

This file contains  
all the correspondence that  
has been received between 8<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> June

**IN FAVOUR OF**

the proposals for a

**REHAB CENTRE**

on the former

Museum Site

at the Abbey

Hello Kenny

As a former resident of Minster I have followed with interest the developments on the proposed centre. As the sister of a very recently deceased alcoholic (she was 37) I have perhaps more interest than some.

I am writing to say that I hope with all my heart that the centre goes ahead, I think that the **edge** of Minster is an ideal location, and I am disgusted at the nimbyist attitude of a group of people who seem to claim that their **entire village is drug- and alcohol-free. My sister completed a rehab at Whitstable four years ago, and I strongly believe that it was this process which enabled her to live mostly alcohol-free for the remainder of her life.**

I would like to be informed of any further meetings that I can attend on this proposed centre, as I feel that voices like mine (and I know other people who were embarrassed by the behaviour of their fellow villagers, and felt unable to voice their approval of the centre) should be heard.

I wish your centre all the luck in the world.

Julieann Gleed

Dear Everyone

I've read with growing alarm the various comments and letters flowing freely round the Village about the proposed Pathways Project (Rehabilitation Centre). There seems to be a great deal of opinion and not always as much fact. Actually, there were strong opinions voiced long before that first meeting in the Village Hall with Kenny Milne, some of it caused by the actions of the Abbey over the Minster Museum closure. Apparent secrecy on the part of the Abbey and Thanet Council in getting the Project in place then created an atmosphere of fear and distrust. It has made it difficult to have a rational discussion. I have gradually moved to a position where I support the concept of the Pathways Project, but now find it quite scary to say so.

We urgently need to do several things if this is not all to get out of hand.

We need to decouple these events from each other. In other words, we need to separate out the issues of:

1. **The part played by the Abbey in closing the museum.** Wouldn't this have happened anyway, regardless of the Project? The way it was done seems unfortunate (although I don't have all the facts), but if the Sisters announced that they were going to site (say) a children's therapy facility or an animal rescue centre there, would there still have been such a furore?
2. **The secrecy of Thanet Council et al.** Again, I don't have all the facts. Councils tend towards secrecy by omission if there are difficult issues like this, on the grounds that if you don't stir the pot much you won't spill anything. Clearly we should be taking our councillors and our MP to task about lack of democracy, poor consultation and so on. But if there had been the same degree of secrecy over the siting of a children's facility in the Abbey, would we still be up in arms? We probably wouldn't even have noticed.
3. **The coming of the Pathways Project.** Aye, there's the rub! Children and animals are cuddly, but recovering drug addicts and alcoholics are not. At least, that's the stereotype! I always think "there but for the Grace of God...." because the truth is that *anyone at all* can become an addict. The main occupational groups at risk include doctors, city finance whizz kids and other professionals. The group intended for the Project are those who have voluntarily committed to staying clean – otherwise they are off the programme. This is an *abstinence-based* programme.

Notice that even if 1. and 2. above are actually true, and there has been the degree of secrecy and manipulation claimed, this does not make siting the Project in Minster automatically wrong. We have to consider it on its own merits.

I did actually have an email and a telephone conversation with Kenny Milne about a week before that first meeting. Interestingly, he said I was only the second person to contact him at that stage! I was in search of the facts. Kenny answered all my questions about whether the centre was likely to be residential (answer: no) or whether people on the programme would be wandering around the village (answer: no – they would be too busy and would be bussed in and out every day). The programme sounds very demanding and it is based on the AA's 12 Steps, which has a very good record of preventing a return to drug-taking. Kenny does seem fiercely protective of his client group, but I would expect nothing less from someone in his position. It was also clear to me that he felt that he and his client group were already being unfairly attacked and vilified just for being who they were, and reading some of the latest letters to circulate, I would guess that his sense of injustice has spilled over by now into anger born of sheer frustration.

We do need to take another look at things. If we wouldn't have been upset by the same train of events resulting in a children's facility, then we may be responding to perceived rather than real threats. We may also have unwittingly swallowed all those media stereotypes of drug addicts. I know several people whose children have become addicts or alcoholics (surely most of us do?) These are the real addicts. Are they what we fear? And if we *are* fearful, surely we should be supporting the need for *more* programmes that reduce addiction? This could be Minster's contribution to UK crime prevention. You may ask "Why us?" Well, to suggest putting it somewhere else really is nimbysism. It passes the buck on an issue that must be of wider importance than just what happens in Minster (always providing that we are assured that there is no *actual* danger to us from around 12 well-managed recovering addicts. I personally am convinced on this, but perhaps more needs to be done to alleviate people's fears, such as putting in place a regular community review process).

We need to lower the temperature a little. No-one seems to have been blameless in this, and no-one has all the moral high ground. We should tackle issues like secrecy and poor consultation using the usual channels, and then put these aside to reconsider the siting of the Project based entirely on its own merits. Above all, we need rational debates where *everyone* honestly acknowledges their own fears, but also questions their own agendas.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Gould