

**RURAL SERVICES SUPPORT GROUP
FURTHER SUPPORT FOR GLOUCESTERSHIRE'S RURAL SHOPS**

CONFERENCE

CONTEXT:

2008 has been a year of change for Rural Service providers both nationally and in Gloucestershire. The nationally focussed Post Office Network Change Programme has led to 37 rural post office closures in Gloucestershire. 13 of the closures have been replaced with a Post Office Outreach service – which operate basic services during reduced hours. The RSSG has worked in partnership to offer support to communities and businesses affected by post office closures.

AIMS OF CONFERENCE:

The conference and subsequent campaign will be focussed on encouraging communities to shop locally and support their local village shop and or post office. A conference provides the opportunity for an open forum for sharing information and best practice models bringing together all sectors of Gloucestershire – also providing all sectors with the opportunity to exchange beneficial contact details.

VENUE AND DATE FOR CONFERENCE:

The location of the conference must be determined by accessibility from all 4 Gloucestershire rural districts.

Suggested Venues:

- Whitminster Village Hall (Stroud District)
- Bishops Cleeve, The Tithe Barn
- Churchdown community centre

Week Commencing 26th January 2009 and the conference doors will open at 6pm. The opening speeches will begin at 6.45pm.

FORMAT OF CONFERENCE:

- Rural Services Support Group Fayre: Members of the RSSG will be given a stand, as delegates arrive they will be able to ascertain information and advice from the RSSG partners.
- Welcome to the conference from Chair of the conference – Robin Grist, Chair of the Rural Economic Advisory Panel (REAP)
- Introduction to conference – Lesley Archer, CEO of GRCC
 - Why this conference is important
 - Local Context
 - Perspective for Rural Services (Network Change Programme, Rising Costs of Living, New Rules and Regulations etc)
- Rural Shops Alliance

- Presentation on state of Rural Services and the current support available from agencies
- Ways that shops can interact more with their local communities
- Ways that as communities you can support your local shop
- Good Practice Models (presented in a 'Parkinson-esq' interview coordinated Beth Whittaker)
 - An example of a privately owned village shop who is working with their community to ensure the shops viability and future
 - An example of a parish council undertaking projects and work to support local trade
 - An example of a community shop who are providing a service to a community through volunteered hours
- Concluding comments, "What we want you to take away with you" and "Where we are heading" speech – Robin Grist

TIMESCALE/PHASES OF SUPPORT PACKAGE:

1. 25th September 2008: RSSG meeting re: Final Decision for Grant Scheme
2. October 2008: Development of a directory of support
3. November 2008: Rural Services debate on BBC Radio Gloucestershire
4. December 2008: The state of rural services article for Cotswold Life
5. January 2009: Rural Shops conference: Shop Local, launch of the directory of support.

ESTIMATED BUDGET FOR CONFERENCE:

(£2,500 has been allocated from the GCC money)

Hire of Venue

Refreshments (based on £6 per head and 100 attending)

Administration/stationery

Administration time

PA

Travel costs

Speakers? (or could we persuade them to waver their fee)

Conference report (development and distribution as newsletter for broader audience).

OTHER ACTIVITIES PROPOSED WITHIN PACKAGE OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Further capacity for GRCC Rural Services Fieldworker.

Further capacity for GRCC Rural Services Fieldworker to support rural communities, rural services delivery, and community enterprises. This includes the further support that the GRCC fieldworker will offer after the grants have been allocated. The fieldworker will produce case studies of each of the successful grant application, with before, during, and after (work

completed) sections to the work, these will be placed on the website to strengthen the RSSG's legacy. Support will also be given to those communities investigating the possibility of developing a community shop following the closure of their post office – e.g. Horsley. This capacity will include offering help to communities considering the option of establishing an alternative social hub to make up for the void left from the loss of the local Post Office.

Development of a Directory of Support

A directory of support will be developed to explain the opportunities of support and funding available to rural services, and their local communities, within the county, outlining what RSSG partner organisations can offer alongside various wider associations and initiatives. The directory of support will be produced as an interactive PDF designed as a web-based tool, ensuring the longer-term availability of the information. The directory of support will be launched at the conference discussed above and marketed to others by the development of a post card or brief flyer.

A potential 'media partnership' will be explored with key local press publications to insure strong publicity.

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