

Refund claim

When it was announced that the provision of a lift was to be cancelled because Grey Friars was to be sold, CALCAG Trustees took the decision to claim back what had been spent on plans for the lift.

It was felt that as local people's money had been freely given to help access to classes in Grey Friars, but the County Council withdrew from the joint project with CALCAG to refurbish the building, a refund was due.

Trustees felt that although a lift is now provided in the Wilson Marriage Centre, the money spent on plans for a Grey Friars lift could have been used for other projects. We have therefore asked for its return in order that it may be spent on other means of supporting local adults' access to education.

Negotiations have gone well and we now have, in writing, a promise to refund the £4,112.50 which CALCAG spent on surveys and plans.

We look forward to the receipt of the refund. Members will have the opportunity to guide Trustees in the use of our funds at the AGM on 9th November 2007, 7.30pm at Grey Friars.

Over-60s fee concessions

When some local education authorities, FE colleges and other providers of adult education axed fee concessions for over-60s we made representations at local and national level.

The official responses relied heavily on the argument that LEA / County Council lawyers advised withdrawal due to the effect of the "Employment (Age) Regulations 2006".

After analysis of the situation, including correspondence with various bodies including the government and national agencies, CALCAG believes that a clear case can be made to deny the so-called 'unlawfulness' of some age-related concessions.

We are currently preparing a strategy to present to local and national government - including Essex County Council who run adult education in Colchester - which we hope will enable the reintroduction of some kind of fee concession for older people.

The paper will be finalised at the Trustees' meeting of August 20th and will be available at the AGM.



What is CALCAG?

This is still the main question the Trustees are asked.

We are the **Colchester Adult Learning Continuing Access Group**, which grew out of the Grey Friars Lift Fund.

In the process of applying for registered charity status, it was pointed out by the Charity Commission that the single aim of contributing to the provision of a lift in a public building was not - in itself - a sufficiently charitable cause to warrant registration.

So we widened our remit to include all aspects of ACCESS to adult learning - physical, social and with respect to choice of curriculum.

This still included the original purpose of getting better physical access to upper floors (i.e. via a lift) but widened our remit to help in other ways, including acting as a representative, lobbying and advisory group.

Our latest purchase (this year) is a hoist to assist people out of wheelchairs for classes.

The latest on:

- ***Claim for refund of cost of plans for lift***
- ***Withdrawal of over-60s concessions***
- ***Grey Friars 'Heritage Days' exhibition and guided tours***
- ***Preparing to move to the Wilson Marriage Centre***
- ***Next CALCAG AGM - Looking Forward***
- ***CALCAG website***

Moving the HQ to Wilson Marriage

CALCAG's chairman attends all the planning meetings for the move to the Wilson Marriage Centre in 2008.

There have already been some improvements, such as the provision of a lift giving easy access to many rooms, but some access matters still require clarification.

These include acoustics problems, sufficient nursery places for students' children, travel / parking arrangements and the type of programme to be offered in the daytime.

Acoustics is a matter of great concern to those whose hearing becomes problematic as they get older, not only in terms of volume, but also regarding the discrimination and separation of sounds. The cavernous nature of many of the WMC rooms is a problem which has not yet been addressed in plans for improvement of the building.

CALCAG is monitoring very carefully the promises made by Essex County Council when they announced that WMC would become the 'new flagship adult college for Colchester'.

The 2007 AGM

CALCAG's AGM for this year will be held on Friday 9th November at 7.30pm.

We intend to be in 'looking-forward' mode for this meeting, which will have the same format as last year: an open forum to start, with presentations and discussion, followed by AGM business.

The theme will be "Access to Learning for All Adults" and there will be a CALCAG statement on this theme.

We will receive a presentation from the current local management of the ECC Adult Community Learning Service on their vision for the future of Colchester adult education.

The AGM business will include another open forum where members can brief the Trustees on what is important to them. This will form an important guide to Trustees for the year ahead.

Join us - it's free! Membership (giving access to our main meetings and a say in how we operate) is open to all who support our aims. We currently have over 50 people in direct membership and a considerable number of other supporters.

First Celebration of Grey Friars – Heritage Open Days 8/9 Sept.

The first event in appreciation of Grey Friars, in its last year before closure, is a fascinating look at the site's historical and architectural heritage.

There will be the first-ever exhibition chronicling the history of the site from Roman times to the present day. This intriguing project presents some hitherto unpublished documents and brings together for the first time an amazing array of maps, photographs and written descriptions.

There will also be guided tours of the buildings with commentary on their past use and development.

Together with a café-style reception in the hall and a stall selling books and memorabilia, this promises to be a significant event.

Entry is free and available on a drop-in basis from 1pm to 5pm on Saturday 8th and Sunday 9th September 2007 (last tour leaves 4pm).

Please tell family and friends.

Website on way

CALCAG's website is in course of preparation, courtesy of local firm Red Tiger - a West Mersea-based I.T. company.

As well as details of the Charity and its activities, we would like to include material relevant to all aspects of access to adult education.

This includes advice, guidance research and analysis of all kinds of issues relating to how adults take part in learning.

We will address problems of access to opportunities, by acting as a database for the many classes and courses that have been continued independently by tutors after being withdrawn by centres or colleges. Such tutors will be invited to provide information for our database so that the general public can find out about opportunities through our web pages.

—————Temporary address—————
As it has not been possible for us to stay based at Grey Friars, we are renting a mailbox:

**CALCAG , UNIT 238,
COMMUNICATIONS HOUSE
9 ST JOHN'S STREET CO2 7NN**

Neither do we therefore now have a telephone number, so please use email: calcagcharity@btinternet.com or write or email your telephone number so that we can call you back.