



Action for Botton
The Vicarage
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3rd July 2014

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

Thank you for your letter of 2nd July. Let me make it quite clear that we reject the suggestions that there has been "point scoring" as this issue is far more important than that. It remains unclear how you can read that into the proper professional way of responding to a generic letter when writing to an individual nor why you state that the letter of the 19th June names me as author. Please accept that we are fully aware of the way in which organisations such as yours operate and move on.

The whole point about the way that your Charity has preceded is that not a scrap of "evidence" has been provided. All you have done is paraphrase what it is said the Charity Commissioners, tax advisers and lawyers have said in a way that is very far from clear.

The basic problem here is being approached from different premises which is very apparent from your simple statement "Botton does not need saving". It may well be that some kind of caring institution can be preserved on the site of Botton Village but it will not be the very special place it has been for approaching 60 years. The reason so many have been generous donors is because Botton operates in a different way from the sort of institution that CVT seems determined to create there. You read the quote in the letter from the Co-workers and will be well aware of the appendix to the CVT Memorandum and Articles. Many believe that

the volunteer/ life sharing ethos of Botton is crucial and that this is indeed something special. This is why there is such determination to "save" it.

We say "may" above because the economics of replacing volunteers (including the essential "guest volunteers" who will not give up part of their lives for an ordinary employing institution) with shift care workers simply do not stack up. You have been asked for the business plan, which must have been prepared, but have failed to supply it. Quite apart from anything else the very site of Botton, which is frequently cut off during the winter, makes the idea of shift care workers travelling in, in the numbers you will need during inclement weather along unsuitable roads and for about the minimum wage unrealistic.

We fear that what will now happen, and it is worth placing this on record, is that you will force through the changes, the vast majority of the co-workers will leave and there will be no more guest volunteers. Quite a number of the villagers will leave because it will not be the Botton they came for. The attempt to manage with employees will prove vastly expensive and the village will lose its soul, its festivals, its joy. Once the cost proves impossible CVT will be faced with closing the village and it will be effectively "asset stripped" as the money could obviously, from the CVT standpoint, be better spent on new build caring institutions in an urban setting. This will then conveniently be blamed on the co-workers who, it will be said, left the situation beyond redemption.

Let us turn to your bullet points.

That the charity must work within the law is a truism and takes us no further. You must appreciate that whilst the details of the advice with regards specifically to Botton are kept confidential by you then our lawyers are bound to treat claims dressed in complex language as just that – claims and the perceived wisdom is that when claims are made but supporting evidence is refused they should be treated with extreme caution.

We have already dealt with your statement that Botton does not require saving.

The investment in all your communities frankly does not impress. They are already a shadow of what they were and even that shadow is likely to fade.

The offer of support to those leaving begs the question. It is noted that you now talk of those who transfer to employment or choose to leave as if they were the only alternatives. Does that mean that your declared intention only to employ those former care workers who you deem to be needed within the new employed structure has been changed?

If only it were possible to consider the "facts". We have appealed to you to provide them and again this is requested. We are informed and intelligent and if they were as you claim we would want to work with you to preserve everything possible at Botton. Unfortunately you have, as made clear above, failed to provide them.

We proposed in detail what should be done and promised our support in achieving this. We know the co-workers have begged that you pull back from the brink. AoCC has made, we now see, a similar suggestion to the one we made and which, in your reply of the 2nd July, you have simply ignored. Unfortunately, whilst you have been repeatedly asked to reconsider, the only response has been for CVT to push ahead with its plans with all possible speed. Almost all the questions that the co-workers have asked have been ignored and to clarify that we have prepared ten questions for you and attach a copy.

The co-workers spelt out the legal risks and particularly those of publicity but you chose to ignore their warning and we have to tell you that there is a growing anger and disbelief about the way an honourable and respected Charity is behaving. We now doubt whether we could stop the ever-growing press interest. If however you were prepared, even now, to work with, the co-workers, the families and AoCC we could and would make a joint announcement that we had put differences aside and were now all working together. That statement would draw some of the teeth of the adverse publicity the Charity is facing. We are afraid that we have no expectation at all that you will take the moderate and reasonable steps we propose or work together to find a middle road and giving the actions you are taking have had no alternative but to work on that basis – we would love to be wrong.

Just to clear up one more misapprehension: I made it clear to Mr Knowles that I was quite prepared to meet him on a one to one basis and rang him leaving messages. When I did not hear back I sent an email saying that I assumed he no longer wished to meet. I have had no reply but, in the light of your comments, I will endeavour to contact him again as we do believe

that communication that is genuine and open and not an attempt to manipulate or threaten is the only way forward.

We suggest another step in the right direction would be for you and the other trustees, as individuals, go to Botton not on a management organised and controlled visit but staying in a house, absorb what is special and then stand back and consider whether the beneficiaries will indeed be better in your new, top-down, controlled, employed Botton. We have extended this invitation to each Trustee and hope that CVT will actively encourage the trustees to take this up. It has been noted that despite CVT have inviting all Families to a "Bottom Village Information Sharing Event" on Saturday 5th July "*to meet and discuss recent events and the future*" and it has been noted with disappointment that none of the trustees will be attending at this crucial stage in BV's future. Accepting the above invitation would go some way towards correcting the impression some have gained that there is a wish to keep the trustees and the actual families and residents separate perhaps because they might learn the true value and worth of Botton.

Yours sincerely,

Neil Davidson