

Debenham Project Update and Local Information

August 4th 2020

Hi Everyone,

In this letter: **How Things are Going: The R-Factor: Sights, sounds and songs page: Thoughts on re-opening: “By Special Request”: Donations.**

Well, we all seem to have managed to cope so far, or as young Mr. Grace of “Are you being Served?” was wont to say: “*You’ve all done very well*”. And, at least for our village and Mid-Suffolk more generally, I believe that is certainly true. Everyone should be congratulated and thanked for everything they have done to reduce the spread of the virus and to help our vulnerable and elderly residents who have had to isolate themselves for over 3 months. Up to the beginning of last week there had been no new cases in the Mid-Suffolk area over the previous 3 weeks, and our care homes had been free of any outbreaks since the middle of May. Whilst our care homes remain free of the virus, one new confirmed case in the general community was reported in the last week. I had hoped that here in Mid Suffolk we would continue the “clean sheet” throughout the next month or so in order to reassure you that the risks of catching Covid 19 locally are extremely low. It may seem that one or two cases in a week is a massive growth on none but this has to be set against the number of people living in Mid Suffolk (in the region of 100,000), the possibility that they may lead to a larger number of people being infected, and they may be the start of a trend rather than just a “blip”. Based upon the latest data, the likelihood of you and I having become infected over the past month has been roughly 1 in 25,000 – Mid-Suffolk has been, and continues to be one of the safest places in Suffolk.

However, this does not mean that the now famous R-factor (the reproduction rate of the virus) by which the government judges whether to relax or reintroduce restrictions is also equally low. It is a fact that, no matter where you live, anyone who is infected can pass it on to several other people unknowingly and lead to a serious outbreak. By sticking to the guidelines we can reduce the local R-rate and make it so much easier for Public Health Suffolk to contain any outbreak. So please be grateful and enjoy the freedom we now have to meet with family and friends within the guidance. But be vigilant – it is still important to “keep your distance” even when you pass in the High Street or stop for a chat, and to wear a mask whenever you are in a shop. However, do not be afraid to go out and about: The risk of catching the virus on a trip to the Co-op, talking to those we meet, visiting Abbots, or having a pint in the Woolpack, is currently extremely small. Let’s keep it that way!

As you can imagine we are totally frustrated that we cannot restart all the groups and activities that all of us enjoyed so much. If things continue as they have done recently, it might be permissible for some social and community groups to meet socially distanced sometime in September or October. However, since almost all of our Debenham Project “family” – carers, cared-for, volunteers and other participants – are probably considered to be in the “older and/or vulnerable” class I suspect that we will be excluded for any such relaxation in the guidelines. Also, the very nature of our get-togethers, activities, lunch clubs, etc., especially in Dove Cottage, would make it very difficult to organise and limit guests/participants to just a few. And our trustees would have to be very sure that it could be achieved without any increased

risk of infection or outbreak. Broadly, this means that we cannot think about “reopening” until:

- The government guidelines permit it
- There has been an extended period of no new local cases
- The number of cases in Suffolk is low
- Any outbreaks in Suffolk have been rapidly contained

I am deeply sorry that, until the situation improves, we can't offer the face-to-face care, friendship and support that the Project has become known for, but please keep in touch and don't hesitate to call when you need help or a listening ear. Sue and I are here most the time and if not, leave a message – we will get back to you just as soon as we can. We will try to make contact at least once a week just so that we know you are alright and managing. And, of course, we will be offering all we can on-line.

Last time, I mentioned that we were launching a new element to our on-line support – [Sights and Sounds and Songs of Nature](#). Well, it is now up on our [website](#) and accessible from the [On-Line Resources page](#) or directly from the menu on the left hand side of the home page. I would be very grateful if you could let me know what you think of it. It will be limited to 10 items but, as time goes by, we will refresh it with new video clips and slide shows. To help us do this, it would be great if you could offer any suggestions for items that we might include. The only criteria are: that they gave you a few moments of pleasure, lifted your spirits a little, and helped you feel just a bit more connected to our lovely countryside.

This time we would love you to tell us about a favourite song which has special meaning for you – a lovely memory of a place, or a time, or a person you will never forget. Our amazing Music Man – Stephen Mckie – has offered to record it just for you. And, if you are happy for us to share it, we will upload it to a special page on The Debenham Project Website. When we have enough, we will link them all into one concert “By Special Request”. I hope this is something you would like to contribute towards. All that's needed is to e-mail me, phone me, or drop a note through my door with your song and a few words describing why you have chosen it. And we want to include everyone in the Debenham project, from carers and those they care for, to lunch guests and other participants, through to volunteers, donors and anyone else. Every contribution will be a pleasure and I look forward to hearing from you all.

Finally, as you will be aware, the coming months are going to be financially very difficult for most charities. Age UK Suffolk has had to close and I fear that they will not be the only one. We are, perhaps, more fortunate because we have enjoyed such wonderful support from our community. Our overheads are relatively small compared with many small to medium sized charities and we don't have the worry of a wage bill. Nevertheless, the bills still keep coming in and we have financial commitments that we must honour. There is no question of the Project “going under” as we can call on our reserves, but we do not know how long it will be before the local fundraising events that have been a major source of our income will be possible. It is likely that we will have to report a loss of between of £4,000 - £5,000 for this financial year. Hopefully, by applying for grant funding we will be able to

make up some of this. So I am very grateful for the generous donations that have appeared, unasked for, through our letterbox since Lock-Down in March. Thank you, Angeline, the family and friends of Leonie Taylor, Jennie, Hair by Stephen Anderson, Lydia, Peter and Norma, and the family and friends of Margaret Denny. Together and in total they have helped the Project by more than £1150 – It means so much.

You can access all of our on-line help by visiting our new "[On-Line Resources](#)" page, where you can find the current version of our "Coronavirus - Local Information and Support" list, and our [News and Project Progress page](#).

I hope you find this letter useful and of some comfort at this difficult time.

With all best wishes,

Lynden