

## **COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE AND FACILITIES**

### **VILLAGE HALLS**

**John Dowsett and Jennie Lane**

#### **Provision of a comprehensive advice and support service**

The Village Halls Advice Service has continued its main task of supporting village hall committees. Enquiries vary widely, and come in by telephone, email, - and occasionally post. The issues this year have included a barbed wire fence adjoining a hall car park, village hall / parish Council relationships, and how to chair a difficult meeting and handle vested interests, but most of all funding and access to it remains the biggest issue. In early 2007 effort in applying to the last tranche of the Big Lottery Community Buildings Fund has been intense; in response the Village Halls Advisor and Charities Information Bureau ran two highly intensive workshops for applicants, and have scrutinised many draft applications. In addition two briefing days were held in village halls on Saturdays in January and February 2007 on a variety of subjects, attended by some seventy people.

#### **Enhanced Communication and co-operation**

Village Halls remain a core feature of our rural communities. They step into many other areas of activity in rural development, and so the Village Halls Advice Service continues to connect closely with many other areas of Community First work, including Parish Councils, grants and parish planning. The complementary responsibility of the Village Halls Adviser for other aspects of Community First's grant making and rural regeneration work has proved highly beneficial to village halls. During the year two occasional briefing papers were circulated to village halls, each with "need to know" information on some ten points, such as latest legislation, funding deadlines and useful contacts. The WVH Advice service has been selected to run a pilot for ACRE of the Hallmark Scheme – a scheme designed to measure and raise standards in village hall management.

#### **Improved liaison with local authorities**

Activities in the year have included technical assessments for Salisbury District Council on village hall grant applications, publicising the County and District Councils Village Hall Grants Scheme and handling over 30 registrations and 15 applications, and arrangement of a tour of four Halls for the members and officers of the Grants panel

## **COMMUNITY INSURANCE SCHEME**

**John Dowsett and Jennie Lane – and Penny Bell from March 07**

### **Offer lower premiums to village halls in the south west region**

Community First acts as an agent for Zurich Municipal, with the aim of offering a competitive and attractive policy while earning fees to support associated services. Starting in Wiltshire and initially in Devon the Scheme is now operating throughout the south west. The year has seen dramatic changes in the market place, with a new entrant and substantial reductions in premiums, this presenting both opportunities and threats. On the opportunity side Community First and two other RCCS are engaged in discussions with Zurich with pushing out the Scheme nationally, opening up the opportunity to extend from the South West to the West Midlands. On the threat side the increasingly competitive market place means that new business will be less easily won than it was three years ago, but it is all good news for Village Halls.

### **Increase WVHA membership income and financial support for the village halls advisory service**

Zurich insurance remains a key to increasing WVHA membership which advanced to 175 in 06/07, with over 180 predicted for the coming year.

### **Offer lower premiums to parish councils in Wiltshire, Devon and Dorset and Gloucestershire**

The Zurich policy for Parish Councils has remained extremely competitive, with almost every quote provided leading to a new policy. The combination during the year of expanded geographical markets for both Village Hall and Parish Council insurance, and the appointment of a Local Councils Assistant led to Parish Council Insurance work being phased over to the Local Councils office; this process will be completed in 07/08.

## **LOCAL COUNCILS**

**Katie Fielding and Penny Bell**

### **Facilitate the involvement of local councils in the democratic process**

WALC continually raises awareness of local councils' powers through the County Circular and the advice line. There has been preparation for the Local Council elections to take place in May 2007 as well as for the election to the Wiltshire Association of Local Councils Executive Committee. The County Secretary summarised the Local Government White paper for parishes outlining what it means for them.

### **Provide administrative support services for the Wiltshire Association of local councils**

Over 1350 enquiries from parish and town councils came into the WALC office. There were 10 county circulars sent out which all included information on updated legislation and the clarification of procedural matters pertinent to parish and town councils, as well as information from the National Association of Local Councils. As ever, the efforts of local councils in Wiltshire & Swindon to perform effectively and legally and to best value are increasingly evident. The service to local councils enhances and encourages these efforts with the above. In addition the County Secretary's work with the Executive Committee saw final revisions of the WALC constitution and the adoption of it at the WALC AGM.

### **Dissemination of best practice**

WALC held 9 seminars for clerks undertaking the portfolio in Local Council Administration.

A training session on Parish Plans was held to accompany the WALC AGM in July, as well as a course for new clerks and a course on the procedures at the time of election were held in March 2007.

The WALC website was developed and launched in early October; this outlines good practice and services for member councils.

There has been promotion of the Quality Council scheme and close working with parishes interested in undertaking the accreditation. Three parish and one town council have been accredited during the year.

### **Improved Three-Tier Working**

The Local Councils' Officer attended parish liaison meetings in Swindon and Salisbury and attended a meeting with the Chief Executive of North Wiltshire District Council to discuss greater communication and liaison with parishes in the district. In addition the Local Councils' Adviser acted as a panel member for West Wiltshire District Council's "So you want to be a councillor" event.

## **RURAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

**Carol Southall & Penny Bell**

### **Raise awareness of the need for affordable housing**

The Rural Housing Enabler (RHE) continues to implement the agreed work plan by liaising with Parish Councils, Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), Local Authorities and other interested parties to facilitate housing needs surveys and find suitable sites to deliver affordable housing.

A Rural Housing and Local Councils Assistant was appointed in May and has begun to deal with the housing needs surveys to assist with the increasing work load.

Additional information has been put on the Community First website to provide more detail for the public on the RHE work, with details of how people can access affordable housing.

Several articles have been written and presentations given to publicise the work of the RHE and to assist those in housing need with relevant information.

The RHE continues to be part of a working group for the Regional Spatial Strategy to ensure that numbers of rural home are also considered.

### **Ensure establishment of suitable projects for which there is strong community support at the parish level**

The RHE is currently working in eight parishes with RSLs to try and deliver affordable housing on exception sites. Three of these are now on site and three are just applying for planning permission.

### **Involvement, cooperation and networking with rural development partnerships**

The RHE continues to be involved with the community planning process and has started working with the Marlborough Community Planning Partnership.

The RHE has become a member of the Rural Executive group of the Wiltshire Strategic Board.

Regular meetings have been attended with the South West Regional RHEs to ensure good practice is adhered to.

## **COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

**Karolyne Fudge-Malik & Anne Rees**

### **Establish Wiltshire Depot**

Extensive promotion has taken place to reach minorities and service providers throughout Wiltshire and Swindon. A 'How to do it' pack was produced for Reaching People in Rural Communities, a partnership project targeting hard to reach in rural communities, and the project is being reproduced in South Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and Glasgow. 15 targeted fieldworkers and 3 migrant workers are now acting as Depot promoters. Information has been delivered via meetings, outreach and post to: 9 villages as well as hamlets and isolated dwellings; 36 rural employers; 64 targeted fieldworkers and over 300 workers and agencies. A new Library information project is being developed targeting people new to Britain.

### **Specialist database and advocacy support**

Response to Depot calls has covered issues such as: transgender and lesbian youth; isolated lesbians; migrant worker representative; food event; cricket; homeless faith issues; Children's Centre support; race/employment; religious groups; housing counselling and none payment of salaries. Databases and information sources established and updated on the basis of issues referred. Use is monitored to identify support needs and to inform and help prevent 'overkill' by agencies particularly in research.

### **Service development – assessment and workshops**

We have carried out workshops and events for agencies and employers and assisted VCS and service providers in needs such as policy development, setting up an independent advisory group, organisational faith conflict, facilitating public Gay Initiative events, inclusive business plan development, an organisational interfaith initiative, and provided an advisory role for housing associations and children's centres. We have gained a better awareness of gaps in provision and service development needs. Information has been disseminated and fed into VCS and Statutory strategies through WSIP (secretariat), Community Safety Partnership Diversity group (Chair) Migrant Worker forums (Chair of Kennet) and the Police Authority Independent Advisory Group (Member). Information gained has been used to develop 6 new initiatives;

- SPY – Salisbury Pride Youth for LGBT youth, with close working relationships with Pride Youth in Swindon.
- Migrant workers forum initiated in Kennet, with participation in West and North Wilts and South Wilts forums
- Older lesbians social network developed to cover the whole of Wiltshire
- Assisted WREC in development of the Gypsy and traveller forum
- Library Information project for those new to the UK, jointly with the Library service, CAB and WREC
- Local Information booklet for West Wilts

### **Cluster group development**

We have seen improved confidence in services, increased our awareness of the real issues and needs of minorities and recruited 15 minority volunteer advocates and minority representatives on 4 forums. Support has been provided to, for example, West Wilts Interfaith group, BME family events, Swindon Asian and Caribbean youth, the Black History group, BME groups in Trowbridge, Melksham, Devizes and Salisbury and clusters across the county.

**RURAL REGENERATION  
SUSTAIN THE PLAIN PROGRAMME  
John Dowsett**

**Maintain and improve management procedures**

The management procedures are now at a stage of ensuring the Programme maintains best practice in record keeping and management rather than looking to further improve accepted practices. A sample audit by the Rural Payments Agency took place in March resulting in (informal) favourable comment on the records and filing – and the same comments on ‘irregularity logging’ and ‘level 2 visits’ as experienced by every programme in the country.

**Facilitate funding and development of appropriate initiatives**

The majority of the funds are now allocated, and the remainder are being applied to bringing forward appropriate projects and initiatives which will help the Programme deliver its objectives. Over the last year two types of projects have predominated – small grants which made grants of £60,000 to over thirty small communities and similar groups over the year, and cooperation projects which involve marrying up activity in the Salisbury Plain Programme area with similar efforts in other parts of the EU.

**Manage relationships with organisations, groups and communities**

The Partnership Management Group, comprising representatives of some eighteen statutory and community bodies, continues to work effectively and harmoniously. The Small Grants Scheme has been particularly useful in establishing useful relationships with a vast number of community groups.

**Work towards sustainability of the Programme’s work and funding post LEADER+**

The Manager and members of the Programme Management Group are increasingly involved in considering how this LEADER group can contribute to the new structure of the European Rural Development Programme (ERDP) 2007 – 2013. There will be no ‘LEADER fund’ as such within this. Instead 5% of all ERDP funds will have to be delivered through the LEADER ‘method.’ At the time of writing the procedures are still being determined.

## **WILTSHIRE FORUM FOR COMMUNITY AREA PARTNERSHIPS (MARKET TOWNS PARTNERSHIP)**

**Nicki Coyne**

### **Identify the technical support required for community area partnerships/ market towns groups**

Considerable consultation in the first part of the year resulted in clear priorities for a skills development programme. The first two skills development evenings were delivered in January and February 2007, with a further two planned for April and May 2007.

Highworth and Wroughton have both received direct support for their planning processes. Marlborough has received support for some consultation with young people and service providers which took place towards the end of the year.

### **Facilitate the development of the Forum through networking**

During the year the website was developed and launched at an event at Melksham attended by fourteen of the eighteen partnership members. The website ([www.wfcap.org](http://www.wfcap.org)) is now live and regularly updated.

The Annual Conference took place in January 2007, with keynote speakers Ben Hamilton-Baillie, a specialist in Traffic Management and Urban Design, and Trevor Cherret, Head of Planning, Housing and Transport for the Commission for Rural Communities.

### **Address funding issues and seek opportunities for funding**

During the year the Wiltshire Market Towns Partnership provided some £7,800 to the Forum for development activities, allowing the activities described above. Discussions have continued in the search for continuation funding – as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 07 it appears that funding is sufficient to allow the continuation of the work until at least March 08.

### **Provide a collective voice at district, county, sub regional and regional level, with the ability to influence policy.**

During the year the Market Towns Programme Manager worked with members developing the Forum's long term goals. This work has taken a variety of forms including

- involvement in county level discussions regarding the 'Settlements as Hubs Scheme' as a means of delivering regeneration funding.
- attendance at AMT conference helped highlight some of issues relating to market towns in Wiltshire.
- working closely with the MCTA.

## **RURAL RENAISSANCE PARTNERSHIP**

**Sue Dewberry**

### **Programme Management**

The Wiltshire and Swindon Rural Renaissance Partnership was inaugurated in February 2002 in response to the Strategic Rural Action in Wiltshire report (Atlantic Consultants, April 2001) as the vehicle to deliver rural regeneration across Wiltshire and Swindon. For the first two years the Partnership has been led by the County Council and Great Western Enterprise. For 2006-07 a new partnership arrangement has been put in place with the County Council assuming the role as Accountable Body and Community First and Business Link responsible for programme delivery.

The Partnership aims to deliver a co-ordinated and holistic approach to rural regeneration, considering economic, social and environmental aspects. The Partnership has adopted the following mission statement: To address the key areas of economic, social and environmental imbalance which are detrimental to the quality of life and well being of those that live and work in rural areas.

The mission will be delivered through the Partnership's five Strategic Objectives:

- Help create the right conditions for attracting rural enterprise and assisting it to grow and be sustainable in rural areas
- To train, retrain and develop individuals in rural areas to maximise potential contribution to sustainable communities
- Secure higher quality provision of and increased access to facilities and services in rural areas
- Develop initiatives which tackle social and economic exclusion
- To provide support, advise and financial intervention for the creation of rural workspace

Over the year the Partnership has been working up a number of schemes covering priority areas such as Rural Transport or Tourism to be the focus of future rural funding. This approach, based on the successful LEADER+ (StP) model, will result in a more focussed and integrated approach to project development and programme management. The change has been fully discussed by all partners and it is agreed will undoubtedly result in better value for money and a more effective approach to linking strategy and need to delivery, and therefore have a greater impact across the rural parts of Wiltshire and Swindon.

### **Community Regeneration Manager**

At the end of October 2006 the Partnership appointed a Community Regeneration Manager. The post is funded through Rural Renaissance core costs and is based at Community First. By the end of this financial year, the role was responsible for maintenance of the 12 Modernising Rural Delivery Programme (MRD) projects totalling £680,000, two of which were initiated by the new Manager. A 'Small Projects Fund' has been set up to soak up 'under-spend' on the larger

projects – the Manager is responsible for the project development for this programme working with WCC, the accountable body. Additionally, the Manager works with the Manager of the Wiltshire Forum for Community Area Partnerships in order to identify potential projects within the Community Plans suitable for Rural Renaissance funding.

**Rural Social & Community Programme Funding**

Management and administrative costs for the RS&CP contribute towards the RRP core costs. The Manager is responsible for the support and maintenance of 7 projects totalling £432,000 and reporting to the Government Office South West.

## **COMMUNITY CONSULTATION**

**Marion Rayner & Sharon Leney**

### **Expand networking between partners at district, county and sub-regional level on rural issues**

Community Development Manager has attended 3 SWAN meetings on community-led planning, 3 meetings of SWAN Parish Plan Network and has taken a lead on work to produce a parish plan application template and guidance notes. Collaborative work on 7 issues has been undertaken with agencies including Age Concern, Plunkett Foundation. Wiltshire Wildlife Trust was assisted with a community wildlife project, and meeting held with WCC DACS team about Timebanks, and a number of agencies concerning Tisbury Accessibility study. North Wessex Downs AONB has been assisted with work to implement Urban Fringe Action Plan.

### **Increase community participation/capacity building in community needs assessments**

Parish planning work first focused on promotion of grant funding and adaptation of application materials for local use. New groups at Bishops Cannings, Cherhill, Limpley Stoke, Landford and East Knoyle have been assisted with support/funding advice and steering group volunteers at 3 received training. 14 other parishes have received presentations about parish plans. 3 existing groups have been assisted with support or facilitation (Alderbury, Tisbury, Steeple Ashton) and 5 parish plan groups have received comments on draft plans (Donhead St Mary, Market Lavington, Alderbury, Kington St Michael, Pitton & Farley). A new template for commenting on draft plans has been piloted.

Mainstreaming work has been undertaken in Marlborough Community Area, Swindon Borough and the AONB Urban Fringe area and presentations have been made at 2 Community Area Partnerships (Pewsey and Chippenham) with a further one planned for Calne.

A Parish Plan Impact Survey has been sent out to parishes that have a plan over 1 year old to find out about impact and effectiveness of plans. A report will be completed early in 2007/08.

Two sessions on 'consultation skills for parish plans' have been held for Salisbury District (32 and 26 attendees each) and a Parish Plan Workshop Programme of 5 sessions has been launched. The first session 'Parish Plan Perfection' attracted 6 attendees.

### **Encourage new community initiatives**

88 enquiries about initiatives have received initial responses within 4 days except during times of staff leave. 25 SOLVE applicants have been supported.

A new training module ('Parish Plans- what's your role?') was developed and piloted with Parish and Town Councils at WALC AGM.

### **Improved awareness of community consultation and community action at the grassroots**

Parish Planning and Community Consultation web pages have been developed which include a downloadable information sheet on Parish Plans. Handouts have been developed to support training workshops. Staff assisted with visits from Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire and a delegation from Japan.

## **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

**Helie Franklin & Sharon Leney**

### **Increased joint working**

Planning partnerships have been supported in Highworth, Warminster, Bemerton Heath, Trowbridge Parishes, Tidworth and North Wiltshire to develop partnership work across the areas to involve local people. Liaison meetings were held with local officers to support the work in North Wiltshire, Salisbury District and West Wiltshire. From the initial meetings, further open meetings and events were held to involve the communities. Meetings were also held with Wiltshire Police and Wiltshire Fire & Rescue to support their objectives to work with communities across the county. Youth Action Wiltshire was also involved in jointly delivering young people's consultation events.

### **Expanded community participation**

Community groups have been supported to participate in local consultations in areas across the County. Community First officers supported an event to introduce the community consultation process in Highworth. A steering group was formed and supported in the initial stages. The group sought additional funding and have been successful in their bid. A tenants' and residents' group in the Warminster area received support to consult on a key issue in their area. An event was also supported for Tidworth Community Area and for the young people of Tidworth. Consultation took place and a report written. In the Trowbridge area, 3 groups were supported. Training and support was planned and working groups assisted with the development of the training. Presentations to introduce community consultation processes were given in 2 areas.

### **Engaging young people**

The planning process has been expanded in some areas to include young people in their local consultations. Two areas have now received support to develop an on-line consultation headed up by young people. Ideas and support were given to the Highworth community to engage with young people. A school council took part in participation and consultation workshops which enabled them to design an on-line questionnaire. The Tidworth Development group was assisted to engage the young people with their public consultation and evaluation event using active consultation tools.

### **Better sharing of best practice**

The joint WAYS project has been a sharing of best practice with county and district officers and other voluntary groups. A learning and development program for Community Planning Partnership was planned and delivered in North Wiltshire to be replicated in other districts in 07/08. Input from the Market Towns Forum and CIB added value to the development program and wider partnership working.

## **CREDIT UNION DEVELOPMENT**

**Sarah Perkins & Helen Cotter**

### **Technical Advice and Support**

Schools collection points have been established in four schools and nearly 60 savers have joined. Parent volunteers run each collection and training has been given to them (20 people involved). Collectors have also been trained in Cricklade and technical support offered across the county. Get Out of Debt accounts have finally been established and are now being piloted in Salisbury District in close consultation with CAB. Money advice basics, issues of affiliation to trade bodies and new developments with collection of loans have all been areas needing support. We have continued to support our local credit unions with advice, by signposting new members to them, helping out when volunteers are unavailable and through development of appropriate forms, policies and procedures.

### **Best Practice**

A volunteer induction session was held in March with seven participants that included credit union cashiers and directors as well as two CAB advisers. The team has continued to offer help in updating policies and procedures as well as business plans. Five new directors have been recruited for North Wilts Credit Union. Wiltshire Federation of Credit Unions has been more intermittent than intended due to availability of volunteers. Consultation is taking place about changes to these meetings. Two meetings in Newbury have been attended to help with establishing a credit union there.

### **Awareness Raising**

Presentations have been made to district, town and parish councils, housing associations, advice agencies and tenants groups. Events have been attended and publicity materials produced. We have been assisting Kennet Credit Union with an innovative project to spread the word about credit unions using paid employees for nine months. Radio interviews and press releases have been organised.

### **Ongoing Support**

Partnerships with housing associations, CAB and an out of county CDFI have been under discussion. In the last six months, contact has been made with 6 town or parish councils and two district councils. Presentation to explore wider inclusion in Community First SLA has been organised for next half year.

## **VILLAGE SHOPS & BGLF**

**Tim Coomer & Marion Whitehead**

### **Expand networking between partners at district, county and sub-regional level**

During the past twelve months the Village Shops Adviser (VSA) has developed positive links with the Village Retail Services Association (ViRSA) and the Plunkett Foundation, ensuring united support for community shop enterprises in Wiltshire. In January 2007 we formed an association with the Rural Shops Alliance (RSA) for the benefit of Wiltshire retailers ensuring the voices of Wiltshire retailers are heard at a national level through this trade and lobbying alliance. The VSA has an active interest as a member of the RSA steering group.

The VSA is also actively engaged with local strategic groups and on a regional level we have been formulating plans with partners to deliver support to Village shops throughout the South West. The second phase of the project has seen us working in close partnership with Wiltshire County Council and particularly the Economic Intelligence Unit to research village shops in Wiltshire, building a comprehensive sector profile. In July we completed an independent research study, commissioned by Dorset Community Action, into the state of the village retail sector in Dorset and have recently started a feasibility study in Somerset.

### **Maximise the social, economic and environmental impacts of a healthy retail sector in village locations**

The first phase of the village shops work finished in November 2006 supporting 51 independent retailers, 31 community groups/parish councils and 25 small businesses and individuals. In Phase two of the project beginning in January 2007 we have already worked with a mixture of 35 retailers, small businesses and social enterprise/ community groups. Activity over the past year has been extremely positive and numbers of shop closures have reduced significantly over the past 2 years. The village shops team has been actively encouraging retailers to support the increasing demand for local food and Fairtrade and organised a village retailing trade show in the summer 2006.

### **Encourage new community based initiatives to deliver services in rural communities**

Over the past 12 months we have assisted in the conception and setup of two new community shops in Wiltshire; both are trading successfully and delivering essential goods and services back to the community. We are actively working with seven further communities exploring the opportunities of setting up a shop or a community taking over of a shop which is failing as a commercial business. Research is under way to identify communities with social groups that are significantly disadvantaged by the lack of a shop or services and to identify shops at risk of closure.

### **Improved awareness of issues affecting village shops and post offices**

The village retail sector is facing one of its biggest threats in recent years because the Post Office network will see the closure of 2500 unprofitable Post Offices over the next 18 months. During the past year we instigated a Wiltshire-wide campaign to raise awareness of the issues faced by rural Sub-postmasters, petitioned against the possible reduction in subsidies and the withdrawal of the Post Office Card Account (POCA), and lobbied MPs. In the early part of 2007 we were instrumental in collating information and responding to national consultations on behalf of Wiltshire retailers and local authorities.

### **Business Grants and Loans Fund**

Over the past 12 months combination grants and loans totalling £31,170 have been awarded. The highest percent of enquiries have been from retailers and the rest come from a broad range of small and medium sized rural businesses. An 'Expression of Interest' stage to the application has been introduced to ensure only the most beneficial projects are invited to make a full application.

## **SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE AND BUSINESS CONSULTANCY**

**David Beaton & Marion Whitehead**

### **Stimulate and support the development of social and community enterprise activity in communities across Salisbury Plain**

The Sustain the Plain project has been running down and was terminated on 30<sup>th</sup> September. Most stated targets were met and some exceeded.

### **Target SME's and farmers to help develop rural business activities**

Although considerable efforts were made to engage SME's and farmers this has met with limited success, principally because this activity has been restricted to the geographical area of Sustain the Plain

### **Increase, maintain and/ or improve services delivery in remote rural areas based on community owned buildings**

In the final six months of the Sustain the Plain work the Business Adviser concentrated on developing the exit strategy to ensure ongoing support for social enterprises in Wiltshire and Swindon. To this end Community First worked with WSEP to develop a Social Enterprise Strategy to support future funding through the framework for delivery of regeneration funding in the county.

### **Consultancy services**

CF Consultancy was launched on October 1<sup>st</sup> 2007 and has carried out a number of assignments for Parish Councils as well as working outside the County, having been recommended by Community Action – the former Avon Rural Community Council. Assignments have ranged from a village appraisal for Broad Town Parish Council, Project Management for the development of the Memorial Hall in Ludgershall, development of the Swindon Urban Fringe Action Plan for the North Wessex Downs AONB, a feasibility study for Yatton Farmers Market and Project Management of a trans-national project for LEADER+. The consultancy is also responding to relevant public tenders as and when appropriate and has been approached by two private sector companies looking for a local third sector partner to support bids for Wiltshire based public service delivery.

## **LINK SCHEMES**

**Marion Mason, Jane Sartin & Mary Hardwidge**

### **Ensure effective scheme coverage**

Through local consultation supported by the Link Development Team, the communities of Netheravon, Enford and Fittleton decided to be part of Durrington Link which has just gone through a rebuilding exercise to ensure an improved and sustainable service. Following a successful Public Meeting the communities of Christian Malford, Dauntsey and Brinkworth are being supported to set up a Link Scheme. Planning and consultation are still proceeding in Market Lavington, Easterton and Urchfont.

### **Improve standards of practice**

CRB checks are being carried out successfully by an increasing number of schemes. Training sessions have included financial management for small charities and running effective meetings. A welcome letter has been introduced to give clients some booking guidelines and to promote appropriate use of the service

### **Partnership working**

Representation at various meetings regarding the changes in local health provision and at meetings concerning accessibility issues within the county. Presentations at seminars e.g. PALS and Age Concern, enable local schemes to liaise with other agencies.

### **Publicity and promotion**

In April 2006 the Celebration of Link Volunteering was a thank you to existing volunteers and useful for profile raising. Wiltshire car dealer Pebley Beach has provided sponsorship as part of the 25 year anniversary celebrations that will give added benefit to volunteers as well as the redesigning and hosting of the Link website. There has been initial publicity about the adoption of West Wiltshire Link Schemes as one of the charities to benefit from the West Wilts Show 2007.

## **RURAL TRANSPORT PROGRAMME**

**Jasper Dorgan, Liam Tatton-Bennett, Helen Lines & Sheila Martin**

### **Strengthen strategic partnership working**

The new Partnership, Delivering Accessibility and Rural Transport in Wiltshire & Swindon (DART) was successfully launched in March 2007 with extended membership to include Local Strategic Partnership representatives and wider stakeholder organisations. Three of the four planned DART Taskforces have also been established (Community Transport, Access to Education and Access in Tisbury Area) with the fourth (Access to Health) subject to settlement in PCT futures.

### **Improve the effectiveness of community transport groups**

This objective is being delivered through the ongoing work of the Citadel project (see Citadel section). New involvement of Community Transport groups on the new Partnership have been agreed and further CT group representation on the four taskforce groups is being explored and developed.

### **Identify local transport needs and promote community transport**

Key community transport strategic objectives and priority needs have been identified through the Wiltshire County Council Local Transport Plan 2007-2011 and new Partnership project activity will reflect the four identified priorities of: (1) Community transport capacity development, group support, new income stream development and new scheme development; (2) Access to education; (3) Access to health in North Wilts, West Wilts and Kennet; (4) Access to services in the Tisbury area

A Wheels to Work Officer was appointed in June 2006 with the project successfully launched in July 2006. 30 beneficiaries have passed through the scheme as at March 2007. An application is underway to expand moped pool and develop commercial sponsorship opportunities.

## **CITADEL COMMUNITY TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT**

**Liam Tatton-Bennett & Sheila Martin**

### **Develop improved services and joint venture working between existing community transport minibuses groups**

With regard to increasing the capacity of existing CT minibuses groups to develop improved services and joint working, the CITADEL programme delivered a highly successful Conference in November 2006 which was attended by over 60 people ranging from voluntary groups to local authorities. The Conference showcased the recent successes of 2 local CT minibuses groups who earlier in the year were selected to run new County Council transport services which were different in nature to 'traditional' community minibus activity. The Conference also featured seven different workshops which were designed to equip existing CT minibuses groups with the tools needed to develop improved services.

During this period the CITADEL programme has also helped a well-established CT group in Melksham to develop a further new shopper service for isolated people and it has helped the same group to secure funding for a new low-floor minibus which will provide services for young people as well as for community groups and elderly and disabled people.

One further edition of CT News has also been produced over this period. Alongside regular meetings of the Wiltshire & Swindon Community Transport Association and day-to-day telephone/e-mail based support, this publication has been firmly established as a means of providing vital operational advice to existing groups to help them to function well and to develop improved services.

### **Identify needs and promote and support new community transport scheme development**

One new community transport hub scheme has been launched in Malmesbury, one group in Devizes has been granted funding to set up a hub and a group in Melksham has submitted a full application to fund a new scheme. The hub scheme planned for Chippenham has not been developed yet due to difficulties in negotiating premises for the project. This project is currently focussing its energies on developing a transport needs survey similar to the one which has recently been launched with the help of CITADEL by a group in Warminster and Westbury.

During this period, the CITADEL programme successfully secured the trial use of a wheelchair accessible MPV from Wiltshire County Council. The vehicle has been used to benefit a number of people with restricted mobility on a self-drive hire basis. The vehicle is also used to provide regular lifts to Church in Devizes and work has been undertaken to use the vehicle in future to run one-off contracts for local statutory authorities.

### **Encourage and facilitate an enterprise approach within existing and new CT groups**

The Conference referred to earlier featured a special workshop which provided guidance to existing CT minibus groups about bidding for 'one-off' transport contracts for social services and special educational needs clients. The Conference also provided a business planning advice workshop and information via a detailed presentation about an enterprising CT scheme in Devon which offered a variety of services to support its income.

With regard to new CT groups, all of the hub schemes referred to earlier have been developed on social enterprise principles.

## **GRANTS PROGRAMME**

**Gillian Barber (since mid November) & Alison Crawford**

### **Expand and increase the efficiency of SOLVE Fund**

As a result of the diminution of some of the funds and the need for the Grants staff to concentrate on Landfill Tax Credits, some thought has been given to streamlining the administration of SOLVE. The strands of Transport and Sustain the Plain have been awarded by other panels during the year with the financial processing being handled by Grants staff. Funding is expected to reduce on both strands and, as a consequence, the application paperwork has been revised and simplified. During the year the Sustain the Plain Programme Manager and the Community Development Manager continued to support Solve applicants. The Community Development Manager relinquished the role at the end of the year to be succeeded by the Rural Renaissance Manager. Additional sources of funds will be sought in the coming months in order to widen the opportunities for applications from community groups.

### **Develop diversity and security of sources LTC funds**

Progress had been curtailed by the unexpected early retirement of the Grants Manager, Bob Bradshaw, and it has not been possible to explore new possibilities. The Landfill Site Operators with whom we work have been made familiar with the changes taking place and the Grants Manager has been meeting with Operators with whom we have an existing relationship and exploring the possibilities of making new ones. Levels of LTC funds placed with the organisation have been maintained during the year and steps have been taken to ensure that the level of funding remains secure in the future.

### **Marketing and public relations**

For reasons already stated there has been less activity than previous years. However, it has been possible to continue attending project openings, to meet with and renew contacts in Local Authorities and voluntary sector organisations, and to maintain existing relationships with Landfill Site Operators. An A5 flyer has been, and will continue to be, distributed widely in appropriate areas in Wiltshire and wider afield.

### **Parish Plan Grants**

No new parish plan grants have been given in this reporting period. Progress on the 8 parishes awarded grants in 2005/06 is monitored quarterly and some are nearing completion although none have been completed during the past financial year.

Responsibility for this area of work was transferred to the Local Councils Team earlier in the year.

### **Manage the Business Loan and Grant Fund for shops and social enterprises**

The BGLF is now being managed by the Village Shops Advisor and is reported on elsewhere.