

## Proposals For Keeping Northiam Open

Dear Kim Hamilton,

Further to my discussions with yourself and Christian Bamber here is a list of ideas for keeping the Northiam centre open.

1. Due to the past history of no professional PR ever being designated to Northiam, employ on a part-time basis someone who has goals to bring more awareness to the centre and funding targets that have to be achieved.
2. Work with the tourist board, Great Dixter House and any other local attractions to bring in the public. Great Dixter is only 5 minutes away and attracts tourists from all over the world.
3. Use the recently upgraded walk ways around the equine fields to take the public on Welfare Walks charging £20 a head, with a knowledgeable groom telling the before and after stories of the horses and talking about various ailments etc. horses get and showing examples. I have been on a tour like this at Bristol Horse World and it was full of people wanting to see and here the various stories. We paid in advance and various funding information was handed to us at the end of the tour. From Spring to Autumn this could be a weekly event.
4. Use the new pub that is just being renovated at the entrance to the BX as a way of offering the public refreshments without the costs of having your own facilities, you could recommend the food and after visitors have left with leaflets re funding they can take time to fill in funding forms and still return them on the day.
5. Take the shop goods out of the Oast House/ Reception and place it nearer the entrance so it can be seen from the road or well sign posted on the road and sell useful pet stock i.e. bedding/leads/books/etc. Have regular volunteers committing to shifts in the shop, plus have a proper till as the method to pay as the one in the reception is too slow.
6. Alan the Head Groom set up a fabulous Tack Sale Shed, this needs to be advertised to the community/horsey or otherwise also it should have other animal donations that the small animal side get given. This can sell all the second hand goods.
7. Both sides Equine and Small Animals should work together when it comes to bringing in money, not to separate departments even if it is to fund say a new kennel block.
8. Set up a FRIENDS OF NORTHIAM club, people pay a direct debit or membership to get discounts on and get a special news letter/ VIP treatment at events, the odd free drink/cake etc make them feel privileged. See Friends of the Opera at English National Opera as they do this very successfully.
9. Involve three of the largest Agricultural Colleges in the South East, Plumpton/Hadlow/Chichester these all have students studying on equine and small animal courses, you could charge students/colleges to have demonstrations / lectures relating to animal welfare/ behaviour/ equine health problems etc. This could be a regular educational service and you already have an employee a groom Tracey who loves this sort of work and is very good.

10. Better signage in the village, before you get to the centre to let people know they can visit and how many metres you are away as at the moment you drive past and its to late before you see the signs.
11. Be more pro active with other local events example: the village fete was just across the road in the playing fields and they used the BX as an overflow car park but the public wasn't aware they could walk in and look around and spend money at the BX.
12. Rent the sand schools out to the public at there own risk.
13. Allow 'alternative' students in at a cost to work on the animals i.e.; reiki, massage etc this a huge industry and I know one group paying £70 a day to go to the RSPCA in Brighton to practise there skills, they have to show they have to achieved certain tasks before thy can pass exams and they can do no harm to the animals.
14. RSPCA in Ipswich the MARTLESHAM ANIMAL CENTRE is self funded it is under the RSPCA umbrella it works to the RSPCA guidelines the staff wear the uniforms etc but it is an independent charity with a different charity number. There are a number of RSPCA sites working this way.
15. Toilet facilities at Northiam for the public can be a portocabin, I work on location in TV & film and the toilet facilities are luxurious considering they get moved every other day to the next location.
16. The Open Day could bring in more money if advertised better, selling pitches to trades people, selling more food and drink and having more things to buy.
17. Fun dog walks that are already great could have feeding stops/ drink stops on route as people did want this maybe at a half way point then again at the end back at the centre where they do get a burger and tea as it is now. Better advertising again is needed.
18. Are you aware that film crews pay a fortune to film in a field and there are agency's you can put the sight on.
19. You allocate a vet to work for this site that is employed by the BX but has the use of a private vets facilities at an agreed rate or that you have a deal with the vets you use already as to reduced costs due to the work load you put there way.

My perception of the Northiam site in the 2 1/2 years I have been a volunteer is that this unique gem of a site has not been used to its full potential to bring in funding / to educate the public about the BX /to become a valuable asset by its beautiful location and land in attracting the public. The public that do come across the site whom I always greet and talk to tell me they can't believe such a wonderful place is here and they had not been aware of it sooner. That says it all to me.

I trust that this email and my proposals will be shown to your Trustees when discussing the future of Northiam and that you do indeed make the right decision in keeping this centre open. As Kim admitted in our volunteers meeting the site has not had a chance to fund itself. It would bring in a small fortune if managed correctly in that respect.

Yours sincerely, Sharon Robinson, a volunteer.