

WICKHAM MARKET PARTNERSHIP

REPORT TO ANNUAL PARISH MEETING, 11th APRIL 2025

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 an additional grant to The George Fund due to funds received from the closure of Inspirations, whilst a grant will shortly be given to the Playing Field Bowls Club to assist their essential electrical works.

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 hold clinics for patients and the Suffolk Police hold monthly police surgeries where residents can seek advice. 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 Archive Centre has gone from strength to strength since moving to its new premises in the rear garden of the Resource Centre in the summer of 2023. Interest in their work and the enthusiasm of the volunteers has been given a real boost with their comfortable building which houses all manner of local records. The new premises were officially opened on May 6th 2024 with a wonderful turnout and excellent exhibition in the garden space. The group felt it had really arrived when new signage was installed on the front elevation of the Centre. It opens every Tuesday and Thursday between 10.30am and 12.30pm (no appointment needed) – entrance is via the Resource Centre atrium and through the exit door at the back.

Wickham Market Shed

The Partnership has been facilitating the development of The Wickham Market Shed since 2020 and this has now occupied the two portacabins behind the Village Hall since the summer of 2023 and continues to thrive, with a core group of members attending most weeks and others dropping in and occasionally joining. The portacabins have been converted into a workshop, social space and store with the help of a Co-operative Community Cares Grant, sourced in the spring of 2024. This has enabled the complete rewiring of the workshop and refreshment room and the laying of suitable flooring. Members have also recently undertaken First Aid training through the local Community First Responder group, giving them the skills and knowledge to support each other in the event of an emergency. Sorting of hand tools and testing of larger equipment, all donated, has kept members busy, interspersed with the making of birdboxes and the repair of more community benches and a lawnmower for the group. However, the social time at the end of the session, with tea and cake, is

equally important and looked forward to. The UK Men's Shed Association's vision to give people, and men in particular, a space to 'connect, create and converse' couldn't be more appropriate.

Village Marketing and Communication

The website visitwickhammarket.co.uk continues to promote the village as a destination for shopping, services, and leisure and where village information can also be found about voluntary groups, clubs organisations and businesses.

However, the rising costs to maintain the website have become a drain on the Partnership's resources and discussions have taken place between Wickham Market Parish Council, East Suffolk Council and The Partnership to solve the problem. As a result an agreement was made that a new up-to-date website be created under the ownership and funding responsibility of The Parish Council. The new website will aim to promote and support the village with much of the detail taken from our existing website.

The launch of the new website is scheduled for Summer '25.

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 8 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. The distribution quantity used last year has since been reduced to under 10,000 therefore consideration to repeat again has been put in doubt. We will be looking at different forms of promotion to compensate.

Library

The 'big' news currently is that Suffolk County Council (SCC) have made the decision to take the library service back 'in house' under their control. The transition is now underway to move library services to SCC from Suffolk Library Services PLC. SCC state they have no plans to alter the core services they offer, and the intention is that the front-line staff and the role of volunteers in delivering library services will remain unchanged. It is not yet clear what will happen to the recently established 'friends' group for Wickham Market Library, but for the time being they will carry on as they are.

Things will become clearer over the coming months. The Partnership will, as always, continue to support, and work closely with the library management team during the transition, to ensure that the library continues to deliver for the community.

Resource Centre/Library Garden

The Garden Team, led by Barbara Harrington, have been in place for some time now and they continue to work wonders in the Resource Centre/library garden. The team 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.