



CHAIRMAN RETIRES

Nick Townsend has retired as Chairman of LSEP a position he held since the company was formed in 2002. He led the organisation through its initial development to its third year of operation.

He recently stood down from the board of Wilson Bowden PLC, where he was group legal director, and now plans to establish his own consultancy business.

LSEP's annual funding allocation from the East Midlands Development Agency (*emda*) has risen to over £10 million as a result of the company's impressive performance. By supporting more than 100 projects each year LSEP exceeds its targets.

Nick was keen to encourage other stakeholders in the development of LSEP priorities and programme, by involving the private sector and promoting cross sector working through establishing a series of theme groups. These are examples of the legacy that Nick leaves behind.

Kishor Tailor, LSEP chief executive who has worked closely with Nick since the company was formed said: "He has played a pivotal role in providing leadership during the development of LSEP and ensured that the company not only met its objectives but made a real difference to the local economy. He has been an ambassador for the organisation and has played a major part in establishing positive relationships between the public, private and voluntary/community sectors from which the sub-region will benefit for years to come."

Martin Traynor, LSEP deputy chairman who will be the company's interim chairman praised Nick's contribution: "We have been privileged to work alongside someone with such a clear vision for the development of the economy. During Nick's time as chairman we have completed a wide range of projects that have had an impact on many different sectors and communities."

Nick was born in Leicester and has spent most of his working life in the city and county, working for local practices specialising in commercial property, planning and corporate work. He remains a director of the Leicester Regeneration Company Limited for which he was a founding board member. For many years he's had an interest in local affairs and previously chaired Leicester City Challenge and Leicester Common Purpose.

The post of LSEP chairman will be advertised later in the year.



NATIONAL FOREST GETS HOSTEL AND CAMPSITE

Funding from LSEP and *emda* is in place and construction starts in October on a multi-million pound Youth Hostel, caravan and camp site in the National Forest at Moira. LSEP has contributed £650,000 to the project, which will total £3.2million and should be ready for Easter 2007.

Two national organisations will operate the facilities. The Youth Hostels Association estimates the new hostel will attract 12,000 overnight stays each year, primarily from schools, youth organisations and families visiting the Forest. The Camping and Caravanning Club will manage the facility for those visitors staying under their own cover in The Forest. The camp site will

add to the environmental, social and economic benefits which will be generated by the Youth Hostel.

"This is great news for the Forest," said Sophie Churchill, chief executive of the National Forest Company. "The YHA National Forest Hostel will attract people from across the country, it will contribute significantly to the sustainability of the Forest, and be of great benefit to the local area. I am also pleased that it will be built to a high environmental specification."

SOMALI EDUCATION PROJECT 'TOP OF THE CLASS'

Formed with LSEP funding in 2003, Aqoon Community Education and Training Services (ACETS) was the first Somali Social Enterprise in Leicester. Its latest report shows it is going from strength to strength with its commitment to promote social inclusion, community involvement, and enhance knowledge and skills among new arrivals in the city. Its mission statement 'Far kaliya fool ma dhaqdo', which translates as 'A single finger cannot wash a face', recognises the vital role of partnership working.

Its Study and Homework Club is a success story. As a result of securing other resources, enrolment has increased 66%. Now, some 80 children attend the Club. They're well motivated, supported by their parents and achieve high attendance levels. Some of the children use their time at the Club to overcome handwriting difficulties and the sessions also help them to improve their spelling. SATs tests prove that a real difference is being made.

Hamdi Aden, a pupil at the Club said. "When I came to England in 2003 I didn't know how to speak any English. I was helped with my English and other subjects which helped me achieve great levels in my SATs. I hope that I can come to the Homework Club till year 11 and that it will help during all my life."

ACETS is keen for children to take a sense of ownership within a multicultural society by helping them get to know the history of the city in which they live. Pupils are taken to various places of interest in the city.



EMPLOYMENT LAND AND PREMISES STUDY BEGINS

Economic and Management Consultants SQW is beginning work on a strategic assessment of employment land, premises and investment opportunities in Leicester and Leicestershire.

The aim of the employment land study is to identify land and buildings that have the potential to be used for employment purposes and to record the quality of land and buildings in a defined geographical area.

Local employment land and premises studies have already been undertaken for the City and all districts in Leicestershire. The Leicester Shire Economic Partnership, Leicestershire County Council and Leicester City Council have funded this further study

and will draw this intelligence together and identify the key strategic priorities for the sub-region. The outcome of the study will be an investment strategy that will help achieve the right balance of employment land and premises to meet the needs of existing businesses and attract new businesses over the next 10 years.

SQW is meeting senior representatives of local authorities and is holding consultation workshops on 27 June and 13 July for representatives of the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Steve Dibnah, LSEP project manager said, "We are aware the present lack of employment land and premises is hampering growth and investment in the local economy. We need to work with all local authorities in our sub-region to ensure the issues are addressed strategically."

The findings of the study are expected to be available in August.



Site of the new Leicester Science Park.

£2 MILLION FOR CITY FACE LIFT



LSEP is contributing £2 million to help transform the centre of Leicester to improve the economy by increasing the flow of pedestrians, particularly evening shoppers and visitors, redirecting bus routes and reducing the number of other vehicles in the centre.

Planners are looking at a comprehensive mix of changes. For instance, many shops and businesses in the City can only be accessed from the front. Currently, deliveries can be made early morning and late afternoon but in future the provision for afternoon access will be removed. It's believed people want to stay longer in a vehicle-free city and as a consequence businesses will need to open into the evening.

Leicester is a compact City compared to many others and this is particularly apparent around the market area where there are high numbers of people but the pavements are very narrow. Making effective use of space will be key to the scheme.

The Clock Tower area will remain a focus with additional street furniture. Seats will be placed down one side of Gallowtree Gate allowing the flow of pedestrians to be maintained on the opposite side. This is important on Saturdays and other times when the centre is particularly busy.

Granite paving, like that at the end of Gallowtree Gate, will be used throughout the pedestrianised areas. It is being imported from China as the large quantities required aren't produced in this country. It will be laid on an improved base to allow for regular steam cleaning.

The Halford Street area which links the New Business Quarter to the shops will see road improvements to reduce the size of junctions and the amount of traffic.

Arguably the biggest selling point Leicester will have will be the new Shires and its major occupant John Lewis. This sequence of improvements recognises that it is vital to attract shoppers out of the Shires, hence the importance of making significant changes to the High Street which will become an attractive open space and will be pedestrianised along its full length.

"We need to ensure that the economy in the entire City Centre is very strong," said Kishor Tailor, LSEP chief executive. "Leicester City Council has a lot of intelligence to draw on and following a recent tour around the City I was very impressed with the changes that are either taking place or are planned."

Martin Traynor, interim chairman of LSEP and Chamber of Commerce managing director added, "We believe that a wide range of businesses will benefit from this programme of improvements. I hope people will appreciate what makes the City unique and will want to spend more of their leisure time here, which in turn will help improve the future economy."



LSEP Board members checking on the progress of work in Leicester City Centre.

NATIONAL FOREST BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The first in a series of grants have been awarded to business within the National Forest as part of the National Forest Business Development Programme.

The project, which began in January 2006, aims to develop and enhance the opportunity that the National Forest provides within Leicestershire and South Derbyshire. The project includes a Woodland Economy Business Support Officer (Webb), Tim Adkin, with extensive knowledge of local woodlands and forest businesses, an experienced business adviser, Liz Thomas, familiar with the local issues relating to small and growing



Heath Contracts of Staunton Harold

businesses, a series of networking events, mentoring programme, technical support and a £105,000 catalyst grant fund to assist in the creation of new and development of existing woodland economy businesses.

The grants, totalling over £23,000, have been awarded to business to purchase essential machinery, provide technical assistance and promote the recreational opportunity that the Forest provides through woodland activity tourism.

Gill Smitherman, LSEP programme manager said. "The National Forest provides a great opportunity for the development of the rural economy, this programme will not only provide the financial resources to enable new and emerging business to release the potential that the Forest provides but the essential advice and guidance that will ensure a stable and sustainable economy."

Dr Hugh Williams, Incentives and Land Management Officer at The National Forest Company commented, "We are already seeing the first thinnings coming out of the new woodlands and it is vital that we get the best value for woodland products and create properly managed woods. To achieve this we need to have a good network of quality forest businesses ready and able to produce quality services and products and this is why we are so pleased to be able to offer these new grants as a catalyst for business development within the National Forest. We are now forming the foundations of a long-term forest industry for generations to come."

Contact the Woodland Business Support Team (Tim Adkin and Liz Thomas) at Moira Replan on **01283 215076**.

APPOINTMENTS TO THE BOARD OF LSEP

Professor Shirley Pearce, the vice-chancellor of Loughborough University, has been appointed to the Board. All three universities in the sub-region now help LSEP determine its priorities.



Professor Shirley Pearce

The Bishop of Leicester, Rt. Rev. Tim Stevens has resigned from the Board.



Cllr. Malise Graham

The annual change of district authority representatives has taken place; Cllr. Malise Graham (Melton Borough Council) replaces Cllr. Carole Claridge (Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council), and Lynn Aisbett (chief executive, Melton Borough Council) replaces Steve Atkinson (chief executive, Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council).