



In the Zone Newsletter, Issue 10



RRZ – Post Conference Evaluation

The fourth Rural Regeneration Zone annual conference took place on July 3rd 2009 at Ludlow Racecourse. A total of 163 delegates from across the public and private sectors attended the event which was focused towards the support of businesses and the way the Zone could act as a catalyst for recovery in the recession.

The Rural Regeneration Zone Conference this year was generally felt to be the best conference we've hosted to date. Considering that the Zone holds a unique position in the rural west it has the ability to galvanise the private, public and 3rd sectors to work positively together to assist the economy survive what is a difficult time for us all.

As part of the Conference, the Zone launched its 2008/2009 [Annual Report](#) which is now available as printed copy or as a download on our website. Furthermore a [Conference Report](#) has been produced with a brief synopsis of the speaker content, highlights of the Q&A sessions and embedded links to the conference speeches and all case study videos shown on the event.

Picture (l-r): Mick Lavery/AWM, Peter Pawsey/RRZ, Alison White/BLWM, Dr Stuart Burgess and Ian Edwards

Thank you!

The Zone would also like to thank everyone who participated in our conference evaluation; we had a tremendous response rate. Following the feedback from evaluation it's clear that the projects in the Zone are highly valued by our partners.

Beyond the practical support we provide to individual businesses and groups, the leadership and strategic role played by the Zone was also recognised to be equally significant with 89% of respondents clearly supportive of the role we play. It is here where the Zone Board are currently focusing their attention and in particular the way in which the Zone can develop further a multi area approach to economic regeneration in the sub-region. The Board recognises the challenge presented by the availability of future budgets and sees the potential to maximise its own and our partners' resources to hasten the economic recovery and to contribute in the longer term to the delivery of the Regional Economic Strategy. Please find further details following the hyperlink [Conference Survey](#).



Groundbreaking care farming initiative launched

A groundbreaking health and social care initiative which will create a network of working 'care farms' across Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Shropshire has been launched at The Fold in Bransford near Worcester.

Care Farming West Midlands (CFWM) has been set up with investment of over £400,000 from the Rural Regeneration Zone and will establish 20 new care farms over the next three years.

Picture (l-r): Ian Edwards RRZ, Roger Murray/CFWM, Carole Caligari Operations Manager CFWM

Care farms have the dual benefit of developing existing businesses and also providing a positive lifestyle for individuals traditionally excluded from society. These working farms help a variety of individuals including those with special needs, people recovering from substance misuse, experiencing mental health problems and the long-term unemployed.

The concept was originally developed in the Netherlands where there are now more than 1,000 farms of this type providing rehabilitation and support to people who will typically have been referred through social care, legal or medical channels.

Roger Murray, Chairman of Care Farming West Midlands, explained the idea behind care farming: “Essentially, care farming is about providing a healthy daily structure for people to develop their social and practical skills. “To date we have received the support of many organisations, not least the Rural Regeneration Zone who, like us, have recognised the huge potential care farming can deliver to the welfare of individuals and to the economy of the West Midlands.”

Ian Edwards, Rural Regeneration Zone Team Leader, said: “We see care farms as not only an important way to improve social and economic inclusion within the Zone but also a way of helping to make farms become more competitive. I am delighted that the West Midlands is once again leading the way in developing innovative models of health and social care.”

Lord Digby Jones added: “Care farming is such a marvellous way of getting young people who felt that society had passed them by to relate to their environment, to their fellow human beings and to discover good things about themselves. We all want that and I wish the project all the very best and so much success as they launch into brightening the lives of people we had all forgotten.”



Shrewsbury's Enterprise Centre celebrates its official opening

The £3.5 million Rural Enterprise Centre celebrates its official opening with news that more than 100 people are now employed at the Battlefield's site.

The facility, which has been developed in partnership with the Zone and Evans Easyspace, currently houses more than 32 young businesses, ranging from lift maintenance experts and a technology specialist to a cafe and on-site gym.

Grand Opening (l-r) Tom Stokes (Evans Easyspace), The Mayor of Shrewsbury Councillor Alan Townsend and Rachael Peters (Rural Enterprise Centre Shrewsbury)

The Mayor of Shrewsbury Alan Townsend officially opened the 28,000 sq ft centre by unveiling a plaque. “We need to do everything we can in Shrewsbury to develop the next generation of entrepreneurs and companies and this rural enterprise centre is a fantastic way of supporting local business,” explained Councillor Townsend.

Ian Edwards, team leader at the Rural Regeneration Zone, delighted to see the uptake the project had attracted, said: “This public-private sector partnership has never been completed in this way before, but you can tell from the four existing centres that there is a real demand in the marketplace for affordable, high quality, high spec, enterprise space. We are now looking at moving forward the four additional spokes at Bridgnorth, Market Drayton, Oswestry and Ross-on-Wye as soon as possible.”

Evans Easyspace's managing director Tom Stokes said: “The facilities are impressive but it is the added benefits of being here which are proving so attractive. For example, the ability to inter-trade, the access to external support form and the easy-in easy-out leases which gives young businesses unrivalled flexibility.” When full, the 28,000 sq ft Rural Enterprise Centre will be responsible for creating 200 jobs in the local economy, if targets are reached. “

Rachael Peters, of the enterprise centre, added: “In the current climate it is more important than ever that we encourage new businesses to start and young companies to grow. “



MP inspects progress at Oswestry health centre

North Shropshire MP Owen Paterson has visited the former Cambrian Works building in Oswestry to see how the work on a state-of-the-art medical facility is coming along.

Work on the £6 million development began in April and has been supported by a Zone investment worth £1.3 million into the construction of a new access road working with Shropshire Council.

Picture Owen Patterson (middle) looks at plans for the new medical centre in Oswestry

The interior of the building has been completed gutted and work will see the cavernous shell turned into a three storey facility with a combined floor area of one-and-a-half football pitches. When complete, the transformed 19th century building will be able to host up to six GPs, a minor injuries service including X-ray facilities, a dental surgery, physiotherapy, podiatry, speech and language therapy services, a health promotions unit and advanced primary care services. Castlemead Developments Ltd is undertaking the work in partnership with Shropshire Primary Care Trust with work expected to be complete by late 2010.

Visiting the site, Owen Paterson MP said: ““This health centre will benefit the town massively, particularly as the population increases as it will provide truly 21st century care. But also, this is an important investment in this part of Oswestry at the gateway to the town.”

Peter Pawsey, Executive Chairman of the Rural Regeneration Zone, said: “This Health Centre is a quantum leap for services in Oswestry and I am delighted that the Zone’s investment has enabled this site to be opened up. Improving access to services is a key aim of the Rural Regeneration Zone and this development will mean the town having a health centre they can be proud of.”

Cllr Martin Bennett, who represents Oswestry East Division on Shropshire Council, said: “I am pleased that this historic building which played a huge part in the lives of people in the 19th century, will be meeting the health needs of the town and area in the 21st century.

“The project has taken the efforts of a number of partners working together and, when it finally opens, will be a credit to everyone involved. Then we need to get on with Phase 2!”

Angus Hannagan, Chairman of Shropshire Primary Care Trust, said: “Having this sort of facility on the edges of the town centre is going to be a major boost for health provision in Oswestry.

“We are very excited at the plans for care in this part of the county and it is great to see work well underway on the transformation of this landmark building.”



Nexus extended with £100,000 boost for community groups

Community groups in Herefordshire, Shropshire and parts of Worcestershire are set for a cash boost after the hugely successful Nexus scheme was extended by the Rural Regeneration Zone.

More than £100,000 is now available to help crucial ‘local’ projects that provide training opportunities, employment assistance and access to leisure, health and specialist outreach services.

Administered by Community First and the Community of Council for Shropshire, the programme is expected to help a further 25 organisations and interested parties can apply for funding by contacting Sophie Mead on 01684 573 334 or e-mail to sophiem@comfirst.org.uk

Matt Smith, Partnerships Manager for the RRZ, was delighted at the renewed support. “Nexus has had a major impact on providing essential services to areas that need them most and this has so far resulted in boosting local skills, creating employment opportunities and improving the standard of living.” He continued: “Grants of up to £5,000 are now available for groups that are looking to reduce poverty, value diversity and promote social and community cohesion by giving full access to services.”

The impact of the original Nexus scheme was revealed recently, with more than 16,000 people benefitting from the small grants scheme that focuses on social and economic inclusion. More than £450,000 was awarded to 93 different schemes, most of which provided a tangible and far reaching improvement in maintaining and extending services for old and young, people with learning difficulties and budding entrepreneurs.

All of the projects chosen had a major local need and this ranged from improved leisure facilities and specialist support from Age Concern to a food delivery services and the development of a learning experience at Oak Farm in Ditton Priors.



Could you be a prize winner?

Entries are now open for this year's prestigious RegenWM Awards. Categories include **Best Regeneration Team, Successful Community Engagement, Environment and People.** [To take part](#)



Graduate placement with the Zone

The Zone will be engaging a graduate via the RegenWM graduate recruitment scheme to undertake an evaluation of the Multi Use Facilities programme.

For further details please contact [Matt Smith](#)



Taskforce boost for West Midlands market towns

In July 2009 the West Midlands Taskforce announced a comprehensive support package for the region's market towns worst effected by the economic downturn.

Significant numbers of towns included in the package are within the Zone and incorporate Ross-on-Wye and Leominster in Herefordshire, Ludlow and Oswestry in Shropshire and Tenbury Wells in Worcestershire.

The package comprises measures to support larger employers within these towns as well as independent retailers. Furthermore an additional £150,000 has been made available to the Citizens Advice Bureau to enhance their offer within these towns.

For further details please contact [Ian Edwards](#)



Offa's Dyke Study is completed

The Offa's Dyke Regeneration Strategy Study is now completed. Together with the findings from the Forum Workshops, interviews with major stakeholders and local authorities up and down the border, and some 190 responses to the web questionnaire, the consultants have produced an overarching framework for sustainable development. A series of further consultations is planned with zonal workshops being held in Abergavenny, Ludlow and Wrexham.

Read more details about the [Welsh-English Border Strategic Regeneration Programme](#)



The Pint and Parcel opens for business!

As the number of pub closures in Britain reaches 50 a week, Scottish & Newcastle UK (S&N UK) is backing the launch of useyourlocal.com, an innovative new parcel collection business, designed to give consumers more reasons to visit their local - and to help put pubs back at the heart of the community.

The initiative is the brainchild of former S&N UK manager Stuart Mills who is heading the joint venture set up with his former company. Stuart said: "We all know that pubs and clubs across the UK are having a tough time at the moment but we also know that opportunities exist to help pubs and clubs to improve the marketing of their outlet and offer new services to their customers."

Please find more information at www.useyourlocal.com

You can help to re-energise the rural economy

Investment Summit, Dunchurch Park Hotel, Rugby, 11 September

Businesses and investment specialists from the Zone are being urged to have their say on the rural economy when a special Summit is held in September.

The Commission of Rural Communities (CRC) event, which is being supported by Advantage West Midlands and emda, is looking at the issue of how public and private sector investment can be channelled into releasing the potential of rural economies.

Peter Pawsey, Chairman of the Rural Regeneration Zone, will be providing a keynote address on 'investing in place' and will be joined on the speakers' podium by AWM Board Member Michael Oakes and Dr Stuart Burgess, the Government's Rural Advocate.

To reserve your place, please contact **01242 534078** or email summits@ruralcommunities.gov.uk,