

Manager's Report – July 2009

New members:

As you will know, Fraser Hamilton from **Bicester Business Park** joined the partnership just prior to the AGM in April.

We have now also been joined by the **Bicester Innovation Centre** represented by Lillian Banister and **Pure Media** represented by Garry Kelly.

Lillian works across all the Innovation Centres at Banbury, Bicester and Heyford. She is well known amongst the local business community and has a particular knowledge of the start up and innovative businesses in our town. She has been very supportive of Bicester Vision and keen to become a funding partner from the start.

Garry has a media background, having worked in local radio and press. He now runs an advertising agency and represents a number of national companies as well as local Bicester companies Biagio the Jewellers and O'Gormans Electrical. Garry has been working with us over the last year on some of our advertising campaigns and has now decided to become a funding partner.

Recent event: Bicester Vision Retail Conference

The event was well attended with a healthy proportion of town centre traders there – not just the usual faces. Inevitably most of the crowd were there to hear about the progress of the town centre development. As a result we lost some of the audience at the end of that session. Lesson learnt for future – less is more. Those that stayed for the whole thing were generally very positive about what they heard particularly about the joint marketing initiatives we have run.

The event will certainly have raised the profile of the partnership amongst this sector and has given me a chance to talk to many of them and try to get them more involved in future campaigns and consultation.

The event saw the official launch of the **Bicester Crime Partnership** which we support. The police were pleased with the response and have been able to sign up a number of new businesses to the scheme. Members of the scheme have access to a photograph album which pictures known shoplifters. This means that staff can keep an eye on them when they enter their premises. Shops can also rent a radio that is linked to other members, the Police, CCTV and the Street Wardens. These schemes works very well in other towns and we hope will make a positive impact in Bicester.

Andrew Bowe from CDC talked about the **Bicester Health Check** which is due to be redone this year. I have attached a copy of the last one which was completed in 2007.

Work continues on the **Bicester Shopping Guide** – we still hope to get this ready to go on line over the summer and printed in the autumn. We are being

quite ambitious with what we want to achieve which is taking time. Miranda and I have recently had a chat about how Bicester Village might support the initiative.

We ran a radio and newspaper campaign to promote many of our independent shops for **Father's Day**. The shops were delighted to be included in the campaign and it highlighted just how many specialist independent shops we have in the town. Copy attached.

We are looking at a number of other ideas for the summer and beyond – The Big Bicester Sale, Climbing Wall in the town centre, focus on certain areas ie: Deans Court. I will make contact with Iceland who are due to open in 10 weeks to see if they have plans for a launch event of some kind.

The Courtyard

As you will know, the Courtyard Youth Arts Centre has been suffering with understaffing for a year or two and this has prevented them from having any really effective youth/arts offering for the town.

This situation is nearly at an end. There is now a Co-ordinator in place who is very keen to move things forward.

I am on the marketing committee for the Courtyard and will be helping them with their forthcoming open day on Saturday 25th July. I am working with the Coop and the Fairtrade Group to organise a Fairtrade Café on the day.

We will also be helping with the advertising – I hope to have posters to give you all to display for you staff.

Town Centre Action Group

The recent work in the market square by OCC has worried the local traders. A reasonably small job was very disruptive and has made them realise that the town centre development will pose serious difficulties in keeping the town moving.

No progress on the big red signs at the top of Sheep Street – help needed by CDC to push this on if we are to get anywhere.

Sports Initiatives

I have been looking for a USP or some sort of brand identity for Bicester to help us spread positive messages about the town.

Bicester has a thriving sports community with very good junior and senior football, rugby, cricket, hockey, athletics, gymnastics as well as other opportunities for a great range of sports and activities.

Oxford United are now using the Bicester Sports facilities at Chesterton as their training ground and I have been speaking to the Chairman of OUFC about how we could work together.

Next weekend (12th July) sees the 6th Junior Triathlon event – over 200 children taking part in what has become a very popular event for all ages and abilities.

I am starting to make connections with various groups and think that there is a real opportunity to promote Bicester as one of the most active towns in the area.

Other meetings/opportunities:

I met with Graham **from OCC Community team**. He is keen to work with us on a healthy workplace initiative and we are looking for large companies who might want to be a test case for this initiative. This would tie in well with our

healthy town status. Ideally he needs a company with a large workforce who currently have no occupational health policy. I will explain more at the meeting.

Common Purpose Day

Bob, John and I spoke to some local movers and shakers about the highs and lows of partnership working. It was a great opportunity to forge some links across the county and fly the Bicester flag again.

Bicester Review

Bob and I had a very useful meeting with the new Editor of the series. She acknowledges that the Bicester news element of the paper has been weak and is keen to improve that. She has been very supportive of our initiatives and the Retail Conference was the front page splash. She also ran a Father's Day competition. Thanks to Chiltern Railways, Wyevale and Bicester Country Club who offered prizes for this competition which was extremely popular.

Dates for diary:

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| Sunday 12 th July | Bicester Carnival – Pingle Field
Junior Triathlon – BCC and Sports Centre |
| Tuesday 14 th July | Opening of Bicester Business Park |
| Saturday 15 th July | Courtyard Summer Event – open day (12-3pm)
Abba Now at the Garth – evening |
| Sunday 26 th July | Bure Park Family Fun Day |
| Wed 5 th August | Town Council – Teddy Bear's Picnic - Garth |
| 8 th /9 th July | Bicester Jazz Weekend |
| Sunday 16 th July | Bicester in Bloom Family Fun Day |