



Business Plan for the Queens at Selborne

Gilbert White and Oates Collection- Registered
Charity No. 1159058

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Executive summary

The Gilbert White and Oates Collection has been in Selborne since 1955 and has only made a consistent income over the years by selling property. Today, with no more property to sell it has to become financially sustainable to survive. Great steps forward have been made with the help of the National Heritage Lottery Fund to develop a stables café “Whites”, a nano-brewery and a holiday apartment to diversify and raise more net income.

The opening a new Field Study Education classroom and activities which releases use of current facilities in the barn and further supports our environmental aims with schools and other groups and will grow a wider interest in nature and natural history in a new space. This is in addition to most of the current programme of the FSC which will be run in the grounds of “the Wakes” with then prime aim of supporting the National Curriculum, encouraging children into the outside world, and running majority of these sessions in the open air. This the museum regards as key and also will help support children’s well-being and mental health.

In addition, the running of , with suitable opening hours, a combination of a Tap room with food from Whites in the evenings and sell beers from the Gilbert White nano-brewery. During the day, a general shop to serve the local community and consider a part time Post Office. Both the local shop and post office have been closed recently and means more travel to access essential services and during the pandemic and lockdown “Whites” filled the gap and was well supported by the local community.

The plan includes the location of the Field Study Centre (FSC) out of its current barn location near the car park. This will allow for a further expansion of the weddings business which is not possible currently which will generate incremental income. The FSC would still use the Wakes grounds for many of its activities.

A new and growing aspect is to work with the developer to, subject to agreement, have a services agreement to manage the apartments on the upper floors in terms of holiday lets for a management fee, including access and reception to apartments, cleaning etc. This enhances Gilbert Whites & The Oates Collection’s own holiday let activities which are planned to grow and have the economies of scale and critical mass to employ staff in this area on a full-time basis. In the South Downs National Park there is a general shortage of overnight accommodation and whilst it attracts day visitors more income can be generated from overnight stays and will benefit the entire community.

To enhance the village there will be more community space for hire for talks, parties, functions that can be catered for by the current -“Whites” café business. In addition, the museum can run Gilbert White talks, lectures and adult learning from this facility.

The Trustees see the ability to have a living business in the centre of Selborne and move away from a boarded-up pub which has been a sorry sight for 5 years to becoming an active centre and a significant benefit to the local community. Plus these activities would bring employment opportunities to Selborne both full time and also part time seasonal jobs for the young.

The opportunity to access and utilize the Queens ground floor supports the long term aims of Gilbert White and The Oates Collection to grow and run a financially sustainable business for the future particularly in the current uncertain climate. The target being to double the museum’s turnover of approx. £XX to £XX in 5 years.

The incremental income of the Queens is estimated as £XX net income in the first year of operation and then growing to £XX in the second year and £XX in the third year. This supports the museum’s strategic aim of growing its businesses over the next 5 years.

Keys to success

Gilbert White & The Oates Collections has been starting to grow with the help of the National Heritage Lottery Fund and other funders. It has converted a small tea room into a fully fledged café and food venue and it now has the staff and expertise to take the business forward with these skills forward and use them in the Queens project. In addition the museum has started its own nano-brewery and is now producing and selling its own beers. In this area we see the addition of a tap room with a food offering that will be a further outlet for Gilbert White beers. The Queens also has a cellar so can be used as an ideal beer storage area .

The strongest driver is that we can move the current Field Study Centre (FSC) activities out of the Barn and grow our profitable weddings, functions and meetings business. This is restricted at present by the need to continually convert between a classroom and wet weather area in the week to a wedding venue at weekends. By moving the FSC to be based at a new location in the Queens this allows us to offer weddings in the week and have a showcase set up for future potential wedding clients to see.

The Field Study Centre in the Queens will offer new classroom facilities separate access with a kitchen and toilet area which can be equipped with the latest learning equipment and space and equipment for upto 30 children. Whilst this will allow engagement to a wider range of students it does not detract from ensuring that classes that come are going to also be out in the open air and in and around the grounds of the museum with a planned outside teaching area. This is very much at the heart of what Gilbert White & The Oates Collections is and can and will enhance its current nature and environmental offerin which is in line with the school curricullum.

The key to success is to have a strong control on costs and to maximize the value of the assets at the Queens by operating a shop during the day and a tap room in the evenings, an an educaton space during the day and a flexible learning meetings amd function space in the evenngs all of which will benefit the local community. During the Covid -19 lockdown the museum ran the village shop from its existing premises and has learnt what is required by way of local demand, local suppliers etc.. Other local shop offerings are limited and maybe shortlived but we have built up the trust and support of the local community as demonstated by their continued patronage of the shop during the November lockdown period.

We also see as a key success factor the ability to manage the aparments for let in the Queens for the owner in return for a service fee/contract. Here we see an opportunity to add critical mass to our own existing holiday let business which strategically we look to expand.