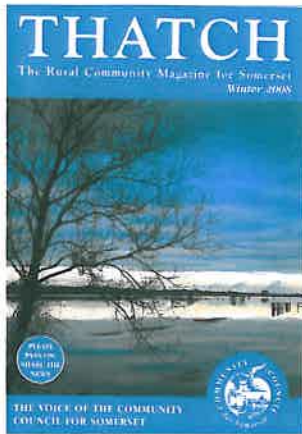


Welcome to “Winter highlights” January 2009.. Please read on, to enjoy a flavour of the variety of features from our latest issue of THATCH, the quarterly magazine for Somerset’s Rural Communities.

If you would like to receive the full, “glossy” version of THATCH magazine, please contact the Community Council for Somerset. We will also be happy to provide details of how to subscribe.



A Word from the Chief Executive

“It seems hardly any time since the autumn edition of Thatch and already here’s the winter one! Yet it is very often during

the winter months that the hard work in villages and communities across Somerset is done. This edition celebrates much of that hard work, with features about Lympsham, Neroche and the Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There are also a number of case studies, for example about the “store is the core” project and our communications competition.

This edition also includes information about the new Grassroots Grants scheme and the work of the Somerset Playing Fields Association amongst much more. I hope that you will enjoy reading this edition and, as ever, keep us up to date with your news so that it can feature in the future.”

David Smith

David Smith –Chief Executive

Please read on to find out more....

Home Truths for the South West Housing Market

A report produced by the National Housing Federation South West entitled, ‘Home Truths 2008 –Why the need for social housing is

increasing’ makes it clear that the weakening property market in the South West remains notorious for its affordability problems. The report predicts that average property prices in five years time will be 25% higher than their present level.

Senior Rural Housing Enabler (RHE), Karl Hine highlights how the RHE project is continuing to deliver affordable rural homes in Somerset.

Somerset Skills and Learning Apprenticeship Scheme

The Community Council for Somerset became aware of the apprenticeship scheme in Summer 2007. The pilot involved the apprentice dividing their time between the public and voluntary sectors. The CCS together with the Community Development Team of Somerset County Council co-hosted the young person. Karen White, Office Manager at CCS gives an employer’s perspective of how it went, whilst Kelly Mason, who successfully completed her apprenticeship in November 2008, gives an account of what she did to achieve her certificate.

Somerset Community Foundation (SCF) £1 million Challenge to provide lasting support for Somerset

Through the Grassroots Match Challenge the SCF is building a major fund for Somerset. This Government backed scheme to match local donations from individuals, families and businesses in the Somerset area will mean that for every £2 donated to the Foundation’s Endowment Fund, the Government will add an additional £1. The Challenge is to raise £1 million by March 2011; this will attract a further £500,000 from the Government for Somerset!

Supporting Somerset’s Market Towns

Matt Day, Coordinator for Somerset Market Towns Forum (SMTF) gives an update on progress. A Service Providers Database has been developed of over 50 organisations that can provide services involved in Town Partnerships and others involved in market town regeneration. They range from public bodies to consultants to community and voluntary agencies.

Recent items added to the SMTF website at www.somersetmarkettowns.co.uk include:

- How to reduce speeding in our towns
- Multi-Use Community Facilities
- Town Design Statements

- Report on the SWAN conference on Climate Action

Celebrating Sport and Play in Somerset

The Somerset Playing Fields Association (SPFA) has been providing help and support to community and trustee groups, club and hall committees and parish and town councils for over 70 years. If you are looking for assistance in forming a playing field group, developing a project, or protecting a field from potential future development, get in touch with the SPFA.

The Neroche Scheme: A Village Lost and Found

President of the Community Council for Somerset, Alan Marsh, tells us about the Neroche Community History Project which aims to offer people of all ages and abilities the opportunity to explore their local history. A community of experts from within the County came together along with over 80 volunteers to help an archaeological dig at Bickenhall in the hope of uncovering objects of archaeological significance! There are plans for an exhibition in the Spring of finds where experts will be able to answer searching questions!

Store is the Core Programme 2007-08: Winsford Stores Case Study

The Store is the Core programme awarded in the region of £500,000 of grants and advisory support to rural retailers during its pilot phase from September 2007 to August 2008. Part of the programme aimed to arrest potential closures of existing village shops, of which Winsford Stores in Exmoor, West Somerset was one.

Paul and Jenny Lawson successfully applied for Store is the Core and give their account of how the grant was used to transform their shop and post office counter.

Somerset Village Communications Competition Winners of Overall Best Newsletter, Porlock Vale and the Overall Best Website, www.hadspenvillage.org in this year's communications competition give an insight into how their newsletter and website are designed and how the content is managed to produce two high quality communication tools.

Hadspen Village Hall built by the community for the community

The new village hall was officially opened by Lady Gass, Lord Lieutenant of Somerset in June 2008. Carole Wyatt, Hadspen village hall secretary, gives an account of

the journey the hall committee went on to achieve the new hall, a facility built by the community for the community. The funding of both the hall and the new entrance and car park came from many sources –less than 10% from outside Somerset and 90% from within the County, of which over 40% came from within the parish of Pitcombe. The total cost, including fixtures and fittings was approximately £230,000.

What is 'Time to Plan' and how to get involved

'Time to Plan' is a campaign run by Mendip District Council aimed at getting local people engaged in planning for the future of Mendip district. The consultation aims to find out how people view the places where they live, work and relax. By understanding what people value or want changed, public service organisations can make better informed decisions that reflect longer term community aspirations. The consultation period runs for 8 weeks until 29th January.

Lymphsham Community Profile

Keith Hart, local resident, profiles Lymphsham in Sedgemoor, highlighting all the community's activity and puts it on the map as a great place to live.

Centre for Sustainable Energy helps Somerset residents stay Warm and Well

The Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE), a Bristol based charity, runs a number of initiatives to help Somerset residents stay warm and well in their own homes. Sarah Davies, Head of Advice, Education and Community Initiatives at CSE outlines three projects : Warmer Improved Somerset Homes (WISH), Warming Mendip and Warm Streets. The WISH project gives advice and support to people aged over 60 in Sedgemoor and West Somerset who are living in cold, unsafe homes or who are struggling to pay their bills.

Warming Mendip is a similar scheme run by CSE in partnership with Mendip District Council with funding from the Big Lottery.

Warm Streets is a new scheme being launched by CSE in partnership with the 5 District Councils in Somerset and Scottish and Southern Energy.

Outstanding Quantocks : Quantocks Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

The Quantock Hills AONB is protected for the quality of its coastline, its rare heathland summits and the ancient oak woodlands nestling in the steep combes. The primary purpose of the Quantock Hills AONB Service is to 'conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Quantock Hills'. All AONB service activities are guided by the 5 year Quantock Hills AONB Management Plan, the new version of which is launched in April 2009.