

# South East Rural Towns Partnership NEWSLETTER

Issue 7: September 2006

## South East pilots good practice sharing



*University of Winchester students carrying out tourism healthcheck on Hayling Island. What a great idea!*

### SEEDA confirms funding for the South East Skills and Knowledge Exchange programme.

The Skills and Knowledge Exchange programme is a combined programme of practical case studies, illustrating best practice and training seminars for town partnerships and practitioners working in small rural towns in the South East.

### Continuing partnerships capacity building.

It is an extension of the work already being delivered by the South East Rural Towns Partnership (SERTP) but seeks to utilise the knowledge and experience of successful local partnerships to improve the capacity of towns to create vibrant sustainable communities. The material developed for these training sessions will include a number of good practice case studies and supporting materials for each training session that will be available to other towns.

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### Seminars for partnerships.

"Early Stages" seminars will be aimed at partnerships that are just starting out or are in the process of doing a Healthcheck. Topics will include engaging hard to reach groups such as businesses, volunteers and young people, consultation techniques, public relations and marketing tips.

"Later Days" seminars will focus on partnerships that have completed their Healthchecks and are now looking at implementing their action plans, and those that are re-visiting their Healthcheck priorities. Topics will include project planning, fundraising, sustaining partnerships and Healthcheck reviews.

**Dates and venues will be confirmed shortly and details will be available from [robyn.woronka@towns.org.uk](mailto:robyn.woronka@towns.org.uk)**

## South East News

# Upcoming SERTP Meetings

The next quarterly meetings are to be held on Thursday 19 October in London:

**SEEDA Regional Programme Monitoring Committee**

**County Co-ordinators**

**SERTP Steering Group**

Details of these meetings and minutes from previous meetings are available from

[glynis.spencer@towns.org.uk](mailto:glynis.spencer@towns.org.uk)

## SEEDA Small Rural Towns Programme (SRT)

The SRT programme is now up and running in a number of towns throughout the region.

For more information on eligible towns and projects contact a member of the SERTP Regional Team.

## SERTP Regional Team

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# Healthcheck by boat!

On the Hampshire south coast, Hayling Island MTI volunteers had asked if the MTI could look at the relatively unknown historical and heritage aspects of the island that they felt visitors were pretty much unaware of. As there is a rich vein of history and heritage, Hayling Island hosted students from the Heritage and Tourism course at University of Winchester. The students produced a full report, audit and recommendations assisted by their tutor Katie Bull. The University of Winchester was an ideal choice, as undergraduates studying heritage and tourism would understand better these niche markets.

Sarah Snowden, Town Project Officer, built an itinerary of heritage

and historical places of interest for the students to visit, as well as carrying out the actual MTI tourism healthcheck and surveying visitors to the island. Tourism South East held an introductory workshop upon their arrival, and local businesses, local councillors and MTI volunteers all generously gave up their time to assist. As no commercial boat trips go from Hayling, Frank Dunster of the RNLI offered his services to circumnavigate the island and take the students out to show them the sights. (see picture on front cover)

This is a Hampshire County Council-led project under the Economic Development Office's market Town Initiative, being supported by Havant Borough Council.

# Emsworth Children Meet The Mayor

During the Healthcheck information gathering process, the local schools in Emsworth did their bit to portray everyday life for younger people in Lee.

Emsworth MTI Chair Brendan Gibb-Gray led several sessions with the children. They completed surveys on their peers and family members, and also prepared their own analyses to identify what they saw as Emsworth's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

One of the things that came over very clearly was how many young people expressed their appreciation at being lucky enough to live in such a lovely place, that they clearly valued.

As a thank you for their help,

and also to help them learn how information is used at local government offices, Brendan and Emsworth MTI Project Officer Sarah Snowden hosted the student school council representatives who led the research at the Havant Borough Council offices, and they got to spend time with the Mayor of Havant and even try on his official robes!! They had tea and biscuits together, and even got to see his special offices, normally not open to the public.

There was a question and answer session where the children got to ask any questions they wanted about being Mayor and how it feels to actually be the person who represents Her Majesty the Queen at official functions.

## 2006 South East Regional Market Towns Awards

### Haslemere Initiative, Business and Economy Category Winner

High street businesses adopt an innovative customer rewards scheme.

The Haslemere Initiative started an innovative customer loyalty scheme that could beat some of the national chains at their own game!

#### High-tech customer loyalty card

The "Haslemere Rewards" loyalty scheme uses a hi-tech card especially developed with its business partner Savvy UK. The scheme offers a branded loyalty card to independent businesses that would not normally be able to afford a conventional loyalty scheme. Cleverly, its chip technology

allows up to 48 individual businesses to each operate in different 'pockets' of the card and control their own rewards and discounts to the customer. The cards were given a £5 value to incentivise sales and ensure that they were valued by customers.

#### 4,000 cards in use

The project demonstrated its success with 31 business joining the scheme and over 4,000 cards in use. Many businesses are reporting increased revenue and footfall. The Haslemere Initiative, Waverly Borough Council and Haslemere Chamber of Trade are supporting Savvy UK and other market towns in adopting this innovative idea.

The Haslemere Initiative group have promoted the scheme well with web pop-ups, sales leaflets, a regular newsletter and an



*Haslemere Rewards card is behind local retail loyalty programme.*

effective media campaign. When the scheme was launched in November 2005, it was covered in the Daily Telegraph, on Radios 4 and 5 and on ITN News at Ten! The Haslemere Initiative was also the South East Regional Winner in the Action for Market Towns 2006 National Market Towns Awards.

**For more information on the Haslemere Rewards customer loyalty scheme, visit [www.haslemere.com/rewards](http://www.haslemere.com/rewards)**

### Whitchurch Association, Social and Community Category Winner

Whitchurch used a quick win Christmas project to unify local business and community.

The Whitchurch Healthcheck revealed that over 80% of people 'shopped out of town' and more than 40% of people viewed the town centre as 'drab'. Against the backdrop of changing social and work patterns, out-commuting, the Internet and the opening of Festival Place shopping centre in nearby Basingstoke, action was essential to arrest the decline of the town's high street. Unanimous support was given for the first 'Christmas in Whitchurch 2005' with the theme 'Shop Locally in Whitchurch'.

#### Activities drew the community together.

A schedule of over 30 events commenced on 26th November and concluded with the Salvation Army band in the town square on Christmas Eve. Highlights included the switching on of the lights, reindeer rides, visits from Santa and the appearance in the local farm shop of a celebrity chef. Significant media coverage helped raise visitor numbers.

Competitions including a treasure hunt for children, a Christmas decoration competition, a best-dressed window display all added to the footfall in the town. The singing of Christmas carols in the town square also contributed to the festive mood.

#### A sense of optimism.

The 2005 event provided a quick win in that it created a community festive spirit, involved the community as a whole and helped engage local retailers in the longer-term town centre revitalisation project.

#### It worked!

Already over £100,000 has been budgeted and allocated to Whitchurch Town Centre in 2007/08 by both the Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council and Hampshire County Council as a result of the community-centred Healthcheck and subsequent action planning. The initiative is also recognised and supported by the Local Strategic Partnership as part of their community improvements programme.

**For further information contact [tony.corbin@hants.gov.uk](mailto:tony.corbin@hants.gov.uk)**

## 2006 South East Regional Market Towns Awards



*Ballard Water Meadows - hogweed cutting.*

### New Milton Town Partnership, Environment and Culture Category Winner

A unique Hampshire water meadow site saved from development pressure by 50 volunteers working with the Town Council. Ballard Water Meadows, close to the centre of New Milton, was identified as a key environmental asset to be protected both for its wildlife and amenity value for the local community.

#### Development pressure

The Healthcheck process identified a need to protect key green spaces from the intensive development pressure found in the area. The site is flanked on two sides by housing estates. Volunteers from these areas were the first to be recruited and asked to become guardians of this wildlife resource on their doorsteps.

#### Local council and residents join up

New Milton Town Council took over ownership from the local district council in 2005. As the ownership changed, the potential to save this site became clearer to the community and a Friends group formed of local residents

and wildlife enthusiasts. The Friends of Ballard Water Meadow are in the process of becoming an independent group from the Town Partnership. The group fundraises for large items such as gates, fencing, boardwalks, on site interpretation etc by submitting grant applications.

#### Project effort has synergy

The site has now been linked to other existing amenity areas in the vicinity these include Ballard Lake and Ballard Wood. Together they form a 10-acre site with open public access and a range of habitats. Ballard Water Meadows provides a good case study on how Council owned land can be managed in an environmentally sensitive way by local people living near to the site.

**For further information contact [newmiltontownpartnership@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:newmiltontownpartnership@yahoo.co.uk)**

### Uckfield Upskills Project, Partnership & Strategic Working Category Winner

This project in Uckfield, East Sussex filled an identified gap to help rural communities access training and economic opportunities. The Wealden Skills Centre is the result of a strategic partnership of The Wealden Skills

Partnership, Uckfield Regeneration Partnership, local business, community and voluntary sector. This collaborative approach has ensured a successful joined up approach of meeting local needs.

#### Local learning, local jobs

The skills and training gap emerged following the Healthcheck process resulting in a Vocational Skill Centre that provides courses in construction, motor vehicle and IT to young people, apprentices and adults. Parts of the community were isolated and excluded from learning tools needed to sustain local jobs. The Vocational Skills Centre is accessible to people that would otherwise have to travel for two hours to obtain similar training.

#### Focus on IT skills

The project offers training opportunities to local businesses and the community. The primary focus of the project is to facilitate IT training. The project contributes greatly to the development of skills and has tackled priority agendas such as Inclusion, Life Long Learning, progression and the development of business links. The project has provided a fully equipped IT suite with a high specification to enable a Learn Direct centre and offer the Learn Direct suite of courses. The centre is able to provide on-line testing, long and short accredited IT courses, short bespoke IT courses as well as delivering IT Key Skills for Apprentices. The project has also equipped part of a training suite for 'non-dirty' skills training. This includes Supervisory Management, Skills for Life, First Aid at Work, Basic Food Hygiene and bespoke business training.

**For further information contact [kirsti.godson@sussexdowns.ac.uk](mailto:kirsti.godson@sussexdowns.ac.uk)**

## Rural services set a new standard

Some of the best examples of imaginative and innovative ways to improve services in rural areas are highlighted in DEFRA's Rural Services Review which has recently been published. The Government has set national standards for the services used by people living in England – for example, how long it takes to see a GP or the kinds of children's services available. The Rural Services Review identifies key standards that affect people living and working in the countryside and shows what levels of service people can expect and how the standards can make a difference.

The Review also gives real life examples of how communities, businesses and local government are working in partnership to bring benefits to young people, public services, housing and older people. In welcoming this publication, Barry Gardiner, Minister for Rural Affairs said: "By showcasing these success stories, we want to give everyone a better idea of how to engage with their service providers and achieve benefits for the community as a whole."

If you would like a copy of the Rural Services review, contact DEFRA Publications on 0845-955-6000, quoting reference PB11929.

Or go to the website at [www.defra.gov.uk/rural/services/default.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/services/default.htm)

## State of the Countryside 2006

The State of the Countryside report is a unique and vital examination of rural England and of the many ways that it is changing - socially, economically and environmentally.

In bringing together a broad range of social, economic and environmental information, the report seeks to initiate and inform a wider debate about sustainability in rural England. The report provides a comprehensive analysis and interpretation of the overall rural picture, presented in an accessible, fully illustrated format. More details of how to purchase the report or see the data analysis used are available on the following website:

[www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/article.asp?aID=115&pID=1](http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/article.asp?aID=115&pID=1)

## Social role of markets in towns.

"Markets as sites for social interaction: Spaces of diversity" is one of the latest publications on the Joseph Rowntree Foundation website. Do open markets still have a place in the contemporary social landscape? And what do shoppers, traders and councils have to say about the places they shop in, work in and control? This study is the first comprehensive account of English markets as social spaces. It:

- **investigates markets throughout the country, coming to some surprising conclusions about the roles that they play;**
- **sets out what everyday practices sustain markets as a crucial part of our social fabric;**
- **offers a series of suggestions for their rejuvenation;**
- **illustrates their potential to improve our lives, from community employment to individual health;**
- **concludes with a powerful endorsement of their continued relevance to our social life.**

For more information, look online at [www.jrg.org.uk](http://www.jrg.org.uk)



*Markets still play an important social role.*

## Diary Dates

**14th October** - Cambridge Land Society Conference on the problem of access to services in rural areas, Grosvenor Hotel, Stockbridge, Hampshire  
**01244 329933**

**19 October** – RTPI Rural Regeneration Conference, London  
**Contact [services@rtpiconferences.co.uk](mailto:services@rtpiconferences.co.uk) or 0845 120 9602**

**31 October – 1 November** – BURA Ordinary Towns Conference, Ashford, Kent  
**Contact [info@bura.org.uk](mailto:info@bura.org.uk)**

**2nd November** – Networking / Training Event for Parishes and Market Towns, Midhurst, West Sussex  
**Contact [Rowena.tyler@westsussex.org.uk](mailto:Rowena.tyler@westsussex.org.uk)**

**5th December** – West Berkshire event, "Power to the Parishes", on bridging local plans into wider strategic plans, Newbury.  
**Contact [Jude Thomas at beacon@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:Jude.Thomas@westberks.gov.uk) or 01635-519083 or Sarah Ward at [sarah.ward@cckberks.org.uk](mailto:sarah.ward@cckberks.org.uk) or 01635 523 857**

## Around the Region



*Haslemere Celebrating*

### Surrey

Congratulations and Celebrations to the Haslemere Initiative who will be once again will be representing the South East at the AMT National Awards with their project - a loyalty card called "Haslemere Rewards". Their recent bid into the SEEDA fund has also been successful to revitalize the hinterland village of Beacon Hill. Celebrations are also being planned by the Cranleigh Initiative as the work on the High Street is completed. The Leatherhead Tomorrow Steering Committee are registering their new company, the Leatherhead Area Partnership with companies house, the first in Surrey to do this. The autumn promises to be a busy time for the Healthcheck committees of Dorking, Caterham and Godalming as DNA (Dorking Needs Action) Caterham ABC (A Better Caterham) and Godalming Together are all launched to the public. Hopefully all this publicity will encourage the other Surrey rural towns to undertake a Healthcheck especially as the benefits are becoming so real!

### Buckingham project finds funds

Buckingham Community Plan submitted a project bid for SEEDA funding under the Rural Towns initiative. The group were recently informed that they are to be

granted £240,000 towards their £700,000 project, 'the Circular Walk', designed to link up existing footpaths within the town and open up areas that are currently underused. The introduction of a new pedestrian bridge across the river is intended to encourage more children to walk to school and to provide better access to the High Street shops.

It is envisaged that greater use will be made of the river frontage through improved signage, waymarking, information boards and leaflets. Picnic sites and seating will also help in attracting more visitors to the town. The project also includes provision of a new youth shelter and lighting around the existing skateboard park, one of the main responses from the younger community who wanted somewhere safe to meet outside.

This is the first project to be awarded funding under the SEEDA Rural Towns Initiative in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. Other recent highlights of the Initiative are the highly successful launch of a Healthcheck in Olney, the publication of the Vision statement and Action Plan in Marlow and the start of discussions regarding a Healthcheck in Burnham.

**For further information, please contact Malcolm Godwin, 01296 382489 or email [mgodwin@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:mgodwin@buckscc.gov.uk)**



*Buckingham's Circular Walk project.*

### Hampshire

In Hampshire 21 towns are involved in the Hampshire Market Town Project, in which SEEDA is a partner, providing funds of up to £1.2M for match-funding selected projects for towns that have carried out a Healthcheck, identified the most pressing needs and formed a stable partnership to manage the projects.

Projects in Hampshire originating from Healthchecks include provision of community transport bus (Whitchurch), a young people's magazine (New Milton), town centre regeneration projects (Whitehill-Bordon and New Milton), community cinemas (Kingsclere and Hythe), tourism information (Botley) and developing business groups (Whitchurch and Alton).

The Brookfield Hotel in Emsworth was the venue for the Hampshire Small Rural Towns Information and Networking Event in July. Brendan Gibb-Gray, Chair of the Emsworth Business Association welcomed over 70 people to a day of information sharing and round table discussions. Julian Owen, Board Chair of Action for Market Towns, gave a summary of the work of AMT and introduced the lunchtime feature, the presentation of the Action for Market Towns South East Regional Awards. The afternoon comprised a tour of "The Terror" (the last remaining and recently restored Emsworth oyster boat) and an overview of the work of the Chichester Harbour Conservancy, followed by a lively presentation about the Emsworth Food Festival by John Twedell. Sue Beer, Chair of South East Rural Towns Partnership and Anne Harrison, Hampshire Market Towns Coordinator, wrapped up the day and thanked Emsworth for their hospitality.

## Around the Region

### East Sussex

In East Sussex there are 16 towns eligible for the Small Rural Towns Programme. Currently ten of the towns are working on or have completed a town Health check and Action Plan and another two are considering getting started.

Lewes has launched a public consultation as part of the ongoing Health check process. There has been a great response from residents who appear to recognise the importance of the process and the benefits it can bring to the town.

The Hailsham Trust has actively been engaging with a number of key people and organisations in the town to develop a potential skills and training project. Three workshops were held in July to presented potential project ideas; the results of the workshops are expected in autumn 2006.

#### The Polegate Vision and Action Plan

The Polegate Partnership completed its Health check in February 2006. The Partnership is now looking to agree its vision for the town and develop an achievable Action Plan to address local key issues.

A new public and private sector partnership is working together to form the Economic Blueprint for the Eastbourne-Hailsham Triangle which includes the Cuckmere Valley, Hailsham, Pevensey and Polegate. The triangle is recognised by SEEDA has been identified in the South East Plan as a key strategic location which offers considerable potential for growth. For more information:

[www.economicblueprint.co.uk](http://www.economicblueprint.co.uk)

Heathfield are planning to undertake a feasibility study for an indoor

swimming pool. The town is also currently planning for Phase 5 of the high street improvements. In addition, the Rural Transport Association has just launched an accessibility audit aimed at identifying transport needs.

The Uckfield Regeneration Partnership (URP) is currently looking at ways to retain the town centre Adult Education building, currently being sold by ESCC, for community use. Also, fundraising strategy for the planned Skatepark is in full swing. An 'appeal pack' is available for possible donors from [barryknights@btopenworld.com](mailto:barryknights@btopenworld.com)

### Berkshire

#### Power to the Parishes

West Berkshire Council is holding a Beacon Open Day, offering insights into what it is that gave them Beacon status as a local authority. "Power to the Parishes" is a one day event on Tuesday, December 5th that offers the opportunity to share their good practice experience and learn how they have embedded parish planning into the culture of West Berkshire Council and how it feeds into corporate and strategic planning. Sarah Ward, Community Action West Berkshire, will give a workshop on an introduction to parish planning. West Berkshire Council officers will have a workshop on how community action plans feed into and influence council policy and the work of the Local Strategic Partnership. The West Berkshire Partnership (LSP) workshop will look at how businesses can support community planning and why they would want to, and will explain the role of the LSP in community planning.

**For more information, contact Jude Thomas at [beacon@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:beacon@westberks.gov.uk)**

**[westberks.gov.uk](http://westberks.gov.uk) or 01635-519083 or Sarah Ward at [sarah.ward@cckberks.org.uk](mailto:sarah.ward@cckberks.org.uk) or 01635 523 857**

#### Sustainable Business Roadshow

The Lee on Solent Town Partnership are working with Hampshire County Council as part of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Sustainable Business Partnership, and Gosport Borough Council, to organize a Sustainable Business Network Roadshow, at which local businesses can meet, network, learn about ways of doing business in a more environmentally friendly way - and saving money at the same time.

If your businesses would be interested in attending a similar Sustainable Network event, contact Stephen Duncan, Sustainable Business Partnership Manager, 01962 845243, email [stephen.duncan@hants.gov.uk](mailto:stephen.duncan@hants.gov.uk), or visit

[www.egeneration.co.uk/hants](http://www.egeneration.co.uk/hants)

#### Networking and Training Event

Action in Rural Sussex (AiRS) is hosting an event aimed at parishes and market towns that already have an action plan. The day will comprise exchanging ideas, solutions and best practice as well as short training sessions on topics such as setting up a community website, managing a community project, starting a social enterprise and applying for funding from the Big Lottery Fund.

**For booking information, contact Rowena Tyler, Community Leadership Support Officer, Action in Rural Sussex, 01798 344612 [rowena.tyler@westsussex.org.uk](mailto:rowena.tyler@westsussex.org.uk)**

# MicroBizz creates buzz!

Steyning Community Partnership Hosts Successful Business Fair for Small Businesses

Steyning MicroBiz Fair took place on Saturday 24 June at The Steyning Centre. Aimed at small, start up and home based businesses and those thinking about starting a business, this was the first MicroBiz to be organised entirely by volunteers - from the Steyning Community Partnership. The event was extremely successful with nearly 200 visitors attending from across the south of the Horsham District.

There were over 35 exhibitors with strong representation from large organisations such as HM Revenue and Customs, LloydsTSB and West Sussex Trading Standards together with a range of interesting business to business service providers.

The overwhelming reaction from exhibitors, 20 of whom were first time "MicroBizzers", was one of great satisfaction, with many interesting and valuable leads generated. Over 50% of them said they were likely to use products

and services offered by others. This demonstrates that it is not just an event for the public but also a great networking opportunity for exhibitors themselves.

Nick Herbert, MP for Arundel and South Downs, recognised the importance of the event as did John Peel, a Director of SEEDA, who both gave welcoming speeches. Both recognise the vital role that small businesses play in the local economy. A strong local economy usually means a strong community.

Richard Woodman, Chairman of the organisers said, "The team of volunteers from The Steyning Community Partnership put in many, many hours of their time and worked hard to make the Fair a success and my thanks go to them. My thanks also to all the other volunteers in Steyning who helped in one capacity or another."

Steyning MicroBiz was sponsored by SEEDA, West Sussex County Council, Horsham District Council, Steyning Parish Council and Action in Rural Sussex.



## Funding Information

### Baring Foundation Grants

This funding programme will give grants of up to £100,000 for projects which will enhance the effectiveness of voluntary sector organisations.

Contact 020 7767 1348 or

[www.baringfoundation.org.uk](http://www.baringfoundation.org.uk)

### Big Lottery Fund

New funding schemes, including the Reaching Communities programme, have opened up fresh funding opportunities. Also, the Community Buildings Programme can provide matching funds for capital projects involving hub building facilities for rural villages and market towns. Details of these are available on the Fund's website at

[www.biglotteryfund.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk)

### GrantNet

Action for Market Towns offers GrantNet as part of its membership services. GrantNet offers a database enabling AMT members to carry out their own initial funding searches. It is a user-friendly, online search tool by which you can gain access to funding opportunities. Contact

[info@towns.org.uk](mailto:info@towns.org.uk)

for more information.

Futurebuilders aims to improve public service delivery through long-term investment in the voluntary and community sector in England.

[www.futurebuilders-england.org.uk](http://www.futurebuilders-england.org.uk)

Awards for All fund projects that enable people to take part in art, sport, heritage and community activities, as well as projects that promote education, the environment and health in the local community.

[www.awardsforall.england.htm](http://www.awardsforall.england.htm)

The next issue will be published in Winter 2007.

Please submit any articles for inclusion in the next issue to [glynis.spencer@towns.org.uk](mailto:glynis.spencer@towns.org.uk)



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