

WICKHAM MARKET PARTNERSHIP

REPORT TO ANNUAL PARISH MEETING, 14th APRIL 2023

The six Trustees, Josie Hopps, Cath Caudwell, Dick Jenkinson, Colin Owens, George Hering and myself, continue to meet monthly to facilitate improvements to the village by way of small grants, helping organisations to achieve their goals and nurturing projects through to independence.

We welcomed Karen Burrows in September as our new Administrative Assistant who usually works Tuesday and Thursday mornings from the Resource Centre.

We held a lovely remembrance celebration for one of our founder trustees, Jacquie Errington, when members of her family planted a tree and placed a plaque in the Resource Centre garden, afterwards sharing fond memories of her.

This year we supported the Playing Field Bowls Club with a £1,000 grant to install a new water tank to keep their green healthy.

Community Rooms

The Partnership provides two rooms for meetings at the Resource Centre where Leiston Citizen's Advice and other counsellors offer sessions, the Diabetic Retinal Screening Service runs clinics for patients and Cruse Chiropractic is based in our treatment rooms.

Archive Centre

During the year the emphasis for the Archive Centre has changed to the Partnership being the lead organisation for grant applications to fund a new home in the grounds of the Resource Centre. The legal agreement with Suffolk County Council is imminent and the installation of a log cabin style unit will take place very shortly. This will bring the Archive Centre in line with the library service and offer a much more welcoming venue for people wishing to view and research local historical records, using the Resource Centre for facilities. Trustees are working closely with the Archive Centre Committee to bring this to fruition.

Trustees would like to thank the Parish Council for supporting this project with a grant to match fund that of the East Suffolk Council Community Partnerships. We have just received a further grant of £1,000 from the Lord Belstead Charitable Trust and are awaiting decisions from other grant funding local trusts. A substantial legacy from a former Partnership Trustee is also allocated to this project.

Wickham Market Shed

Trustees continue to support the core group of Shed members, who have been operating from two wooden sheds near the Village Hall and who have repaired and refurbished a church seat (funded by the Partnership), a Parish Council seat and the Giving Community shed on the Glebe allotments. Meetings had to cease over the winter period as the only working space is outside. However, this will change for the better once the Archive Centre has moved to its new home and their portacabins become available for the Shed to occupy and upgrade into workshop and recreation spaces. Shedders will assist with the installation of the Archive Centre in its new home.

Village Marketing and Communication

The Partnership continues to promote the village as a destination for shopping, services and leisure.

The website visitwickhammarket.co.uk reaches out to people far and wide and is at the top of the search engine list for anyone seeking details about Wickham Market. Village information can be

found here including voluntary groups, clubs, organisations and businesses. There is also a 'what's on' section where events can be advertised. On average we get around 1000 visitors to the site every month.

The Round Robin list continues to grow with close to 450 people currently subscribed to the list. This communication is sent out weekly and includes messages and news from organisations and businesses.

Christmas shopping leaflet. For the past 6 years the Partnership has helped promote shopping in Wickham Market by producing a Christmas promotional leaflet which is distributed to 17,000 households across our area of Suffolk. This is a vital time for retailers to make an impact and we are pleased to hear that many retailers see an uplift in business following its distribution. The Partnership funded all costs of the promotion last year however the budget for this promotion, which is the remainder of the Town Team fundraising activity, has now been used and future years' promotion will rely on fresh funding of around £900pa.

Library

The partnership continues to support the library and library management team. Maggie Lusher, Executive Manager for Suffolk libraries, took over as on-site manager for Wickham in June and more recently, Lynn Colbear has joined the team and has taken over the day to day running of the library with Maggie as overall manager.

The library continues to be reasonably well used and the number of volunteers has increased. The volunteers mostly cover the afternoon sessions during the week. Last year the library held a successful Summer Reading Challenge and continues with extra activities on Fridays such as Ancestry Research sessions and IT support surgeries. The library is also regularly visited by pupils from the Primary School.

The library can always do with more volunteers to spread the load, so if you can spare a half day once or twice a month then please contact Lynn Colbear who will be only too pleased to welcome you as a volunteer.

Resource Centre/Library Garden

The front gardens have been looking rather sad recently – not helped by Covid – and the previous small garden team have decided to retire. But I am pleased to report that a new team is being assembled, led by Barbara Harrington. There is a lot to do to get it back in shape so she would welcome volunteers to help for an hour or so a couple of times a month. The Partnership has bought a new garden shed to store tools etc. If you have any spare tools, they would also be very welcome. Please contact the Partnership for more information.

Ray Lewis, Trustee, The Wickham Market Partnership