

12 February 1982

From Peterlee Development Corporation – G Philipson D.F.C to Victor Pasmore

I thought I would write to let you know what progress we have made in the matter of the Pavilion and seek your advice on a particular point that has arisen in our discussion with the District and Town Councils.

I think we have managed to edge the local authorities, a little at least, away from the idea of demolition. Our main argument has been that the North East already enjoys, if that is the word, a reputation for indifference to art, and if they demolish the Pavilion they might well be subjected to a barrage of criticism in the nation press which could reach very substantial proportions, given the lobbying ability of the art world and your prestige (no flattery) in it. This could be made distinctly unpleasant if it were linked, as it probably would be, to Easington District Council's recent troubles with the Ombudsman and such local fold lore as the well know story about the citizens of Hartlepool hanging the monkey.

We sweetened the pill by suggesting that we would be willing to make a sizeable contribution towards restoring the Pavilion and then maintaining it. In fact we talked of £2500 towards putting matters to rights and a £500 per annum maintenance contribution thereafter, though I should be grateful if you would keep these figures to yourself for the present. We had, of course, to say that our contribution would have to end when dissolution came along at the end of 1985, unless we are granted a stay of execution.

In fairness to the local authorities, they have no real animus against the Pavilion itself: they are simply pestered by complaints about vandalism, noise, litter, courting couples (with the emphasis on the coupling) and demolition seems a simple if drastic solution to their problems.

If they could be persuaded that not only would demolition not be worth it (because of adverse publicity) but there was a possibility of putting the Pavilion back into decent order and keeping it that way, then they might well co-operate.

There is still one substantial problem to be solved, and it is this. The local authorities argue, cogently I think, that the Pavilion is vandalised because its only function nowadays is as a meeting place for the idle and the ill-disposed. In other words, if a valid alternative use could be found for it, and one to which it could be put on a regular basis, then if it were put to this use after being put back in good order the vandal problem would sort itself.

Have you any ideas on the question of alternative use? I must confess that I have none, but I hope that as the designer of the Pavilion you may be able to think of something that would meet our needs.

It would be particularly helpful if you could let me have any ideas you may have before the end of February. Although most of the discussions that have taken place so far have been at the official level, a fairly important political meeting with local community representatives is due to take place during the first week in March, and it would be useful to have your views by then.

I look forward very much to seeing you in March.

With kind regards,