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Dear Huw John and all CVT trustees,

Thank you for the application form you sent following my request to join the trust. I first came into contact with Camphill 30 years ago as a school girl. I was amazed and captivated by the work of The Camphill Movement. Its unique personalised, creative and most of all compassionate approach to the person with special needs has sustained my interest and ensured my support since then. Since its inception, Camphill is a concept built on inclusion and equality and has been hugely successful in its endeavors to create community and meaningful life and work for all its members. My application to become a member of the trust was made from this perspective and also from a sincere appreciation of the value of Camphill not just to its members but also to the wider community and the world. It is my wish to see the Camphill vision sustained into the future.

It was with great astonishment that I read the application form and the enclosed letter. There was no name on the letter, no acknowledgement or appreciation of my interest in your endeavors, no inclusion of any material pertaining to the vision of the trust. Instead, two pages (in addition to the little insert) detailing the reasons why an application is likely to be refused, without the trust being under any obligation to give reasons. It is a screening tool to ensure that anyone with any Camphill experience or sympathies, direct or contiguously will not be admitted. It demonstrates a wish to gain complete control coupled with a tangible overriding fear and suspicion that anyone may challenge this aim.

My optimism for the future of Camphill has now turned into a grave concern and I wonder how CVT has maneuvered itself into this position and in doing so deviated so far from its ideals. I also read from the application form that you wish to enforce co-worker employment in Botton Village and that you fear opposition to this plan. Your solution to this potential challenge is not to admit anyone to the trust who may have an opinion on these dramatic changes or who is connected to anyone who may be affected by the changes. I have also read about your wish to have a majority of independent trustees on your board. Apart from one, I was unable to identify the 'dependent' trustees. Considering all this I am now very concerned that there is no one to represent the interests of the community members or defend the Camphill ethos. Can you advise me who I can raise this issue with as a matter of urgency, perhaps in addition to Mr John, as previous experience in communicating with him

gives me little hope that he would even reply to my letter. I would also like to add that a CEO who has a reputation for not answering concerns or replying to communication (especially at a time of such crisis) has a damaging effect, not just on himself, but on the reputation and credibility of the trust. In addition, would it be possible to forward the current trustees' CVs or personal statements that they made when applying to the trust both as members and more especially in their application to become trustees. I am assuming that these are available to the public in the same way that other trusts make such material available.

For your interest, I lived and worked in Botton Village for 5 years, leaving in 2005 to become a nurse and midwife (I previously worked in Camphill Ballytobin). During that time I worked very hard for the benefit of the community. In addition to multiple other things, I looked after a large house of 12 people (some with very complex needs), was an active member of the welfare and admissions group, the legislation group and the holiday group. I obtained an NVQ 4 in addition to doing multiple other trainings (to be in a better position to help the village develop into the future) . I organised the 'Speak up' forums and other advocacy projects. I contributed to the social life of the village and mentored young co-workers. I washed, cooked, cleaned, looked after the garden, milked cows, worked in the health center AND raised a family. I worked closely with North Yorkshire Social Services and Supporting People and had good and positive relationships with both. I clothed and fed myself and children, visited my family twice a year in Ireland and Germany and the children had music lessons. These were the benefits I received. I would challenge any of you to say that they were excessive and given the volume of work and the nature of it I am sure I was good value for money. Most of all I enjoyed life in Botton and from what I can gather and from feedback I received so did the other people I lived with. Most of the co-workers I knew contributed to the village in a similar way. I found it offensive to read in your recent letter to parents about the 'excessive benefits' of co-workers and the general disparaging tone you used. This does little to further your cause and only serves to alienate both past and present co-workers, supporters and families.

Botton Vilage has suffered considerably in recent years and has undertaken tremendous change, some for the better, some not. Given the speed of change and (what I can now appreciate following your communication) the draconian way it is implemented, a co-worker walking out of a meeting is the minimum that can be expected! Your steamroller approach and wish for ultimate control allowing little say or voice to a previously autonomous and self determining community shows little empathy or compassion for the people you support and demonstrates poor management and leadership. I am sure you are all working very hard and this alone must be commended, however, your approach increasingly illustrates a lack of knowledge of the Camphill movement and questions your commitment to its values. This may leave you very vulnerable to legal challenge and more worryingly jeopardise the future of the whole Camphill movement not just the CVT. Please do not make the mistake of assuming that I am against change. I fully support change and development and given the correct management and leadership believe that the

CVT and in particular Botton Village has a glowing future whilst retaining its unique values.

I visited Botton recently and in spite of the tremendous stress everyone is under, it remains an amazing and inspiring place. Through my work and training I have some knowledge of current trends in the provision of care and support for people with learning disabilities. In direct opposition of the Camphill ideology many have delivered on societies expectations of the learning disabled person as a 'service user' - passive recipients of 'activities' such as: 'jelly tasting' and 'cutting and pasting' . Having seen the alternative, I feel Camphill offers the gold standard. I wonder if the board of trustees realise the true value of Camphill in today's world.

You express confidence in the future of Camphill and Botton without residential co-workers. I remain concerned and visitors to both Oaklands and Larchfield who I have been in contact with do not share your optimism. A recent visit to an old and frail friend being cared for by employees in Botton has only affirmed my fear for the future. My friend – a long standing co-worker who is no longer able to state her wishes was lying in bed, nearing the end of her life with Jeremy Kyle blaring from the television and the young care assistant in uniform tapping away on her smart phone as I entered the room. I am quite sure that this is not the vision Dr Koenig had for the future of Camphill and I sincerely hope in spite of your actions you do not either.

In a post Winterbourne era where social care has become so contracted and regulated and where the person with special needs is defined by the risk they present and 'providers' by their potential for abuse, I urge you to look back to your roots and the basis on which you were founded and use this as your inspiration for your guiding vision for the future. This must surely start by demonstrating compassion (in its truest sense) and befriending (from a position of equality) the very people you work for - all members of the CVT communities and especially Botton Village, your founding and flagship community; and you could add to that people like myself who show a genuine interest in your work and have supported you through the years.

I will forward my application form in hope and remain as ever committed to the work and continued success of The Camphill Movement and Botton Village in particular.

Yours Sincerely ,

Catherine van Dam