

THE WOODCHESTER WORD

Community offer to acquire replica mosaic rejected

A local community group have had their offer to acquire the famous replica Orpheus pavement rejected by the owner.

The Woodchester-based Orpheus Group wanted to put the replica on local display and submitted a detailed offer to the current owner of the mosaic at the end of November. The proposal covered the likely location where it would be displayed, details of a proposed new visitor centre, and importantly described how it would become a major community asset and a significant national and international educational resource.

The Group also outlined plans to make it a legacy to Bob Woodward – one of the two brothers who created the replica. Bob lost two children at a young age and has spent his life committed to helping sick children and their families, including founding Cancer and Leukaemia in Childhood – CLIC. The Orpheus Group's plan included profits from the attraction being donated to the CLIC-SARGEANT charity.

The Group's offer of £100,000 was based on valuations by three international experts in antiquities, all of whom agreed that this was a reasonable price for the artefact.



The last time the original pavement was uncovered was in 1973

But the owner's agent told the Group that "the owner is not interested in your offer or your expert valuations. I have been told not to pursue it further."

It seems that although the Orpheus Group were assured by the owner's agent, a well-known London art dealer, that both he and the owner were keen to see the replica restored back to the community, this in fact does not appear to be the case. The Group was not prepared to consider the asking price of over half-a-million pounds, and did not believe that a heritage funding organisation, which is where they would have sought funding to buy the replica, would support the purchase of an item so far above its expert valuation.



The replica was last displayed at Prinknash Abbey before being sold at auction to a private buyer in 2010, and has been in storage ever since.

"We are really disappointed that after three months of hard work by our team to put together a very credible proposal, our offer, which was at a fair price agreed by international experts, has been rejected out of hand" commented Iain Dunbar, a member of the Orpheus Group. "This is a great disappointment not only to the Woodward Brothers as creators of the replica, but to the residents of Woodchester who were keen to see it displayed for all to enjoy, and with profits generated from its display going to charity."