

## **WICKHAM MARKET PARTNERSHIP**

### **REPORT TO ANNUAL PARISH MEETING, 12<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2024**

The six Trustees, Josie Hopps, Cath Caudwell, Dick Jenkinson, Colin Owens, George Hering and Ray Lewis, continue to meet monthly to facilitate improvements to the village by way of small grants, helping organisations to achieve their goals and nurturing projects through to independence.

The trustees are supported by Karen Burrows our Administrative Assistant who usually works Tuesday and Thursday mornings from the Resource Centre. Karen also manages the content for the weekly Round Robin email.

This year we have provided grants to the Archive Centre in facilitating their move to the Resource Centre Garden, The George Fund, The Men's Shed to move to the vacated archive centre cabins & the Resource Centre Gardening Team for tools & bulbs.

#### **Community Rooms**

The Partnership provides two rooms for meetings at the Resource Centre where Leiston Citizen's Advice offer weekly advice sessions, the Diabetic Retinal Screening Service and the Hearing Advisory Service run clinics for patients and Cruse Chiropractic is based in our treatment rooms. The meeting rooms are also available for bookings on an ad-hoc basis for meetings and events.

#### **Archive Centre**

The project to create a new home for Wickham Market Area Archive Centre came to fruition in the summer of 2023 after sourcing a range of grants, utilising a legacy from a former trustee and topping up with funding from the Partnership. This was completed with the negotiation of a new lease with Suffolk County Council (the owners of the Resource Centre) and the Partnership subsequently taking on a licence with the Archive Centre. The result is a top of the range insulated log cabin situated in the rear garden of the Resource Centre that now safely houses Wickham Market's historical records. The group is launching the new venue on May 6<sup>th</sup> with an Open Day and official unveiling.

#### **Wickham Market Shed**

The move of the Archive Centre released the two portacabins behind the Village Hall to be converted into a workshop, social space and store for the Wickham Market Shed Project. A small group of core members has stayed with the project since its inception in early 2020, resuming activities in autumn 2021 and eventually moving into the portacabins mid-2023, having previously operated in a small way from the wooden shed, refurbishing community benches for the church and Parish Council. Sorting of hand tools and testing of larger equipment, all donated, has kept members busy. A huge step forward has been the complete rewiring of the workshop with new consumer unit, sockets, lighting, heating and emergency cut-out facilities by local firm Hudson Electrical, whose 8 strong work-force gave their time freely over a Saturday morning in March. The firm recognised the importance of a project such as this that supports men's mental health, offering opportunities to 'connect, converse and create'.

### **Village Marketing and Communication**

The Partnership continues to promote the village as a destination for shopping, services and leisure.

The website [visitwickhammarket.co.uk](http://visitwickhammarket.co.uk) reaches out to people far and wide and is at the top of the search engine list for anyone seeking details about Wickham Market. Village information can be found here including voluntary groups, clubs, organisations and businesses. There is also a 'what's on' section where events can be advertised. On average we get around 1000 visitors to the site every month.

The Round Robin list continues to grow with close to 450 people currently subscribed to the list. This communication is sent out weekly and includes messages and news from organisations and businesses.

Christmas shopping leaflet. For the past 7 years the Partnership has helped promote shopping in Wickham Market by producing a Christmas promotional leaflet which is distributed to 17,000 households across our area of Suffolk. This is a vital time for retailers to make an impact and we are pleased to hear that many retailers see an uplift in business following its distribution. The Partnership was supported in funding last year's promotion with a grant via the Parish Council from funding via the East Suffolk Towns Initiative.

### **Library**

The partnership continues to support and work closely with the library and library management team headed by Maggie Lusher, with Lynn Colbear looking after the day to day running of the library. The library continues to be reasonably well used and the number of volunteers has increased. The volunteers generally cover the afternoon sessions during the week and the staff cover mornings and Saturdays.

A new 'library friends' group has now been formed and trustees of the group have been appointed. The Partnership have now formally handed over its membership of Suffolk Libraries IPS to the new group. Some of the things the new group will be focussing on are to raise the profile and encourage more use of the library, fundraising, and adding to the extra activities we already provide which are currently ancestry research and IT support. To kick things off, the group had a stall at the Spring Market on 16th March which was very successful. They sold some books and there was lots of interest in library membership and volunteering.

### **Resource Centre/Library Garden**

The Garden Team, led by Barbara Harrington, have now been in place for a year and they have achieved wonders in that time. At a recent gardening session they found some orchids growing in the back garden and have put a little protective fence around them. They meet once or twice a month on Wednesday mornings and are always looking for new helpers so please contact Barbara or the Partnership to find out more. And there's always cake and coffee/tea on offer.