



# HAMPSHIRE RURAL PATHFINDER Newsletter

Issue 4, May 2006

Welcome to the fourth issue of the Hampshire Rural Pathfinder newsletter.

## Aims

The Rural Pathfinder programme is a Government inspired initiative to test:

- Ways of achieving more joined-up delivery of services in rural areas, addressing social, economic and environmental issues
- Innovation in rural development and delivery of services in rural areas, building on existing best practice
- Better prioritization of existing resources, in line with local priorities, towards areas, communities and people with the greatest needs

## Update on Pathfinder projects

The Pathfinder programme is now more than half way through its lifespan, and we are now beginning to look what will happen at the formal end of the programme. All projects need to be completed and assessed by March 2007, so we are no longer accepting new projects unless they can be completed rapidly.

The past few months has seen a flurry of new project applications, meeting Pathfinder's key priorities. One of these, 'transport and young people', has come from Community Action Hampshire (CAH). This is a key area of need for rural communities.

We are delighted that, significantly due to Pathfinder, the condition of 4,000ha (9,600 acres) of Sites of Special Scientific Interest has been dramatically improved. It has come about through new partnership working between the agencies responsible for the New Forest. Prior to Pathfinder, Government funding rules meant that they were not able to pool their resources for wildlife conservation. We are working with the Government to change these regulations.



Work in progress in the New Forest

A milestone has also been reached—completion of the first Pathfinder project. The initiative was run by West Berkshire Council to explain how it has been so successful in working with communities through parish planning. The national conference they organised was oversubscribed, and drew in people from across England, together with key figures from Government departments. The conference acted as a catalyst for yet another Pathfinder project: this will benefit towns and parishes across the south east and beyond.



Some conference attendees

West Berkshire Council has since been awarded "Beacon status" in recognition of its outstanding work in rural areas.

More details on our web site — <http://www.hants.gov.uk/ruralpathfinder>

## New Website

The Association of Parish and Town Councils in Hampshire (HAPTC) has launched a new [website](http://www.haptc.org) providing a new national resource for local councils. The website is to be the platform for an Electronic Parish Library, the development for which has been funded by Pathfinder and the Government Office of the South East (GOSE). The new website address is: <http://www.haptc.org>

## The Local Area Agreement

The [Local Area Agreement \(LAA\)](#) now underpins the way services are delivered in Hampshire by the public sector. Its purpose is to draw in the various arms of the public sector so that they work much more closely together, giving consumers better services. Within the LAA, the Rural Pathfinder Steering Group has been given responsibility to help create a stronger rural economy in rural areas, and to enable local people to have a greater voice and influence over decision making and service delivery. This is a new and exciting challenge that will continue long after the Pathfinder itself is finished.



Work in progress in the New Forest

## The Future

As the programme comes to an end, we will be sharing what we have learned across the region, and also with Government and other Pathfinders. Likewise, we will learn from the other Pathfinders.

The LAA is one indication that the expertise of the Pathfinder Steering Group has already become a vital resource to effective delivery of services in rural areas. Our thoughts have therefore turned to the future. Once Pathfinder is finished, how do we maintain this pool of expertise and improved working between partners? But how do we avoid adding to what is already an enormous number of organisations working in the region? We don't yet have the answers, so, if you have any suggestions, please contact us.

### Stop Press:

**David Miliband, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs visited Hampshire on 10 May to learn about the Rural Pathfinder.**



New Forest photos kindly supplied by the New Forest LIFE Partnership

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