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February 7, 2018

Dr Janet Owen
Chief Executive
Hampshire Cultural Trust
Chilcomb House
Chilcomb Lane
Winchester
SO23 8RB

Dear Dr Owen,

Thank you for your prompt response to our letter of February 5th. We were surprised to find that you thought it necessary to invoke anonymous and ill-informed gossip in your response, since the concerns we raised arose from public fact and your organisation's own published statements and documents. We have no interest in spreading unsubstantiated rumours, and in our discussions with others will continue to point them towards these published sources in providing background.

We are pleased to see your statement of good intentions with respect to the collections, but remain troubled by the lack of focus on the particular needs of the biological collections (including the herbarium), the uncertainty concerning the resourcing and levels of expertise that will be available for their curation and conservation, and the measurable effects for their volunteer supporters and their users. The drop in grant funding will hardly have been a surprise for the Trust. It seems extraordinary to us that, with only five weeks to go before the specialist curation staff depart, these questions remain unanswered and, as far as we have been able to ascertain, no formal handover from the knowledgeable and experienced existing staff to their successors is in place.

With the interests of the herbarium at heart, we are keen to co-operate with you in both ensuring its long-term future and bringing it to the attention of the public. However, we are realistic about its general appeal and its ability to attract revenue by public exposure and would not wish to see its value and importance to the Trust and the county determined on this basis, which is the tenor of your last paragraph. It is difficult to offer practical support until we know the basis on which it is sought, and can make our own assessment of the effectiveness of the practical arrangements on your side. We would therefore urge you to resolve these matters as soon as possible, and meanwhile we shall continue to share our concerns with colleagues in the botanical world and more widely.

Yours sincerely,

Two handwritten signatures in black ink. The first signature is 'Martin Rand' and the second is 'A.R.G. Mundell'.

Martin Rand

Tony Mundell

cc: Alan Lovell, Chair of Trustees, Hampshire Cultural Trust
Jane Baker, Director of Communications and Development, Hampshire Cultural Trust