

**Faringdon Town Council
Annual Town Meeting 13 April 2015**

Faringdon Town Team Report

VWHDC have a corporate objective “To continue to invest to improve the vitality and attractiveness of our towns.” To help us meet this objective, VWHDC work jointly with Faringdon Town Council and Faringdon Chamber of Commerce through the Joint Economic Forum. We have recently set up a Faringdon Town Team, and in 2014/15 VWHDC funded two part-time market town co-ordinator positions. The purpose of these roles was to “*stimulate town centre activity, increase footfall and increase local spending in the town centre*”.

In 2014/15, Faringdon Town Team delivered the following projects:-

- Faringdon loyalty card scheme – to promote all town centre businesses who are members; now have a stamp card scheme and monthly click and share prizes. Find us on Facebook!
- Holding regular town centre events: Blackbird Day (6 May, 17 May); Independents Day (4 July); Young Traders Market (11 October); Christmas Market (6 December). These all had a big impact on town centre footfall bringing between 200 and 500 additional persons into the MarketPlace
- Faringdon Flag competition running alongside the Portwell Bench (Berners’ Big Bench Bash)
- Lots of social media – around Faringdon Markets and Faringdon loyalty card scheme
- WiFi now installed and working in the town centre – just under 600 users to end March 2015 (report attached)

Faringdon Town Team have recently approved, and from April 2015, will begin working on the following projects:

- Work with commercial agents and landlords to attract new businesses to Faringdon
- If possible, trial a pop-up shop in Faringdon
- Strengthen the loyalty card scheme to make fuller use of its potential as a local shopper and business communication platform
- Improve the existing markets, particularly the weekly Tuesday market, and to introduce new weekend markets that will also benefit existing retailers.
- Encourage, support, co-ordinate and develop a programme of public arts and performances, particularly where these might help strengthen the markets

- Produce a 12 month events calendar and co-ordinate, work in partnership to facilitate and promote these events to residents and visitors:
 - February 28th - Charity Market
 - March 28th - "Meet the Traders" Saturday Market
 - May 16th - Blackbird Day/French Market
 - June 13th/20th - Young Traders' Market
 - July 4th - Independents' Day Market/Organic Food Festival
 - August 7th-9th - FollyFest 2015
 - September ?? - Heritage Day
 - Sept 19th-20th- Oktoberfest Beer Festival/Pink Pigeons day (Lord Berners' Birthday)
 - November 28th - Festive Faringdon/Christmas Market

- Work with Town Council and other partners to improve the appearance, look and feel of the town centre
- Marketing Faringdon to residents and visitors in order to increase footfall and convert into local spending. This could be achieved through:
 - Work to support and promote the independent businesses through participating in national initiatives such as Independents Day, Small Business Saturday, #Shop Local and other local initiatives (such as retail support programmes)
 - Possible recruitment of a specialist marketing professional to programme, schedule and run marketing campaigns to promote Faringdon, its events and its businesses.
- Create and publish a set of town itineraries focussed on promoting Faringdon to residents and visitors, using 'walks', 'cycle routes' or history or geology as possible 'hooks'
- Improve look and feel of the public toilets, perhaps using "Berners-inspired" artistic additions to the toilets working in partnership with the Pink Pigeons and Vale's arts development officer.
- To co-ordinate and encourage the 'Pop up museum in shops' project working with volunteers and businesses
- To improve Folly Park as a visitor destination by establishing a working committee to raise funds and deliver the country park or adventure playground as identified in the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan policy 4.10a
- Improving linkages between TESCO and town centre by using art to improve the walkway (Pink Pigeons and Vale's arts development officer Abigail Brown) and by encouraging the instalment of much-needed signage to direct people into the town centre
- To help identify or signpost possible LEADER-funded projects that will be made available during 2015 that will give an opportunity to fund rural tourism projects (Guidance to be circulated once available)

Faringdon Joint Economic Forum

The Forum is a partnership comprising: Faringdon Town Council, Faringdon Chamber of Commerce, Vale of White Horse district council and 'other' organisations such as the Folly Tower Trust, Pink Pigeons, etc.

There is a formal constitution, and elected chairman, vice-chairman and treasurer. Each year, Faringdon Town Council provides £500 grant funding, the Vale of White Horse district provides £1,000 and the Chamber contribute 'in kind' and to specific projects.

“The aim of this forum is to identify actions, projects or funding that will help us to improve town centre vitality through increasing footfall, visitors and spending and to increase commercial investment in Faringdon and improve pedestrian, cycle and vehicular access and movement in the town centre.”

There are very few funding sources for economic projects in the town centre in Faringdon.

Projects that have recently been funded include:-

- Faringdon cycle route cards proto-type £100 (January 2015)
- Faringdon Folly Tower Trust £602 to produce Civil War booklets (July 2014)
- Faringdon loyalty card leaflets print-run (June 2014) £550
- Faringdon FreeFoods flowerbeds and planting project £500 (October 2013)
- Folly Tower blue plaque commemorating Lord Berners £300 (January 2014)
- Faringdon loyalty card leaflet and Faringdon loyalty card design work £852 (April 2012)
- Faringdon Business Map 2012 artwork, production and print £252 (April 2012)
- Faringdon Town Map production £200 (January 2012)
- £3,000 to pay for a professional bid writer to apply for £100,000 funding from SEEDA Small Rural Towns programme in 2009. This bid was successful and provided much needed funding for essential repairs to the Faringdon Folly Tower, paid for a project manager for Faringdon skatepark, production of walking route cards, grant for Faringdon community bus.

Trudy Godfrey
Economic Development Team Leader