

Manager's Report – May 2009

AGM

Very positive feedback from our first AGM. The printed literature has proved very helpful and we are in the process of producing a smaller (cheaper version) that can be used by all partners when we are out and about.

Projects:

Retail Conference

Work is progressing on the conference and we have a good variety of speakers lined up. As always, the biggest challenge will be getting the retailers to attend. We know that they are keen to be better informed and consulted in decisions about the town centre but actually getting them to come along to events can be challenging. Any support from you to encourage them would be fantastic. We have distributed a postcard with the basic details around the town and have a sign up form on our website as well as a phone number (mine) for registering interest.

Shoppers Guide

Work is underway to get this project completed although it is very laborious. I am keen to ensure that we do not pay for work that has already been done and work with other partners to see what is already out there.

National Lift Share/Bike Week

I am working with the Town Council on a couple of initiatives to encourage less car use. We have had good support from the Bicester Advertiser on the Liftshare scheme and have put them in touch with Chiltern Railways to include info about their 3 for Free scheme. If any partners are currently encouraging lift share or cycling to work please let me know so we can include you in the pr. Some partners are displaying posters to promote the car share scheme.

Father's Day

We are hoping to put together a small campaign to encourage shoppers to use Bicester at Father's Day – just an excuse really to promote some of our independent stores such as: Beans, J&K Tackle, Henry's, Trysports.

Meetings and Events

Choose Abingdon – I was invited to the Board meeting of our Abingdon equivalent last week to present to them about the workings of Bicester Vision. They have great support from the three tiers of government but are struggling to get buy in from the private sector at this stage.

Bicester Mayor Making – as many of you will know, Cllr Pauline Liddington has now finished her one year stint as Mayor and the position is now being filled by Cllr James Porter. The event at The Garth included presentations to local people who have given their time and their energy in their communities – very inspiring stuff.

Good Neighbour Scheme – Paul James suggested I meet with Anne Honeyball from OCC to find out about how we could support the Good Neighbour Scheme. I will be following up with a meeting at the Bicester Resource Centre in the near future.

Association of Town Centre Manager's – I meet on a quarterly basis with managers from Aylesbury, Oxford, Windsor, Eton, Maidenhead, Brackley, High Wycombe and Milton Keynes. These meetings can be very productive in sharing ideas. Some of them have far more information available to them about the state of their towns and this is something I am exploring particularly with CDC. I have met with Andrew Bone who will be charged with completing Bicester's next health check. He has agreed to speak at the Conference and give our retailers some idea of what the check involves.

Mid-Counties Cooperative – we now have 4 reasonable sized coops in the town (this does not include Somerfield which has been bought by The Cooperative – not the Mid-Counties Cooperative). They are very keen to work with us on specific projects. The company targets all their staff to take part in some volunteering work 3 days a year. They are given time of in lieu to achieve this. I met with the community office and we discussed a number of areas where they may be able to help some town projects.

Bicester Crime Partnership

I chaired the Crime Partnership meeting at the police station. The police are finding it hard to recruit retail partners to the scheme but they already have some success stories that have been well reported by the local press. We hope that the launch at the conference will help with this.

Bicester Fairtrade Group

The group now has representatives from Chiltern Railways and the Mid-Counties Cooperative which will be a big help with their application. We are helping them to be more focussed on achieving their end goal of Fairtrade status for the town.