

My Lord Lieutenant, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you very much to the Rector, Churchwardens and Parochial Church Council for being our hosts. And thank you very much to our bell-ringers for their jubilant peals and members of the band for their triumphal music.

On behalf of the LARCS' Team, I welcome you all very warmly to The Exultation of LARCS: the joyful celebration of the launch of our Community Hub which marks the beginning of the next phase of our project. Whether your family has lived in this area for generations, or you've just moved in, or become a LARCS' supporter from further afield, here we are all Bamptonians.

We are indeed honoured to welcome Her Majesty the Queen's Representative, The Lord Lieutenant of Devon, Mr David Fursdon. I believe this is the very first visit of any royal, or his or her representative, since Bampton's castle was destroyed by King Stephen's forces in 1136. We do hope that this visit will be entirely constructive. Please don't leave it 880 years before the next visit to Bampton, Sir!

We are delighted to welcome back The Former High Sheriff of Devon, the Honourable John Rous, Fire Station Manager, Mr Jim Laker who is deputizing for The Chief Fire Officer of Devon and Somerset, Mr Lee Howell; our Patron, Mr Neil Parish MP and the Power to Change Regional Programmes Manager Ms Jenny Sansom, all of whom will be addressing you.

All our Very Special Visitors have extensive experience of voluntary organizations – and LARCS is entirely voluntary – and they are all people willing to roll up both their metaphorical, and actual, sleeves.

That we can rejoice in the newly-furbished building, the Old School, now the new Library and Resource Centre, and enhances Bampton's community provision, is entirely due to all of you, both individually and as members of the organizations which you represent including local government, community services, and organizations, professional bodies and businesses. You have all been very generous with your ideas, your labour, your time and your encouragement - LARCS needs every bit of that support in order to continue, and also to enable it to grow to its full potential.

With your backing of the LARCS' project, we were able to apply successfully to the Power to Change Initial Grants Programme and demonstrate that Bamptonians could make the idea of a community hub become a reality. (Also, early next year, we very much hope to provide a long-term home for the library, which will be cause for another joyful celebration.)

Perhaps first remarked by Adam to Eve on leaving the Garden of Eden, we are in an Age of Transition. The Spirit of Britain flourishes in our local parish and surrounding areas, however: we're pragmatic, resilient, protective of the community and its materials, (including its buildings), adaptable - and very very determined. (You need

look no further than the Heritage Centre here which shares this ancient space and is helping it move forward into the future.)

LARCS could not have achieved all it has without the generosity of the Old School's owner, Stan Vincent, continuing Rex Serringer's philanthropic intentions in making the Old School building available for a tiny rent with a very long lease – up to fifty years.

Nor could we have achieved this without the substantial grant of £148,000 from Power to Change. This enabled us to engage local builders. Ware Construction, who have renovated the Old School so splendidly - on time and within budget. And the professional guidance we've received has borne us up through all the legal and building minefields. We are delighted to welcome all their representatives here today as we celebrate, and to acknowledge our debt to you all.

But please bear in mind that today's Launch celebration by no means marks the end of the LARCS' project, rather it heralds the beginning. The Library and Resource Centre has to be well-used in order for it to fulfil its obligations to our community and our supporters –and to make its future sustainable. Let's never forget the warning: Use it, or lose it!

Already we've implemented some of the new services which you told us you wanted: for toddlers, for schoolchildren, for senior citizens and those with special needs. In addition to those services, we are also hosting a wide range of events – as, for example, Dogs Helping Kids, U3A and Bampton's Big Draw for the children. Next week on Tuesday evening, there will be an author event with Sarah Winman.

We aim to have something for everyone – keeping us safe, informed, realising our potential, improving our well-being – and having fun - whether it is something specific you require, such as specialist advice from Age UK, or the Fire Service, or practical help getting on to the Internet or as a very informal pleasant meeting-place in which to drop in for a chat.

Provision for young people has consistently been high on our list of priorities.

Bampton Cub Pack has visited the LARC both before and after the building's renovation, and chose LARCS as a community project with which to be involved as part of the World Challenge Badge. The Pack would like to take part in our celebratory event with a recitation of poetry.

I'd now like to invite David Phillips, Akele, and the Bampton Cubs to come forward...

JMC