



Debenham Project Update and Local Information

April 9th 2021

Hi Everyone,

In this letter: **The Debenham Lake; Looking forward to Summer: A hope for the future: Having your “say” through co-production: Making Suffolk dementia friendly: And finally.**

The Debenham Lake: It is normal for the weather at this time of year to be very changeable but what a wonderful few days we have had recently. One such morning I was walking with our ever-faithful Labrador, Nelly, around the lake in the sunshine and, coming down from the upper field, its Spring beauty could not, and did not, fail to make me wish for my camera. The Pussy Willows were bursting from their greyish furry state into full flower – an enchanting gentle green and pale yellow blossom – surrounding and reflected in mirror images in the surface of the lake – and framed by hundreds of daffodils. Last November Louise Hammond organised their planting and called the project “Plant in Hope”. Thank you, Louise for the pleasure that you and your friends have given me and the many others who regularly include the lake in their daily exercise. We are so very lucky to have such a spring garden to enjoy. If you haven’t yet found this special place, I urge you to do so. Just turn right beside Coopersfield on Aspal Road, then follow the path up and then down and through the gates at the bottom of the Cemetery, turn left and there you are. You can wander around, sit on a bench and relax, meet your friends there, meditate, exercise, listen to the birdsong, or just be. It is a natural resource of well-being which moves and changes with the seasons; it gives without asking for anything in return; and it is inexhaustible. Please make the most of it.



Looking forward to Summer: I very much hope that we are now moving into a time of change for the better. I am sure we all hope that it won't be too long before the sadness and fear and isolation and restrictions of the pandemic are behind us. The statistics are generally very positive and support the Government's "road map", but like the weather there are probably going to be some concerns before we get to the planned full relaxation of the guidelines at the end of June. So we still have a while to wait until we can resume our groups and activities in Dove Cottage, and enjoy a summer in which we can, albeit with some minor limitations, regain the pleasures of "summers remembered" - not only those pre-Covid, but those of years ago when Debenham village life in the Summer was filled with events – open gardens, galas, coffee mornings, outings, garden parties, sports days, celebrations, shows, clubs and societies, exhibitions, etc.

A hope for the future: As we recover from the impact of the pandemic I believe that most of us have the utmost praise for the achievements of the NHS in responding to the Covid crisis. However, I sense amongst those that I come across in my daily walks, that it has highlighted the need for significant improvements in the way we, as a nation and a county, have cared for our older relatives, friends and neighbours. A wish that, as a result of our experiences over this past year, our national and local governments will review not just the massive impact that the virus has had on the operation of the Health and Social Care sector, but also consider how to tackle the pre-existing problems the nation faces due to our ever increasing ageing population. I do sense a willingness in the "Corridors of Power" to explore new approaches aimed at making services much more community-based and person-centred. It is my hope that prevention, awareness, and local support for those living with dementia in all its forms will be placed centre-stage.

Having your "say" through co-production: The current buzzword in national and local government is "co-production". Much has been written on this subject, training courses created for its implementation, and its use has become an important plus-point in any bids for funding for health and social care projects. But what does "co-production" actually mean? Basically, it means asking you and I what local services and support should do to make a real difference to how well we can cope with living with chronic and progressive illnesses as patients and carers. It also means actively involving people who have "lived experience" to help in the design and management of new and existing care services. I know that you will argue that this is only common sense, and so it is, but as my father was wont to say "commonsense rarely seems to be common practice". Over the years I have seen a number of proposals for restructuring Social Care and the NHS based more upon academic research and the need to cut costs than upon the everyday needs of people struggling to cope. Now is the time to make known your views. If you have any ideas that you think would make the health, wellbeing, and quality of life of you or someone close to you better, please contact Dan Poulter (our MP), Mathew Hicks (our County Councilor and Leader of Suffolk County Council), or, Kathie Guthrie (our District Councilor). They will listen to not only your concerns, but also, and especially, to your suggestions for improvements to the

way you feel Health and Social Care should be delivered in the community. Each of us can, and do need to, have a say.

The Debenham Project is anxious to play its part in designing the future of health and well-being in and around Debenham and has initiated a research project with The University of Suffolk to survey the provision of the health, social, community and well-being care which is readily available locally, and those services and activities that are, perhaps, less easily accessed because of their remoteness. The aim is to build up a picture of the strengths eg the GP practice, the Leisure Centre and community support, and the weaker areas eg respite, social care, and mental health, so that we can explore how to better meet the needs of our older population. What is working well, what could be improved, and what new services and facilities it would be good to bring to Debenham. As well as gathering the data and statistics, we are also into “co-production” and will, over the next few months, be asking you, and many others living in our community to help by letting us know of your experiences, your views, and your ideas.

Making Suffolk dementia friendly: Last month I mentioned that as a founder member of The Suffolk Dementia Forum we were hoping to persuade Suffolk’s Health and Well-Being Board to make dementia a top priority and to create a programme to “Make Suffolk a Dementia Friendly County”. Over the past few months we have been developing proposals with the “vision” of every community and organization in Suffolk positively responding to and supporting every one of their friends, neighbours, residents, staff, customers, etc. who are struggling to cope with the impact of dementia on their lives. A tall order indeed, but to “start with a single step is the only way to make any difference in the long term”. Our plan is to seek investment and involvement in practical prevention, awareness/understanding, and active community-based support. This was the basis of a presentation to the Board which was introduced and sponsored by Georgia Chambani, the recently appointed Director of Adult Care, led by Sue Hughes, the independent chair of Healthwatch Suffolk Dementia Forum – And the Debenham Project did it’s bit – a real team effort! So, on March 11th, Georgia, Sue, myself, Caroline, and Rachael, made, as they say on The Apprentice, our “Pitch”. You can see [the presentation here](#), and for those who are would like to know the details of what we were asking the Board to sign up to [click here](#).

I have to say that I was delighted with the response from the Chair and the members of the Board. Our “ask” was that the Health and Well-Being Board would accept and commit to implementing our proposals and recommendations. The presentation was highly praised and wholeheartedly endorsed, and is to be built in to the on-going programme of the Well-being Board. I believe that it is a very important step forward and hope for the future of dementia care in Suffolk. The challenge is to maintain the momentum and to build upon on it.

And finally: Thank you everyone who has made donations to the Project. It is your support that has ensured that we will be around for years to come. You can access all of our on-line

help by visiting our new "[On-Line Resources](#)" page and can find our "Coronavirus - Local Information and Support" list on our [News and Project Progress page](#). You can also call us on 01728 862003.

With all my best wishes, Lynden

Lynden Jackson

The Debenham Project

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