

NOTES ON ANSON TRUST FUTURE

Although there are points of detail in the Anson Trust Future document that may be commented on, I strongly believe that the real issue here is a fundamental one and has to be looked at in the round, or Marcham may not arrive where it needs to. There is a risk of the wrong solution being arrived at, if we look only at the Anson Trust perspective and we don't take a view of this from the viewpoint of the community as a whole.

My strongly-held personal view is that, to arrive at a solution for fit-for-purpose facilities in Marcham, Anson Trust cannot do so on its own, cannot speak for other parties who need to be involved, and therefore is unlikely to be able to progress the right way forward.

In more detail:

- 1) Anson Trust is obliged by its articles to act narrowly in respect of the objects of the trust, and access to certain solutions will remain outside its powers, capacity and resources. The implications of these constraints is seen in the way that some of their options are ruled out as uneconomic, or outwith their powers to resolve.
- 2) Anson Trust is privately-owned and privately-run and sees itself as unable to access certain sources of funding as a result. For the same reason, individuals, and public bodies will (justifiably) not be willing to invest in Anson Trust – it is not publicly accountable. Furthermore, a lack of understanding of the constraints, and perhaps some poor handling in earlier years of legitimate public concerns, has led to an unhelpful mistrust of Anson Trust.

There is a tangible public demand for hall facilities for Marcham, at least comparable with the Institute hall in size. Some loss of community spirit and activities is attributable to the loss of the Institute facilities.

There is also a strongly-expressed desire to retain the open area of the Anson field. This is understandable amongst the NAF residents, who have a direct financial interest in how what lies over their fences affects their own property, but is also shared by many other non-adjacent Marcham residents who value its open space.

I would appeal for a more viable solution as long-term end goal, as follows:

- 1) The Anson Field is retained as such, in its entirety.
- 2) The Institute is either sold to a developer, or re-used for another purpose.
- 3) A new hall facility is built in place of the existing SSC building, with a more creative approach to how space on the Anson field can be used, than is evidenced by the Anson Trust document. Only if this really is not practical when re-examined at more widely, should another site be investigated.
- 4) The Anson Trust retains ownership of the land only for the benefit of the community, and relinquishes **all** ownership of buildings – it is principally building maintenance liabilities that have brought Anson Trust to its present predicament. If building ownership were taken out of the equation, then Anson Trust could become viable under Charity Law into the indefinite future.
- 5) The responsibility for building and operating a new facility is carried by an independent publicly set-up body, with running costs underwritten by the Parish Council.

- 6) That a village fund-raising enterprise be set up to raise funds from a range of sources (Lottery, grant-giving trusts, and also from sales of residual building assets by the Anson Trust, in the appropriate form that is allowable by the Charity Commissioners). This requires a large commitment from the community, and the body set up to do this must be seen as coming from the community, and NOT as a successor body to Anson Trust – this may be critical. This is hugely ambitious, but if the residents of Marcham have strong enough need for such facilities, then I think momentum can be built to make this a success. With the right mechanism in place, that should also provide Anson Trust with a business plan to release some of the endowment for a capital project in community ownership.
- 7) The footprint of use of the land is leased by the Anson Trust to the public body on a reasonable basis (which may be peppercorn, or may relate only to land maintenance costs (such as access) only.

I think this issue and the options can be properly evaluated only by a community body that can accountably take account of the various interests, the Anson Trust position, and the public interest in its truest form. To, reiterate, Anson Trust cannot solve this on its own - they need help from the community to deliver a solution to benefit the community. Where the will is strong enough, there is a way!

I would encourage the setting up of a new body, a Marcham Community Trust, accountable to the community to fund raise, take on responsibility for, and operate the facilities in Marcham. This body should be entirely separate legally from, and independent of, the Anson Trust, and not a successor body.

Just to be 100% clear, these comments are not about a confrontation with the Anson Trust – this is a genuine attempt to find a way to square what has become a very wobbly circle, in the very real long-term interests of our local community.

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