

Support to the local economy

Kirdford Community Shop

Community owned and managed, Kirdford Community Shop will soon offer access to daily essentials and local produce that the residents of this rural village currently have to travel up to five miles for.

In September 2007 a steering group was formed, following a public meeting that confirmed overwhelming support for the enterprise from the local residents. Established as an Industrial and Provident Society we have recruited over 230 shareholders and raised over £200,000. These funds come from interest free loans from residents, donations, share purchases, and grants from ViRSA, part of The Plunkett Foundation, the Co-operative Fund, the Rural Development Programme for England's LEADER programme, South East England Development Agency's (SEEDA) Rural Access to Services Programme, our local and district councils, plus a bank loan from

the Social Enterprise Bank, the Co-operative and Community Finance Company. We have also held many fund raising events.

Last September we completed on the purchase of a building that was once part of The Kirdford Growers, the first wholesale co-operative in the Country and once the major local employer and social focus for the community. We have finished refurbishing the building and we will begin to trade in early May, with an official launch in early June.

The shop ethos is to source as much as possible locally to support the local economy and to aim for food yards, not miles. With a small café area, a community meeting room and business services, we can once again create a social and economic focus for the community.

Sue Ransley, Chairman of the Kirdford Community Shop Committee



Rural public and community transport provision

Ewhurst – finding the right solutions

Action in rural Sussex (AirS) is working in partnership with the East Sussex County Council to promote community transport in rural areas and to consult with communities in an effort to identify their community transport needs. Undertaking public consultations in rural parishes requires a well planned and diverse approach. An example of this is the consultation being organised in Ewhurst Parish in the Rother District.

AirS has worked with a parish working group to decide on the most suitable way to undertake the consultation. As a result of this development work, AirS is leading a multi dimensional approach to ascertaining community transport need. This approach is being undertaken over a four week period.

Firstly, a brief and concise community transport survey has been distributed to each household complete with a self addressed return envelope. This will be analysed by AirS and a report written that collates and summarises the findings and opinions.

Secondly, as the majority of young people go to school in nearby Robertsbridge, AirS is going into the school in order to engage young people on their

particular transport needs. This reflects the view in Ewhurst that young people are one of the main groups that are disadvantaged by not having ready access to a car.

Thirdly, a general public meeting and consultation is to be held at the Village Hall. Part of the meeting will discuss what parishioners see as their community transport needs and what they feel may be a feasible sustainable community transport based solution to those needs.

Both AirS and East Sussex County Council are committed to helping Ewhurst identify and then implement appropriate solutions to the existing transport needs.

Scott Lipa, East Sussex County Team Manager, AirS

AirS commentary

Kirdford Community Shop is part of a growing network of community owned shops. Sue and her team responded to the lack of a vital service in their village and took direct action. This shop will not only provide much needed retail services, but will also deliver information about local services and it plans to provide support for local business. The trend in rural communities is towards a growing number of home based businesses and the facilities at the shop will provide local support and a place to meet. Kirdford is part of our rural access to services programme, funded by SEEDA, which is supporting new community shops.

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