



ST FRANCIS FIELDS

NORTHIAM

CIC Introduction for Open Meeting

While social media can be a wonderful and helpful thing, it also has a very unfortunate downside. It can spread misinformation and disinformation and sow seeds of worry and suspicion, and many people will continue to believe there is some foundation to what has been said on it, even though it can be shown to be false.

One Open Letter, which is extremely economical with the truth, has done much damage to our lovely village. It has undermined the Parish Council, of which the author is a co-opted member, the CIC and trashed the reputations of people who only have the good of the village at heart.

We haven't been given time tonight, unfortunately, to read out the whole of the CIC's response, but anyone who has requested a copy of the response will have seen that the open letter is riddled with inaccuracies and misrepresentations. Fortunately, an encouraging number of people in the village have asked for a copy and we'd be very glad to provide anyone else with one. Just email us at the address shown on the flyer which we'll be handing out at the end.

Aside from opening a footpath so that residents can now walk right across the site and organising the hugely popular pop-up pub last summer, until now the CIC has had to concentrate on repairs and maintenance because the site had been so badly neglected in the last few years of the Blue Cross. We have been lucky to have a large group of volunteers to help us with this, saving the Parish Council thousands of pounds in labour costs. The CIC would like to recognise and pay tribute to our volunteer team.

We are now ready, though, to begin the process of turning the property into a community facility, and step one will be to refurbish and repurpose the hub – that is, the buildings surrounding the courtyard where the pop-up pub was held. We have recommended converting it into a multi-use space for as wide a range of uses as possible. Our plans for this were submitted to the parish council in November last year. But as far as we know, the document has not yet been discussed.

The Directors of the CIC are committed to managing St Francis Fields to help create a multipurpose community facility in partnership with the Parish Council. But over the past few months this has become increasingly difficult to do with a deeply divided council.

We'll leave you to decide whether all the effort that has been put into continually promoting a DIY Livery use for the stables, which the CIC has shown in its Stables Option Report to be highly questionable from financial and governance points of view, and all the time that's been spent attempting to discredit so many people, could have been better spent.

On a personal note, I have been lucky enough to be a parish councillor in two regions, one local, and have seen what can be achieved when councillors and other organisations work together and the good that they can do. Like many others, I have been amazed at the infighting at Northiam PC and sincerely hope that this will change as a result of the forthcoming election.

So, please, don't believe everything you have read or heard, request a copy of our response and a copy of the Stables report and ask us any questions. We'll be glad to answer them.