

Our ref: ETC11/12/EMTP/

Frank Green
Town Clerk
Evesham Town Council
Community Contact Centre
Abbey Road Evesham
WR11 4SB



Date: 26th September 2011

Re: Evesham Market Town Partnership Manager's Report 2011-12 and Request for Funding in 2012-13

Dear Mr Green,

I have the pleasure to enclose my annual Evesham Market Town Partnership (EMTP) Manager's report to Evesham Town Council. This report reflects the period since my previous report dated 21st September 2010 and identifies the partnership's priorities going forward. These aim to build upon successes already achieved and respond to potential threats to the economy of the town.

Introduction

EMTP is part of Wychavon's Local Strategic Partnership structure and as such supports the Community Plan. The partnership has had, for the past 8 years, an annual budget of £30,000 per year from Wychavon District Council to deliver community projects and this is set to continue until March 2013.

As part of a county wide review in 2011, Wychavon District Council has updated the Community Plan and seven new priorities that reflect current needs have been agreed. Following the adoption of the plan all projects must support one or more of the priorities identified below:

- Support and improve the local economy;
- Develop skills and life long learning;
- Reducing health inequalities and promoting healthy lifestyles;
- Supporting older people;
- Providing positive activities for young people;
- Supporting people to play an active role in their communities and take more responsibility for improving their lives; and

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- Deliver housing that meets local needs.

EMTP's 2011-12 Action Plan responds to these seven priorities and the proposals in this report complement these. The partnership's financial allocation is used as an enabling resource to lever in additional resources from elsewhere. This year EMTP's £30,000 budget is leveraging a total value of **£1,716,300** to Evesham and the Vale and Evesham Town Council's contribution of £13,500 is a valued part of this. The largest contributing factor to this value is the amount of free positive publicity generated for Evesham resulting from events and festivals.

As Evesham Market Town Partnership Manager I also manage Evesham's allocation of the Wychavon Town Centre Initiatives budget to help promote the town (Local Distinctiveness & Events). In 2011–12 this is £17,000 and it is understood that this will be the same for 2012-13.

Delivery 2011-12

Evesham Town Council kindly agreed to support the Market Town Partnership's Action Plan 2011-12 with contributions amounting to £13,500. This was in respect to the following:

| Initiative | Evesham Town Council contribution | Initiative total budget |
|---|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Attracting Inward Investment | £2,000 | £15,300 |
| Business Support and Development Grants | £3,000 | £10,500 |
| Better Welcome Stage 3 | £1,000 | £7,700 |
| Local Distinctiveness / Events (Asparagus Festival, Air Balloon Festival, Morris Festival, Christmas activities and Vale Fresh Food Festival) | £7,500 | £128,600 |
| Totals | £13,500 | £162,100 |

The need to support Evesham through the negative impact of the struggling wider economy continues. The optimism following the completion of the High Street works that I reported last year faded during the winter months. This was exacerbated by heavy snow in the week leading up to Christmas which meant that the anticipated increase in takings retailers rely on to offset the quieter months of November and January was reduced.

However, since Christmas the growth of Evesham's Charter Market has helped to increase footfall on Saturdays in the town. Retailers on the Eastern side of High Street are generally positive about the market's extension into the new amenity area and EMTP is aware of enquiries from retailers outside this area who would like to see the footprint extended further as well as additional markets on other days of the week.

Evesham Town Council is to be congratulated on what has been achieved with the Charter Market in a relatively short period and EMTP will continue to support the Town Council's

ambitions for the market and work with the new operator to achieve continued improvement.

Funds that are available to EMTP are primarily used to support community based groups to achieve outcomes that align with the partnership's priorities. Not only does this help to develop community cohesion it enables much greater value to be achieved from the limited resources available. The added value that Evesham Town Council's contributions have helped to lever in is **£162,100**.

Attracting Inward Investment

Preparatory measures have been put in place to enable the effective promotion of Evesham to investors. The Partnership's web site (www.eveshamtown.co.uk) which promotes the Vale of Evesham, its events and business support offer, was redesigned earlier this year. This has led to an increase in visitors to the site with a jump of 36% in the 3 months June to September on the previous 3 months. Visitor loyalty is showing a slight improvement and the bounce rate is reducing indicating that the site is increasingly fulfilling searchers' requirements. The primary reason people access the site is to find out about our events, underlining the benefit of these in attracting visitors and footfall.

The production of the 'Place' leaflet and 'Investment' display stand has enabled the partnership to quickly communicate Evesham's offer to potential investors at events and conventions that attract our target audience. To date the partnership has taken a trade stand at the Three Counties Show, Cotswold Professional Business Forum and at the events that are organised by EMTP in Evesham.

In September the partnership attended the British Council for Shopping Centres annual 2 day convention in Manchester where the countries top multiple retailers, retail developers and advisors met to discuss the future of retailing in the UK. The partnership's manager secured a trade stand at the event (normally priced at £3,500) for £499 and together with the partnership's chairman used this opportunity to meet with the acquisition teams from leading retailers, promote Evesham as an investment opportunity and challenge negative preconceptions that potential investors or their advisors may have about locating in Evesham.

The event also provided a useful insight into the future of retailing based on new innovations that are becoming established around the world. For example, it is anticipated that in the case of convenience retailing 'e-shopping' will become increasingly dominant, however, 'experiences' cannot be downloaded and the concept of 'Experience Shopping' was promoted as an emerging concept where innovative retailers and centres are using events and attractions to draw in customers. Evesham is clearly ahead of the game here and our 23 page events guide proved to be a useful tool in demonstrating this.

Business Support and Development Grants

Continuing the theme of promoting inward investment, Evesham Town Council's contribution of £3,000 to support small businesses investing within the Town Centre has levered in an additional £7,500. This has enabled more grants to be offered than was originally anticipated with 10 awarded to date. Recipients have created an additional 13 full time jobs as a result of undertaking the proposals supported by a grant.

Grant application forms and information on the criteria for eligibility are available to download from the partnership's web site (www.eveshamtown.co.uk) and this has helped

to increase awareness of their availability. I expect that a total of 14 Grants will be awarded to businesses located within the town centre by the end of the financial year, 6 more than in 2010-11.

Better Welcome Stage 3

This proposal supports much smaller projects than previous Better Welcome initiatives. The primary objective is to work with Wychavon's Heritage team to support small enhancements in Port Street to coincide with the reopening of the Regal Cinema. The enhancements, which will include two additional Historic Slabs featuring Bengeworth, are being developed in consultation with WCC Highways.

Local Distinctiveness

Evesham's festivals continue to grow both in number and in their appeal. This year we took advantage of the fact that St George's day fell on a Saturday and expanded the **Asparagus Festival** launch event into a full day of activity, the highlight being the crowning of the King of the Asparagus Festival ceremony which was undertaken by Cllr James Bulman, Mayor of Evesham. This event brought into play Evesham Church Yard as a unique venue for events which benefits from the beautiful back drop of All Saints' and St Lawrence's together with Evesham's iconic Bell Tower. Thanks must go to the Reverend Andrew Spurr who was very supportive in enabling this and other events to take place in this location.

Once again the Asparagus Festival won the regional 'Where Else But England' award for the most eccentric event, and came third (one place better than last year) in the national competition. Media interest was unprecedented, with Evesham and the Asparagus Festival featuring on amongst others, national and regional news, Country File, and a new series featuring celebrity chef Jamie Oliver which will be screened in the autumn. To understand the total financial value of such publicity, independent assessors have reviewed all media coverage for the 2011 season and have reported that this coverage was worth **£1,500,000** to Evesham and the Vale. This is a huge jump on last year's figure of £660,000 demonstrating the continuing growth in national interest in what Evesham and the Vale has to offer.

The **Balloon Festival** featured hovercraft, classic car displays and live music which helped to compensate for the high winds that affected the Hot Air Balloons. The live music and variety of activity helped to create a relaxed 'picnic in the park' atmosphere as visitors gathered for the evening's Night Glow and Fireworks spectacular finale.

This year's **National Morris Weekend** saw 14 Morris sides from all over UK descending on the Vale of Evesham to compete for the coveted 'Evesham Stick'. On Saturday the Morris sides toured the Vale and danced in Ashton under Hill, Bretforton, Broadway, Fladbury and met up back in Evesham for the evening's Ceilidh and celebrations. The Trumpet in Merstow Green made a special effort to welcome the dancers and ensured that the sides had an enjoyable experience and great memories of Evesham's hospitality. On Sunday morning the bleary eyed Morris Sides gathered in Abbey Park ready to march up Bridge Street into Market Place where they competed for the stick. Visitors and local residents joined in the fun and unanimously supported the decision that Wrigley Head, from Manchester was this year's winner and the Evesham Stick was presented by the Mayor of Evesham, Cllr James Bulmam.

Alongside this event, Transition Evesham Vale in partnership with Transition Pershore organised the **Vale Fresh Food Festival** in Evesham Church Yard. The two events complemented each other with traditional entertainment, the Vale's freshest food and lashings of locally produced ale and cider. Transition Evesham Vale is keen to make this an annual event for Evesham.

The by-annual **Evesham Festival of Music** was bigger than ever this year covering 8 days and featured a packed programme including Handel's Messiah with four professional soloists. The partnership made a small contribution to this event but its success is thanks entirely to the organising committee that presented a full and exciting range of performances that featured the very best of local talent.

The new committee responsible for **Evesham River Festival** was able to step up to the mark and ensure that the event's success continued to grow. EMTP helped the new committee over some of the bureaucratic hurdles an event of this scale inevitably encounters as well as providing some practical support with toilets, litter collection and sponsorship.

Evesham Festival of Sport was a new event aimed at encouraging greater participation in physical activity. The launch event used the established Evesham 10k run as a focal point and provided a wide range of fun activities in Crown Meadow for residents and visitors alike.

Although not directly supported from these funds, the **Evesham Angling Festival** once again drew huge crowds to Evesham over the August Bank Holiday weekend. The competition attracted the UK's top anglers and 25 qualifying competitions held over the preceding three months ensured that only the very best competed in the festival's three championship events. Evesham Angling Festival has, for some years now, been recognised as the largest coarse fishing event in the UK. This is evident by the increased demand for trade stands and I was particularly proud to welcome the Irish Tourist Board who came over to the UK especially to attend this event and promote tourism in Ireland. Plans for next year are already being developed and it is anticipated that the trading village will feature a much wider variety of merchandise to respond to the increasingly diverse range of visitors.

In response to the challenging trading conditions VECTA decided to take a proactive approach and organise a new event designed to attract visitors into the town centre after the summer holidays. **The Pie and Ale Festival** offered tasty tipples along with plenty of scrumptious pies that proved to be a great attraction despite some intermittent showers. Celebrity Chef Tom Bridge and the Mayor of Evesham helped with proceedings and the event was a great shop window for local producers' and businesses, not least Vale Balloons who created incredible balloon sculptures for the event.

All of Evesham's events and festivals attracted excellent attendance and again made a positive impact on visitor spend in the town. The wider economic benefit of our events is reflected by reports that most of the accommodation in the Vale area was fully booked, restaurants and bars did a roaring trade in the evenings and the town centre benefited from additional footfall.



November 19th sees the beginning of Evesham's Christmas celebrations when Santa will lead the countdown for **Evesham's Christmas Lights Switch-on**. The event will take

place in Market Place Evesham and will feature Santa and his reindeer, live music, food and drink and fireworks. Details of upcoming events in Evesham and across the Vale can be found at www.eveshamtown.co.uk

Delivery 2012-13

EMTP's priority continues to be focused on supporting and growing Evesham's economic vitality. The partnership's approach together with that of its partners of creating positive experiences for visitors, supporting local independent retailers and promoting Evesham's offer to their larger counterparts must continue if the town is to retain and grow its competitiveness against competing centres.

This will be achieved by increasing efforts to establish Evesham as a target for investment with regional and national retail agencies, investors and multiple retailers. It will include capitalising on the extremely valuable coverage the town benefits from thanks to the extensive events programme and in particular the Asparagus Festival. At the same time the partnership will support local independent retailers by continuing the small business grant scheme and will commit resources to promoting the town centre as an attractive shopping location to residents within a 20 minute drive time.

EMTP is in regular communication with Realis (Riverside Centre Managing Agent) and has committed to help facilitate proposals for better signage for the Riverside Centre and to assist with investment proposals, especially for the former PJ's unit as they come forward. The partnership will also maintain its close relationship with Eagle One as the Country Park application progresses to help ensure that the positive aspects of this proposal for Evesham Town Centre are delivered.

The programme of projects for 2011–12 has again been very successful in helping to underpin the local economy despite a stubbornly flat national and international economic situation. However, the pressure must continue through 2012-13 and beyond if the successes achieved so far are to be consolidated and built upon. Thus the following projects are included in my request for funding 2012-13:

Attracting Inward Investment

EMTP has grasped opportunities to communicate Evesham's positive message by exploiting a free offer by the Federation of Small Businesses to attend the Three Counties Show in the Rural Business Support Marquee. It secured a grant from Wychavon District Council to attend the British Council of Shopping Centres annual conference and exhibition in Manchester which attracted representatives of the UK's leading retailers and has attended networking opportunities that attract businesses not yet located in the Vale of Evesham.

This effort has seen an increase in awareness and interest at a national level and the partnership will continue to use as many opportunities as it can to keep communicating Evesham's offer to potential investors. Actions will include participating in high profile events and be backed up by a targeted use of the updated 'Evesham, A Great Place for Business' packs. Additionally we will give encouragement and assistance to all leads (confirmed or otherwise) that we become aware of, to ensure that every prospect has the best opportunity for success. A total budget of £7,000 is proposed and it is requested that Evesham Town Council support this initiative with a contribution of **£3,000**.

Business Support and Development Grants

Encouraging local entrepreneurship is essential if the recovery of the town centre is to be sustained. Securing the investment of multiple retailers is important but the businesses that remain the most committed to the town have and will always be those that were conceived and nurtured locally. Therefore, alongside the work to promote Evesham to national investment markets this project will continue the focus on small local businesses that are new or have growth aspirations. Although only £750, each grant provides an additional resource for small businesses and includes the advice and guidance of business experts in developing a sustainable business model. This project has proved extremely successful at leveraging additional funds from other sources. To maintain this opportunity and continue its momentum a pot of £6,000 is required. In partnership with EMTP it is requested that the Town Council support this initiative with a contribution of **£3,000**.

Local Distinctiveness

The concept of 'Experience Shopping' is a new phrase that seems to be becoming established within the national retailing community. Evesham has understood and embraced this concept for many years and is currently ahead of many of its competitors. EMTP intends to retain this advantage and continue this long-running project as a key component of its Action Plan. The profile of the British Asparagus Festival, Air Balloon Festival, National Morris Weekend, Angling Festival, River Festival and others is expanding. The programme continues to bring tens of thousands of visitors to the town and is also a welcome boost to community well being and social cohesion.

This year has seen three additional large events together with other initiatives that have enhanced existing festivals. Encouraging innovation helps to ensure that our offer does not become tired and less effective. In 2012-13 we will continue to develop existing events and embrace new ideas. The extended Asparagus Festival launch day was a great success and although it was anticipated to be a one-off event (as St George's day coincided with Easter Saturday) there is support for making this an annual event. The programme also includes the Hot Air Balloon, Music and Classic Car Show on 9th & 10th of June which will include the Midland Kite Flyers who will give displays in the Air Balloon operating area if high winds stop the Air Balloons from inflating. The Asparagus Festival grand finale is the National Morris Weekend 23rd and 24th June which will be enhanced by the Vale Fresh Food Festival. Between events there will also be a range of supplementary events such as Open Farm Sunday, asparagus tours and farm shop visits with displays and exhibitions.

For Christmas 2012, I propose to continue the theme of 'An Evesham Country Christmas' with the Christmas Lights Switch-On event planned for Saturday 17th November. A supporting programme of activities will take place on the Advent Saturdays in partnership with the Town Council and the Riverside Shopping Centre's Christmas promotion events.

With all events I have endeavoured to give service providers as much notice as possible in return for keeping their costs under control. The stewarding services of the Lions Club and Evesham Round Table have proved extremely effective and the litter picking service provided by the Gold Leaf Scouts is to be highly commended. Although small grants are given to these organisations, significant savings have been made over the cost of employing contractors. However, with the additional activity and increase in fuel costs I anticipate allocating a larger budget for the 2012-13 season. To help with this I respectfully request that the Town Council consider a contribution of **£8,000** to support the Local Distinctness programme, an increase of £500 on last year's contribution.

Summary

EMTP would be most grateful if Evesham Town Council would kindly contribute to the above projects for delivery in 2012-13 and respectfully requests a total contribution of **£14,000**, subject to the other match funding being approved. Any funding not spent will not be claimed and any element of a project underspend will be claimed proportionately.

Finally, I sincerely thank Evesham Town Council for its support in my capacity as Evesham Market Town Partnership Manager. Economic conditions nationally are challenging but I believe that we have an exciting offer to communicate. I relish this opportunity and look forward to continuing and developing the close working relationship between Evesham Town Council and EMTP.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shawn Riley', written in a cursive style.

Shawn Riley: Evesham Market Town Partnership Manager