

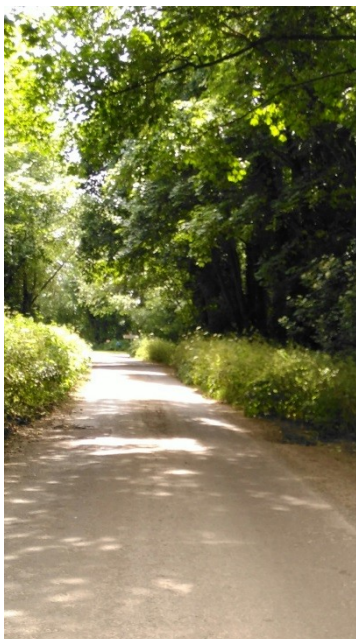
Kelmscott Village - “Heaven on Earth” under threat.

As residents of Kelmscott, we are saddened to see that the Society of Antiquaries have been successful in their application for Heritage Lottery funding and have been awarded £4.3M to “save” Kelmscott Manor. This will allow the Society, who own the Manor, to carry out the repairs to this heritage site, but it is at a price and that price is the village of Kelmscott and the natural environment.

We fully support conservation and responsible and sympathetic tourism but in order to receive this grant, HLF require the Society of Antiquaries to achieve an increase in visitor numbers from current levels of around 20,000 per year to 40,000 per year. Open days each year will also increase from the current 91 days to 199 days in order to achieve this.

The tiny hamlet of Kelmscott is beautiful. It is an idyllic rural landscape with fewer than 100 residents, only 34 houses, 2 working farms, a pub, a church and of course Kelmscott Manor, the summer home of William Morris. It is easy to understand why Morris chose Kelmscott as his country retreat and why he referred to this Thames side village as a “heaven on earth”. The village has largely escaped modernisation and has no street lights, single track, two-directional lanes throughout, only some 100 metres of narrow pavement, open drainage ditches, no mains drainage and no public transport.

It therefore seems quite incredible that anyone should encourage 40,000 visitors a year to visit this tiny village which does not have any infrastructure to support such a tourist hotspot. We believe we are already at saturation point with current levels of 20,000 visitors a year. The pictures here show the Eastern single track entrance into the village, 2.8M wide with several blind bends and few passing places. This is the



route all Manor visitors will follow, whether entering or leaving the village. It is also one of two access roads into and out of the village and used by everyone else as well. Imagine a 2.6M wide coach meeting a 1.7M wide car or an emergency vehicle trying to get through.

The Society, HLF and the Council state that they will be removing all traffic from the village as justification for the plans to go ahead, but this is not the case as the car park is in the village and traffic has to reach the car park, through the narrow two directional country lanes and around blind bends. Once the 40,000 visitors have arrived at the car park, currently a grazing field which will be urbanized into a permanent car and coach park, these 40,000 people will have to walk most of the 410M pedestrian route to the Manor in the road, avoiding farm traffic, cars and Manor electric shuttle vehicles. How on can this be safe?

We have expended a considerable amount of time and effort trying to make public bodies aware of the hazards of such expansion. We have objected to the planning application and have also raised concerns with HLF. *We fail to understand how WODC granted planning to an application that clearly contravened a number of policies regarding infrastructure, traffic management, pedestrian safety and conservation and how the HLF approved an application that did not appear to meet their criteria that "Your local area/community will be a better place to live, work or visit; and Your local economy will be boosted".* These public bodies will not directly answer our concerns or justify how this development is safe, sustainable or acceptable in such an environment.

It should be perfectly possible to carry out the required conservation to the Manor without destroying the village and the unique characteristics of Kelmscott that made it so important to William Morris. Indeed, recently, in an 18 month period, the village successfully raised the £130,000 required to conserve the Morris Memorial Hall by seeking grants and support from a wide range of charitable trusts, local organisations and individuals, demonstrating just how deeply we care about Conservation and our Heritage and showing that even though the sum is much less, it is possible to raise a significant amount of money without sacrificing the integrity of the village to do so.

More information is available at <https://www.facebook.com/savekelmscottvillage>

On behalf of Kelmscott Objectors