

Some exciting news for the New Year!

Community & Leisure Centre

**Exhibition 28/29/30 March,
at the Leisure Centre,
Hardings Lane, Gillingham.**

**Friday 28th 6-9pm,
Saturday 29th 9-7pm,
Sunday 30th 10-3pm**

This Newsletter is primarily to bring you up to date with the current plans. Lots has been happening behind the scenes and many of you will already have seen reports in the local media. It became clear that it was unrealistic to expect that the £11 million needed to implement the original complete rebuilding scheme could be raised and the only way forward would be to explore how the existing building could be re-used.

Consultation with local architects Philip Proctor Associates has resulted in an exciting new plan to restructure and extend the present building to provide all the facilities the public voted for at the Expo. These include a new community hall, 25 metre swimming pool, 4 badminton courts, an upstairs fitness suite, meeting rooms, café, exhibition foyer, new car park and improved skateboarding facilities. Both the interior and exterior will be transformed to provide a facility of which the region can justly be proud.

A robust business plan is being produced, a Board set up and an operating company is being formed. The projected cost is around £6 million. As you know, North Dorset District Council has set aside £4 million of this and grant funding could be the source of a further £1-1 ½ million. The remainder will be raised from local sources, and we shall employ a professional fundraiser for this. The target for re-opening the new facility is September 2009. Gillingham Town Council and some of the local

parishes have already pledged initial financial support through the precept. To ensure the success of this venture it is vital that this support is ongoing and extended to include all the towns and parishes in the catchment area. Please do all you can in your locality to encourage this community involvement approach.

Once again we are working with Gillingham Town Council and North Dorset District Council to present full information to the public. We hope you will be as excited as we are at the prospect of an attractive, functional building at a realistic cost which will meet the community and leisure needs of the area for many years to come... and be up and running in less than 2 years!

Updates

So much is happening so quickly at present that we plan to produce regular monthly updates. These will be in addition to the quarterly Newsletter and will be sent out to members via email. It is not practicable to send these to the over 200 members currently on our postal mailing list, but the information will appear in the local media and can be seen at the Library.

If you currently receive the Newsletter by post, but have an email address, please let us know immediately.

Open Spaces

The massive new build of housing started in the 1990s highlighted how vulnerable our valued open spaces are and the urgent need to protect what remained in a strategic way. The natural beauty of the waterways, countryside and heritage of the area is recognised as a major asset of Gillingham and its surroundings and a critical factor in its future prosperity. It is essential that future developments, residential, commercial or industrial, do not jeopardise

those features of the area, which attract people to live here. The loss of open spaces has been voiced as a major concern by communities.

It is also important to recognise the crucial relationship between Gillingham, the surrounding parishes, villages and nearby towns by protecting what is unique in the built and natural environment and heritage, which is highly valued, and enhancing the quality of life of residents with sensitive management of existing open spaces and the acquisition and development of new ones.

Thorough and robust Development and Management plans have been completed for almost all of the larger sites together with an over arching area plan.

Community Charitable Trust

The Partnership has a Charitable Trust with the Directors as Holding Trustees.

The Trust will hold public open spaces on the community's behalf in perpetuity and be managed by the Open Spaces Board. This structure enables access to third sector funding.

- The community has for some years been managing areas and approaches have been/are being made to the landowners to negotiate passing the lands into the Community Trust.
- Some areas have been identified by neighbouring villages and towns to be potentially held safely in the Trust
- Part of NDDC's Tough Choices/Local Delivery programme is to transfer the lands they own to the community by March 2009.

Importantly – long term, and looking at the bigger vision – there is evidence from local towns and villages to use the Land Bank Trust and Three Rivers Charitable Partnership as a vehicle for community projects over the wider area.

The Government commissioned Quirk Review published September 2007 concluded that there are no substantive barriers to prevent councils transferring assets into community management or full ownership. Powers already exist for this but the report finds that many are not fully aware of them, or are not using them to full benefit. Therefore a change in culture is required so that every community has the chance for more active citizenship, a greater role in running services and owning assets, and

improving wellbeing in their communities.

Open Spaces Officer

NDDC ceases funding the Ranger Service March 2009, also DCC are considering what level of financial support they may continue with. The Partnership is actively seeking an Open Spaces Officer to involve, train and support the community/s in the management and development of the sites, promote the sites, and facilitate a programme of community-based events to involve local people in responsible use of the sites.

The job specification is a combination of the DWT People and wildlife officer, ranger and warden – the person will work closely with the North Dorset DWT team, the Somerset and Wiltshire Trusts, the Environment Agency, GANG, English Nature and other natural and built environmental groups, green transport, health, schools, youth groups, businesses etc.

We look forward to the appointment.

Voluntary Car Scheme in Gillingham

Many people in rural Dorset, particularly those who are older, have trouble getting to the shops or to doctors appointments. A voluntary car scheme is being set in Gillingham to try to solve some of these problems. If you think you could help in setting up the project please contact Ted Turkentine on 01747 821102 or email gilvolcar@gmail.com

Second Public PACT meeting

The next public meeting of Gillingham PACT (Partners And Communities Together) will be on Wednesday 12th March at Gillingham Town Hall. All are welcome.



DIARY DATE

**Three Rivers Partnership AGM
Wednesday 7th May at 7pm.
Gillingham Primary School.**