



Vale Vision News

Issue: 2
February 2006

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Thursday 16 March Town Centre meeting	7 pm
Tuesday 21 March Tourism Meeting	2 pm
Wednesday 22 March Board Meeting	7 pm
Monday 27 March Sports Network	7.15 pm

Changing Times

Things are happening in Dursley – we have talked about it, we have consulted local groups, and we have listened to ideas of what is not good in the area, what needs change and what local people would like to happen. This resulted in Vale Vision launching the plan in May.

In 2005, Vale Vision invited bids for 'Quick Win' funding, small grants of money for local projects. One of those 'Quick Wins' was a contribution to a marquee for the Dursley festival. We report on other 'Quick Win' projects later in this newsletter.

Vale Vision have not been standing still whilst doing all of this, various groups have been meeting representing Town Centre, Tourism, Construction Skills, a Multi-Use centre for Community Facilities and a Sports partnership. Three of these groups have recently been granted funding for projects in the plan, our biggest success, in partnership with Stroud College being the £½ million project for a Construction Skills Training Centre on the Littlecombe site. We thank Stroud District Council, Lister Petter, St Modwen and the South West Regional Development Agency for their assistance with this project.

Be part of the action! Get involved in making it happen! A small amount of time from a larger number of people can make it happen quicker

Shop Local Scheme Goes Ahead

The Shop local scheme is planned for April 2006. Everything is in place for purchase of cotton shopping bags to be distributed by local traders. The bags will be printed in Dark Green with a Map of Stroud and 'Shop Local' text on one side and In Cam, Dursley & District together with Vale Vision logo on the reverse. A letter has been sent to all traders in the Vale Vision area informing them of the scheme and requesting their participation. Supermarkets have also received a letter requesting their participation in the way of their choice which could be banners or something similar.

Vale Vision invite suggestions for a personality to launch the scheme, please e-mail, telephone or post realistic suggestions through Vale Vision shop door, details below or at the end of this Newsletter.

A Visit to the New Library

This week I visited the new library but strangely enough not to borrow books. Why did I go – a reporter from Radio Gloucester had asked me to join him there to speak about the Vale Vision Construction Skills Centre Project.

On approaching the library I had all the negative vibes that come from articles in the press and was a little anxious in case I was asked my opinion on the structure. I stepped inside to what was a warm welcoming light and airy complex, not just housing books but CD's videos and a suite of computers. Glass 'footprints' sculptures in the floor made by a local craftsman led the way, in front of me were sculptured letters designed by local school children to highlight the area for children. What a friendly place to come to browse, to surf the internet or to borrow books – welcoming for young and old.

Upstairs were offices for Citizens advice bureau, the Learning Community and other local services in the centre of town close to the bus station and accessible for all those who use their services.

The reporter and I exchanged a few words about the Construction Skills project but he then went on to say how excited we must all be that so many events to celebrate were happening in Dursley.

We moved outside and I reflected on what I had seen and when asked my opinion on the new library replied without any hesitation 'what a change it was from conventional libraries and how fortunate we were to have something in Dursley that all would be keen to use'. If you haven't yet visited the new library, I suggest you see it for yourself. *Shirley Hill, Vale Vision Project Manager*

Latest news from St Modwen & SWRDA

St Modwen and SWRDA are pleased to have successfully completed four recent lettings at Drake House. The building was originally built in the 1980s to accommodate Lister Petter's research and development department. It has been completely refurbished internally providing open plan working areas with raised floors and suspended ceilings. A new entrance has been formed to enhance the access and a lift installed to serve all floors. The lettings have been 2 units to Rowley Associates, The Shaftesbury Society and Salus. There is a further letting due to be completed at the end of March

Rupert Joseland at St Modwen confirmed that 'the accommodation has been designed to offer suites from 500 sq ft upwards on flexible terms. The majority of the lettings have been to local businesses and it is clear there is a growing need for small offices for companies that would otherwise move out of the Vale area.' Further information and letting particulars can be obtained from Rupert Joseland on 0117 316 7780 or from Robert Smith at ASH & Co on 01452 300433.

In terms of the remediation of the foundry sand and creation of the Business Park, the initial works are to commence in March and will commence the initial stages of opening up the River Cam from its current culvert running under the length of the site.

Littlecombe Planning update from SDC

Planning consents were given by SDC Development Control Committee on 14 February 2006 to two schemes in relation to Littlecombe:

- 1 Change of use of The Towers with new development in the grounds for a Care home
- 2 Opening up the River Cam and diverting it around the proposed business park at Littlecombe

These are welcomed steps on the road to delivery of the overall redevelopment of the former Lister Petter factory site. The Towers scheme will bring new jobs to the area and make good use of a building highly valued by the community. The opening up of the River Cam will provide a new environmental asset to Dursley and Cam. It will involve the creation of a new river bed and banks with associated recontouring of adjacent land and the provision of fish passes and new wildlife habitats.

Quick Win Projects

Last year Vale Vision funded several projects under 'Quick Win' funding. Criteria was drawn up, forms were completed by those who responded to information in the Vale Vision newsletter. A panel met to judge those who met the criteria and funding was awarded to several projects, updates of three such projects follow.

GL11 Community Project

Play equipment for youngsters of the GL11 Bright Buttons Toddler group had become very jaded and was long overdue for replacement. Vale Vision donated £800 for replacement equipment.

On contacting GL11, Marilyn McKechnie told Vale Vision: 'The children have played creatively and imaginatively with their new kitchen and play food. They have had wonderful playtimes on the huge caterpillar which will be going outside in the Spring for them to crawl under and bounce on. A fantastic floor mirror for babies to see themselves and imitate has already been used a great deal. The £800 made a real difference to our children and the Crèche. The new kitchen created an atmosphere of home for the little ones to play with and make friends.'

The money has been spent wisely and provided good value for the Quick win funding from Vale Vision.

River Cam Ecological Survey

Stroud Valleys project were funded by 'Quick Win' money and together with 'The year of the Volunteer' funding were able to carry out a survey on a stretch of the Rivers Cam & Ewelme. The survey of the river Cam looked for the presence of water voles and otters, recorded the principal river vegetation and noted the geographical and human features along the river course. Volunteers were trained to gather data through the use of field guides on some common aquatic and waterside vegetation, trees and invasive species. The survey work also looked at the topography of the river channel with volunteers sketching each survey point when working along the riverbanks as well as recording potential habitats and signs of water voles and otters.

Water voles, also known as "Ratty", are a nationally threatened species and their populations have declined by 75% since 1900s. Whereas these creatures were found on most stretches of the river Cam during a survey that was carried out in 1978, a second survey showed that they had virtually disappeared from the water course in 1989. Excited volunteers spotted burrows that could be water vole habitats, found footprints in the mud and heard the characteristic "plop" when water voles jump into the water to hide from predators. One person living along the river reported sightings of water voles. Otter spraints (droppings) were also found along the river.

The survey work has highlighted potential sites for bank profiling to encourage the remaining water voles to regenerate along the river, create otter holts as well as to manage particular stretches of the river for invasive ground flora species i.e. Himalayan Balsam that has identified by the survey work.

Through this work project officers have also been able to build up relationships with farmers and landowners, a number of which have shown an interest in getting involved in the Severn Vale Biodiversity Project, with some seeking advice on DEFRA's new on-farm ELS & HLS agri-environment schemes. These new contacts have through the survey work been able to identify possible sites where habitat enhancement work could be focused to encourage either/or otter and water vole.

We hope through further funding to conserve and enhance the River Cam Wildlife Corridor, an important stretch of diverse river habitat and to link it up to the surrounding countryside such as hedgerows coppices and important habitats such as the Rackleaze Wetland site in Cam, a remnant of a neutral grassland site, of which only 12% of original neutral grasslands sites are being left in the UK.

The river survey has so far covered 6km of the 8km river stretch. It is hoped that with spring arriving, the river survey work can continue up along the stretch that is known as the Ewelme from Water Street in Dursley to its sources on the edges of the Cotswold escarpment north of the village of Uley.

Stroud Valleys Project has produced a report of the river survey so far, which can be obtained by contacting Vale Vision office. (details at the end of this newsletter)

Snicket Way Survey

Funded by Vale Vision Quick Win money and the Heritage Lottery, members of the Cam Wildlife Group and wildlife volunteers in Dursley have started to survey Cam and Dursley for existing footpaths and alleyways. The "Snicket Way Survey" will produce a map showing all existing footpaths that link roads in Cam as well as in Dursley.

The term "snicket" comes from the old English word *snican*: to creep and is used widely in North Yorkshire describing narrow passages leading from one place to another, which may have walls or hedges on either side.

In Cam and Dursley many of the existing paths used to lead to the workplaces, which historically were the mills. For 500 years the network of paths has been used to walk from the edge of the parish to the centre. As the community and housing grew the locals still used the paths but now they became tarmac paths, alleys or snickets between buildings. With the advent of the car, increasingly people moved away from walking to work and local knowledge was restricted to the immediate area where one lived. Newcomers moving into Cam and Dursley might learn the snickets where they live but would not know them a few streets away. Housing developments may have maintained the access but the footpaths are not always signposted and local OS and street maps frequently stop short when the footpath reaches a residential area. It can take 10 minutes in a car to meander from one side of Cam to the Centre; it takes only the same time to walk if you know the snickets.

To date all of the snickets have been surveyed and the results are currently being put on one map, which will be ready for distribution through the Vale Vision premises in Long Street, doctor's surgeries, parish council offices, libraries and local shops by the end of March.

With the aid of the snicket map it is hoped to encourage people back out on foot into the countryside on their doorstep. Not only a means to walk around the village, the snickets provide mini wildlife corridors and the observant walker will be rewarded and hopefully also relaxed whilst improving fitness too. The production of this map may even encourage some people to leave behind the car, explore the parish and take pride and pleasure in the community in which they live.

If you are interested in becoming a member of the Cam Wildlife Group, please contact the Chair Shirley Welsh on 01453 543549.

Rednock News

In December 2005 Rednock celebrated the news that it had been granted £21.3 million for a new school for Cam & Dursley. The new look school will be placed on what is currently school playing fields. The new design for the school will provide specific areas for each subject all under one roof. The school will have designated areas for performing arts, a library resource centre, state of the art ICT facilities and a purpose built Post 16 Centre. Some existing buildings, the music block, science plus centre and sports hall, will be retained, refurbished and linked into the new buildings.

The new build will also provide Rednock with the opportunity to realise its aim of becoming an Extended School, providing facilities for everyone in the community, offering access to a variety of activities and services within and beyond the school day. The opportunities are endless from dance to adult education and drama to family learning programmes. The new school will have the capacity for so much needed by the local community. Building work is due to begin in the Autumn with the new school being completed and ready for staff and students by September 2008.

Cotswold Vale Talking Newspaper

Talking pages would like your help in identifying those who are blind or visually impaired who would be helped by their service but are not aware that it is available. If you know of anybody living in Cam, Dursley, Berkeley or Wotton under edge who would like a copy of talking newspapers, please telephone 01453 845287 or 843793.

'Test the Town' – piloted by the Learning Community

Cam and Dursley have been selected to pilot a national 'Test the Town' campaign in February. The aim is to get as many people as possible in Cam and Dursley to work towards, or take, the National Tests in English and Maths (GCSE level equivalent qualifications).

The twin communities were selected for the pilot scheme due to the success of The Learning Community (TLC) launched in the area 18 months ago.



Whether you are looking to plug a gap in your CV, improve your confidence, be able to help your children with their homework or just get your brain working again – this could be of interest to you.

Those taking part in Test the Town will be given the chance to work on practice test questions in English or Maths in a relaxed and friendly environment. This will be backed up by free, flexible, short courses held at venues across Cam and Dursley offering people the chance to brush up any skills they feel they need to:

Lower Kingshill Management Office, St Georges Road, Dursley	Friday 1pm-3pm for 3 weeks (Starting 3 March)
GL11 Community Project, Fairmead, Cam	Monday 1pm-3pm for 3 weeks (Starting 13 March)
Dursley Education Centre	Tuesday 10am-12 noon for 3 weeks (Starting 28 Feb) Saturday 10am-1.00pm for 2 weeks (11 & 18 March)
Rednock School, Rednock Drive, Dursley	Monday 7pm-8.30pm for 6 weeks (Starting 20 Feb) – Join anytime!

A range of fun promotional events will also be happening throughout February including "Challenge the MP" with David Drew having a go at one of the practice tests, and "Challenge the Teachers and Support Staff" at Rednock School who have also volunteered to have a go. Meanwhile members of the public will be able to try out the tests and enjoy a free tea or coffee at Dursley Farmers' Market at the town hall on Saturday 25 February.

The practice tests are online at www.move-on.org.uk Follow the learner route and click on English or Maths (or both) - to have a go! If you would like more information or to sign up for a free course, please contact Jane Manning or Louise Amato on 01453 548189 or email info@thelearningcommunity.org.uk

Further information can also be found on The Learning Community's website: www.thelearningcommunity.org.uk

Vale Vision Needs you – do you need us!

A little rusty or out of date, would like to develop skills or experience in a friendly environment – why not volunteer to work in the Vale Vision office.

Would like a job but have no skills, nervous to join a college course but would like to see what you can do – why not join us and we can work with you and give you the confidence you need to work towards a qualification.

Have skills but would like to get out of the house – get involved in community projects!

Yes we need you but you can have the opportunity to use Digital cameras and DTP to update the window display, use the internet and e-mail to develop communication skills, work on this newsletter or a 'What's On' booklet, update a database or use a spreadsheet to costs projects.

Help research projects or write funding bids – we can provide a range of skills and the opportunity to be part of community projects.

The office should be up and running by end of March but contact us now to express interest and to ensure that you do not miss out on this opportunity to develop your career or know more about Vale Vision and what it is doing in the community.

Vale Vision Sponsorship

Vale Vision are seeking further funding through funding bids but there is an opportunity for sponsorship of individual projects, newsletters, etc. If you or somebody you know would like to offer sponsorship for a particular aspect of the Vale Vision work, it would be acknowledged and in return Vale Vision would offer recognition of you or your company in the shop, in publications and in media releases with regard to the work of Vale Vision.

Promotion in this newsletter

An excellent opportunity for local people to promote an event or your business at low cost. If you would like to take a page or half a page in this newsletter to advertise your business or promote an event, please contact Vale Vision to discuss details and book the space.

Details

All advertising must be in this newsletter format and two colour only (black and one other colour). Entries will be restricted to a maximum of two pages and will only be for local business or local events.

Full Page - £20 per entry

Half Page - £10 per entry

Circulation:

E-circulation to all those involved with Vale Vision, Parish, Town, District and County councils
Copies in our shop, in participating newsagents, in town and parish council offices

Current Newsletter and back copies will be posted on our website when it is established (predicted date for completion, April).

Contact Details

Vale Vision can be contacted: By Post: Please use the address below

Telephone: Shirley Hill Tel: 01453 549208, e-mail: shirley @act2.demon.co.uk
 Geoff Wheeler Tel: 01453 545583, e-mail: geof.wheeler@btinternet.com

Note: Details with regard to shop telephone, e-mail etc will be notified as soon as these are operational