



Local community update

Dear local community parish councillors and residents

I am conscious that most of my updates in 2020 have all been about closing and then reopening and then closing again the various parts of Chatsworth in line with government guidance and our guiding principles. Today I write with an update and with some more heartening news but first I should set-out where we currently are at in terms of what is able to be open.

Following the address by the Prime Minister where he announced the national lockdown you may be wondering what the lockdown announcement means for the various different parts of Chatsworth. I can assure you that we have reviewed the government guidance in detail and have considered how it applies to us, but always with our cautious and careful approach in mind and with the overriding priority being the safety and wellbeing of our colleagues, our visitors and our local communities.

At Chatsworth the garden and car parks at the house and Calton Lees will remain open under the guidelines relating to personal exercise, although this will be undertaken with a significantly reduced number of tickets being available and with capacities also being carefully managed by continuing to use pre-booked timed entry slots. The house, retail shops, indoor restaurants and cafes are all closed, with only a limited takeaway food offer available. The Farmyard closed on 4th January as planned and the estate Farm Shop remains open as an essential shop, with the café closed. When we have any more details on any closure or reopening we will share these with you but this will only be when we know and understand more about what might be both permitted and sensible in the coming weeks and months.

We are conscious that the Chatsworth Estate is an important element of outdoor space for many people, most importantly our local communities, and the government guidance for this national lockdown is very clear on the issues of both travel and exercise. People must stay at home, avoid travelling out of their village, town or part of the city in which they live and that exercise should be limited to once per day. The government guidance continues to state that it is for individuals to act within the law and we are not being asked nor are we expected to police their behaviour. This guidance is communicated to all our potential visitors and we will keep our plans under review and make any changes that might be needed as the lockdown progresses. It has been reassuring for us all to see the Police on the estate and across Derbyshire recently.

Having detailed how we have reacted to the latest lockdown requirements the remainder of this letter is slightly different in that it concerns what I believe is an exciting step-forward for the local area and the Devonshire Group* and I was keen to share it with you.

Many of you will know the Peak Shopping Village - <http://peakshoppingvillage.com/> - in the village of Rowsley, less than three miles south of Chatsworth. This is a site that operates as a discount retail offer and has in excess of 30 stores, a café and a household and antiques auctioneer as well as car parking and a nature trail.

As has been the case with many retail sites Peak Shopping Village has struggled in recent years and has experienced an increasing number of vacant units as more shopping moves online and, more recently, as the

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pandemic lockdown has limited shops' ability to trade. However we recognise the hugely important local economic role that the site has played, and which it can do again, and we therefore recently approached the site owners and have subsequently agreed terms to buy Peak Shopping Village from them. As a consequence I'm very pleased to say that the sale is due to complete today, Monday 11th January 2021.

At this stage our intention is to work with the current occupiers and to reinvigorate the site with an investment into its decoration and landscaping as well as seeking tenants for the vacant properties that are complementary to our existing retail offers at Chatsworth.

We are not naive as to the challenges of retailing in the current climate, but we also know that the site can be so much better than is currently the case. Looking slightly further ahead we would like to investigate the opportunity for other businesses to be part of the tenant mix and we do not feel these necessarily need to exclusively be retailers. Small office units, artisan producers, start-up businesses and health and wellbeing services could all work well at Peak Shopping Village, all subject to obtaining the necessary consents of course.

It may strike you as slightly strange that we are making an investment such as this at a time when we have been so significantly impacted by Coronavirus at Chatsworth. We believe we shouldn't look to simply cut our way out of where we find ourselves. Where there are sensible opportunities to invest and grow our way out then we should be bold enough to take these, and Peak Shopping Village falls squarely into that category. We are also fortunate that the Devonshire Group sold a number of buildings on an industrial estate in Eastbourne at the top of the market in 2019, and the investment into Peak Shopping Village is coming from those sales. Our aim is to increase the number of jobs and employment at the site by making it more successful in the long term and to support sustainable growth in the local economy.

We are in no doubt that it will take focus and hard work to develop the full potential of the site at Rowsley and we now need to take our time to get to know the site and how best we can improve it for all; tenants, local residents and others visiting the area.

If you have any queries regarding this news then please contact our Estates Director for Derbyshire Nick Wood in the first instance at Nick.wood@chatsworth.org.

May I wish you all the best of health, happiness and good fortune, and here's wishing for a brighter 2021.

Kind regards



Stephen Vickers Chief Executive, The Devonshire Group

