

PRESS NOTICE

The Sir Edward Heath Charitable Foundation

Trustees to test feasibility of continuing to open Sir Edward Heath's home to the public

On 20 September 2011 the Charity Commission announced its decision not to make a scheme, a draft of which it had published on 17 May 2011, which would have authorised the Foundation to sell Arundells, the former home of Sir Edward Heath in The Close at Salisbury. Since then the Charity Commission has suggested that the trustees should investigate the feasibility of a three-year business plan and an annual financial strategy with a view to establishing whether the Foundation could in that period reach a "break-even point" which would allow it to maintain Arundells as a visitor attraction into the future.

The trustees remain unconvinced that that there is any possibility of achieving financial viability for the Foundation so long as Arundells is retained and opened to the public, and remain of the view that it would be in the best interests of the charity to close Arundells, sell the property, allow it to revert to residential use, and use the proceeds of sale for other charitable purposes as provided for in Sir Edward Heath's will. As the trustees have made clear, the business plan proposed by the Friends of Arundells does not in their view provide a basis for reaching a break-even point or for providing a "secure long-term future for Arundells", as desired by the Friends of Arundells. The trustees are, however, prepared to test the feasibility of the Charity Commission's suggestion of a three-year business plan and financial strategy, and therefore propose to commission independent professional advice on the feasibility of such a plan.

Before doing so, the trustees propose to apply to Wiltshire Council for planning and listed building consents to open Arundells for a further three years from 2012 to 2014, on the basis of longer periods of opening than hitherto, and to enable the Foundation to supplement income from visitors' entrance fees and the sale of merchandise by marketing the use of the house and garden at Arundells for events, such as concerts, wedding receptions and other social gatherings, along lines suggested by the Friends of Arundells. There would clearly be no point in spending the Foundation's money on an independent study of the feasibility of a three-year business plan if the necessary planning and listed building consents were not to be forthcoming.

The Friends of Arundells, with representatives of whom a group of the trustees have recently had a useful meeting, have been informed of these proposals.

29 November 2011