



In the Zone Newsletter, Issue 11



Pioneering web scheme casting the Net wider thanks to Nexus support

A groundbreaking project which uses wireless technology to create a broadband hotspot in a Worcestershire village has won vital support from the Nexus Grant Scheme.

Picture (l-r): Richard Jackman, Martley Web Mesh; Sophie Mead, Community First; John Nicklin, MWM; Matt Smith, Rural Regeneration Zone; Tom Pearsall, MWM.

The village of Martley and its surrounding hamlets had for years been unable to secure high-speed internet connections in some areas due to its distance from the telephone exchanges, difficult landscape and a lack of investment in the ageing infrastructure.

This led to a small group of villagers creating a not-for-profit organisation known as Martley Web Mesh around three years ago. Using the latest wireless technology, Martley Web Mesh enables provision of up to two megabits per second of broadband to local homes and businesses without the need for major investment in the capacity of the telephone line.

It is run by a small team of volunteers – Richard Jackman, John Layton, Tom Pearsall, John Nicklin, Michelle Higgins and Margaret Colburn – and currently services more than 100 computers across the community including businesses such as an electrical contractor, the local B&B and the village pub.

This means that many of the residents who commute to places like Worcester or Birmingham have the option of working from home, youngsters who need the internet for their studies have access and businesses are able to compete on a level playing field with those based in urban areas. Additionally, free access is provided to the village hall for anybody to use.

Martley Web Mesh received £5,000 from the Rural Regeneration Zone's Nexus Grant scheme via Community First which enabled them to purchase radio equipment to expand the service.

John Layton from Martley Web Mesh said: *"For a long time, the inability to secure broadband coverage in the village had caused us all sorts of problems. Part of the beauty of this service for the people in the village is they know that if there's a problem it's a local phone call and they know we will be able to help them quickly which is great particularly for the older villagers. This is the first project of its kind that we're aware of in the West Midlands and there are only a handful of similar schemes nationally. The Nexus funding enabled us to buy equipment to upgrade the service, particularly as we operate as a not-for-profit organisation and we try to keep the cost as low as possible."*

Matt Smith, Rural Regeneration Zone Partnerships Manager, said: *"Having access to high-speed internet is almost as important as having access to running water or electricity and people living in rural areas can sometimes miss out through no fault of their own. Martley Web Mesh is a fantastic example of how a community has managed to tackle its own challenges by developing a low cost solution. The result is not just better access to broadband – the local community and businesses in this corner of Worcestershire have been brought closer together."*



Nationally acclaimed country retreat receives Zone support!

A new country retreat near Ludlow is winning national acclaim for its environmental credentials after receiving support from two Rural Regeneration Zone funded initiatives

Picture (l-r) Matt Smith and George Tasker

Ludlow Ecolog Cabins offer self-catering holidays in a hand-built state-of-the-art Scandinavian style log cabin on three acres of secluded land two miles from the town.

Company boss George Tasker received funding worth £14,000 from the Zone's Shropshire Tourism Grant scheme and RE:Think Energy to support the installation of the latest environmentally-friendly features in what is known as Annie's Cabin.

This includes a wood pellet stove which uses the most efficient forms of heating, solar water-heating, an induction hob and LED/low energy lighting. Additionally, the cabin has been designed and built with disabled access in mind, incorporating a wet room, level access throughout and extra wide doors.

The cabin has already proven a hit with guests and was recently listed as one of the top 20 hideaway cottages in the UK by The Times Travel.



Would your organisation benefit from a Business mentor?

A new volunteer matching scheme has been launched bringing together experienced business people with community leaders for the mutual benefit of both the private and third sectors.

Leadership & Management Partners (L+MP) is a dynamic programme created in partnership between Business in the Community and Regional Action West Midlands and funded by Advantage West Midlands and Government Office West Midlands.

Further extended from the highly successful Partners in Leadership with Headteachers programme, L+MP acts as pilot that matches business people with leadership and management experience with community leaders from the public sector (e.g. head teachers, regeneration managers) and the community and voluntary sectors including social enterprise. Together the partners are encouraged to work on leadership issues and find business solutions to the challenges they face in an economic downturn.

The main aims of the L+MPs are to share expertise, experience and develop or refine leadership and management skills from two different perspectives, to access different skills, build new networks, raise awareness and increase understanding of both business, education and the community & public sectors and to ultimately contribute to improvements to the local community.

The programme provides unique personal development opportunities with both partners not only gaining an insight into a completely different working environment, different ways of working but also benefiting from enhancing employee skills and experience, improved staff morale and raised community profile.

For further information and to find out how your organisation could qualify for this programme, please follow the [link](#) or contact Philip Hunt on 01902 717491 or e-mail to philip.hunt@bitc.org.uk



Innovative step to leap into energy self-sufficiency

The owner of an Oswestry smallholding has taken the step to become energy self-sufficient after securing RE:Think Energy funding to support a wood fuel heating system.

Picture (l-r) Steve Fowkes, RE:think Energy, Matt Smith, Glen Noakes

The owner of an Oswestry smallholding has taken the step to become energy self-sufficient after securing RE:Think Energy funding to support a wood fuel heating system.

Glen Noakes is the owner of Noakes Building Supplies, a small building company operating from Ivyhouse Farm, which he also runs as an agricultural concern.

The heating system which burns agricultural waste has been installed and is now helping to produce enough energy to heat all of the business and residential buildings including the greenhouses, workshop and farm buildings.

The £20,000 cost of the project to install the system has been supported with a £7,000 grant from RE:Think Energy which is funded by the Rural Regeneration Zone and provides grants to businesses in the Zone seeking to invest in renewable energies.

The boiler has replaced four old oil heaters and, depending on the price of oil, Glen expects to save between £2,200 and £2,500 each year as a result of the investment as well as almost 34 tonnes of CO₂ each year.



Zone provides continued support for home based businesses

The zone funded Enterprise HQ, Shropshire's headquarters for local home workers and home based businesses provides state-of-the-art facilities for work, meeting and selling spaces.

Mobile professionals and business nomads who are seeking 'hot desking', 'downsized office space' or luxury 'workstation' premises can now benefit from the recently launched offer of wireless connected 'E-Pods' in Coalport, Telford.

Rents range from £100 to £400 per month and include furniture, private meeting room, reception service, disabled facilities and free parking. Please follow the [link](#) for more details.



Graduate now placed with the Zone!

RRZ would like to introduce a new addition to the team. Joanne Singleton, a geography graduate has been appointed as part of RegenWM's Graduate Placement Scheme to evaluate the Multi Use Facilities programme in the Zone.

Originally from Bewdley, Joanne developed a keen interest in working in rural development and regeneration whilst at Lancaster University.

"I studied housing, employment, tourism, rural sustainability, rural governance, social regulation and transport; as an undergraduate I developed a knowledge and awareness of rural policies and rural development, and an understanding of the complexity of rural communities. This placement with the Rural Regeneration Zone will hopefully give me a springboard into a career in regeneration."

This part-time post is funded until the end of March 2010.



New Zone project creates two vacancies!

The Zone has secured funding in order to extend the Competitiveness through Collaboration (C2C) project throughout the whole Rural Regeneration Zone.

C2C aims to create a network for the environmental technology sector to exploit and develop new markets, facilitate more effective supply chains and encourage collaboration between businesses and with HEIs. It will aim to raise awareness of the business support available via a trusted source which will result in increased take up by local businesses.

Two new posts will soon be advertised to deliver the project, so watch this space.



The Rural Regeneration Zone (RRZ) is one of the key delivery mechanisms established by Advantage West Midlands and covers nearly all of Herefordshire, most of Shropshire and parts of west Worcestershire