

Oxfordshire Rural Community Council

NEWS BULLETIN

April 2007

Cholsey made it happen...

....and so can you with a Parish Plan for your village.

Cholsey completed their Parish Plan in March and are already making things happen.

- ✓ District and County Council now listen to what the village has to say.
- ✓ A new doctors' surgery will be placed in their new village hall.
- ✓ Local primary school children will be able to attend a breakfast club and an after school club.
- ✓ Social clubs also know exactly what activities to provide.
- ✓ ...and many many more actions are in the pipeline.

You can find out more about Cholsey and their success from their website:

www.cholsey.org/parishplan/index.html

All this was made possible with help and support from ORCC's community development team and the Parish Plan Grant Fund.

If you want to make it happen in your village contact Anton Nath or Aimée Evans

anton.nath@oxonrcc.org.uk

aimee.evans@oxonrcc.org.uk

Remember ~
your village has a future, be part of it!

ORCC News Bulletin is available on the ORCC website at

www.oxonrcc.org.uk

'21st Century Village'

ORCC is to take part in a national venture that will draw attention to the host of things that rural communities are doing in response to the challenges of climate change. The '21st Century Village' exhibition will take place in the week of 7 – 15 July, and all 38 Rural Community Councils across the country plan to take part. Our parent body ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) will be 'topping and tailing' the week with national publicity to maximise the impact of the event.

In Oxfordshire, we know that many communities are already doing great work in drawing attention to low energy light bulbs, improved house insulation, local foods, and more. We have come across exciting ventures with infra-red cameras (which show where houses lose most heat), and ambitious targets set by local residents aiming to reduce their community's carbon footprint.

If your village would like to join us in 'spreading the word' and highlighting the fantastic array of good practice that is already under way, please get in touch on 01865 883488, e-mail orcc@oxonrcc.org.uk.

ORCC Membership Scheme

Our members are important to us and ORCC depends on your support. We hope you too have benefited from joining and will be renewing your membership for 2007/08.

Membership forms will be sent out soon, and are available on request from

christine.bartle@oxonrcc.org.uk

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Oxfordshire's Success in the Best Rural Retailer Awards

Congratulations to the Oxfordshire village shops and farm shops that recently received commendations in the national Best Rural Retailer competition, organised by the Countryside Alliance/Daily Telegraph. The competition was judged initially at county level, then regional level; regional winners then competed for the national awards.

www.bestruralretailer.co.uk

The winner of the best Village Shop and Post Office in Oxfordshire was Sibford Village Stores and Post Office, with Taste Buds of Adderbury in second place. Both shops are past winners of ORCC's Village Shop of the Year competition. Third place went to the TVSA Community Shop in Finstock.

Having taken first place at county level, Foxbury Farm Shop near Brize Norton went on to take the national award for Best Local Food Shop in England. The runner up in Oxfordshire was Local Tastes of Thame with Chadlington Quality Foods taking third. Both Finstock and Chadlington shops are taking part in the 'Look for Local' Food Project, currently being organised by Plunkett and ORCC.

For further details contact Jane Barker, ORCC Shops Development Worker:

jane.barker@oxonrcc.org.uk

Area Bus Reviews

The review of subsidised bus services in the Wantage, Faringdon and Cumnor area has now commenced and many parishes in this part of the county will be consulted about public transport provision.

For those parishes who contributed to the review of services around Thame, Watlington and Wheatley the decision on replacement contracts will be known after 10 April 2007.

For further details contact Alix Michaelis at ORCC on 01865 883488, or Tim Darch or John Wood, Public Transport, Oxfordshire County Council on 01865 815587.

Grant Aid for Village Hall Projects from West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC)

As hall committees in West Oxon know, WODC has two annual grant funds available to help village halls improvement projects: one for Minor schemes and one for Major schemes. There is still significant funding left in the budget allocation. Applications are made through ORCC, from whom information and application forms can be obtained.

All decisions on grant allocation are made by the District Council's Cabinet.

For further details contact Lynne Newin, Village Halls Adviser:

lynne.newin@oxonrcc.org.uk

A new Kitchen for Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor Village Hall

Ron Green, Chairman of Village Hall Management Committee reports...

Work has recently been completed to install a new kitchen at the village hall. Thanks to a £10,000 grant received from Waste Recycling Environment (WREN) Landfill Communities Fund, including third party funding from the Vale of the White Horse District Council and Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor Parish Council. Local fund raising events held by village organisations also helped to achieve the £15,000 needed to upgrade an existing 20 year-old kitchen.

The new kitchen will be a tremendous asset to the hall, providing a full catering facility to meet the demands of an active and growing community who require the capability of preparing full course meals or snacks to serve in a spacious hall which also provides a stage, bar facility and adjacent large car park.

Further details www.kbsonline.org.uk

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A triumph for ORCC's BKV Competition following its golden anniversary

ORCC is celebrating 50+ years of its well-known Best Kept Village Competition by recognizing the significant changes that the BKV has achieved over the years. From evidence all around rural Oxfordshire ORCC and its valiant team of volunteer BKV judges are aware that there is generally now firmly embedded in village communities a greater sense of care and appreciation of their physical and natural environment.

When ORCC established the Competition in 1956 it did so in order to encourage people to take action to improve the external appearance and upkeep of their village including the community buildings and other physical and natural features. Clearly the lack of upkeep was seen to be a problem which demanded local DIY effort and ORCC decided an element of competitiveness between villages would provide an incentive for action.

Now after 50 years, circumstances and expectations have moved on. Standards generally are higher and fewer villages each year are feeling the need to focus on the "best keptness" of their surroundings by entering BKV. After consultation with their Hon. Organiser, Peter Lund MBE, and the BKV judges, ORCC will therefore no longer be organizing an annual Best Kept Village Competition.

All the key elements of the BKV's focus on a cared-for and well-tended village environment are already part of the newer Calor Oxfordshire Villages of the Year Competition (COVYC). The COVYC now offers an annual opportunity to encourage and highlight a wider range of community-based action in our villages, including environmental action. The 2007 COVYC has just been launched. In 2006 Oxfordshire was top of the national league for the number of villages entering the Villages of the Year Competition and the ORCC's approach to running it is commended to others by Calor, the national sponsors.

"When BKV started, parishes needed prompting to promote tidiness. Now that is not the case. BKV has served its purpose in leading to Villages of the Year" experienced BKV judges have told ORCC. "We suggest that it is time to put BKV into well-earned retirement."

"ORCC is extremely grateful to all the volunteers and sponsors who have supported the organisation of BKV to and through its Golden Jubilee in 2006. Calor Gas and the Duke of Marlborough have been especially generous as sponsors", says Linda Watson, ORCC Chief Executive. "Congratulations are due to our Hon. BKV Organiser, Peter Lund, for his recent award of an MBE for services to the Oxfordshire community and to the BKV in particular. We are delighted that Peter's involvement with us will continue as a Patron and Hon. Adviser to the COVYC."

Celebrate your Village!

The Calor Oxfordshire Villages of the Year competition is organised by ORCC with sponsorship provided by Calor – the UK's leading supplier of LPG (liquefied petroleum gas). Entries are invited from any organisation within a village and judges will be looking for active, caring and inclusive communities, rewarding community action and community spirit as well as taking into consideration the physical environment.

The entry form is a simple tick box questionnaire, which is quick and easy to fill in and all villages and hamlets in the county are eligible to take part.

The closing date for entries is 30th June 2007. For more information contact Aimee Evans or to request a competition entry questionnaire email orcc@oxonrcc.org.uk, tel. 01865 883488 or download a copy from the website: www.oxonrcc.org.uk.

If your mailing details are incorrect, please let us know.

The text version is available in large print on request.

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‘Improving Rural Reach’ – a new ORCC community development project

The ORCC, in partnership with the Oxfordshire Racial Equality Council (OREC), has obtained 12 months’ grant funding from the national agency, Capacity Builders, for a project to identify where voluntary and community groups serving marginalised or isolated individuals and groups exist in the county’s rural areas and what are their unmet support needs.

Although the needs of a range of isolated groups will be considered, ethnic minority, minority faith and migrant workers will be focused on in particular. We will also be looking at how to support communities without existing community champions/leaders coming forward to stimulate self-help initiatives.

On 2 April we were pleased to welcome 2 new members to the ORCC staff team. Julie Smith, IRR project worker, will be based at Jericho Farm, and Lebo Molete, will focus on building the capacity of black and minority ethnic/faith groups to engage with the project and will be largely based at OREC.

For further details of the Improving Rural Reach project, contact Meryl Smith, ORCC Deputy Chief Executive:
meryl.smith@oxonrcc.org.uk

Review of Oxfordshire Primary Schools

As a result of a joint briefing by ORCC and the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (OALC) on the above review being undertaken by the County Council a number of parish and town councils submitted comments which were noted by the new Primary Review Programme Board appointed to oversee the review. Local councils, along with ORCC, OALC and a number of primary schools, both large and small, expressed concern that from the outset of the review undue and unfounded emphasis was being put on “management and learning issues” related to small schools and that rural community interests were not to be represented on the Board.

As a result of these representations the Programme Board has now agreed to remove potentially prejudicial references to school size from the terms of reference that will guide the review and to give ORCC and OALC full voting membership of the Board.

ORCC has been pleased to appoint as their representative Gill Bindoff, who is Chair of Lewknor Parish Council and has local and national experience of primary education issues. With Gill’s help we will be keeping a watching brief on the progress of this important review, which the County Council stresses will focus on providing support for primary schools as key partners in the local community and on education and community renewal rather than closures.

For further information contact Meryl Smith, ORCC Deputy Chief Executive:
meryl.smith@oxonrcc.org.uk.

New Contacts for the Market Towns Initiative

With immediate effect, the new contacts for the Market Towns Initiative are

Ann Tweney ann.tweney@oxonrcc.org.uk

Nicky Ball nicola.ball@oxonrcc.org.uk

Both can be contacted on 01865 883488.

ORCC would like to thank Brian Spragg for all his work on this programme.

VAT petition on Number 10 website

Those who believe charities should not have to pay VAT are encouraged to sign a petition on the Number 10 website.

The petition, which will close on 21 June, simply states: “We the undersigned petition the Prime Minister to Stop making charities pay VAT”.

The petition can be found in the new (launched in November 2006) E-petition section of the Number 10 website. To add your name, visit
<http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/Charities>

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Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment Update

At the last TOE Board meeting held in February, more than £100,000 was committed to a range of projects, all of which will make a real difference to communities and/or the environment. We awarded £11,000 to a playground in Churchill, £10,000 to Kingsfield Playground in Bodicote, £10,000 towards a new sports pavilion in Finmere, £1,645 for access improvements at the Stanford-in-the-Vale Millennium Green and £5,400 towards toilet and kitchen improvements at Tiddington Village Hall. We also awarded £62,464 towards the appointment of a Project Officer to implement a programme of habitat management and improvements on floodplain grazing marsh at BBOWT's Chimney Meadows reserve and at sites in the River Ray catchment.

March has seen the publication of the first TOE Annual Review to be produced in full colour – it is a real celebration of the success of TOE in making funds available to a huge range and number of community and environmental projects right across the County. Copies are available free from the ORCC office.

Funds are available now!

We are delighted to announce that we will have an increase in funds available for this year, and would like to encourage local organisations and Parish Councils to submit applications.

If you have a project that involves making improvements to local facilities such as recreation areas, community buildings, historic buildings, rights of way or carrying out management of natural habitats, we would love to hear from you.

If you would like to find out if your project is eligible to apply to TOE for funding, call Fiona Danks on 01865 883488 or email toe@ruralnet.org.uk.

Getting it right.....

As part of ORCC's 'Quality Standards' assessment, we have been busy consulting with our staff and Board members as well as with external stakeholders about how well we are doing. A random sample of external stakeholders was asked to complete a short questionnaire and we are grateful to those of you who took the time to fill it in. All the feedback has been extremely useful and we aim to respond as effectively as possible in areas where there is room for improvement and to build on those where we are already doing well. We always welcome your comments (not just in response to questionnaires!) so don't hesitate to contact us if you want to tell us where you think we could improve, or what you value most about the ORCC service.

'Thank you for your feedback'

Thank you everyone who has responded to our News Bulletin. Feedback to the first issue has been very positive – *'I like it. Easy to read and reproduce. Much easier to pass around the committee and ask them for their views on an item...'*

We have noted all your comments and will act on them. Please continue to tell us what rural issues you would particularly like to hear about, and suggest ways you think we can develop the Bulletin even more.

We are delighted to be asked to send the Bulletin out to so many of our readers by email – do let us know if we can include you in our emailing list in future. Contact 01865 883488/ christine.bartle@oxonrcc.org.uk

'Let us know'

If you would like to make a complaint about any of ORCC's services, please ask for a copy of our Complaints Policy and Procedure.

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Funding opportunity

The Community Support Fund

This fund is aimed at increasing the capacity of small voluntary groups, especially those who work with individuals, families, groups & communities to maximise independence and minimise dependency.

Applications are usually received for amounts under £500 and priority is often given to those with limited funds.

If you feel your organisation would benefit from the Community Support Fund then please apply and inform other groups that you work with of this funding opportunity.

Application forms can be obtained from Oxfordshire County Council, Social & Community Services:

Brian Conroy: Tel. 01993 704007.

brian.conroy@oxfordshire.gov.uk

or Barbara Jordan: Tel. 01844 217904.

Barbara.Jordan@oxfordshire.gov.uk

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