



Action For Wiltshire Newsletter – August 2011

The Action for Wiltshire (A4W) Programme was established early in 2009 to deal with the impact on business and communities moving into recession.

What the Programme wants to achieve

- Broaden the employment base so that Wiltshire is less dependent on public sector employment and a low wage economy;
- Make jobs more local so that we can lower our carbon footprint;
- Tackle barriers to employment growth and make Wiltshire a location of choice for businesses;
- Improve the skills and employability of Wiltshire based workers and those who are unemployed;
- Reduce and minimise the regulatory burden on business;
- Maximise volunteering;
- Create an Employee Assistance Programme for those facing redundancy;
- Develop stronger links between businesses and communities; and
- Support the vulnerable and offer advice to individuals in crisis.

Progress so far...

Information about the key achievements and progress of the Action for Wiltshire Programme can be found on our new web page:

www.wiltshire.gov.uk/actionforwiltshire

Phase 2 news

New Business Competition

Congratulations to Triple Helix Wargames of West Wilts Trading Estate, Westbury, winners of the 2010/11 New Business Competition. Charlotte and Steve Judson opened the doors to the Destination Gaming Centre of Southern England in May 2010. Charlotte and Steve had to compete with worthy opponents, but emerged victorious as a great example of the undercurrent of business acumen in the Westbury area.

Wiltshire Work Grant

February 2011 saw the launch of a unique partnership between Wiltshire Council, Jobcentre Plus and 15 local employers which has halved the number of unemployed Wiltshire residents claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) for 2 years or more. The Wiltshire Work Grant is a locally developed support package for disadvantaged unemployed people who have been claiming JSA for 2 years or more. It is operating in Wiltshire as a Jobcentre Plus pilot model for getting the very long term unemployed back into work, managed by Wiltshire Council.

Working alongside 15 local employers, Wiltshire Council has created 40 jobs, across a range of sectors and occupational areas, each paid at the national minimum wage and lasting for 13 weeks. Workshops have been run to support the long term unemployed people to take up these opportunities and successfully adapt to the life changes that being in work brings such as coming off of benefits and the financial implications for the jobseeker; lifestyle management; and living without benefits and one to one support to identify and address personal barriers.

The Wiltshire Work Grant has been a major success with all 40 jobs created and filled and to date only 2 employees withdrawn from the programme. Moreover, during the programme period the number of people claiming JSA for 2 years or more halved from 90 to 45. The programme is achieving sustainable results also, with 24 of the 40 employees receiving a contract extension from their Wiltshire Work Grant Employer, of which 7 have been taken on permanently. The pilot is instrumental in helping secure work for long term unemployed people, giving them valuable skills and experience for their CVs, as well as providing a recent employment reference to significantly enhance their future work prospects. The Wiltshire Work Grant has given those who have struggled for years to find and prepare for work an opportunity to break the cycle of long term unemployment.

Fredericks Wiltshire

Fredericks Wiltshire has approved a third loan to a Wiltshire based company bringing the total to six across Wiltshire and Swindon. The latest loan is to Fairies Wear Boots Designs who produce unique gifts from paintings to hand engraved glass. The loan will enable the business to open a shop in Melksham on Bath Road, and will assist with a marketing campaign and purchasing stock. Fredericks Wiltshire is delivered by the Fredericks Foundation to give financial support to existing and start up businesses. It is supported by Wiltshire Council, GWE Business West Limited and The Wiltshire Assembly's Action for Wiltshire programme. Local businesses wanting more information on how Fredericks Wiltshire could help them can go to www.fredericksfoundation.org or contact their local client manager on 01793 698023 for further details.

Digital Inclusion

The Council has been successful in securing £4 million of funding towards the project from Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK). Wiltshire Council was one of three successful bids, which has enabled the project to be at the forefront of the procurement process and is able to take part in the initial Call-off around May of next year. Early engagement with the procurement process will allow the programme team to ensure the Wiltshire's requirements are embedded within the procurement framework as well as being closely involved with scrutinising the bidders proposals and the contractual arrangements around the entire process.

The Wiltshire On-Line survey has now been completed. A total of 3,622 Wiltshire residents responded to the survey. The majority of respondents reported download speeds between 512kbps and 8mbps. Almost 40% reported speeds less than 2mbps and less than 1% indicated that they had download speeds greater than 20mbps. The overwhelming majority of respondents said that their internet connection was either very important or fairly important to them and their family. However, 22% indicated that their internet connection was not adequate for the things they wanted to do, and 32% indicated that their connection was only adequate for some things and not others. Four hundred and twenty five businesses responded to the business survey. The majority of businesses who responded to the survey were small with up to 10 employees, reflecting the general profile of business size in the county, and almost 70% were home based. Over 80% of businesses who responded to the survey indicated that their internet connection is critical to their business. However, only 2% indicated that their connection was adequate all the time.

A summary of the survey and executive summary of the Council's bid for funding from BDUK can be view at: www.wiltshireonline.org. A full version of the survey will be uploaded in October to the site.

Wiltshire Advice Line

Further support for the Wiltshire Advice Line was agreed at the May Action For Wiltshire Board meeting. It is anticipated that this will support the Wiltshire Advice Line until March 2012 when the Citizens Advice Bureau hope to be able to sustain it.

Who to contact

If you would like further information about the Action for Wiltshire programme or if you have any questions or comments please email ActionforWiltshirePMO@wiltshire.gov.uk or call Matthew Croston, Economic Development Officer on 01249 706429.