

Man's plan to buy Belle Tout

BUYING Belle Tout lighthouse and opening it to the public is a dream for one ambitious man — and he is calling for volunteers to help.

The privately-owned building, previously used as a lighthouse, is on the market and 38-year-old Rob Wassell, an IT manager from Redhill, Surrey, has been working to set up a charity.

Mr Wassell hopes to run the not-for-profit organisation, which will be called the Belle Tout Preservation Trust.

He plans to raise the funds to buy the Grade II listed building and offer the public a chance to stay at a bed and breakfast in the lighthouse.

He has been seeking advice from organisations such as the National Trust and English Heritage, as well as discussing media coverage with the BBC, ITV and Sky.

Rob Wassell, who once lived in Peacehaven, said, "I have spent many years of my life on the South Coast and I know the area of Beachy Head very well indeed.

"I have always admired Belle Tout and often wished it could be open to the public — when I heard it was for sale, I knew this was the chance.

"I believe this amazing building deserves not

by **Juliet Perry**

only to be opened to the public but owned by the public which is where I had the idea for forming a charity to achieve this.

"The Trust's formation is nearly complete, although I am hoping that we can recruit trustees from the local area to help as there is still a lot of work that needs to be done."

Belle Tout Lighthouse is placed on the market with an asking price of £850,000 and Mr Wassell estimates an extra £100,000 will be needed to prepare the lighthouse for the public.

The trust is not yet a registered charity, as Mr Wassell is waiting for more trustees before he applies for charity status. He is calling for other volunteers to come forward so the fundraising can begin.

He said, "Providing we can get more trustees on board and quickly, I envisage being able to go live within a couple of weeks.

"We will be taking donations online and by bank transfer and we would like to have raised enough money for us to put in an offer by the end of August."

For more information or to join the trust visit www.belletoute.org.uk

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