

Gemma Peters
Chief Executive Officer
Macmillan Cancer Support
The Forge
3rd Floor
Bronze Building
105 Sumner Street
London
SE19HZ

22nd July 2025

Dear Ms Peters

I have been a very strong and positive supporter, raising money for Macmillan Cancer Support since 2012. With the, then, very positive support of the local fundraising managers and support staff, I formed Driftwood Fundraising Group, of which I am the Chair. It is a committee of 1, as I have done everything myself from the onset, not wanting to be tied by other peoples decision making.

All monies raised have gone to the Macmillan Horizon Centre in Brighton and to date this exceeds about **£120,000**. The committee was set up to manage the Macmillan Coastal Garden Trail I ran from 2012 to 2022, this encompassed a vast range of both administrative and practical tasks ranging from recruiting gardens, visiting to assess suitability, risk assessing the plots and supporting garden owners through to opening.

In addition, I built and maintained a comprehensive web site for the Macmillan Coastal Garden Trail, created and designed all the publicity, marketing and published the trail booklet for the annual event. I consolidated and banked all income after the event and engaged with local celebrities, MP and community leaders to support the event on trail weekend for the official opening. I was also successful in recruiting TV gardener, Christine Walkden, as its patron. The final trail took place in 2022.

In addition to the trail funds raised, monies from my own, multi-award winning garden, Driftwood have been donated to the charity. Since 2009 I have opened my own garden with entrance going to Macmillan Horizon Centre in Brighton. I have personally baked 10,500 portions of cake over the years to sell at my openings, all served on my large collection of vintage china in garden, with proceeds to Macmillan. We've served over 12,000 cups of tea and coffee over the years with proceeds to Macmillan too. I devised 2 different talks about gardening and charity fundraising to deliver to WI, U3A, Gardening Clubs and the like through the winter with my fees going to Macmillan. Between 2009 and 2019, I staged a raffle of artwork each summer with pieces donated by local artists, with all monies going to Macmillan and have staged fundraising events on social media eg, naked gardening day in 2020 and raised over £800.

Until recently I truly felt all my efforts had been wonderfully acknowledged by Macmillan over the years. Indeed, I received an invite to a reception at Buckingham Palace in January 2018 with the then POW and was recognized as a finalist in the Macmillan “Thanks to You Awards” in 2023.

Up until the last 18 months, I had always found my interactions (although not needed that often, as I have long been recognized as real self starter) with the charity to be engaging and appropriate. There was someone local who I could contact, who knew me, knew what I was about and what I have been doing, which was refreshing and worked really well for me as a one-man band! Local Macmillan social media teams engaged with me to promote garden openings etc too.

How sad I have felt over the last 12 months or so, since the demise of the local fundraising teams. I have felt isolated, and lacking any real support (not that I actually wanted it) with no one in the charity actually knowing who I was any more and what I actually did. I’m fed up being spoken to by a variety of different people from Shipley over the phone who know nothing about me and what I do. All assume I am the Chair of a committee and deal with me on that basis, no longer as an individual who does not fit the standard mould of a committee member. I must have had to recount to several people now what I do and it is incredibly frustrating. Having supported and raised money for the charity for 13 years now, one would have hoped they would know what I’m about. Equally, I’ve had no contact with the Horizon Centre team either.

On 12th November last year I was so frustrated that I sent a detailed email to the rfsupport@macmillan.org clearly outlining what I had been doing, after being told *my stewardship* had been passed to them! No-one had bothered to communicate that information to me prior to that! Yet, still I am asked what I do!

Last autumn I completed the online data protection course and because it no longer produces a certificate, when I was challenged earlier this year by Lynne that I had not completed it, I could not prove it so had to do the thing again.

Following the frustration by the whole process last autumn I also copied details to you via a message on ‘X’. See attached communication dated 9th November 2024, **even you failed to acknowledge and respond to me.** Things have not improved this year.

I have now had several conversations with team members in Shipley and I did express my very strong views over the phone at the time to one of them, Claire Gallagher on 15th May and mentioned to her the earlier conversations I’d had with Lynne Perris over the data protection. I have been contacted since, but I really still do not feel as valued as I had been previously. After a couple of earlier calls in the year, I really felt like I had been “*processed*” by staff in Yorkshire, who have never met me nor seen what I do, it was all so frustrating and unnecessary.

I have therefore decided that 2025 will be my final year raising money for Macmillan Cancer Support. I have not taken this decision lightly after 13 years of having a wonderful working relationship with the charity at all levels, I sometimes communicated and met with your predecessor too. It is all very disappointing, as so many of my visitors so relate to the charity and support me *because* of the charity.

Sadly, after the garden closes on the 3rd August, I'll reconcile the money raised this year and bank it, then send all the details to the Finance team and then plan to request that they cease Driftwood Fundraising Group, with immediate effect, and close down my Enthuse fundraising page too.

I can't tell you how very sad this makes me feel after 13 years of a truly harmonious working relationship with Macmillan Cancer Support and I believe it is totally unnecessary, had the charity handled the whole process differently.

Yours sincerely

Geoff Stonebanks

Chair Driftwood Fundraising Group (D29)