

The Trustee Members  
Ledbury Places

Artistree  
The Artistree gallery  
Church Lane  
Ledbury,  
HR8 1DN

c.c.Ledbury Town Council  
Ledbury & District Civic Society  
Ledbury Area Development Trust

21st October 2020

Dear Trustees,

On Tuesday 13th October Emma Sharman, Gallery Manager, received an email from Mark Waller, part of an on-going exchange about heating issues in the upstairs room at the Heritage Centre, which Artistree have been renting as a gallery since 2016. It was with shock and dismay that the 2nd paragraph in this short email gave Artistree notice to vacate the gallery by 31st of December this year.

Artistree is a co-operative of 12 artists and craftsmen who have mounted exhibitions from March to December annually and have contributed much to the cultural environment of Ledbury. This has been appreciated by visitors to the town and with locals. The closure of Artistree Gallery can only be detrimental to Ledbury, diminishing further the culture of the town, already suffering the loss of cinema, theatre and other artistic endeavour such as the poetry festival, which are suspended or ceased. Furthermore, Artistree believe that encouragement of art and artists of any age is an important contribution to the mental wellbeing of our society. Recent members range from those in their 20s to their 80s.

It is now the decision of Artistree to bring our situation to the attention of the press, in order to assist our search for a permanent venue.

The email did not advise of the intentions Ledbury Places has for the first floor of the building, nor when the work is intended to start. We have a large amount of equipment in the gallery which will require dismantling and storage. In view of the short notice to vacate, at the end of the Christmas holiday period, it is probable that other, suitable premises will not be found.

We would appreciate your earliest response to the following:

Can Ledbury Places offer Artistree alternative gallery space?  
If not, are Ledbury Places able to offer storage facilities in another building for our display boards?  
Or, can Artistree be given a longer period of notice in order that we have a better opportunity to find premises or at least find storage for our equipment.

Yours sincerely

Phil Cooling  
Chairman, Artistree.



# LEDBURY

## PLACES

23 November 2020

Mr Phil Cooling  
Chairman, Artistree  
c/o The Artistree gallery  
Church Lane  
Ledbury,  
HR8 1DN

Dear Phil,

We are writing to address the issues raised by your letter of 21st October, which unfortunately we have only just received.

There are always two sides to any situation and those involved will have their own perspective. However, we are concerned that the points you make might lead the reader to believe that Ledbury Places has been an unreasonable landlord. This we refute and would like to remind you of the facts:

1. You have had the use of the first floor of the Old Grammar School since 2016. This has always been under a Licence to Occupy, which does not require either party to give any notice.
2. Last year we explained to Artistree that you should not regard this space as a long-term exhibition venue, as we have plans to re-purpose it for a wider community use. We are responsible for maintaining the building and keeping it in the ownership of the town for the benefit of the community and visitors to the town. We are obliged to generate more income from this space than just £1,000.
3. Despite not being required to serve notice, we did give you 2 and ½ months' notice on 13th October.
4. It is the case that notice was given as part of an email exchange relating to a problem with the heating. This was clumsy on our part, but the decision to give notice was in no way related to the heating issue. This would have been petty. The final decision to give formal notice had been taken at a previous Trustee meeting and driven solely by our plans to re-use the space.
5. Despite our statutory duty as Trustees of a charity, we have always accepted a rent which is well below a commercial rent, as a gesture of support for Artistree. For the first two years your rent was £500 per annum and then increased in two stages to become £1,000 per annum from 2019 until now.

*Building our future from our past*

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Registered Charity No: 1162108  
Registered Office: 1A The Homend, Ledbury, Herefordshire HR8 1BN

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6. We granted a full holiday rental for the duration of the first lockdown and until you re-opened in August.

This year we have completed a major overhaul of the museum on the ground floor. This is the first phase of an ongoing development, with a renovation of the first floor starting in early 2021. Plans include a Film Club, talks on local history and other interesting topics, invitations to local artists and craftspeople to hold demonstrations and workshops. Last, but not least, encouraging more visits from local schools. This evolution will more closely align the use of the building with our charitable remit.

We had always thought that we had a good working relationship with Artistree, so it is regrettable that you felt it necessary to involve a wider audience before first engaging with us.

Despite this we wish to address your two requests. We do need to have access to the top floor so cannot extend the notice period beyond that already given. As for alternative space, the only other building available to us is the Barrett Browning Institute and earlier this year we undertook to make this building available to another organisation, so we do not have any other space available to offer you.

Kind regards

**Mark Waller**  
**Chair of Trustees - Ledbury Places**

Copies:  
Ledbury Town Council  
Ledbury & District Civic Society  
Ledbury Area Development Trust

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