

Lodge Farm, Laxfield Road

Stradbroke Eye

Suffolk IP21 5NQ

26 November 2019

Christine Fairchild
Director of Alumni Relations
University Offices
Wellington Square
Oxford OX1 2JD

Dear Christine,

The future of Oxford University Society Suffolk

On behalf of myself and the Committee of the Oxford University Society Suffolk Alumni Group, I have to advise you that we shall not be organising any events for our Members in 2020. We have taken this step with great regret but see no alternative. With an ageing and declining active membership we are no longer able to attract sufficient people to events that we have organised over recent years to justify the effort involved. Nor can we provide attractive numbers to get good deals out of enticing venues.

There may be other factors contributing to dwindling attendance at events over the last five years but it is obvious that the failure of the Alumni Office to release to us updated database details including recent graduates living in Suffolk will ensure the demise of the Group. This is especially frustrating because the change required to make this possible is so simple.

Although falling numbers are clearly the key reason for our decision there are others. Most of the members of our small Committee have served for at least six years, most are also not young. Our attempts on many occasions to recruit new, younger and more diverse Committee members have failed. – Hardly surprising perhaps given that there are so few such people among our Membership.

Meanwhile the support that we have received from the Alumni Office in other respects has been minimal – especially in securing accomplished Oxford based speakers. Professor Paul Smith, who was to have spoken at our final lunch in November, stands out as a shining example in a pathetically short list of polite refusals.

The Suffolk Group will not actually close, but become temporarily inactive. I hope that a policy change might bring new, younger, potential Members to the County and from their number perhaps a new, vibrant, Group might emerge. It is our intention therefore to retain the registered domain name, and initially the web site, keep the bank and PayPal accounts in suspense and securely archive the post-GDPR membership list to facilitate such a revival

I am willing to remain as a contact point (chairman@ous-suffolk.co.uk diverts to me) for 12 months before bowing out completely. No events will be organised by the present Committee beyond the end of 2019. Following our AGM and Committee Meeting, both held on November 23rd, the present members of the Committee have however all agreed to retain their present roles for a further 12 months solely for the purpose of facilitating the transfer of the running of the Group to others, or should that fail, its formal closure.

It is very sad that I have to acknowledge our failure to keep this once active group alive. I do not believe however that its demise can be laid entirely at the Committee's door. Other groups must confront the prospect of slow death, being deprived of new members. If our case prompts a rethink in Oxford our six years of effort will not have been entirely in vain.

Yours sincerely

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Chairman

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