

# Voluntary and Community Sector News

Issue 05 May 2010

## Volunteers in Kidderminster influence change!

A local ex-teacher has been championing an environmental project that is working on improvements in a derelict and overgrown site beneath the railway viaduct arches at Kidderminster.

There is a right of way through the area which is popular with walkers and residents from local housing estates, who use the pathway to access the town centre and shops. When Margaret Bradley first visited the area it was covered in years of rubbish and fly-tipping and was a mammoth task to undertake and clear. With help from two other residents and co-operation from Wyre Forest District Council and Homebase and following months of clearing the site and removing vast amounts of rubbish, the site became recognisable as an interesting and valuable wetland and woodland site.

The time and commitment given by these three residents is remarkable including the time spent writing and telephoning numerous agencies for their assistance or advice. The ladies persistence paid off as one of Worcestershire's County Councils Rights of Way teams have installed a boardwalk over a wet area and the Community Greenspace Team of Worcestershire's Countryside Service have planted shrubs in the area and are to return to plant some fruit trees. They also have on-going support from the local District Council and the land owners Marstons Brewery and Network Rail.

Future plans include the establishment of an interpretation board providing information on the sites history, including the 18th Century Hoo Brook Spinning Mill powered by water power and the building of the railway viaduct in 1870. Additionally, the Environment Agency will be working on clearing watercourses to enable the Hoo Brook to flow freely and join the River Stour and into the River Severn.



## Breaking down barriers through dance!

Towards the end of 2009 the VCS Unit ran a grant round for the VCS to run intergenerational projects in the county. This grant entitled the Generations Together Holiday Fund proved very popular with some interesting and varied projects coming through the application process.

One of the successful projects funded from this grant was the Richard Alston Dance Company's Intergenerational Project, organised by Malvern Theatres. The project aimed to bring together both younger and older generations through providing opportunities to engage with professional dance performance.

Verity Noughton from the University of Worcester, as part of a placement at Malvern Theatre, was also involved in the workshops and helped to explain some of the benefits gained from bringing together different generations:

*"Seeing youngsters so willing to work hard and get involved encouraged the older generation to avoid the negative stereotype of youths in today's society. It gave them the view that when allowed to channel their energy, most youngsters want to achieve the best of their ability!"*

Andrea Blake, the grant lead for the Generations Together Holiday Fund, has been very pleased with the projects funded through the grant scheme and explained how much she has enjoyed seeing the results of projects that aim to bring together both younger and older generations in such a wide variety of contexts:

*"The variety and enthusiasm for this work has been fantastic right across the county. It is very rewarding to see so many brilliant examples of intergenerational work taking place; with over 700 people in Worcestershire involved so far."*

If you would like any more information on the intergenerational projects that have happened in the county or would like more information on funding please visit the VCS Unit web pages [www.worcestershire.gov.uk](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk)



## We need your views!

As the Worcestershire County Council grant process is now in its third year it is time again for us to evaluate how well we are doing!

We are keen to discover what your experiences are of using our grant process and would like to work with you on improving the process wherever possible.

This will provide us with a valuable opportunity to discuss application forms, timescales, evaluation panels and all elements of the process from launch to payments. So, whether your bid was successful or unsuccessful, we are keen to hear from you and welcome any contributions you wish to make.

The workshop will take place on Thursday 13th May 09:30 – 11am at St Peter Baptist Church in Worcester  
If you are interested in joining us, please reply to Suzy James by email by Friday 7 May:  
[sjames2@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:sjames2@worcestershire.gov.uk)



## Start Living for Tomorrow!

Worcestershire County Council's sustainability team has launched the 'Living for Tomorrow' campaign. Packs are now available to help residents in Worcestershire achieve better health, well-being and improved finances.

Cat Ainsworth, our Principal Sustainability Manager at the County Council explains more:

"By taking the 'Living for Tomorrow' challenge, you can start to take some simple steps towards a sustainable lifestyle. You'll be able to watch your energy bills fall, enjoy fresh local produce and get out in the countryside to that little secluded spot where you can sit and think about all the great stuff you've achieved.

There are eight challenges available, launched throughout the year, which you can sign up for, ranging from reducing your energy use to growing your own vegetables. Each challenge offers a number of easy actions which can help improve home and lifestyle as well as giving further information and support.

The 'Living for Tomorrow' challenge is an ideal way to take quick and easy steps to save money on energy bills, improve health or learn a new skill. We're encouraging everyone to get involved either by requesting a pack or visiting our website where you'll find lots of hints, tips and sources of further information."

This is a great opportunity for VCS organisations to help us spread the word for both organisations and service users to benefit from the 'Living Tomorrow Challenge' so please don't forget to take a look at the information available and tell your colleagues and service users about the campaign and how it could give them a great start to a sustainable lifestyle!

To find out more, and for your free 'Getting Started' pack, contact the Sustainability team on 01905 822029, email [sustainability@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:sustainability@worcestershire.gov.uk) or visit [www.worcestershire.co.uk/greendirectory](http://www.worcestershire.co.uk/greendirectory) where the information contained in the packs is also available.

The poster features a dark blue header with the text 'Living for tomorrow' in small white font. Below this, the main title 'Living for tomorrow' is written in large, bold, white letters. The background is a light blue gradient. Below the title, the text 'Better Lifestyle', 'Better Health', and 'Better Finances' is listed in a dark blue font. At the bottom, it says 'Start Living for Tomorrow!' in a dark blue font. Below the text is a colorful illustration of a landscape with green hills, trees, and a house. At the very bottom, the website address 'www.worcestershire.gov.uk/greendirectory' is displayed in a dark blue font, along with the Worcestershire County Council logo.

## Need help with funding!

The Worcestershire Infrastructure Consortium (WIC) is on hand for all VCS organisations in Worcestershire to help with identifying funding as well as a range of support on a wide range of other issues. The VCS Unit also provide information briefings on current funding streams available and other routes to look for funding. You can find out more about this on the VCS Unit web pages. Just visit the following address and click on the VCS Support Symbol under 'Quick Links' to find out more! [www.worcestershire.gov.uk](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk)



## Parents and carers urged to have their say on childcare

Worcestershire County Council is calling for parents and carers to get in touch and share their views about childcare.

The council is responsible for making sure there is sufficient childcare in the county to support parents who are in employment, education or training. This is a statutory duty placed upon all local authorities and as part of this duty local authorities must carry out a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment across the county every three years.

That's why it's important as many people as possible take part in this valuable consultation exercise, which fits in with this year's National Family Week campaign.

"We're hoping plenty of people will take the time to take part in the questionnaire either by filling in one of the surveys at local venues across the county or logging on to our online consultation portal.

By taking part in this consultation parents will be able to help the Early Years and Childcare Service shape the future of childcare provision in Worcestershire."

Questionnaires asking for parents' and carers' views on childcare are being distributed throughout this month (April) via Worcestershire's Family Information Service, children's centres, childcare providers, schools and other professionals working with families.

Alternatively, parents and carers can log on to the council's consultation portal via [www.worcestershire.gov.uk/haveyoursay](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/haveyoursay)

In the meantime, people wanting to find out more about the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment, should visit [www.worcestershire.gov.uk/childcaresufficiency](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/childcaresufficiency). Alternatively, people can call Jan Roberts on 01905 728986 or email [jroberts3@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:jroberts3@worcestershire.gov.uk)

Worcestershire parents have until June 14 to have their say on childcare through the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment consultation, which is being carried out by its Family Information Service from April 1 this year.

Jan Roberts, Operational Manager for the County Council's Family Information Service, said: "All parents and carers should have access to childcare in order to remain in, or return to, work or education.



## A big thank you!

In February Worcestershire County Council, in partnership with the NHS, hosted a ceremony to recognise and thank the VCS for their contribution to the response during the bad weather at the begging of the year. The event was a huge success and a number of organisations were awarded certificates of commendation including Gloucestershire and Worcestershire 4x4 Response and St John's Ambulance.



## WIC's Support for VCS Representatives



In recent years the Government has insisted that VCS organisations are involved not in just the delivery of services but also in planning for them strategically. This is through the vehicle of LSPs, or Local Strategic Partnerships. Each district within Worcestershire has a corresponding LSP and it is in these LSP's that many of the key decisions are made.

For the VCS contribution to be as effective as possible, clear engagement and representational structures need to be in place.

These structures, protocols and procedures are supported by WIC (Worcestershire Infrastructure Consortium), which is comprised of 12 VCS organisations in Worcestershire who work together to strengthen the sector's voice.

In this aim, WIC have developed a representatives 'toolkit' to encourage new, and support longstanding representatives. WIC advertise all representatives' places in the county, carry out an application procedure, and then offer an induction to the successful candidate. But it is the VCS itself who must determine how and by whom it should be represented – so WIC make a clear

and transparent election process available when needed. Representatives must also be able to draw views from and report back to their constituency's networks – and WIC manage a system of feedback and storage held on their WebPages. The Consortium also hold twice yearly 'Listening Events', where representatives can network and share experiences.

Jim Smith who coordinates the support WIC provide to VCS representatives explains how you can get involved:

*"If you would like a taster of what VCS Representation can mean to the Sector, you and your organisation, you may wish to join the Short-term Representatives' Bank which will give you one off opportunities to represent on a variety of decision making panels and gain an insight into some of the benefits you can gain from representing the Sector".*

If you require further details on VCS Representation, or details of opportunities in your area. Please contact Jim J Smith at [wavocc@btconnect.com](mailto:wavocc@btconnect.com) or view the WIC webpages at [http://www.winc.org.uk/the\\_voice\\_hub\\_er](http://www.winc.org.uk/the_voice_hub_er)

## A new gloss on Community Leadership!

Community Leadership's management team rolled up their sleeves in Redditch on Saturday 20 March. The group of Community Leadership managers gave up a weekend lie-in to help decorate a room that will expand the town's St John Ambulance building and improve the building for the community.

Suzy James from the VCS Unit in Community Leadership motivated her colleagues to get involved and there are now plans to promote to staff across County Hall the value from giving up a small amount of time to benefit the local community!

Suzy James said 'the morning proved a great success, the management team actually enjoyed developing their decorating skills and even expressed interest in doing it on a more regular basis! We value the work of the voluntary and community sector and see this as an opportunity to join in and get to know organisations better.'

If you have anything you would like the Community Leadership management team to come and help you with let us know by contacting Suzy on [sjames2@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:sjames2@worcestershire.gov.uk)

