

FOCUS ON SUSTAINABILITY

Gloucestershire Market Towns Forum

NETWORKING MEETING

JULY 2010

REPORT COMPILED BY BETH WHITTAKER



Left: The airy meeting room at The Main Place welcomed more than 20 people for the Forum networking event. **Middle:** Peter Chamberlain (standing) Chair of Coleford Area Partnership, with Vice Chair Stuart McLester **Right:** The official opening of the building a few weeks before the Forum event

What better environment in which to discuss sustainability than Coleford's supremely eco-friendly new community enterprise centre – the Main Place?

Almost 30 people representing market towns across Gloucestershire gathered to look around the new £2.5m multi-use centre which has, since February, fed more than 4.3MW of electricity into the national grid, and to hear more about the 13-year back-story of the development. The Main Place is also the new home of the local **library** which is welcoming up to 100 people per hour since moving to the new venue. [Read more? Click here](#)

GMTF Chair Pearl Stokes introduced Shirley Hill from Gloucestershire Chamber of Trade, County Councillor Terry Hale and Bob Watters representing the voluntary sector, who led a discussion on what '**sustainability**' means to individuals and rural communities. [Read more? Click here](#)

Representatives from **Coleford, Cinderford, Fairford, Newent, Stow-on-the-Wold, Tewkesbury** and **Winchcombe** member towns shared their experiences and ideas at the ever-popular **Information Exchange** which included reports of how Forum funding and the FREE 15-hours expert support is making a difference and useful information to pass on. [Read more? Click here](#)

The meeting also heard about the Forum's latest **Economic Recovery Research report** [Read more? Click here](#)

- [Who attended](#)
- [With grateful thanks to...](#)

NEXT MEETING: A 'Look and Learn' visit to Ledbury will take place on **September 2nd** and the GMTF AGM will take place in Churchdown on **Thursday September 30th**. For more information visit the **new website** www.glosmtf.org.uk



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Networking meeting report July 2010
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The Story of Coleford's Main Place

(for more information, visit <http://main-place.org.uk/>)

Peter Chamberlain and **Stuart McLester** from Coleford Area Partnership (CAP) gave a presentation about the story behind the £2.5m Main Place community enterprise centre - regional finalist in the Action for Market Towns Awards.

It is likely that, with Government cut-backs, the building of future community centres will not be a priority, and the Partnership was grateful the job was now done.

It started in 2002 when, working with the town and seven surrounding parishes, the Time for Coleford MCTi (market and coastal towns initiative) community-led plan was researched and published. This showed the need to:

- Replace the town's ageing 1960s community centre
- Do more to encourage regeneration of the town and local area, its services and employment opportunities
- Create more affordable housing

Following a feasibility study involving CAP, Sout West RDA and Coleford Town Council, the site for the Main Place in Old Station Way was identified and secured thanks to a complicated 'land-swap' involving the county and district councils.

Architects Quattro and Builders Kier Moss were selected by the community and a design which focussed on a low carbon-footprint, accessibility and a welcoming 'feel' was chosen.

The latest environment-conscious technology was incorporated into the building which has already generated 4.3MW of power over and above the energy needed to heat the building, which has been 'sold' back into the national grid.

The Main Place is a community hub offering:

- A purpose-built **adult day care centre** for 20 local people including a sensory garden
- **New library** – reporting up to 100 people visiting per hour since opening and offering an IT suite of ten pcs which is open for community use outside library opening hours
- Purpose-built facilities for **young people** with a youth club meeting several times during the week
- **Coleford Area Partnership office**
- **Meeting rooms and office space** for businesses, community organisations and for rent
- **Business Link advice** for new local businesses and business start-ups
- Opportunities for **volunteering** and developing confidence and skills



Sustainability

Shirley Hill from Gloucestershire Chamber of Trade, County Councillor Terry Hale and Bob Watters representing the voluntary sector, led a discussion on what **'sustainability'** means to individuals and rural communities.

Shirley, a grandmother who is also an active volunteer in her home community of Cam and Dursley, says she feels guilty that her generation had used "more than our share" of nature's resources.

"When we were younger we used fewer resources but had just as much fun," she said. "When it became possible to explore other countries with cheaper flights, we did it and it was exciting and a learning experience, but we didn't think of the consequences. Now we really have to make some hard decisions."

Terry spoke of the cuts Gloucestershire County Council was having to make as part of the Government's targets and that very difficult decisions were being made.

Bob said everything he was involved in whether in terms of community projects or personal lifestyle decisions had to be subjected to a **'sustainability checklist'**. "We need to maximise what we can do without damaging our grandchildren's future."

Comments from the floor included:

- a plea for a more **integrated transport system** – the meeting was urged to find out more about the Local Transport Plan consultation at <http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/ltp3>
- reassurance that the human race would evolve to cope with fewer resources
- using email to communicate more, reducing the need for printing



Information Exchange

- Forum member towns urged to nominate a Board member
- GMTF Development Fund
- 15 hours of FREE expert advice
- Newent's updated community plan due to be published
- New, rapid response email address for member towns
- Heritage Open Days
- What to do with empty shops
- Your views on what stops people from volunteering
- Action for Market Towns annual convention: 'Running on Empty'

Forum member towns urged to nominate a Board member

All Forum member towns have the right to nominate someone as a Forum Board member. Chair Pearl Stokes is keen to have more representation from more towns. Contact Pearl on pearl.stokes@ukgateway.net to find out more.

GMTF Development Fund

Member towns can apply for up to £2,000 through a simple process. Contact Martin Harwood martinharwood560@btinternet.com for an application form.

- **Winchcombe** – funding has supported a new kitchen in the Guides hall, a minibus for elderly people and the Winchcombe walking festival.

15 hours of expert advice

As part of its services to member towns, the Forum offers up to 15-hours of professional expert advice through its Technical Advice service. This support of offered by consultants Hannah Reynolds Associates and paid for by the Forum.

To find out more about how your town can benefit, visit www.glosmtf.org.uk

- Peter Street from **Newent** said the advice the Newent Initiative received from consultant Martin Davidson had been 'most impressive'
- Chris Turner from **Stow on the Wold** explained that the town's Health Check had foundered, but with the support of free expert advice from the Forum's consultant Martin Davidson, a town plan is about to be published. "We were very pleased with Martin's professional support and have managed to achieve something tangible in just eight months, as a result," reported Chris
- Martin Harwood from **Fairford** reported that, like many towns, it was having to update its Town Plan, and that Martin Davidson's support, through the Forum, had been very useful



- Chuck Pavey from **Tewkesbury** said Martin Davidson was currently helping review the use of a large community hall and how it could be helped to pay its way, and would be helping with a feasibility for a skate park
- **Cinderford** was urged to take up its opportunity to benefit from advice through the Technical Advice service and local councillors agreed help would be most welcome to support the town's Miners Hall

Newent's updated community plan due to be published

The town's updated Community Plan is due out shortly. The delay was due to a promised £900,000 improvement fund grant being clawed back by the SWRDA, but the funding was now back up to £700,000 from other sources and receipts from the RDA to cover costs incurred by the cancellation of the first grant.

New, rapid response email address for member towns

GMTF has a new email address for member towns to use to take advantage of the wealth of experience and knowledge among Forum Board members. Just send your questions to info@glosmtf.org.uk and you will receive a quick response.

Heritage Open Days, Forest of Dean, September 9 - 12

For the second year, Coleford Area Partnership is co-ordinating the Heritage Open Days in the Forest of Dean on behalf of the Tourist Office. Thirty different properties will open their doors to visitors across the district.

What to do with empty shops

Richard Morgan, Cinderford Regeneration Officer, passed on details of a company which says it dresses empty shop units with a difference, using props to tell stories and attract positive attention. See www.wish.co.uk for more information.

Your views on what stops people from volunteering

Margaret Highton mg@gmbhighton.plus.com had recently been invited to take part in a discussion at national level about the barriers facing voluntary organisations. If you have comments you'd like her to pass back to Government representatives, please email her.

Action for Market Towns annual convention – 'Running on Empty'

The annual convention of this national organisation which works to support market towns is to be held in October 12 and 13 in **Chippenham**. 'Early bird' discounts for tickets are now available. This convention is highly recommended. To find out more, visit <http://towns.org.uk/events-2/amt-convention/>

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GMTF Press release

Market Towns research highlights new ideas to boost rural economy

To read the full GMTF Economic Recovery Report 2010 on the Forum website, see
<http://tinyurl.com/GLOSMTF-report>

The latest research commissioned by the Gloucestershire Market Towns Forum looking at the high streets of the county's market towns, highlights some exciting local initiatives designed to boost the rural economy.

Forum member towns **Chipping Campden, Cirencester, Fairford, Newent, Tewkesbury** and **Winchcombe** are featured in the report as being among those taking positive steps to encourage local people to 'shop and trade local' by working in partnership with traders and other local businesses.

The Forum's latest Economic Recovery Report 2010, which updates research refreshed over the past 12 months, also shows that although some towns are still suffering shop closures, there is good news too with 30 new businesses opening across the market towns from October 2009 to April 2010.

Information was supplied by almost all the Forum's 16 member market towns and large parishes. They reported a total of 39 mainly independently-run High Street shops and businesses had closed over the six months to April 2010, with clothing outlets being the hardest hit, closely followed by cafes and restaurants. About half the closures were directly attributed to the recession with a number attributed to high rent increases.

Pearl Stokes, Chair of the Forum, praised the efforts made by some member towns to directly support the growth of their local economy. "We need even more towns and parish councils to work in partnership with local business groups and plan a stronger economic future together," she said. "Our market towns are the heart of Gloucestershire's rural community and need to become even stronger and more vibrant to succeed.

"We can all do more to make our towns and parishes more attractive to visitors and tourists to support our local traders."

Pearl, a Tewkesbury Borough and Churchdown Parish councillor, also appealed to people to think about their shopping habits. She said: "Before automatically ordering something off the internet, I would urge people to check if they can buy the same product or service locally. Sometimes it looks cheaper on-line, but local suppliers often won't charge delivery and will offer an after-sales service which you won't get off the internet!"

Several of the Forum's member towns have been successful in winning funding from the Gloucestershire Trade Local Campaign, funded by Gloucestershire County Council, to encourage councils and businesses to work together to raise awareness of local products and services.

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GLoucestershire Market Towns Forum Networking Event July 29 2010 Attendance

1.	Ashton, Lyn	Memento Gifts, Newent
2.	Baugh, Kate	GRCC
3.	Chamberlain, Peter	Coleford Area Partnership
4.	Coborn, Max	Cinderford Town Council
5.	Cornwall, Barbara	Tewkesbury Town Council
6.	Edwards, Claire	Gloucestershire First
7.	Gerrard, John	Winchcombe
8.	Godfrey, Peter	GMTF Board, Lechlade Town Council
9.	Hill, Shirley	Breakheart Community Project
10.	Hill, Jim	Vale Vision
11.	Hale, Terry	County Councillor for Coleford
12.	Harwood, Martin	GMTF Board, Fairford Town Council
13.	Highton, Margaret	Newent Initiative Trust
14.	Howell, Chris	GMTF Board, Coleford Town Council
15.	Lichnowski, Andy	GMTF Board, Cirencester Town Council
16.	Marrott, Janet	GMTF Board, Coleford Area Partnership
17.	McLister, Stuart	Coleford Area Partnership
18.	Morgan, Graham	Cinderford Town Council
19.	Pavey, Chuck	GMTF Board, Tewkesbury Town Council
20.	Riley, Denis	Forest of Dean District Council
21.	Street, Peter	Newent Initiative Trust
22.	Stokes, Pearl	GMTF Board, Churchdown Parish Council
23.	Turner, Jenni	Stow on the Wold Town Council
24.	Turner, Chris	Stow on the Wold Town Council
25.	Vaughan, Dawn	Coleford Area Partnership
26.	Watters, Bob	GMTF Board, Lydney AiP
27.	Whittaker, Beth	Viva Communications, Stroud

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With grateful thanks to....

Hosting: Members of the Coleford MCTi Partnership and particularly to GMTF Board Director Janet Marrott for the buffet supper

Photos: GMTF Board Director Chris Howell

Welcome: Main Place: Peter Chamberlain and Stuart McLester

Speakers: Shirley Hill from Gloucestershire Chamber of Trade, County Councillor Terry Hale and Bob Watters representing the voluntary sector

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