

Autumn 2007

Ramsey Matters

The Ramsey Town Centre Partnership Newsletter



ISSUE 16



The Great Fen Project

Here, on our doorstep, we have a project that has HRH The Prince of Wales as its patron, Stephen Fry as its President, grant funding of many millions of pounds and national (and no doubt international) media coverage. We've all heard something about it, some of us have actually got involved with it, but what is it really all about and what does it mean for Ramsey and the Ramsey area? The Town Centre Partnership discussed the project with Tanya Mercer, Campaign Officer of the Great Fen Project. Turn to the centre pages for the story so far...

Huntingdonshire Volunteer Awards

Back in May we were delighted to nominate Mr and Mrs Dennis and Phyllis Jackson in the first ever Huntingdonshire Volunteer Awards in recognition of their many years of work for the Town Centre Partnership. We were absolutely thrilled when they were shortlisted and then named winners of the Inspiration category at the Awards Ceremony in June. It really was Ramsey's night with Anne Thompson winning the Commitment category for her work at Ramsey Volunteer Centre and the Ramsey Learning Community Champions and the Ramsey Rural Museum among those shortlisted. Congratulations to everyone.

Sadly, Phyllis Jackson died in July. The legacy of her work continues to support the Ramsey Town Centre Partnership and other organisations.





Regular readers of this section will know that we usually signpost a number of business support organisations, helpful websites, training opportunities and so on by publishing contact details. In this issue we are giving two organisations the opportunity to explain more fully just what they have on offer.

Business Link... the place to go for business support

Whether your business is established, or you are just starting out, Business Link can provide you with independent and impartial support to help you make the most of your business.

"The business advisers at Business Link understand the needs of local businesses and the economy in Ramsey", says adviser Brian Leeming. "We are working with businesses in the area and supporting them to grow and become more profitable."

Business Link is your gateway to:

Free one-to-one business advice with an experienced business adviser, who will

- Identify, analyse and diagnose your business needs at no cost to you
- Develop and customise a plan of action
- Provide a summary of support services required to meet your needs
- Support you in the implementation of your plan

Answers to any business questions through our Information and Intelligence Centre, including

- Mailing lists selected to meet the needs of your target market
- Company information and/or more extensive company reports
- Potential sources of grants, finance and/or subsidised business services
- General business and market intelligence

Workshops and seminars covering a vast range of business topics, such as

- Understanding business legislation and regulations
- Starting your own business
- Winning public sector contracts
- Successful marketing for growth

Contact Business Link on 08457 17 16 15 or visit www.businesslinkeast.org.uk



CREAM – Cambridge & Rural, Enterprise Advice & Mentoring

If you have a budding business idea and you live in Cambridgeshire, then read on. A new, free initiative has been launched to help you start and grow in business.

We can help your business idea bloom...

Free Business advice will focus on supporting people from high-priority areas across Cambridgeshire who are thinking about starting a new business and is available at the Ramsey Community Information Centre every Thursday morning.

We will provide free and impartial advice to help your business venture succeed and we will work with partnering organisations in order to deliver the most appropriate package of support, ensuring you make the right decisions.

As well as confidential one to one business advice the CREAM programme provides a series of free pre start up business training workshops. These range from an intensive five day Best Start course, covering all aspects of starting a new business and preparation of a business plan to short "taster" sessions on marketing and selling but also personal development skills such as confidence building, and communication.

Our advice and training are delivered by an experienced team of

advisors who have all either worked with small businesses for a number of years or have owned a business. They have worked with a range of clients from part-time hobby businesses to national companies, from individuals just thinking about starting up, to long established enterprises. Whatever your business or idea, we have relevant experience to draw on.

Accessing affordable finance can often be a problem for the start up business. Entrepreneurs participating in the CREAM programme are eligible for Business Start Up Loans from the NWES ADVANCE loan scheme, part of the Community Development Finance Initiative. Businesses applying for ADVANCE Loans are solely judged on the business plan and idea, there is no credit scoring involved.

The CREAM programme is funded by the Greater Cambridge Partnership through the Investing in Communities programme. For further details of the programme, to book an appointment with a business advisor or to enquire about the Start Up workshops please call Enterprise Fenland on 01354 660900.



Better Neighbourhoods on the Agenda for Ramsey

The Neighbourhood Management initiative was introduced in October 2006 as a way to focus scarce public resources where they are needed most. In the case of Huntingdonshire that means that just three areas, one of which is Ramsey, will be the focus of attention. It aims to improve existing services, or change them where necessary. It has been tested throughout England and is now being extended due to its success.

I am an experienced community worker, having spent the last four years working in St Neots and I am now delighted to be in Ramsey working with existing businesses, communities and key organisations such as health services, police and housing associations, as well as councils, to bring the different elements together.

Ramsey will have its own dedicated Neighbourhood office based at the Community Information Centre at 39 Great Whyte, where I can be contacted on 01487 814897.

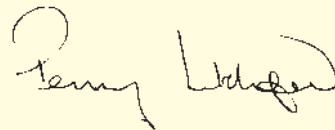
I came to the town in July and I am greatly encouraged by the quality and extent of the work already happening in and around Ramsey. It is clearly a vibrant area and I hope my role will pull the different strands together to make things work even better for local people.

One of my first priorities has been to meet as many key people as possible to hear their different perspectives on the area. One

element of this work is to support elected councillors whose skills and networks are well established. There is no substitute for asking the experts already here what works and what else is needed. After that, a Neighbourhood board will be set up with representation from key groups.

A great deal of work has been done over the last few years including an extensive 'health check' conducted by the Ramsey Area Partnership, to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the area. This information has been vital to the providers of services but it is now time to refresh some of the material so we will be asking people to give us their views again. Without asking people what makes their lives better, it would be impossible to plan properly for the future.

Look out for Neighbourhood Management information coming your way in the coming months and please spare a few minutes to answer any questions that you might be asked.



Ramsey Town Council Update from Councillor Neil Dick

One of the main functions of Ramsey Town Council is to try and address concerns of the residents and to keep them informed about developments, both in planning and other areas that will affect the town. Currently three issues have been concerning the council.

The Grand

The old Grand Cinema sits in the heart of the town and is one of the most recognisable buildings in Ramsey. Since its purchase by Luminus there have been several planning applications submitted to Huntingdon District Council, some incorporating a new Library and some including removing the New Road car parking. Luminus arranged a public consultation and displayed the proposed plans but it is fair to say that none were greeted with enthusiasm by the residents.

The latest plans are now in and the Town Council called a public meeting to ensure the resident's views were heard.

Skate Park

Following the success of the mobile skate park in 2006 the Town Council are looking to repeat the event in September. Hiring the skate park and all the associated safety equipment is expensive, over £500 a session. To pay for this an application has been made to the Cambridgeshire Youth Bank The Cambridgeshire Youth

Bank gives funds to projects that will be completed by March 2008. It is for groups aged between 13 and 19 years old, living in Cambridge City, South or East Cambs, Hunts or Fenland. Ramsey qualifies because of its isolation being a rural market town. Dates and location of the skate park sessions will be available shortly.

Speeding

The Town Council has been approached by a number of residents, especially from the villages, regarding cars exceeding the speed limit on the area's roads. The police have been made aware of these concerns and have started a series of radar checks which have resulted in warnings, fixed penalties and fines to a number of motorists. Your Town Council is monitoring the situation and receive a police report on the matter at the Council meetings.

Tesco Development

Sorry no news!! If you have any information, hear a new rumour please let us know and we will try to follow it up!

Finally remember members of the public are welcome to address the Council, on any subject, at the Council meetings held on the second and fourth Thursday of the month. Come and let us know how you see the future of Ramsey.

Neil Dick Ramsey Town Council

In conversation with The Great Fen Project



What is the Great Fen Project and why is it important?

The Great Fen Project aims to join Woodwalton Fen, near Ramsey Heights, with Holme Fen, to create a 3,700 hectare greenspace for people and wildlife. This is one of the most exciting habitat restoration projects ever undertaken in Britain and it's happening right here in the Fens.



Our aim on the Great Fen Project is to protect and expand precious fenland habitat. Less than 1% of ancient fenland habitat still exists today. This means rare flora and fauna are clinging on in a few small nature reserves. This makes it very difficult for species to survive. So, by joining Woodwalton and Holme Fen, the Great Fen Project will create a larger area for wildlife to expand and flourish. This will also provide a beautiful mosaic of reedbeds, wetland meadows and waterways for wildlife and people to enjoy.



Another important aspect of the project is preserving precious peat levels. Unfortunately, arable farming requires dry peat soil which causes it to erode away. Eventually, once the peat has gone, crops like potatoes and sugar beet will not be able to be grown. What the Great Fen Project will do is maintain peat levels by raising water levels and creating wildlife habitat. These two things will hold the peat together and stop it, and the wildlife that thrives on it, from disappearing.



The project is a partnership between the Environment Agency, Huntingdonshire District Council, Middle Level Commissioners, Natural England and the Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs, Northants and Peterborough.

But won't it end farming and increase the chance of flooding in the area?

The Great Fen Project will not end farming or increase the chance of flooding.

We want to work with farmers and local people to create a productive and sustainable area that not only compliments current farming practices, but enhances tourism and local business and also

protects precious fenland wildlife. The land will still be productive, but in a way that maintains peat levels and benefits wildlife. Hay cutting and grazing will become common land usage and meat production will thrive in the project area.

What is more, the Great Fen Project will preserve peat levels and therefore, if ever we need to dig for victory again, the land will be available for growing crops.

In addition, far from increasing flooding in the area, the Great Fen Project will actually enhance flood protection and thus better protect farmland and property around the project area. Woodwalton Fen already acts as a flood storage area in times of high water, but once the Great Fen is established, the area will be able to store even more flood water and therefore protect farmland and property further. The Middle Level Commissioners, who operate the area's flood protection, have just joined us as partners of the project, because they are confident the Great Fen will compliment the work they do to protect the area from flooding.

So how will Ramsey benefit?

In addition to flood protection for the area, the Great Fen Project will provide many other benefits to Ramsey and the surrounding area.

The biggest benefit the project will offer to the region is in leisure and tourism. There will be an increased demand for restaurants and pubs, hotels and B&Bs, general retail and entertainment. Ramsey is an important location for the Great Fen Project; it is connected to the project area by the waterway. We hope business people in Ramsey and beyond will take advantage of the project as visitor numbers grow.

That's excellent news for our economy. We see this as a superb opportunity for our business sector and will do our best to support their involvement. What about our families and visitors?

Ramsey's schools and families can also benefit



from our fun and varied outreach programmes. We already have a great relationship with local schools, where children come to visit the Great Fen and learn about their local wildlife. In Spring 2008 the Countryside Classroom at Ramsey Heights will be fully renovated and will provide a wonderful setting for children to learn more. The Great Fen Wildlife Watch Group also welcomes children and families to come and explore the fen, and learn about the wonders therein. The Wildlife Trust has been running family events including “Creatures of the Night”, “Wonderful Wetlands”, “Dragons and Damsels” and “Hogweeds School of Wizardry”. We plan to hold more events for families during school holidays and also for the wider community in the future.

Finally, the project will provide a “green lung” right on our doorstep, which we can enjoy whenever we want. This is especially important as the population grows in Peterborough, Ramsey and surrounding areas. To have a green area to enjoy will be so important for everyone’s well being and quality of life. Eventually people will be able to walk for hours among the peaceful fenland habitat, listen to the birds singing and the reeds rustling, and see rare fenland flora and fauna inhabiting this region once again.

What’s happening at the moment on the Great Fen Project?

We are progressing really well at the moment. Our most recent news was a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, which awarded us £8.9m – their biggest grant ever given to an environmental project. This money will help us to purchase the massive 1,300 hectares we secured in May of this year. This land is to the north of the project area, and increases our land holding by 70%!

The land restoration of this newly acquired land will be a slow, consultative process. We are currently talking to tenant farmers about the future of the land and we are looking forward to working with them when and if they are happy to do so. The farmers know the land better than anyone else, and their knowledge and experience will be invaluable to us. Eventually, we hope to work with farmers and other local people to use sustainable agricultural practices to manage the land, including grazing and hay cutting.

Restoration work is continuing on Darlow’s Farm, where water levels have been raised to maintain peat levels and cattle are happily grazing. Already we are seeing the rare fenland habitat start to take hold, and the return of wildlife like wetland birds, such as snipe and lapwing. You can now visit Darlow’s Farm to see the progress for yourself – check out the Great Fen Project website – www.greatfen.org.uk – or call us to find out how.

We are also looking forward to starting restoration work on another farm very soon. We are working closely with the farmer, who will continue to manage the land and help restore it by raising water levels. He has secured a grant to do this work, and this demonstrates one way in which local people can work with the project.

How can local people get involved and find out more?

We really encourage volunteers to get involved with the project in any way they want. Whether it’s helping with research, working in the mud or running Wildlife Watch events for children, we’d love to hear from you.

Maybe you’d like more information, or you have children who’d like to join one of our events or you’d like to visit the fen. Whatever it is, we want to hear from you.

If you would like to get in touch with the Great Fen Project team, please contact us on 01954 713 500, email us on info@greatfen.org or write to Chris Gerrard, Great Fen Project Manager, The Manor House, Broad Street, Cambourne, Cambridge CB23 6DH.

You can also find out more about the project through community talks given by Chris Gerrard, Great Fen Project Manager. If you’d like Chris to come and talk to your local group, do give us a call. You can also visit our website – www.greatfen.org.uk – to read about the project, get the latest news and sign up for our regular bulletins.

So now we know. Ramsey Town Centre Partnership will stay in close contact with the Great Fen Project managers, HDC’s economic development team and other contributing organisations and will bring you regular updates in Ramsey Matters.

“The Great Fen Project is a fantastic example of how we can combine environmental, social and economic issues positively for the benefit of local communities.”
Chris Gerrard.



Youth Matters



Do you get bored in the evenings? Then you should come to our new Youth Club just for you (school year 7). Get involved in sports, art and music. Chill out with your friends, play pool, table tennis and other fun games and activities.
STREETWISE – Every Tuesday 6-8pm at Ramsey Youth Centre.

Farmers' Market Dates

Don't miss the forthcoming Ramsey Farmers' Markets. All our favourite traders with wonderful fresh, local produce. Markets are held on the Great Whyte from 8.30 am – 2.00 pm.

Sunday 16 September – A special market to celebrate the culmination of the Huntingdonshire Food and Drink Festival. Lots of special events and attractions as well as all the usual first class local produce

Friday 30 November – Winter Warmers. Hot food, seasonal produce and a chance to order Christmas goodies.

Friday 14 December – Ramsey Christmas Market. Stock up for the festive season with meats, cheeses, pies, preserves and much more. Santa will be in attendance and there will be hot food and entertainment.

The Ramsey Farmers' Markets provide local meat and meat products, fruit, vegetables, cheeses, bread, preserves, sweet and savoury pies, cakes, herbs, herbal preparations, flowers, plants and much more.

Our markets are certified by the National Farmers' Retail and Markets Association (FARMA) which means that they have local farmers, growers and food businesses selling their own produce directly to you.

The Ramsey Town Centre Partnership holds five markets per year and we rely on your support to ensure they continue. Please come along, bring friends and family and enjoy a wonderful shopping experience.



Training + Action = RESULT!

On Tuesday 10th July 2007, Joanne Gysin and I attended a Visual Marketing Course at the Saxongate Community Learning Centre, Huntingdon. It was an engaging and fascinating four hours learning how to create attractive, professional window displays; how to use space to its optimum and, most importantly, understanding how important our shop windows are to the success or otherwise of our business. These are the skills that the big retailers rely on and so we were really thrilled with what we came away with.

Later in the day I walked into Carousel to find Jo describing all the things she had learned to Bena, my business partner. The next week they put learning into practice and started to move the entire shop around! Result! Since then we have taken the bull by

the horns and closed the shop for a weekend to undergo a complete refurbishment. This is all as a result of lessons learned on a course that was a lot of fun and absolutely FREE to Ramsey shopkeepers.

On behalf of Jo and myself, many thanks HDC for bringing us the opportunity to learn. We hope other businesses will take up future offers. I know the public will appreciate our efforts to make shopping in Ramsey a really good experience. To our shoppers I would say, Ramsey businesses provide a personal service you wont find elsewhere, please use your local shops - we all deserve your support.

Gina Randal, Carousel.

A New Service For Ramsey CAB Money Advice Clinic

Help with money problems and debts is now available in Ramsey. The Citizens Advice Bureau is holding drop in sessions on the first Wednesday afternoon of each month at the Ramsey Community Information Centre, 39 Great Whyte, Ramsey from 1.30 – 3.00 pm.

No appointment necessary. Just drop in and meet an advisor.



RAMSEY JOBSEARCH *Putting job seekers and employers in touch*

JobSearch is a Ramsey Town Centre Partnership project which helps job seekers to find local employment, and helps local employers to find staff to fill their vacancies.

In the spring edition of Ramsey Matters we put out a plea for volunteers to man the weekly Monday morning session and we were delighted with the response. Thank you to all those who got in touch. We now have an excellent team of volunteers; some new, some founder members of the scheme, all keen to help those looking for work and the businesses with job vacancies. The drop in session is held every Monday from 10.00 am to 12.00pm at the Community Information Centre, 39 Great Whyte, or you can make an appointment by calling the Town Centre Partnership office on 01487 813612.

Date for your diary - The Ramsey Town Centre Partnership will be lighting the Ramsey Beacon on the evening of Friday 23rd November to mark the 60th Wedding Anniversary of HM The Queen and HRH Prince Philip. More information will be available a little nearer the time.

Vital Communities in Ramsey

An update from Susan Potter, Project Manager

As Vital Communities celebrates the successes of its first phase, so the children and families, artists, teachers and friends have all been remembering the 'best bits'. After just eighteen months this unique research project has resulted in some astounding outcomes across the ten participating communities.

What's been happening?

The highlights of Phase 1 are too numerous to mention – and we are sure that everyone will have their personal favourites – but the following 'top ten' give a snapshot of just some of the memorable Vital Communities events happening in Ramsey during the past eighteen months:

Mini Beast Musical at The Red House Residential Home

The Gingerbread Show touring theatre at Ramsey Spinning Infant School

The Magical Fens environmental exhibition and soundscape at Ramsey Youth Centre

Tales from the Crow's Nest touring theatre at Ramsey Spinning Infant School

Fruit Salad Sharing at The Red House Residential Home

Spirits of the Fens half-term music workshops at Ramsey Library

Bhangra Beat! Indian music and dance at Abbey College

The Observation Room installation at St Thomas a Becket Church, Ramsey

Strange Creatures weekend sculpture workshops at Woodwalton Fen

Vital Communities Film Festival with Mini Oscar Awards Ceremony.

A unique Research Study

Beginning with a three-year pilot and aiming to conduct the study over a 15-year period. Through a vibrant programme of high-quality creative activities (dance, drama, film, literature, music, visual art) the project will study the impact of the arts upon both individual and community development. The project will investigate whether the arts have a positive impact on the aspirations, achievement and attitudes of ten specific communities across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Even at these earliest stages,

Vital Communities is beginning to provide strong, positive evidence resulting from the impact of participating in the project.

Finally, at the end of our first year, we need to extend a huge thank you to everyone who has contributed to the success of Vital Communities during the past months.

For further details about Vital Communities and/or to find out how you can become involved as a participant

or a sponsor, please contact:

Susan Potter, Project Manager Vital Communities

Tel: 01223 718013

Email: susan.potter@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/leisure/arts/Vital+Communities



Ramsey Matters is produced by the Ramsey Town Centre Partnership and distributed to Ramsey and the surrounding villages as a means of sharing information and supporting local initiatives. If you would like to be a member of the Partnership or learn more about our work, please contact Vera Woolmer at 39 Gt Whyte, Ramsey, Cambs, PE26 1HH, tel 01487 813612 or email rampart@btinternet.com. www.ramseytowncentrepartnership.org.uk

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure accuracy we cannot accept any liability for errors or omissions.

