



## BLIMP: Broadband Line Information Monitoring Project

Broadband speed is a hot topic at the moment. The prime issue is that private service providers do not consider there to be an economic case for improving broadband provision in some areas with poor connectivity. A key element of this is that it usually costs providers considerably more to provide broadband services in rural areas than it does in more urban areas

emda recently hosted a rural broadband summit which brought together stakeholders from across the region to explore the potential for improved broadband connectivity in areas that are least likely to be reached by mainstream market providers. Delegates were invited to put forward their ideas to inform a rural broadband manifesto for the region.

Broadband connectivity has been identified as a key priority within the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategy for Economic Growth, 2010-20. Prospect Leicestershire, as a delivery partner with the new sub-regional governance arrangements, is currently leading interventions within the County.

### How can you help?

The Broadband Line Information Monitoring Project (BLIMP) is supported by a number of Regional Development Agencies to gather information on local broadband speeds. It aims to measure the broadband speeds which are being achieved in the real world and store these in a database from which the relative levels of service being delivered across the country by different suppliers can be monitored. This information will be made publicly available. It will enable an up to date, self maintaining atlas of Internet connectivity to be created.

Visit <http://www.blimpchecker.co.uk> where you can download a tool which will make periodic measurements of your line speed and return this data automatically to the BLIMP database.

You can uninstall the tool at any time, it doesn't collect any personal information and the tool should not significantly impact the performance of either your computer or the speed of your broadband connection.

## Playing Field Association membership

Anyone involved in running and maintaining a playing field or play area in their village should keep an eye open for details of the membership service run by the Leicestershire & Rutland Playing Fields Association, sent to all current and potential members during the last week.

Full Membership of the Association has many benefits, including technical advice on facility and financial management, information on funding opportunities and access to interest free loans and starter grants provided by the Association.

Members also receive quarterly copies of "The Playing Field" magazine together with discounts on training courses places and events.

The support of our members is vital in helping the Association continue to encourage the provision of recreation facilities for all age groups throughout the area, and to help protect and enhance sports and play facilities.

Membership for Parish Councils starts at just £12.

For full details see the membership letter or email [kbutcher@ruralcc.org.uk](mailto:kbutcher@ruralcc.org.uk).



## INSPIRE Leicestershire grant programme



Building on the success of the Rural Business Support Programme, 2006-09 and Market Towns Initiative the Leicestershire Rural Partnership has successfully secured further funding to support businesses within rural Leicestershire. Aligned to the Leicestershire Rural Economic Priorities, 2009-12 the LRP has established 5 grant schemes which businesses can apply to for funding support. These are identified below.

### \* **Shop front improvement grant**

To improve the appearance shop frontages and commercial premises in market towns. Maximum grant of £5,000. Available in all Leicestershire district areas.

### \* **Working over the shop**

Converting the upper floors of shops and commercial premises to increase workspace accommodation and retail space. Maximum grant of £10,000. Available in all Leicestershire district areas.

### \* **Rural redundant building grant**

To help bring new economic uses into redundant buildings through conversions or upgrades. Maximum grant of £24,500. Not available in Loughborough, Coalville, Market Harborough, Hinckley, Melton Mowbray and Oadby and Wigston.

### \* **Rural visitor grants**

To help businesses raise the quality and accessibility of their tourism product and improve the visitor

experience. Maximum grant of £10,000. Not available in Loughborough, Coalville, Market Harborough, Hinckley, Melton Mowbray and Oadby and Wigston.

### \* **Equestrian development grant**

Offering support to farriers, livery yards, riding schools and equestrian retailers along with accommodation providers, hospitality businesses and leisure attractions who provide, or wish to provide, stabling and livery services to riders. Maximum grant of £10,000. Not available in Loughborough, Coalville, Market Harborough, Hinckley, Melton Mowbray and Oadby and Wigston.

All grant schemes will provide up to a maximum of 50% of total project costs. Full details about the grant schemes available through INSPIRE Leicestershire is available on the LRP's website at [www.oakleaves.org.uk/inspire](http://www.oakleaves.org.uk/inspire). This includes

- Grant Application Form
- General Guidance Notes
- Guidance Notes for each Grant Scheme

For more information about funding available through the Leicestershire Rural Partnership please contact either

- \* Fiona Walker (Rural Services Officer)  
[ruralgrants@leics.gov.uk](mailto:ruralgrants@leics.gov.uk), 0116 305 5673
- \* Matthew Kempson (Rural Partnership Manager)  
[matthew.kempson@leics.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.kempson@leics.gov.uk) 0116 305 6179



## Waltham on the Wolds and Thorpe Arnold awarded Quality Council status

Following their recent re-accreditation as a Quality Council, Waltham on the Wolds and Thorpe Arnold Parish Council were delighted to be presented with their Quality Council Certificate on Thursday 25th February.

The Council is now in the process, with Kate Sharpe of the RCC, of preparing a community-led plan that will update and renew the Parish Appraisal that took place in 2003.

Pictured (l to r) Michael Rainey, Quality Councils Panel, Peter Holbrook, Chairman of the Waltham on the Wolds and Thorpe Arnold Parish Council and Eric Smethurst, Parish Clerk.



## Harborough pilots 'First Contact' Scheme

An initiative to improve the lives of older or potentially vulnerable people, and help them remain safe and independent in their own homes, is being piloted across the Harborough district.

The 'First Contact' scheme encourages various agencies, who might be visiting residents over the age of 60 for whatever reason, to help identify any further needs they might have using a simple 'checklist'. This is filled in by the visiting agency and, if necessary, the resident can be referred or 'signposted' to the appropriate organisation to get any extra support.

This could include housing repairs or adaptations, benefits support, falls prevention, security advice such as fitting free smoke detectors or alarms, or information on a healthier lifestyle and group activities. It is hoped that, once the scheme is established, around 60 checklists and 120 referrals will be generated every month.

The scheme is being piloted until March 2011 and being funded through the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), a multi-agency group aiming to make the district a better place in which to live, work or visit.

Harborough's 'First Contact' partners include Harborough District Council, Adult Social Care Service, Trading Standards, Fire and Rescue Service, Police, Pensions Service, Citizens Advice Bureau, East Midlands Housing Association, Seven Locks Housing, Voluntary Action Leicester Shire / VASL, Harborough Be Safe, Royal British Legion, Age Concern, NHS, Libraries and Anchor Staying Put.

A survey will be carried out at the end of the pilot to ask people if it met their needs.

For more information about First Contact call Tom Day, LSP support officer at Harborough District Council, on 01858 828282 or email [t.day@harborough.gov.uk](mailto:t.day@harborough.gov.uk)



## New LOROS Chairman appointed



Professor John Feehally (left) is pictured with Stephen Thomas, present Chairman of the Board of Trustees

LOROS is pleased to announce that Professor John Feehally will take over as Chairman of the Board of Trustees when Stephen Thomas retires in June 2010. John Feehally is a Doctor specialising in kidney problems. He has worked as a Consultant at Leicester General Hospital for more than 20 years and divides his professional life between clinical work, teaching and research.

John became a Trustee of LOROS in 2003 and said "LOROS is a wonderful organisation much loved in Leicestershire & Rutland. For me it is a great privilege to have been involved with LOROS over recent years, and I look forward very much to the opportunity to serve as Chairman of the Trustees."

## Time to change your password?

That "123456" password you might be tempted to use isn't going to fool anybody. But it's the most popular choice on the Web. Another of the most common is "Password". The astonishing findings come from a data security firm that looked at millions of passwords recently exposed in a security breach. The company analysed the data and compiled the results for a 'Consumer Password Worst Practices' report. Of the 32 million passwords involved, the four most common were: 123456, 12345, 123456789 and Password.

## BIG Lottery launches improved version of Reaching Communities programme

At least £100 million a year is to be invested across England by the BIG Lottery Fund in a new improved version of its flagship Reaching Communities programme for each of the next five years. The new funding which will be introduced this spring comes with two distinct improvements:

- \* First, applicants seeking smaller sums of money will enjoy a simpler application and assessment process.
- \* Second, a two-stage decision making process for larger bids will ensure that all applicants will learn sooner whether their project is in with a chance of receiving funding. For those invited to the second stage, the likelihood of success will be much higher, making work on completing a full application more worthwhile.

## Good news for rural community buildings

Also in the pipeline for later in the year is a third element; a dedicated capital stream offering funding within the familiar Reaching Communities application process to respond to the high, unmet demand for funding for community buildings.

You can apply to Reaching Communities if you are:

- \* a registered charity
- \* a voluntary or community group
- \* a statutory body, (including schools)
- \* a charitable or not-for-profit company
- \* a social enterprise – a business that is chiefly run for social objectives, whose profits are reinvested in the business rather than going to shareholders and owners.

[http://www2.biglotteryfund.org.uk/pr\\_100209\\_eng\\_rc\\_big\\_steps\\_to\\_make\\_flagship\\_funding\\_programme\\_even\\_better](http://www2.biglotteryfund.org.uk/pr_100209_eng_rc_big_steps_to_make_flagship_funding_programme_even_better)