

16h June 2007

Dear Monica,

Thank you for your letter.

I am writing to say, first of all, that your letter and any others we may receive are being considered seriously by the Trustees.

It would not be true to say that we are in the final stages of completing arrangements with the pathways project. Obviously, we ourselves needed to collect quite a lot of information before even considering the proposal in a more serious light. Equally obviously, there needed to be some shape and content to the pathways project before these could be presented to the public. I am sorry that you feel that there has been 'secrecy' -and it has certainly not been our intention to side-line our neighbours and friends whose friendship we value.

I am glad you feel that Minster Abbey and the community here are loved and respected in the village.

We are concerned for the safety of all in the village - especially the young and the elderly. All issues of security/ safety, are, of course, of the first importance and must be thought through carefully and professionally. We understand that Pathways House is preparing a collection of questions and concerns raised at the meetings - with answers - and that this will be made available in the village. Concerning security, we ourselves - prospectively the closest neighbours - are, of course, vitally interested in having satisfactory answers to concerns raised.

The proposed format of the project

a project that requires all prospective clients to show a firm commitment to addressing the issues connected with their addiction (this may be an addiction to alcohol, to food, to drugs or to prescription drugs)

- a project based on complete abstinence:

this means that those clients addicted to substances or alcohol are already substance-free when they enter the project, that they are required to abstain completely from addictive substances and that they will be regularly tested for substance-use

- a project that has rigorous assessment strategies for accepting clients

- a small project for 12 clients

- a non-residential project, operating between approx. 9am and 5.30pm 'on-site', that is, not in the village

not a drop-in centre, but clients being in as a group and leaving in a group

- a project providing a disciplined, structured programme a completely supervised and professionally run project

is the only kind of programme that would be feasible in a residential area. I can assure you that we would not even consider any project that is not abstinence based and extremely well supervised - and that, in the event of moving forward to consider a lease agreement, we would certainly insist on stringent safeguards being in place.

I hope this answers some of your questions.

With Kind Regards

M. Nikola

Dear Sisters of Minster Abbey

PATHWAY PROJECT - THERAPEUTIC REHABILITATION CENTRE

Although I was unable to attend the meetings on 8 June and therefore lack first hand knowledge of what took place, I feel it necessary, as a local resident, to lodge a formal protest about this project and the manner in which it has been placed before the village as a virtual inevitability.

Projects such as this require the goodwill of the local residents. This has been forfeited by the perceived attempt to present the scheme as a fait accompli with all interested parties consulted apart from the villagers and the Parish Council.

Yours sincerely,
Peter Taylor
14 June 2007

Copied to
Dr S. Ladyman MP

(Webmasters note: A stock reply was received from Dr. Ladyman's office that reads exactly as a previous one printed in this file)

18th June 2007

Dear Mr Taylor,

Thank you for your letter. I write to assure you that your letter, together with any others we may receive, is being considered seriously by the trustees.

Yours sincerely,

M. Nikola Proksch

This file contains
all the correspondence that
has been received since 23rd June

IN FAVOUR OF

the proposals for a

REHAB CENTRE

on the former

Museum Site

at the Abbey

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

Dear Mr Ladyman

Many thanks for such a quick response. You may note that I referred to "*apparent* secrecy" in my letter, because I was by no means sure what the facts were. It's good to have your explanation (below) of what happened, told from your perspective. I guess there is even more need for us to listen to each other rather more than we speak (which is generally from already entrenched positions.)

Regards

Ruth Gould

"LADYMAN, Steve" <LADYMANS@parliament.uk> wrote:

Dear Ms Gould

Thank you for the constructive line and the thoughts that you have put forward. A community review process is an idea worth exploring and I have also suggested ideas to Kenny that might give people the reassurance they seek and I know he is thinking about them.

I would point out, in my own defence, that I went to visit the nuns and meet Kenny to find out about the project within a few days of hearing about it and immediately advised them to engage the village and hold a public meeting. The day of public meetings was then carried out within a few weeks – so I don't believe I can be accused of secrecy and nor should they be as they have worked hard to tell people at what is still an early stage in the plans and Kenny has always offered to brief people on a one to one basis if they are concerned.

One of the problems the project faces now is that they are still working on their plans so people are asking questions that they don't have final answers to and they are being criticised accordingly. So they are being in some ways criticised for telling people late in the process but also for telling people too early!

I don't know when the Parish Council or the District Council became aware of the plans.

Steve Ladyman

6th July 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

I write to strongly disagree with the proposed Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Unit not because we have lost our Museum but because I have witnessed, having lived in Tower Hamlets, London, what a Rehab centre can do to a community. It doesn't matter how dedicated Mr Mime is to this Rehab Unit he cannot stop the undesirables it will most definitely attract.

This is a wonderful place to live and certainly worth fighting for, I hope we all do before it's too late. I cannot attend the meeting due to work commitments however I leave you with my name and address to pass on to anyone that will need help to organise a campaign to resist this proposal.

Yours sincerely.

Jean Smith

Cc: Dr Steve Ladyman M.P Mother Nikola Proksch
Minster Matter

1st July 2007

Dear Sirs

RE: Notes on the Rehab Centre

Unfortunately we missed the chaotic meetings at the Minster Old School Hall but from what we have heard and read the majority of the Villagers present were against the Rehab Centre development.

We, like most people are appalled at the blatant misuse of drugs & alcohol by so many people, but if we have these self abusive people in our area then we suppose they need looking after, as we are told it is an illness!!!

If a Rehab Centre Development is required then let us consider the correct position and not in a dilapidated & derelict barn in a Historic Village and Abbey.

Where is the money coming from to rebuild, refurbish, re-roof, damp proof, equip, furnish and set up? If, as stated this scheme is being funded, or partially funded with Government money, then it must be released from an allocated budget, we presume the National Health Budget!!!

We understand that this self inflicted *illness* is not necessary every tax payers' responsibility, it is definitely not Minster's, but we presume someone has to pay. NHS Budget appears to be the correct one. Then why has the NHS Trust *i.e.* Government backed money, closed so many hospitals, clinics and day centre's in our area, but can release finances not only to equip a Rehab Centre but pay over £100,000.00 to repair a roof of a totally dilapidated and inadequate building, a Barn, before any refurbishment costs have been calculated which could cost as much and probably more.

As this is a Health problem (if that is what it is) it should be connected to the NHS facilities. Then it should be located in the only complex left The QEQM Margate Hospital, since the government has sold and disposed of other buildings in our area.

There are Day Centre's at QEQM that appear to be only partially used, which could be used or adapted. Alternatively the ridiculous amount of money that is being banded about for converting a dilapidated & derelict Barn could be channeled into a permanent new building in a position that can be properly controlled by its staff and in a position where ALL Thanet towns are connected and access is available, without the need to bus or taxi people to a distant village barn at considerable extra expense. If the Rehab Centre does not become cost effective then the NHS has a building to use for proper unfortunate sick people.

Our MPs, Councillors & Council, have acted without consultation and without due care and consideration to the Villagers' wishes, interests and comments. This ill conceived scheme is definitely not in the interest of this Historic Village. Regardless of what the misguided Nuns think, it is the majority of villagers that are against this development and if it goes ahead the Nuns will lose their good will.

The existing Derelict Barn, we are told, has a planning class D1 status, but exactly what sub class. It should have been class XV1 and if that is the case, then a change of use Planning Application must be applied for to obtain a class XV.

This is when our MPs, Leader of the Council, Councillors and Parish Councillors can all show their solidarity with the majority view of the villagers and object to the change of use.

People of Minster who are against this scheme should vehemently oppose this and any other application for change of use into a Clinic.

Will the Parish Council please consider the growing ground swell against the proposed Rehab Centre and circulate to all Minster residents a standard letter of objection or approval, so that we have a communal objection or not. The circular could be returned to the Minster library, so avoiding expense to the villages. If they wanted to comment further then they will have an opportunity and enclose a letter.

We have read many of the letters penned by villagers and agree with most of their comments, all except the person, who is not a villager who is in favor of the Rehab Centre in Minster. We think if a centre is required in the area then we must all consider where and not just say not in our back yard.

If there must be a centre, let us as a community seriously consider a more appropriate and sensible location, such as the QEQM Margate Hospital, but not in this Historic Village and Abbey.

The next Public meeting will be an excellent opportunity to hear sensible questions, arguments, conclusions, a combined community spirit and a positive way forward and the total backing from the Parish Council to the wishes of the villagers.

Yours sincerely

John & Sandra Day

cc. Minster Matters
Dr. Steve Ladyman
Mr. Roger Gale
Mr. S. Ezekiel Thanet District Council
Minster Nuns

Minster Parish Council
The Library
Monkton Road
Minster
Kent

9th July 2007

Dear Sirs

RE: Rehab Centre

We are enclosing the reply that we received from Roger Gale M.P. to our letter dated 1 July, which you had a copy. We were so incensed with his pompous reply that we immediately sent a response, a copy is also enclosed..

It is blatantly obvious that he did not read our letter and he has a standard defensive reply, but it is interesting that Roger Gale M.P admits that he instigated the proposed unit and introduced it to the Nuns, he is fully in favour and that any proposals will be considered in accordance with the Law by the Thanet District Council. An interesting phrase.

Will you please make sure that our previous letter and Roger Gales reply are added to the Minster Matters website, so that all interested residents are aware of Gales involvement.

If he has the decency to respond we will send you a copy.

Yours sincerely

John and Sandra Day.

cc. Minster Matters
Mr.S. Ezekeil. Thanet District Council.

Roger Gale, M.P.

House of Commons
London. SW1A 0AA
website: www.rogergale.co.uk

Dear Mr & Mrs Day,

I acknowledge receipt of your letter relating to the proposed drug rehabilitation unit.

I should first point out that while Minster will indeed be in the North Thanet Parliamentary constituency after the next General Election at present it is in South Thanet and you should properly address your concerns to your own Member of Parliament, Dr Stephen Ladyman.

Having said that I take issue – as Mr Milne, who is the driving force behind the scheme is one of my constituents – with the assertions that have been made by some living in Minster in relation to this project.

First it is not true to say that there has been no consultation as the company involved in the project held three public meetings in Minster very recently indeed (both Dr Ladyman and I attended the evening meeting). Second any proposal will be considered in accordance with the law by Thanet District Council if and when appropriate notices are issued and at the correct time.

I believe that I should make my own position plain: I regard the proposition as an extremely worthwhile and positive endeavour to address a very real problem. I also believe that the religious order involved in the project and those behind it are responsible, honest and well intentioned. I am deeply saddened by the misinformation that appears to have been propagated within the village of Minster.

In view of your concerns I am forwarding a copy of your letter together with a copy of this letter to Dr Ladyman.

With my best wishes.
Yours sincerely,

ROGER GALE MP

Roger Gale M.P.

House of Commons
London

9th July 2007

Dear Mr. Gale

RE: the Proposed Rehab Centre in Minster.

Thank you for your letter dated 06/07/2007 in reply to my letter regarding the proposed Rehab Unit.

It was a great pity that you did not have the courtesy to read our letter, otherwise you would not have sent such a ridiculous and pompous reply. You would have realised that I had sent the letter to Dr. Steve Ladyman among other names. I also mentioned the meeting that was held in the Minster Old School.

No mention was made of a Mr. Mime and no opinion was offered on his competency to run or control a unit, and it is irrelevant that he is one of your constituents. Remember we will be one of you constituents in two years, along with all the Minster residents.

We take great exception to the fact that you accuse us of an untruth, because if you had read our letter we did mention the meeting that Dr. Ladyman and you attended. As you have brought up the subject of consultation, we are disgusted that the Nuns were told to keep quiet about the proposed unit. Who instructed them, and when would the Villagers have been told if the meeting had not been called, since this project had been festering since the summer of 2006.

The Villagers of Minster will be very interested to learn that you were the instigator of this project and they are well aware of the laws of appropriate notices and planning procedure within the Thanet District Council.

Your letter does make your position very clear and thank you for admitting it was your recommendations that the unit was to be located in Minster. The villagers are aware of the very real problem, some of them unfortunately have personal experiences of the real problem. It is disgraceful that a religious order has been brought into the position they now find themselves. Religion has very little to do with drug and alcohol misuse. We are not prepared to comment on the people behind this scheme, but only to say that so far they have not impressed us, nor a considerable number of the villagers, of their ability to conduct themselves properly, let alone run a Rehab Unit, and what qualifications do they hold.

You are under a delusion if you think that the Villagers are misinformed, on the contrary they are very much informed and are now aware of the situation created by you. Some of the villagers are even more informed after the Public meeting held on Saturday 7th July, that you unfortunately did not attend.

In view of our concerns and a great many of the villagers, we think this project would best be sited at the QEQM Hospital complex or in Canterbury Prison as that is where the majority of the Pathway project units are located. In fact 16 out of the 18 they already have. The one in London we can understand, but the one in Hull has had a great deal of problems. Do you seriously wish these types of problems in your constituency? You had better be very sure of the consequences of this type of unit when they go wrong.

These proposals still need a great deal of discussions and the village sincerely wish that a Rehab unit will be located in a suitable position where it can be monitored professionally.

Yours sincerely

John and Sandra Day
cc. Minster Parish Council
Minster Matters
Mr. S. Ezekeil, Thanet District Council

11/7/07

Dear Sir or Madam

Would like
to express our dislike of the
current scheme to place the Drug
and Drink Rehabilitation Centre
on the old Museum site.

Surely with all the new
publicity for the Museum (plus
the current £40,000 plus in the
Museum's Bank account) the
whole village could support
more than before regard
regular visits and limited
financial support. After all it
is our Heritage we are protecting.

Yours Sincerely



Transcript of the above handwritten letter

Dear Sir or Madam

Would like to express our dislike of the current scheme to place the Drug and Drink Rehabilitation Centre on the old Museum site.

Surely with all this new publicity for the Museum (plus the current £40,000 plus in the Museums bank account) the whole village could support more than before regards regular visits and limited financial support. After all it is our Heritage we are protecting.

Yours sincerely

Mr & Mrs Harrison