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## Dispute closes Buddhist centre



1/5/12- The Maitreya Buddhist Centre, Bexhill

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A VOLUNTEER at the Maitreya Buddhist Centre claims "a traumatic and bitter dispute" has left this former haven of peace changed forever.

Now the building in Sea Road is locked with no sign of when it will be opened again.

Andrew Durling helped set up the meditation centre having been at the start of New Kadampa Tradition meditation classes in Bexhill.

He was one of the trustees when the charity was registered and was responsible for the oversight of administration.

The centre became established and thrived with up to 50 people a week attending regular meditation classes led by resident teacher Lam-ma and other teachers she appointed.

However since she retired there has been a breakdown in the relationship between NKT and the centre's management team, and from there Andrew and others have struggled to reach agreement with the head office based in Cumbria.

This appears to have become a struggle for control between a handful of volunteers and the umbrella organisation which has more than 1,000 branches throughout the country.

Now Andrew says this has gone so far he cannot imagine how the problem will be resolved. He believes he has acted in the best interests of the charity but claims the NKT head office wants him and the other trustees gone.

On Wednesday he met with the landlord of the building to discuss a possible next move.

Andrew told the Observer: "For six wonderful years this was a happy flourishing community and now within six months it is all gone.

"Whoever 'wins' (so called) the situation will find there is nothing left. I am as guilty as anyone else.

"This bold experiment in bringing buddhist meditation to Bexhill has, temporarily at least, failed."

He said the community had been irrevocably split, with some backing him and others supporting NKT, and added: "It is anyone's guess whether it will be alright."

The head office was approached several times for a comment this week but none was forthcoming.

A woman who attended the meditation classes described the struggle for control and said: "They have taken my place of worship away from me. It isn't a proper buddhist centre anymore."

She added: "It is just awful.

"I won't go back there, it's a mess. I am really sad. I want to say – how dare you do this."

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