



LEICESTER SHIRE  
**economic  
partnership**

# newsletter

developing economies • developing people

Winter 2006

## HIGH COMMISSION PLEDGES FULL SUPPORT

The Indian high commissioner to the UK, Mr Kamlesh Sharma told guests, as he officially opened the Leicestershire-India Trade Bureau, that for every step taken by the Bureau a further ninety-nine would be taken by the Commission.

Mr Sharma joined the partners involved in the Bureau for a round table discussion before the symbolic lamp lighting ceremony at the New Walk Museum. During the event he spoke about the advantages of establishing partnerships at all levels and suggested success for the Bureau would ultimately stem from these links, with the support of the Commission.

Emphasising the commitment of local authorities to work with India were Cllr Roger Blackmore the leader of Leicester City Council and Cllr David Parsons the leader of Leicestershire County Council. The India Trade Bureau offers advice and support to local companies which recognise the potential of trading with India, where the market is expanding rapidly, or Indian businesses looking to trade in Europe from the sub-region.

LSEP board member Yakoob Dassu who is chairman of the India Trade Bureau steering committee said, "I hope that businesses will see the visit of Mr Kamlesh Sharma as an endorsement of the role of the Bureau. We have forged links with South Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and I intend to oversee the Bureau developing to its full potential."

Taking the work forward will be the coordinator of the India Trade Bureau Mahendra Mistry who added, "The early signs are that Leicester Shire businesses recognise the benefits of trading with India and I aim to give them the confidence to enter the Indian market. There is already plenty of interest and we'll soon be able to report more success stories."



Bureau funding comes from LSEP, UK Trade and Investment, Business Link and Leicester City Council.

India Trade Bureau  
Mahendra Mistry  
0116 258 7327  
[mahendra.mistry@bllleics.co.uk](mailto:mahendra.mistry@bllleics.co.uk)

Mr Kamlesh Sharma,  
The Indian high commissioner  
to the UK

Left to right,  
Trevor Allsop  
(Automatic Access),  
Niloofar Sakari (LSEP)  
and Paul Murphy  
(Business Builder)  
outside The Ark  
Business Centre in  
Loughborough



## BRIDGING THE GAP FOR COMPANIES AT RISK

Following a successful pilot project LSEP is making a major investment in a business support programme 'Mind the Gap' for companies which have been operating for between six and eighteen months when, according to research, they are most likely to fail.

The scheme is being delivered by Leicestershire Chamber of Commerce (Business Builder). "There is plenty of help available for start up businesses but, after the first six months, they find themselves on their own," says Martin Traynor, Chamber of Commerce managing director.

Regular sessions with a business adviser, workshops and a support network of other young firms will be key elements to the success of the initiative, which it's hoped will help make a significant improvement in the number of young businesses that become established.

Niloofar Sarkari, LSEP programme manager says Mind the Gap fulfils the aims of many agencies. "Everyone wants to see new Leicester Shire businesses becoming a success and we are pleased to offer them as much support as we can. Our Board was very impressed by the response to the pilot and we have made just over £200,000 available over the next two years."

One of the first to benefit from Mind the Gap is Trevor Allsop of Syston-based Automatic Access. "The support has taken us into areas of business where previously we would not be able to trade, or consult. The result of the training is more sales and increased profitability."

Mind the Gap - 0845 070 0086

## £1 MILLION INVESTMENT FOR PERFORMING ARTS

LSEP is investing £1 million pounds in the new Performing Arts Centre in Rutland Square, Leicester which is due to open in 2007.

The Centre will be the focus for the city's Cultural Quarter. New business units will be created supported by production workshops for the creative industry cluster. In addition to two new theatres with rehearsal and production areas, there will be cafes and bars, all contributing to a centre that will attract visitors from within and outside Leicester Shire.

LSEP recognises that the Centre will provide wider economic benefits to the sub-region through creation of new jobs and new business opportunities. "The Company has always believed that the Performing Arts Centre is vital to the regeneration of Leicester," said Nick Townsend LSEP chairman. "As well as creating a centre of excellence for the arts it will make a big impact on the economy of the city and county."

Kishor Tailor the chief executive of LSEP commented, "This is one of our biggest projects and we note that there has already been a tremendous amount of energy dedicated to the



Artists impression of the new Performing Arts Centre in Rutland Square, Leicester

Performing Arts Centre. I think the centre will be a great icon in the city and will assist in our efforts to attract Government office relocation to this sub-region."

## LOUGHBOROUGH LOOKING SMART

A £500,000 town centre improvement scheme has spruced up the Biggin Street area of Loughborough making it look much more attractive for shoppers and traders. The new features include reclaimed granite paving, better lighting, ornamental pear trees, new stylish seating and other street furniture. Funding for this latest development phase came from LSEP (£80,000), the Rushes development, Leicestershire County Council and Charnwood Borough Council.

Kishor Tailor, LSEP chief executive said, "This sort of project can be vital to Market Towns. They have something different to offer and I believe the shopping environment and experience is all important. We want to ensure they are vibrant places and contribute to make a real impact on the economy of the sub-region. To be successful traders need to be in an attractive environment and I'm sure this scheme will make a big difference."

Nicholas Rushton, Leicestershire County Council's cabinet member for Highways and Transportation said, "This is an excellent scheme which has really enhanced this area of Loughborough town centre. The improvements provide a real boost for this part of the town, creating a safe and more attractive environment."



A more attractive Biggin Street in Loughborough

Cameron MacLeod, Charnwood Borough Council's cabinet lead member for Development added, "The scheme is great news for shoppers and businesses and will make a real difference. The County and Borough Councils have worked closely together throughout the project and will continue to develop this good working relationship in the future."

## EVERY DAY IS LEICESTER SHIRE DAY

If you missed the highly successful Leicester Shire Day you can catch up with the proceedings now – online at [www.leicestershireday.co.uk](http://www.leicestershireday.co.uk) and soon you will get the chance to take forward the themes and raise issues relating to the Day.

Leadership was the day's key concern. LSEP, Leicester City Council, Leicestershire County Council and *emda* set about proving there is a combined vision of how Leicester Shire will fulfil its potential. A sequence that included six presentations interspersed by video illustrations was the highlight of the event whilst the other key ingredients were workshops and a question and answer session.

Log on to view the illustrated presentations and speeches which were given by Bryan Jackson (chairman of *emda*), David Parsons (leader of Leicestershire County Council), Roger Blackmore (leader of Leicester City Council), Roman Scuplak (deputy leader of Leicester City Council), Nick Townsend (chairman LSEP) and Kishor Tailor (chief executive LSEP). The illustrations include extracts from over 40 video interviews carried out with key organisations and individuals around the county.



Delegates listen to Roman Scuplak (deputy leader of Leicester City Council)



Left to right, Neil Morris (chairman Leicester Shire Day), Nick Townsend (chairman LSEP), Roger Blackmore (leader of Leicester City Council), Bryan Jackson (chairman of *emda*) and David Parsons (leader of Leicestershire County Council)

The chairman of Leicester Shire Day Neil Morris is keen that the momentum from the day should continue. "During the first part of the morning many questions concerning leadership were raised and answered. There are other issues that came up during the Question and Answer session which we will review and act upon. We are urging delegates to let us have their thoughts on the event and then we plan to engage them further by giving them a forum to continue the debate. I'm confident people will be honest about their own contributions as we move towards 2010."

LSEP is also looking at how the material recorded by local media company Channel 2020 specifically for Leicester Shire Day can be used to help attract a Government office relocation, inward investment and to promote Leicester Shire on Trade missions.

Leicester Shire Day website is [www.leicestershireday.co.uk](http://www.leicestershireday.co.uk)

## NATIONAL FOREST ECONOMY BOOST

The Leicestershire Rural Partnership has secured £235,000 with support from the LSEP and the National Forest Company to develop the National Forest economy.

The National Forest Business Development project, which has £105,000 over two years, will provide grants towards developing forest related business. This includes all aspects of the forest economy such as tourism, renewable energies and craft related enterprises. Business Development specialists will be on hand to provide advice and support and help develop networks of new woodland owners and rural businesses. Although support will initially be available in the Leicestershire area of the Forest it will be rolled out into Derbyshire from March 2006.

Kishor Tailor, LSEP chief executive said, "Working with key partners we are committed to ensure a successful rural economy and by encouraging businesses to grow and develop it will create a thriving National Forest economy."

Dr Hugh Williams, incentives and land management officer at The National Forest Company commented "Since 1995 over 6 million trees have been planted here and woodland cover now stands at 16% - it was only 6% in 1995. However, the National Forest is, and always has been, about more than just planting trees. Economic sustainability will arise from the development of a sustainable forest-based industry. This will ensure that the Forest helps to pay for itself and stimulates new enterprises. We hope that this easy to access grant and support encourages businesses and entrepreneurs to locate, develop with and maximise their opportunities in the Forest."

LRP website is [www.oakleaves.org.uk](http://www.oakleaves.org.uk)





Left to right, David Rider of LSEP, Raj Vandra of Gayatri News and Lesley Pendleton of the LRP

## NEW LIFE FOR VILLAGE SHOP

A Kegworth newsagent has reopened following an extensive refit made possible by a grant of £5,000 towards redevelopment costs from the Countryside Retail Support Scheme. Gayatri News in the Market Place has undergone a complete transformation including new flooring, shop fittings, signage, chiller cabinets, outside fascia and improved access for disabled people.

The grant has not only enabled the business to become more stable but has also ensured the retention of a vital service within a rural community.

The Countryside Retail Support Scheme aims to improve and enhance facilities across the County, including those in market towns, by supporting post offices, pubs, village or farm shops, along with specialist retailers such as butchers, bakers, greengrocers and fishmongers. The grants are delivered by the Rural Community Council (RCC) on behalf of Leicestershire Rural Partnership (LRP) with the support of the LSEP.

Lesley Pendleton, chairman of the LRP and Leicestershire County Council Cabinet lead member for rural affairs, said: "We are keen to support rural shops because they contribute a great deal to local communities. They help to sustain village centres, support vulnerable people, and act as a focal point for local communities."

Gill Smitherman LSEP programme manager said, "This is a good example of a shop that has benefited from LSEP funding. The owners have been able to transform it into a more desirable place to shop in the heart of a large village. General stores, post offices and other retail outlets are at the heart of the rural economy. They provide an essential service to the local community and make an essential contribution to a diverse and sustainable rural economy.

Countryside Retail Support Scheme - Kevin Butcher (RCC)  
0116 268 9703 [kbutcher@ruralcc.org.uk](mailto:kbutcher@ruralcc.org.uk)

## LSEP DIALOGUES WITH BUSINESSES

How often have you heard about the lack of open dialogue between the public and private sector, or a lack of continuity between publicly funded agencies?

LSEP has begun an initiative with key companies in Leicester Shire, working with them to examine their issues and bring them face to face with both our Board members and other agencies. We've started by meeting with a few large businesses that are significant to the sub regional economy and to begin the process of engagement so that businesses are able to articulate their needs and to identify issues that could affect business opportunities.

Strategem, an independent consultancy, is leading this work and setting up a series of events without any formal agendas where members of the LSEP Board and representatives of other influential agencies will meet with business leaders. It gives businesses a unique opportunity to get to meet decision makers and influence their thinking. Experts will be invited to participate when the need arises and it is also envisaged that MPs may attend in the future.

## NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR DESIGN SUPPORT SCHEME

The Government spokesperson for Trade and Industry in the House of Lords, Lord David Sainsbury is singing the praises of 'Improving Business by Design', managed by DeMontfort University, which grant aids small companies to help develop new products. The grants range from £10,000 to £30,000 and in this financial year the LSEP will hand over more than £250,000 to fund the scheme.

Lord Sainsbury was speaking at the UK Research Base Funders forum. He said, "De Montfort University's Improving Business by Design Programme links academic design expertise with design and manufacturing companies to design and develop new innovative products. For example, the development of a wheelchair that can be used with standard gymnasium and sports equipment, with a potential first year market of £5.5m. Overall, Improving Business by Design can demonstrate a 14:1 return on public sector investment through the development of new markets for UK design and manufacturing companies. Improving Business by Design is funded through Higher Education Innovation Fund and the LSEP."

## NEW OBSERVER

Sue Smith (pictured) has been appointed as an Observer of the Board of LSEP. Sue is chief executive of Harborough District Council and has worked in local government for 25 years.

