

ANNUAL REVIEW

MILEHAM FREE SCHOOL CHARITY

When I presented this review a year ago, the Parish Council had just become sole trustee of this charity. The Charity is responsible for the Old School building and adjacent playing field and a second playing field off Back Lane. We acquired control of these assets from Norfolk County Council after a lot of hard work by a number of your councillors, three of whom have since left the Parish Council. We are grateful to them all.

Most of the work since acquisition has been with the Charity Commission, understanding their priorities for a Charity that has been unable to fulfil its charitable purpose since the School closed in July 2015.

Following a number of conversations with commercial and residential estate agents, we appointed independent chartered surveyors to identify the best route to raise funds for the Charity so that in future it would be able to fulfil its purpose once again. They recommended a sale by auction.

As we were preparing our report for the Charity Commission, one of the agents we had spoken to previously got in touch to advise that they had a small developer that may be interested in acquiring the Old School site, subject to obtaining planning permission to convert the old school for residential use. Following a number of visits and extensive negotiations with that developer, they made us an offer which was substantially higher than the predicted auction result.

We then communicated this to all parishioners with a mail drop in early December and were delighted with the response.

We reported all of this to the Charity Commission but, before they gave their final approval, they asked us to thoroughly review and amend the Charity's governing document to ensure that it would be fit for purpose following the School sale. This was a tough job but I am pleased to say that it was concluded successfully and in mid April we were able to confirm, to our (very patient) developers that we could proceed to exchange of contracts.

Our energy is now focused on concluding the deal with the developers, then awaiting the result of their efforts to achieve planning permission. Our fallback is an auction process.

Once the sale of the old school site is concluded, we will be able to focus our time fulfilling the objectives of the Charity which are to advance the education of children resident in the village, and to improve their conditions of life - this will involve investment in the remaining charity land off Back Lane to provide play, exercise and sensory facilities for all ages.

Nick Clowe

Vice Chair

20th May 2026