisation alien to the ethos of Botton. You have lost or are about to lose the trust of the vast majority of those at Botton (described by "In Control" as "skilled and highly motivated" - surely the Holy Grail of any organisation). This is a direct result of your behaviour and actions in the recent years, which have been seen as antagonistic and divisive. This view is reinforced by your current attempts to sign-up individuals into something contrary to their core beliefs. You will inevitably lose those most committed. As public scrutiny of your actions grows you will lose the trust and generosity of donors. You will also lose villagers and we are aware of a number of parents and guardians who, appalled at the way things are going, are actively looking for new homes as they no longer believe that the new Botton you are determined to create will be a good and happy place serving their interests.

We believe all this is a real tragedy: not only because all that is good and worthwhile about Botton and its ethos will be lost but also because it could so easily be avoided. You are facing a real impasse here and, if you endeavour to plough on regardless, this can only lead to the loss of the good name of the Charity and you will indeed be responsible for bringing it into serious disrepute.

We therefore do hope that you will draw back from the brink and start working with those involved. If you do so we will do everything in our power to assist and support all in finding a way forward. If you reject this, as you have all other approaches, then you must take responsibility for the debacle that we fear will result.

In an attempt to start a process of openness we enclose a paper with ten questions. If it were possible to answer these frankly and openly it would be a step towards re-establishing trust and would help us believe that you do truly intend to be open and transparent. We, with regret, anticipate that you will fail to answer these questions, just as you have failed to answer the questions the Co-workers have raised in correspondence. We will take no pleasure in the high visibility campaign which will follow but, other than see the real ethos of Botton destroyed on the eve of its 60th Birthday, we will be left with no alternative.

Yours sincerely,

Neil Davidson
Chair, Action for Botton