

Hi Everyone,

In this letter: **Welcome back: Re-starting the Project: A day at the seaside: Preparing and rebuilding: Reviewing our policies: Finances: "I Care" on-line information and advice: The Debenham Movers: And finally.**

Welcome back: It's always special to welcome back the swifts after their 6,000 mile migration North to spend the summer months with us. I spotted a couple wheeling over the Church last Monday and I heard that that there where 8 or 9 over Gracechurch Street. Today, I spotted a group of about 30 racing around the Church and down the High street. Chatting to friend on my dogwalk, she said that the males arrive first and make the nests, the females follow a little later to mate and start this years family, and both "knock themselves out" feeding them and raising them until it is time to return South. It's their pattern of life and, perhaps, we could all learn a little from them about how important it is for us to have an underlying, familiar, and regular pattern to our lives.

Over recent years the swifts have been regular visitors and have raised large numbers of youngsters that in late summer swoop and whirl and dive over the village and, literally, race through the streets between the houses, for all the world like children playing "catch me if you can", and all the while seeming to be shrieking with laughter.

In advance of their expected arrival and whilst they were swirling over the Congo feeding up for the final legs over North Africa and Europe, St Mary's Church became a swift hotel with the attachment of 20 nest boxes under the eaves at the East end of the building. They say that "You get no business if you don't advertise". So an electronic "swift caller" box has been fitted to attract their custom and each time I pass through the churchyard – morning and evening to unlock and lock the Church – I hear the sound of swift chatter. I have to confess and can honestly say by now that "I have had heard their (recorded) gossip" quite enough times already! However, it will be lovely if and when, they take up residence – our resident swift watcher, Janice, is on the job.

Re-starting the Project: The current weekly average number of cases of Covid-19 in Mid-Suffolk is under 3 per week ([Suffolk CoronaWatch](#)) which is amazing but not quite at the level of last July which was one tenth of this figure. Back then I was hoping that the trend would continue and we might be able to resume our groups, activities and support, but we all know how things have changed. Until this last week things looked quite promising that all the Government guidelines and restrictions will be lifted in the last week of June. But with the latest figures suggesting that the number of cases of Covid is rising, albeit slowly, and Needham Market having a noticeable number of cases of the Indian variant, we have rethought our plans to relaunch our groups, activities and services. We wanted to get things going just as soon as possible, and our thoughts were that the Carers Club and info Cafe, the Fit Club and Cameo, and any other regular events that use Dove Cottage as a venue could potentially return in early July.

However, Sue and I have been thinking hard about when, realistically, we might restart the activities, groups and services of the Project. We had thought that early July would be the earliest but, with the Indian variant taking hold, and the overall number of cases increasing, the likelihood is that important restrictions such as social distancing, limited numbers, and mask wearing may remain in place in some form or other beyond June 21st. Also, we have, traditionally, had a break in August for Cameo and Fit Club, and some other elements of the Project. Taking all the circumstances into account, talking to the group leaders, and being very much aware of how everyone has really missed meeting together in Dove Cottage, we don't really feel comfortable with restarting in July. So, with the full support of our Trustees, have come to the conclusion that we should plan to resume from the 1st of September and we have organised a new pattern of bookings of Dove Cottage accordingly. I hope you are happy with this. Please do let me know how you feel about it.

A day at the seaside: We are more confident about outdoor garden events such as coffee mornings or afternoon tea and, hopefully, we can organise one or two over the summer. One special event that we are going ahead with is the annual Felixstowe Hut seaside day out on Sunday August 22nd. Before Covid, it was a highlight of our calendar with a fish and chip lunch, rickshaw rides along the front, and paddling in the sea for those who want to relive the days when summers spent on the beach seemed to last forever. Oh! How I remember getting sunburn – it was before the days of sun-cream - and the skin on my back ‘peeling’. My mother used to apply calamine lotion to soothe it. But it didn’t last long and we were back out in the sun before you knew it! Happy memories! If you would like to join us at Felixstowe on August 22nd just ring Joy Walton (01728 860007) or let me know and I will pass on the message (See the attached poster).

Preparing and rebuilding: We will also try to offer, with care, some of our other services such as Transport, One-to-One, Advice and Information, etc. a bit earlier. But, to begin all this we will have to approach all of our regular volunteers and ask them if they are able, happy and willing to give us their support in rebuilding the Project to its pre-Covid state. It may be quite a long time before we can fully recover from the impact of the pandemic, but I am sure that everyone - family carers, those they care for with dementia, volunteers, and those in the background involved in The Debenham Project – will be keen to help in rebuilding the family support that we are known for. Over the last 15 months all of us have really missed being together and helping each other.

Reviewing our Policies: In the meantime, I have been doing some tidying up in advance of our re-starting the groups, activities and services that had to be suspended since last March (such a long, long time!). Unfortunately for our trustees and me, this means tackling some of the bureaucracy that goes with a charity such as ours. For example, we have to review and agree “The Policies” which determine how we address various important aspects of managing things as smoothly as possible, and responding to problems and concerns, wherever they result from. We have an honest and open approach to everything we do and, if you wish to, you can find them and other governance material on the Trustees/Steering Group page on our website. Remembering and making sure it is up-to-date is sometimes difficult but if there is anything you want to know or to talk about please do not hesitate to contact me.

This time we have included an important new policy - Complaints - that addresses an area that, too often, is not seen as a high priority for local charities but it runs central to the nature of being a charity. Our aim is only to do good, but sometimes we may fail and we need to have a clearly documented way to address the concerns of those whom we may have not helped in the way we may have offered, or been able. If you ever feel that you have any concern about the care and support that we have offered we want to know about it. We have not received any complaints over the last 12 years but that doesn’t mean we can afford to be complacent – “a reputation is hard won, but easily lost”. So, even if it might just be just a niggle, please do not hesitate to make contact with myself or any of the trustees to talk about it.

Finances: Over the last year, we have lost some of our number in the "Debenham Project Family" - carers, cared –for, participants and others in the community. These were all friends whom we will miss, friends we cared for - all precious people. We have also lost a few who have funded, and supported us over the years. However, as a small community charity, we been able to avoid the serious financial problems that many charities and local caring organisations are struggling with. I don't ask why, but I do know that The Debenham Project is something that belongs to our community and our community has done, and will continue to do, its level best to make sure it supports those who are living with the impact of dementia on their lives. The donations we have received over this last year have ensured our financial stability. The kindness of those who have donated means that, for the foreseeable future, we do not have to worry about where the money

will come from. Just recently I had someone say "Are you ok for funds? If you ever need help please ask". I didn't ask! But they made arrangements for a regular financial contribution anyway! I never fail to be amazed by the kindness and giving of everyone in Debenham – Thank you so much.

"I Care" on-line information and advice: And now to a particular concern for everyone that find themselves worried and concerned about how they will cope following the worry that they or their loved one may have dementia. The Debenham Project has always tried to be there for them, to understand and to offer advice and information to help them cope with the impact of the illness on their lives. Having someone you can talk to is the first step. But you need to know what it might mean for the future, what support you can call on, and how to access it. I also feel that all information and advice, no matter whether it is delivered face to face by health and social care professionals, local charities and community projects, or via the internet must be easy to find, simple, straightforward and practical. I am delighted that a new on-line information and advice app has been launched by Suffolk and North East Essex. It is the **"I Care Dementia App" which you can download now to your computer, tablet or phone [here](#). I believe that whoever designed it had in mind: "When you need it, it is there for you, and we hope that it will help". I do encourage you to explore it and let me know what you think of it.**

The Debenham Movers: And now a bit more evidence that things are coming back to life, Dance East launched a new venture called Debenham Movers (see the attached poster). Weekly movement classes for people over 55. It started at 10.00 am last Thursday (June 3rd) at the Leisure Centre. Sounds like a great idea to improve our balance, flexibility, and fitness whilst having fun. Look out for the posters around our village.

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

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