

GOSPEL STANDARD BETHESDA FUND

Registered Charity 209376

The Future Direction of Bethesda

Introduction

It is well known, following our various public meetings of 2019, that the trustees have been prayerfully considering how the provision of Bethesda might be sustainable for both present and future beneficiaries of the Charity and in the current 'care environment' (operating within and complying with care legislation and government policies shaping the nature of future care provision).

This has been the subject of much prayer and continues to be so and we trust that we are seeing the good hand of our God going before us. We cannot, for reasons of confidentiality, share with you all of the work that is ongoing, but we feel that the time has come to lay before you, what we are moving towards, always acknowledging our utter dependence on the Lord in these matters.

The purpose of this document is to inform you of our current thinking, so as to prevent speculation, and to keep you informed if you are considering Bethesda to meet your future care needs.

The future of Bethesda

We believe that the Lord still has a perfect will for Bethesda and that the Charity will be helped to continue. It will, however, need to be significantly remodelled to:

- remain viable,
- make it more suitable to the beneficiaries (both present and future),
- meet the current 'care environment' in which we operate.

We have been helped to significantly improve the financial position of Bethesda (though still operating at a loss) during 2020, but that is only one aspect of helping to sustain the provision. We believe the next step is, with the Lord's help, to move Bethesda forward to ensure that the future care provision is both suitable and appropriate for the beneficiaries of the Charity.

Any change is 'an emotional subject' and we seek your kind and prayerful support as we desire, by the help of our God, to meet the needs of both present and future beneficiaries of 'Bethesda'.

Effect on Home Residents

These changes will (as and when they are introduced) affect us each in various ways. However, we seek to reassure you that minimising the impact, particularly for the residents in the homes (and their relatives), is our primary consideration as we prayerfully seek to move forward.

The future 'Care Home' provision

It is readily apparent that the current model of three homes is no longer viable. The current occupancy rate across the three homes is just above 50%, and 76% of residents are over 90 years of age. Allied to this, the financial position of the charity remains a cause of serious concern, with the fee income in two homes not even covering staff costs. The current decline in our congregations is

also likely to have a continuing impact, with fewer potential residents coming into the homes in the future.

At this point in time, the level of future occupancy is not expected to require more than one purpose-built care home. We have not yet decided where or when this should be built and continue to seek the Lord's leadings in the matter.

The Government sees the way forward as 'care in your own home' and funding is targeted accordingly. Noticeably, people are staying in their own home for longer and the current 'care environment' is moving in that direction. We are seeking to build 'independent living accommodation' suitable for this purpose, and the take up of that provision may also be reasonably expected, in future years, to have an impact on the numbers needing to enter the 'Care Home'.

The future 'Independent Living' provision

Following the presentations made in 2019, a substantial majority of our supporters endorsed the proposal to build care provision by way of 'independent living accommodation' local to places of worship. We believe that we have seen the Lord's hand going before us in this matter.

We also desire to build similar accommodation, local to the new care home, to provide for couples to live close to each other in those instances where only one of them needs the higher dependency provision of the care home.

In Conclusion

We reiterate that whilst we are seeking to make Bethesda more suitable for both present and future beneficiaries, we have not yet decided where or when the new home should be built and continue to seek the Lord's leadings in the matter.

Whilst we cannot put a timescale to the work that is before us, it will be appreciated that it will take some time to build a new home and therefore those interested in coming into Bethesda should not be deterred from applying. The transition to new accommodation will be managed in a transparent and sensitive manner as and when, God willing, that stage is reached.

The trustees are faced, in the fear of the Lord, with very difficult decisions and we ask for your prayerful support.

On behalf of the Trustees

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Ridout". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Michael Ridout (*Chairman*)

12th March 2021