



Action for Botton  
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27<sup>th</sup> July 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 and Trustees

Thank you for your letter of 18<sup>th</sup> July.

I appeal to you once again to reconsider the course your charity is following. Your letter is clearly prepared professionally with very carefully worded phrases which, frankly, appear designed to mislead. It has been observed that this has become the leading characteristic of information disseminated by your charity and it would be a lot more helpful if you could actually engage with those who care so much about Botton openly and frankly. I informed you before that you were facing a management and public relations disaster and how we could work together to avoid it but , rather than listening and co-operating, your charity has pressed on making matters vastly worse.

I now have to place on record the extraordinary behavior of your charity's senior staff at the very time when it could have attended the public meeting, called for that purpose, to put the CVT viewpoint. You had, of course, informed me that CVT representatives would not attend but did not give any reason. This was a pity because it would have been a real opportunity to engage with approaching 250 local people who are very concerned about what is happening.

I assumed that your management was too busy to attend so I was very surprised, on the way to the meeting, to pass David Knowles and Frances Wright driving towards my house in Glaisdale, where we had just had a meeting with the Member of Parliament. I was later informed that they were parked at Botton, apparently observing residents preparing to leave for the meeting. Finally, and really unacceptably, just 30 seconds before the meeting started, I was handed a box full of statements by CVT, which I did not have time to consider before the meeting started. Perhaps this was an intentional step intended to try and destabilise the meeting, if so it failed spectacularly. As they were evidently intended for meeting attendees, I announced that they had arrived, that I had not read them but that, unlike CVT, but that I was quite prepared to be open and share documents, even those clearly prepared to negatively influence the meeting. The documents were all handed out but there were not nearly enough to go round. If it was wished to circulate a statement it would have been more courteous to provide me with a copy in advance and it could have been read out to all who attended.

I must also bring to your attention the fact that the meeting felt so strongly about what was happening that the following resolution was moved from the floor:-

*“We the people of Esk Valley know and value Botton Community and call upon Camphill Village Trust to withdraw their ultimatum of 13th May 2014 and enter into immediate open and frank discussions with all those affected in order to find an agreed way forward.”*

Given the fact that you are prepared to ignore appeals from your charity's co-workers, MPs, the international Association of Camphill Communities, the villagers, their families and all the many, many people who have written to you, I have no expectation that you will respond positively. Despite that, I once again offer my services to facilitate reconciliation and to mitigate the growing damage that your charity is suffering, if only CVT is prepared to withdraw the ultimatum and start open and frank discussions. Your suggestion that we are threatening to bring your charity down is misplaced. The charity is being brought into disrepute by its actions, its ultimata, its treatment of loyal volunteers, its total disregard of the hugely strong messages it has been receiving from the families and the way that its behaviour is impacting on

those it professes to have “at the heart of everything” it does. You should also be aware that the level of press interest is growing and will soon be on a national basis.

I also need to let you know that the Co-workers received a prolonged standing ovation from all at the public meeting when the Botton Declaration was read out. I am very sorry that your management felt fit to respond once again punitively in removing signatories from their position in the management at Botton. Can you not understand it is their community, which you should be serving and supporting not yours? Actions of this sort will further outrage those who value Botton.

It is also no good you trying to put some blame on Action for Botton for the debacle you are presiding over or seeking to create us as the enemy. The reality is that we genuinely wish to prevent damage to CVT for the simple reason that what damages you, damages Botton. For instance we have, to date, held back from appealing to all your donors to cease supporting a charity that uses money, given to support the ethos and life-style at Botton, to destroy it. It is however inevitable that many will reconsider their donations when they become fully aware of the actions of your charity and their impact. We would greatly regret that but the fact is that you are using money given to support a special life-sharing volunteer ethos to destroy it.

The choice as to how things develop is, and always has been, yours. All you need to do is call a halt and work together with the stakeholders who you should be serving and stop trying to manage unacceptable behaviour through expensive PR. I remain hopeful that I will, sooner or later, get a genuine contact from you or your management, heralding the start of open discussion and reconciliation. It just needs a call, please make it happen.

Yours sincerely,

*Neil Davidson*

Neil Davidson  
Chair, Action for Botton

To be circulated please to the Senior Management and Trustees of Camphill Village Trust by CVT.