

**Dear All,**

The latest news from Somerset Market Towns Forum - promoting and supporting community-based action to revitalise Somerset's market towns.

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**News**

**New on [www.somersetmarkettowns.co.uk](http://www.somersetmarkettowns.co.uk)**

Read our report into developing sustainable tourism and its economic benefits – 'Promoting Our Market Towns' – [Exec Summary here](#); and learn about Ilminster's excellent [signage survey](#).

**Somerset Post Office closures announced**

As you are probably aware, the Royal Mail has announced that they are planning to close 30 Post Offices across Somerset, with another 6 being replaced with a part-time van service – [read Somerset County Council's press release](#) on this. The Royal Mail see this purely as a business decision. The vital social aspect of remote Post Offices, especially for older people, hasn't been considered. At this extremely disappointing time, all we can do is flag up some avenues of support that may be able to assist those PO's targeted for closure to look at diversification (if that is possible).

[Commission for Rural Communities](#) has a section on the Post Office review, maybe most useful is the Rural Service Support and ruralnet services.

[Rural Shops Alliance](#)

[Community Council for Somerset's](#) support for rural shops

**Coastal Towns Conference - Tuesday 18 March 2007, Portsmouth**

Not much notice on this one I'm afraid, but the South East RDA are hosting a one day conference to look at the issues faced by both coastal towns and those towns with similar partnerships, structures and issues. 'Coastal towns are often characterised by ageing and transient populations, low business start up rates, difficult transport issues and low quality public spaces & buildings. Fortunately the tide is beginning to turn and some towns are regenerating; catering for current demands with year-round economies, vibrant public spaces that celebrate heritage, contemporary attractions and exciting cultural activities.' See the attached pdf for more info.

**Rural Advocate reports on realities of rural England**

During 2007 [Stuart Burgess](#), the government's [Rural Advocate](#), visited rural communities across the country to listen to rural people about what matters most — the many benefits of rural living but

also some real concerns. His '[Report of the Rural Advocate 2007](#)' sets out a wide-ranging package of actions for government to lead on, to tackle the issues people raised with him and ensure that rural areas continue to thrive.

### **RuSource Briefings –free database of articles on rural issues**

RuSource Briefings is a free rural information service for anyone working in the countryside or with rural people, and those supporting rural life. The briefings aim to “cut important issues down to essentials and tell it straight”, saving subscribers to the weekly e-news bulletin hours of time searching the internet for up-to-date, accurate & unbiased information. As part of this service, the Arthur Rank Centre is now providing a comprehensive 'back up':

- A regularly updated catalogue of EVERY Briefing
- Easily-downloadable copies of all papers
- Encouragement to subscribe for yourself to this free service in order to receive all briefings as soon as they are produced.

[Find out more...](#)

## **Training**

### **An introduction to Section 106 agreements – virtually free seminar!**

Not much notice on this either but spaces still available - Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> March, 9:45am till 2:00pm (including lunch) at Development House, 56 – 64 Leonard Street, London, EC2A 4LT

*Do you want to influence how developers contribute to your community's needs?*

*Would you like to find out how the Section 106 process can deliver benefits for your community?*

*Are you looking for guidance from planning experts on how you can effectively influence the planning process?*

The community needs new development to provide homes, shops, business premises and leisure facilities; yet new development creates all sorts of pressures such as more traffic, pollution and environmental destruction. Section 106 agreements are an important part of the planning system - they are commitments made by developers, when getting planning permission, to do things that will lessen the harm caused by their development proposals. These might include providing funds for traffic calming measures, new play facilities, public art, tree planting, cycle paths, meeting places and affordable housing. They can be of huge benefit and significance for local communities.

See attached pdf for more details and how to book.

### **Community Development Learning – A look at the Training Needs of people involved in community development**

The Federation for Community Development Learning and the English Standards Board would like your views on the training needs of those involved in Community Development, at a seminar on Wed 19<sup>th</sup> March, at the offices of South West Foundation, Westway Farm, Bishop Sutton near Bath. There will also be the opportunity to find out more about existing training and the National Occupational Standards so that those organisations in the employment of community development workers have better knowledge of and access to training routes. There is also the opportunity to hear more about the occupational standards in community development. The seminar is free to all those involved in the Community Development field.

See attached pdf for more details and how to book.

## **Funding**

### **Somerset Funding Email Bulletins**

Somerset Voluntary Sector Network produces an excellent, in-depth email bulletin called 'Bits and Bobs'. We will include a link to the SVSN website in future bulletins, but you can view the most recent Bits and Bobs which is attached. Details of how to sign up for these are in the pdf.

### **Free funding-related events**

The Somerset Fundraisers' Group (SFG) has organised two free events:

'Working with a Fundraising Consultant' on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> April in Bridgwater and 'Achieving Sustainable Funding' on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> April in Shepton Mallet. Both events are free to anyone from a voluntary or community group based in Somerset and will begin at 1pm with lunch, followed by a presentation from Simon Pearson of Pearson Fundraising Ltd. There will be plenty of time for questions and discussion and to find out more about 'SFG'. Simon Pearson, based in Torquay, is an experienced fundraiser who has successfully worked for and with, many high profile charities across the South West.

These events are being organised by ViSTA as a follow-on from its 'Employer Engagement' events in the morning so there'll be plenty of opportunity for networking. To book your place, please contact Lindy Booth at: [lindy.booth1@virgin.net](mailto:lindy.booth1@virgin.net) or 01278 455830/07866 943578. They will need to know the date you'd like to attend, your name, organisation, contact details and any dietary or access requirements you might have.

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*If you have been forwarded this email, and would like to join our mailing list, email*

[matt@somersettrcc.org.uk](mailto:matt@somersettrcc.org.uk)

*To unsubscribe, please reply with 'unsubscribe' in the subject line.*

*We welcome feedback so that we can develop our services.*

Matt Day

Information Officer

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[www.somersetmarkettowns.co.uk](http://www.somersetmarkettowns.co.uk)

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