

Report from Station House Community Connections for Campsea Ashe Parish Council AGM May 2021



Station House April 2020 – March 2021

Station House Community Connections, is a charitable community benefit society incorporated in 2013, after the launch of a fundraising campaign to bring the Station House back to life for the benefit of the local area and beyond. There are currently 35 members. The Station House re-opened in June 2017, and its 4th birthday comes up in June.

But what a roller-coaster this last year has been

Prior to the first lockdown there was a positive energy at the Station House with room bookings at their highest level, 1-3 on most weekdays and all four in use, at the same time, on the odd occasion. Of course, given the building's solid build, no group is ever aware of others in neighbouring rooms. With the added footfall of railway users through the building and those using the cafe, it makes for a lively atmosphere. We are so hoping this will all return.

With the first lockdown all room bookings were cancelled overnight and we lost our volunteers, including those pursuing their Duke of Edinburgh awards.

The decision was made to keep the café running as a take-away service at the window throughout the pandemic and lockdown periods. It sustained the Station House during the downturn, but more significantly it provided a service for which walkers, cyclists and passing cars were very grateful. We heard of births, marriages and deaths (though thankfully only one Covid-related), and from those living on their own, grateful for the chance to talk to another human being. The car park enabled people to maintain social distancing. The winter months were tough, though, serving through an open window.

Throughout the three lockdown periods 10,020 coffees and 7127 slices of cake were consumed.

We began whole cakes to order with the first lockdown and have carried on with 109 commissioned to date.

We also grabbed the opportunity during the first lockdown to repaint most of the woodwork and cast ironware around the building, which was a satisfying achievement.

Neighbourhood Response Team

Station House Community Connections & Campsea Ashe Parish Council teamed up to organise a Neighbourhood Response Team of parish volunteers on standby to help anyone advised against, or not able to leave home.

The SH&PC Messenger ran alongside this, for 8 editions from March to July. Its aim was to disseminate practical information via email to 40+ Campsea Ashe subscribers who in turn would pass it on to their neighbours, friends and family, thus hopefully reaching every household in the parish. It was an opportunity for everyone to make a contribution.

The garden awning arrived

The all-weather garden awning arrived in October 2020. The fundraising campaign had started in early 2019 to increase our capacity both inside and out.

Efforts redoubled during lock-down, as the coronavirus pandemic brought with it new challenges. Like all community fundraising, the target was reached through a mix of grants, individual giving, proceeds from railway history presentations and the many small donations from Station House visitors. Sources of grants and donations included:

Campsea Ashe Parish Council; East Suffolk Council's COVID-19 Community Fund; Locality Budgets of County Councillors Alexander Nicoll and Christopher Hudson; District Councillor Carol Poulter's Community Enabling Budget.

It is now really coming into its own, especially as the weather warms. Thank you to all contributors.

Census support service

The census was a "digital first" meaning everyone was encouraged to complete their census survey online. From 1st March – 2nd May, the Station House took on the additional role of Census Support Centre on behalf of the Office of National Statistics (ONS). The Peto Room was an ideal setting and we had a team of trained advisers able to support anyone needing assistance completing their census form, or access to better quality broadband in order to complete theirs independently.

We are all looking forward to returning to normal activities.