

Villager's nine-month web bid ends in success

A woman from a village in Shropshire is celebrating after a nine-month battle to secure a broadband link to her home from BT ended in success.

Emma Price, who lives in Marton close to the Shropshire/Mid Wales border, initially applied for broadband with BT in May last year but was told she could not have the service until either the nearest exchange was upgraded or until someone cancelled their subscription. But after Councillor

Heather Kidd, Shropshire member for Chirbury and Worthen, got in touch with BT group chief executive Ian Livingston, the issue was swiftly resolved.

Mr Livingston intervened to make sure Miss Price could get a broadband service which is now working. BT has already rolled out fibre-optic broadband to almost 100,000 homes across the county as part of a bid to improve the service in rural areas.

Councillor Kidd said: "I've been campaigning for a number of years to get both BT and the council to give the commitment to give us proper high speed broadband.

"Businesses and individuals, if anything, rely on the internet more in country areas than those in towns.

"I have people all over the Chirbury and Worthen division from Pentertown to Stiperstones and Brompton finding it difficult or impossible to receive broadband.

"I'd like to thank Mr Livingston for his intervention and the other BT staff who made this possible. It's amazing what becomes possible when the CEO gets involved.

"I understand that a commercial company will be offering an alternative high speed service for rural areas like ours from this month. I hope that this will give BT and other providers the jolt necessary to give us the same choice and accessibility that residents in local towns already enjoy."

Farming Talk with

MARTIN JONES



farming@shropshirestar.co.uk

Small woods project due to end this year

Heartwoods, a project of small woods based in Ironbridge, is scheduled to end in September.

Developed from the previous Marches Woodland Initiative and funded through the RDPE programme, it has been going since December 2009 and has brought benefits to the whole of the woodfuel supply chain including not just woodland owners but local forestry contractors employed throughout the counties of Shropshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire, Staffordshire and Warwickshire.

Over the last three years, the programme has supported more than 1,000 rural businesses including 320 woodland advisory visits, 30 woodfuel boiler surveys, 70 capital grant applications for applicants securing over £500,000 in grant funding and leveraging investment of £1,250,000 in the industry.

It has also generated 128 consultancy referrals including woodland advisory visits for owners and timber inventory surveys. A total of 700 individuals have benefited from woodland management training and knowledge transfer events. In total, the woodland area brought back into management and bringing with it a range of environmental benefits now exceeds 4,000 hectares with a 5,000 hectare target by the summer of 2013, in a region where approximately 35 per cent (35,000 Ha.) of woodlands are unmanaged.

And it doesn't end there. As one of the six Woodfuel Champion consultants for Heartwoods, I've witnessed myself the way in which the multiplier effect has benefited local communities. A classic example is a farmer or woodland owner who doesn't know what to do with his 'unmanaged' woodland but knows timber prices are fairly buoyant right now yet doesn't have the time or expertise about how to enter the market.

He calls Heartwoods and one of the project officers arranges a site visit for impartial advice. Very often this could result in a referral to one of the Woodfuel Champions to undertake a timber inventory survey at a subsidised daily rate of £100 plus VAT.

There is an additional FC grant to write a plan under the current English Woodland Grant Scheme, which, once approved by the FC, can allow the owner to apply for a whole series of grants for other operations, including the Woodfuel Woodland Improvement Grant to cover timber sales, track building, and other WIGs for thinning and coppicing work to improve bird habitat.

I now have a number of schemes with all the grants in place that are now at the implementation stage, which involves thinning work, clearing rhododendron and employing local contractors, including two horse-loggers in the Clun valley at least for the next several months before other projects come on stream.

Martin B. Jones is a member of the Institute of Chartered Foresters and managing director of the Woodland Stewardship Company based in Shrewsbury

Organisers double donations after tree moved to new location

Tree of Light event to be record breaker

By Chrissy Symmons

A Tree of Light campaign in Oswestry is expected to be a record breaker this year thanks to thousands of pounds in donations.

Oswestry Rotary Club's Tree of Light has been stood outside St Oswald's Church, in Church Street, for about 14 years to raise money for local good causes. But this year it was moved to the entrance of Sainsbury's store because organisers felt it would make 'more of an impact'.

Today organisers revealed they are expecting to raise more than £4,000 from donations, almost double last year's total of £2,317.50.

The campaign started on December 1 and ever since people have been asked to pay a minimum donation of £5 to have a name, memory of a loved one, cause or event put on the tree.

Calculations so far by the Rotary club have shown the total cash donations this year is expected to beat last year's figure.

Great

Rotarian Mike Jones, event organiser, said: "The new location at Sainsbury's has worked really well and I would like to thank everybody there for all their help and support - it has been a great team effort between the store and the club.

"But the biggest thanks go to the people of Oswestry and the surrounding area for their generosity. Our featured charities are all very deserving and despite difficult times, the local community has come up trumps."

Charities which will benefit from this year's campaign include Hope House Children's Hospice, The County Air Ambulance Trust, The Cricket Federation for People with Disabilities, North Shropshire Special Olympics and Rotary good causes.

In December Rotarians celebrated the launch of the Tree of Light by inviting John Abram the High Sheriff of Shropshire to take part in the switch-on.

For more details about the club visit www.rotarycluboswestry.co.uk

Parks meeting

Whitchurch Town Council's parks and open spaces committee will meet on Wednesday. The meeting will take place in Whitchurch Civic Centre from 7.15pm and items on the agenda include new play equipment in Jubilee Park.

Unsung heroes in a town in Shropshire will once again be commended under an awards scheme launched by the town's mayor. The awards proved successful when the scheme was held last year.

They recognise people who carry out work in the community.

Residents will be able to nominate their favourites in different categories which will conclude with an awards evening at Wem Town Hall on March 1. The closing date is January 14.

Categories include child of courage, local hero, good neighbour, school staff and big heart award.

The child of courage award recognises a young person who has overcome adversity. The local hero award recognises an individual who has made a contribution to Wem or has improved the lives of others.

The good neighbour accolade recognises someone who has been an asset to their neighbourhood or to their close neighbours.

The school staff member award recognises an inspiring member of staff of St Peters and the Thomas Adams schools in Wem.

The big heart award recognises an individual's charitable/voluntary work.

The awards are organised by the town mayor Councillor Peter Broomhall and a working party.

Nomination forms are available from Wem Town Hall, Thomas Adams School, Edinburgh House, Wem Library or online at www.wem.gov.uk

Meeting day for senior citizens club

A senior citizens club in Telford will hold its first meeting of the new year next week.

Donnington Senior Citizens' Friday club will meet in the Polish church hall in the rear of Barclay Gardens in Donnington on Friday. Doors will open 1.15pm for 2pm.

During the afternoon there will be a bingo, raffle, and free tea, coffee and biscuits available. New members are always welcome.

The group's next monthly trip will be on February 13 at Bridgmore shopping complex and garden centre near Nantwich followed by a two course carvery at the Red House in Lilleshall. For more call (01952) 604962.

Computer course

A laptop computer course for beginners will take place at the Corbet Arms in Uffington, near Shrewsbury, from 10am until 2pm on Monday, covering all aspects of basic computing. For more information call Deb Armitage on 07792 411554.

Quiz for wildlife trust night



Shropshire Wildlife Trust's Ellesmere branch chairman, David Farncombe, prepares for the annual wildlife quiz tonight. The branch meets at Ellesmere Town Hall on the first Thursday of every month. They enjoy a variety of activities including guest speakers and trips to local reserves. For more information, go along to a meeting or call Mr Farncombe on (01691) 622 497.

Shoebox appeal helps 350 in need

A shoebox appeal by Rotarians in Oswestry which saw Christmas gifts collected and sent overseas helped about 350 people in need.

At the group's latest meeting, members of Borderland Rotary Club, Mike Lade, for the club's community services, said 350 Rotary Shoeboxes were collected from primary schools and Oswestry School.

They were then sent to eastern Europe packed full of festive gifts and given to people in schools, hospitals, children's homes and old people's homes.

Venue offering wedding advice

A wedding venue in Shropshire will give husbands and wives-to-be the opportunity to picture their big day by hosting two free fairs.

The four-star Hill Valley Spa, Hotel and Golf in Whitchurch will hold the wedding fairs on February 16 and April 28.

A team of wedding co-ordinators will be on hand to answer queries and to help couples plan their perfect day down to the finest detail.

The events will take place between 11am and 3pm. Anyone wishing to attend is asked to book their place by calling 0844 879 9049.

New business launches at county furniture shop

A new business has opened at a Shropshire furniture shop.

Telford-based Chrisbeon Office Supplies has launched its Office Furniture Solutions by Chrisbeon venture at Alan Ward on Ennerdale Road in Harlescott, Shrewsbury.

Items on sale will include a range of furniture for people looking to work from home.

Elaine Ray, senior director at Alan Ward, said: "We are delighted to welcome Chrisbeon into our showroom and believe they will be an excellent addition to our business."

Security advice offered at session

People in Shropshire are being offered the chance to ward off opportunist thieves targeting homes for expensive Christmas gifts at a police event next week.

The Safer Neighbourhoods Team for Sundorne and Battlefield will be at The Lantern in Meadow Farm Drive, Shrewsbury, on Tuesday.

Officers will be security marking people's goods for free.

They will also be advising residents

on how to protect their homes from burglars.

Constable Kerry Hawkins said: "A lot of people will have been treated to things like iPads, mobile phones, digital cameras and laptops for Christmas, all of which can be very attractive to thieves."

"Marking such items with your post-code and registering them on the Immobilise website increases the chance of you getting them back if you

are ever unfortunate enough to have them stolen.

"Anyone who comes along to The Lantern between 10am and midday on Tuesday will get their stuff marked up for free by the police - and we can also give additional security advice when it comes to protecting your home."

"It is also a great opportunity for people to come and meet the team and to raise any local concerns they might have."

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