

ANSON TRUST

The Directors of the Arthur Anson Memorial Trust would like to clarify the position with regard to the Institute, and their intentions with regard to its future. Firstly, there has been much comment in MADNews with regard to the Institute, much of which has not been helpful or informative. The Directors are loathe to discuss commercial matters or refer to specific individual's personal affairs. However, since there has been so much written, it is appropriate, at least, to set the record straight. The Trust announced its irrevocable decision to leave the Institute site last year and therefore its primary duty is to obtain the best possible price in disposing of the site. Last year the Trust undertook a marketing exercise to test the market. Although more than one offer was received for the site the trust was advised that those offers did not reflect its full value, most probably because there was litigation ongoing with the lessees and an as yet unresolved planning application pending in respect of the property. As a result of this, the Directors concluded that the best price would not be obtained until the site could be offered for sale unencumbered by those matters and accordingly decided to delay a sale until those matters were resolved.

Nevertheless, if an offer were received which, on the basis of professional advice including any requirements of the Charity Commission, took fully into account the value, bearing in mind the long term potential, then the Directors would accept such an offer with alacrity. At the time of writing, no such offer has been received by the Trust or by its agents. The Directors hope that the position is clear.

ANSON TRUST DIRECTORS

Dear Editor

I asked the Charities Commission for their response to some inaccurate statements made by a contributor in the October 2007 MADNews. This is their reply after they read the page in question and my response.

...The Charity Commission does not have power to sell charity land. The future of the Arthur Anson Trust and whether any sale goes ahead will be determined by the trustees of the Trust, not the Charity Commission. If the trustees propose a sale of the Trust's land, they will need to ensure that they obtain the best market price for that land. The trustees should consult with the local inhabitants to find out what is needed in the local area.

Victoria Crandon, Senior specialist caseworker

NAF Reply

We are pleased that The Trust has an obligation to consult with local residents and thank you for your clarification on the powers the Commission has in the circumstances previously referred to.

The Anson Trust is currently working on an

ambitious plan to secure its future solvency but there may be a more satisfactory alternative as their current plan may carry significant risks. The trust has another asset in "The Institute" (the local village hall), a much loved building. For various reasons this has been allowed to deteriorate to a condition where it is barely useable. We acknowledge that the trust has an obligation to obtain the best possible price if it sells any of its assets; however in an initiative involving both our District and County Councillors a local benefactor has just rekindled his earlier offer to purchase the Institute site. I believe it is his intention to refurbish the building and then hand it back to the village to run and finance in the same way that most village halls are.

Consequently the benefactor's probable offer to The Trust may not be as much as if the Institute were placed on the open market for redevelopment (unencumbered by various obligations that The Institute in reality carries with it). In this case it is essential to stress that it would not be a developer profiting from the purchase but that the entire village would benefit. The village are of course the first Object of the May 2005 Scheme governing the Trust and in this way the Institute would once more become the focus of many village activities. The Trust would receive a substantial sum of money, which would allow it to concentrate its resources on the Anson Field with its existing sports and recreation facilities. Clearly there are many details to be worked out but it would be helpful to know at an early stage if there could be some flexibility in the Commission's stated requirements to allow The Trust to accept what may be slightly less than market value for the purchase of our Institute.

BOB ANDERSON

Dear Editor

I am writing in response to Peter Rowe's letter (MADNews, October 2007) and a subsequent personal communications which claimed the N.A.F. survey and I personally 'showed subjectivity' while carrying out the survey and had twisted the results. With University degrees in Maths and Physics and many years working as a professional, I very well know how to objectively collect data and I would never compromise any statistics. Any interested party is more than welcome to contact me directly, or N.A.F., and have a look at the written notes I made at the time.

N.A.F. had approached the Parish Council (with the then Vice Chairman Mr Peter Rowe) to commission a survey, which they wouldn't do. In February 07 N.A.F. then asked two trustees of the Anson Trust for the Trust's input in producing a joint survey. They rejected. N.A.F. then without any outside help widened the survey to the whole village to gain a view beyond

NIMBYism and self interest.

The fact is, the proposed development on the Anson Field and the future of the Institute certainly are not 'a single sided coin'! More importantly: What would Marcham gain or lose either way? Shouldn't we hope for everybody in the village to have come to an informed decision about their vision of the Anson Field and Institute and what it might take to make Marcham a nice place to live in, now and in the future? Everybody could have had a say while we carried out the survey! Some people just choose not to, which is their right! It's not too late, I'd like everybody to speak out loudly now! You can do so on www.scilutions.co.uk/anson.

Having said all that, the big question is: Is the future of the Anson Field at all subject to a democratically founded decision or is it in the hands of a very few people to decide over the parishioner's heads? I strongly believe that only a decision respecting a majority vote will keep Marcham alive and I can only wish for those who have been outvoted to be fair in their debates!

S. GRAWERT (member of N.A.F.)

Dear Editor

I am writing to clarify my objections to the N.A.F. Survey I highlighted in my letter to MADNews last month. Since the publication of my letter there has been considerable correspondence between myself and Bob Anderson of N.A.F. and consequently I would like to highlight my specific concerns.

With regard to the actual questions themselves, it could arguably be considered that the closed questions posed, do not fall within what could be considered "survey best practice" and might be considered "leading" - forcing a strong opinion in one of only three ways - For, Against or No Opinion. There is also some debate about the manner in which some of the data was collected.

However since my discussions with Bob, I am more reassured that these issues are probably as a consequence of a well meaning and dedicated group of people in N.A.F. attempting to do the best job they could with limited resources and expertise at their disposal rather than some ulterior motive. I do not have a particular axe to grind against N.A.F. and I wish them well in their campaign. But the charge has been levelled time and time again at the Anson Trust of not being transparent. All parties in this debate should be 'transparent' and it is not acceptable that some are "more transparent" than others.

Unlike the 'official' N.A.F. communications, many of the letters to MADNews on the subject of the Anson Trust's plans use sweeping generalisations with very little regard for the facts and use the N.A.F. survey as their justification. This is not acceptable and does nothing to further the debate.

PETER ROWE