

THE COATS CHAIRMAN – JOHN BARNES – JANUARY 12TH 2021

It is with regret that the Trustees of COATS announce the retirement of our much-respected Chairman, John Barnes, with effect from 31 December 2020. The charity owes him a depth of gratitude for his time as a Trustee. He joined the charity as it was recovering from a difficult period in its history and has worked untiringly to ensure the continuing success of COATS.

John has been a key figure in the life of COATS for 15 years, becoming a Trustee in 2005 and was subsequently elected as Chairman in 2007. During his period of office COATS received the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, the equivalent of an MBE for charities.

In his earlier years he led the charity through opening The Centre from just a couple of days to five full days a week of operation with professionally qualified staff supported by many volunteers. He has also supported the COATS Charity Shop and volunteers helping to make it the successes it has now become, the main contributor to our funds.

He has steered the charity through many significant events including three substantial building works to make the building, formerly known as Woodmancote, more suitable for purpose as a Centre for "Crowthorne's Seniors". The most recent of these was the complete refurbishment in 2019 of the part of the building now known as "The COATS Centre" under the Building a Better COATS initiative. He has always been concerned with maintaining the future financial stability of the charity and has been involved with many negotiations to ensure this. His last months as Chairman have, of course, focussed on the challenges presented by the coronavirus pandemic.

His experience, wisdom and statesmanlike demeanour have been a huge asset to COATS. He has always given of his time and experience to the fullest extent and is much respected by our Staff, Visitors, Volunteers and the wider Crowthorne community. We would also like to thank Margaret who has been kind enough to lend us her husband and sometimes her kitchen table for impromptu COATS meetings.

As he stepped down as Chairman at the Trustees meeting in December John said: *"I have enjoyed every minute as a COATS Trustee and think from small beginnings we have achieved a lot. Covid has presented us with a major challenge but we are successfully working our way through it. When it is all over you will be able to benefit from our splendid new building and I believe that COATS is in good hands and will go from strength to strength. Many thanks for your support and very best wishes to you all as you meet the challenges ahead. I remain very interested but will now observe from a distance."*

The Trustees will be confirming the arrangements for the future leadership of COATS at the January Trustee meeting.

As soon as circumstances allow the Trustees plan to hold an event to thank John for his service and recognise his significant contribution to COATS. In the meantime you may wish to offer your personal thanks and good wishes via the chairman@coatscrowthorne.org.uk which we will be sure to pass on to John.

The COATS Trustees