



# BusinessMatters

COTSWOLD  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

## Let's rock the Cotswolds!

*Oli Christie, CEO of Neon Play, is leading a campaign to make the Cotswolds a fun place for young people.*

Back in 2010, I wanted to start a new company making iPhone games. I had a name for the company, Neon Play, a book of game ideas...and that was about it.

After reviewing various options around the region for an office base, I decided on Cirencester - I shop there, knew my way around and liked the vibe of the place. But - and it was a major "but" - was it really a good idea to start a tech company in the heart of what seemed like a sleepy Cotswold town, awash with red-trousered estate agents, coffee shops, hairdressers and Roman remains?

Erm, probably not, but I thought if I could create a company with a good culture, high quality games and a nice office, then people would come to Neon Play, even if it wasn't the most logical place in the UK to launch a games company.

We launched our first game, Flick Football, in June 2010. It did pretty well and got to the top of the UK charts, even going above Angry Birds. That was a big surprise, but it meant we suddenly had money coming in much, much sooner than we could have dreamt. And so we started to grow and employ people.

Our first office was in Castle Street in a deserted building we rented off a friend. It was simple, but kept our overheads low in the first year. However, as the company took off and our app downloads headed towards 30 million, we got wind of an opportunity to rent the stunning Old Museum building in the big Bathurst wall. We snapped it up pronto.

Now we are 22 people strong, even though recruitment hasn't been easy. There is a serious skills shortage in the UK and we have had to look further afield for talented staff from Greece, Poland, Hungary and Lithuania.

The Cotswold district is very pretty, but it's not perceived as being a very cool place to come for the young (by that I mean 20-30 year olds). So we have launched an initiative called Rock the Cotswolds ([www.rockthecotswolds.com](http://www.rockthecotswolds.com)) to try and champion the coolest companies, artists, individuals, places to eat, drink, shop and stay, plus anything else which changes the perception of what we know of the lovely Cotswolds. So far, we've had over 300 nominations.



*Oli Christie, CEO of Neon Play, at The Old Museum building in Cirencester*

Cirencester itself has issues when attracting young people. The nightlife is average at best and the town mostly dies after 5pm, which is why the planning approval for a cinema is cracking news. Additionally, the lack of public transport after 6pm is a disgrace and the town becomes an island where no one without a car can leave or arrive in Cirencester. Someone please sort this.

But I love Ciren and I'm incredibly proud that we've built and grown Neon Play here. We will hopefully continue to flourish and try to attract and retain the best games makers in the world. However, the more that everyone can do to help make it a vibrant, fun and kicking town for young people will keep Cirencester as the pumping heart of the Cotswolds.

## Forthcoming Public meetings at Cotswold District Council

**27 February, 13 May 2014**

Full Council, Council Chamber, Cirencester

**6 February, 6 March, 3 April, 1 May 2014**

Cabinet, Council Chamber, Cirencester

**4 February, 4 March, 1 April, 6 May 2014**

Licensing Committee, Council Chamber, Cirencester

**15 January, 12 February, 12 March, 9 April, 14 May 2014**

Planning Committee, Council Chamber, Cirencester

**28 January, 18 March 2014**

Audit and Scrutiny Committee, Council Chamber, Cirencester

Please check [www.cotswold.gov.uk](http://www.cotswold.gov.uk) for start times and agendas details/minutes

# Council urges action on A417 'Missing Link'



The majority of the A417 is high quality dual carriageway

Members of Cotswold District Council voted unanimously in December to support the urgent inclusion of a new route in the Highway Agency's Major Scheme development programme. This would resolve the chronic problems caused by the lack of a dual carriageway on the A417/A419 between the Cowley roundabout and the Brockworth by-pass. The Council also backed a motion to call on the Department of Transport and the Highways Agency to address this concern as a top priority.

The majority of the A417/A419 trunk route between the M4 (Swindon) and M5 (Gloucester) is high quality dual carriageway, but the 5 km single carriageway section between Cowley and Brockworth – commonly referred to as the 'missing link' – causes considerable problems for motorists and residents alike. This is due to serious congestion, heavy pollution, and a high potential for serious accidents, including the recent death of three road users in early November.

After debating the issue, the Council agreed unanimously to support the 'brown route' solution which would see the construction of a new Brockworth-Cowley link to avoid the problematic Air Balloon roundabout, and also by-pass the current choke point at Nettleton Bottom. Members also encouraged the county's Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to include the brown route as its top priority transport scheme for Gloucestershire, and agreed that the County Council should consult with local residents affected by the missing link early in 2014 so that they would gain a thorough understanding of the issues, particularly the preference for the brown route rather than a tunnel solution. The Council also urged the Highways Agency to carry out a short-term improvement at the current Birdlip junction which would prohibit right turns to alleviate traffic flow problems and improve safety.

## Sign up now to give forces personnel a helping hand

Current and former members of the armed forces in the county and elsewhere are being offered support by a service that offers discounts online and on the high street.

Defence Privilege Cards allow businesses to offer service personnel, former service men and women, spouses and widows, discounts at no cost. Small businesses across Gloucestershire are being urged to sign up to this initiative.

The Defence Discount Service was launched by the Defence Secretary in October 2012 and the privilege card was introduced two months later. There are now more than 105,000 members with companies such as Cotswold Outdoor, Iceland, Vodafone, KFC and Burton having signed up.

The discount scheme forms part of the Ministry of Defence armed forces community covenant, which aims to redress disadvantages that the service personnel community can face in comparison with other citizens, such as the problems of finding other work. Cotswold District Council has signed up to the covenant and has formed an excellent relationship with South Cerney-based 29 Regiment Royal Logistic Corps, providing services such as: English language training for speakers of other languages; adult learning classes; and monthly youth support outreach sessions to tie in with existing youth club activities.

For more information about Defence Privilege Cards and to become a member of the scheme, visit [www.defencediscountservice.co.uk](http://www.defencediscountservice.co.uk).

If you want to learn more about recruiting ex-servicemen or women, contact Omega Resource Group on 01453 827333 or visit [www.omegaresource.co.uk](http://www.omegaresource.co.uk).



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## Saving paper – and the environment

As part of CDC's drive to save on unnecessary paper, Business Matters is published on-line only and no hard copy versions are available from the Council. You may, of course, print off your own copy for your personal use.



# Invitation to grow your business with Green Deal Together

Discover how you can expand your business opportunities with Green Deal Together. The Green Deal is the Government flagship scheme helping people to subsidise and finance over 45 types of home improvement. Traders such as heating engineers, plasterers, electricians, general builders, and glazing installers can grow their businesses with the Green Deal Together scheme.

**Find out more by joining local installers and industry experts on Thursday 13 February 2014 at the free Green Deal Showcase which takes place from 4.30 pm to 7 pm at the Lambert Arms Hotel, Watlington, Oxon OX49 5SB (exit Jct 6 M40.)**

If you are an installer of home improvements or energy efficiency products - such as wall and loft insulation, rendering, renewable technologies and boilers - the Green Deal can offer you the chance to provide financial support for your customers.

The Green Deal helps reduce, and can remove, the upfront cost of installing energy efficient measures to homes by

allowing residents to pay for improvements through savings in electricity bills. The loan is designed to help customers reduce their energy bills and live in greater comfort.

The Green Deal Together Community Interest Company is owned by a consortium of Local Authorities throughout the South and East (including Cotswold District Council) and is developing a network of local Green Deal Installers. As an approved Green Deal Provider they will be launching their services in early 2014.

If you are interested in broadening your customer base or simply want to find out more about how the Green Deal can impact your business contact Green Deal Together on 0300 111 3330 to book your place at the Green Deal Showcase or visit: [www.greendealtogether.org.uk/](http://www.greendealtogether.org.uk/).

Independent and impartial advice about the Green Deal can be obtained on 0300 123 1234 or at [www.gov.uk/greendeal](http://www.gov.uk/greendeal)



## More green stuff!

Severn Wye Energy Agency is inviting Cotswold businesses to participate in Your Green Future – Gloucestershire event being held on Tuesday 4 and Wednesday 5 February in Stroud. This event will see hundreds of secondary school students' work with business to explore the opportunities in a low carbon, resilient future.

There will also be an evening event on 4 February for members of the public and businesses which aims to promote sustainable business in Gloucestershire. Please go to [www.yourgreenfuture.org.uk](http://www.yourgreenfuture.org.uk) for further details. There are opportunities to exhibit and work with school students in various workshops. Please contact Cecily Etherington, Severn Wye Energy Agency (CecilyE@severnwyenergy.org.uk or 01452 835060) to find out more information.



# Everyone Active's swimmer is best in Britain!

Octogenarian Tony Clack, one of the oldest customers at Cotswold Leisure Cirencester, which is operated by Everyone Active, has been hailed as the Senior Swimmer of the Year at a national awards ceremony.

Tony swims almost every day at the Cirencester pool to keep up his astonishing level of fitness, and he also finds time to continue working as a caretaker at Meysey Hampton school. When the organisers of the Kellogg's 2013 'Swimtastic' awards heard about his active lifestyle they had no hesitation in naming him as the Senior Swimmer of the Year at a recent star-studded celebration event in Birmingham's Edgbaston stadium.

Jon Senior, Regional Director for Everyone Active, said: "At Everyone Active, we encourage all ages to use our many facilities. It's never too late to take up a sport – and Tony Clack is living proof of the benefits that exercise can bring. Long may he continue to use the pool!"

Sports and Leisure Management (SLM) Ltd, operating under its brand name, Everyone Active, recently took over the operation of leisure facilities in partnership with Cotswold District Council.

The facilities in Cotswold district that are now managed under the Everyone Active name are Cirencester Leisure Centre, Bourton on the Water Leisure Centre, Chipping Campden Leisure Centre and the Corinium Museum in Cirencester.

Everyone Active also offers a very comprehensive website ([www.everyoneactive.com](http://www.everyoneactive.com)) to enable people to book and pay online for sessions, see up to date timetables and also to view forthcoming events.



Tony (centre) with Cotswold Leisure Cirencester receptionist Shirley Sharrock (left) and manager Andrea North (right)

## Lechlade celebrates first fibre broadband switch-on in Cotswolds

A Lechlade church choir was singing the changes in December as the town became the first in the Cotswolds, along with Kempford, to acquire faster fibre broadband through the Fastershire project. The £56.6 million project aims to take the high speed technology to parts of Gloucestershire and Herefordshire not covered by commercial roll-out plans.

The St Lawrence Church Choir helped to create a festive atmosphere to mark the first fibre broadband cabinet going live in the town. They were joined by Ed Vaizey, the UK Minister for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries, and representatives from Gloucestershire County Council and BT.



Once the roll-out is completed in the coming months, around 1,000 homes and businesses in Lechlade will have access to the technology. Lechlade and Kempford follow Coleford and Whitecroft in the Forest of Dean, which both went live recently.

Cllr Ray Theodoulou, deputy leader of Gloucestershire County Council and County Councillor for Lechlade, said: "We are now starting to see the results of all the hard work that is being done to give local people and businesses in towns and villages throughout the county the opportunities that faster broadband can bring.

"Faster broadband helps people access services in their community or seek out new markets far away. Business will benefit greatly and all residents in Gloucestershire will benefit through a thriving local economy."

# New CDC website gets underway

Cotswold District Council recently launched a new version of its website – at [www.cotswold.gov.uk](http://www.cotswold.gov.uk) – following extensive feedback from the public.

The new site takes into account many comments from users of the previous site who were asked to suggest improvements. In particular, they asked for simpler and clearer language and a user-friendly format which makes it easier to navigate the site and find what they are looking for quickly.

A recent review of the new site prior to its launch showed that 70% of users submitting comments welcomed the changes, and Cllr John Burgess, the Cabinet Member responsible for Support Services, is confident that the new-look pages will continue to improve:

“In keeping with the feedback we have received, our website has been re-designed, re-written and re-structured to focus on the most popular tasks and information which people access. We are also keen to ensure that the website meets the needs of users with a wide range of disabilities and we are consulting regularly with the leading experts to test the functions. As well as providing a better service for residents, we hope that the new website will attract more users and increase online transactions, helping to keep down residents’ Council Tax costs. There are more improvements in the pipeline and we value comments and suggestions from users as the website continues to develop.”

Please provide your feedback by completing a short survey now. Additionally, if you are experiencing difficulties using the site, please let us know by filling in the relevant form.

## Training events

For details of training and business support services provided by Gloucestershire Enterprise Ltd, see <http://www.glosenterprise.co.uk/>



## £1 billion visitor economy boosted by 2014 Cotswolds Tourism Guide

The official Cotswolds Visitor Guide was published recently ready for the new visitor season. This coincided with the release of VisitBritain’s new ‘Tourism: Jobs & Growth’ report, highlighting the contribution tourism is making to the recovery of the economy. Tourism is the fifth largest industry in the UK and is one of the fastest growing. The tourism industry currently contributes around 10% both to the UK’s Gross Domestic Product and total number of jobs.

Sally Graff from Cotswold District Council says: “The Cotswolds remains one of Britain’s ‘must-see’ destinations with tourism contributing around £1 billion to Gloucestershire’s economy. VisitBritain’s report recommends that the industry responds to visitors’ increasing desire for more ‘authentic’ and individual travel experiences. Our aim now is to go further and encourage longer stays as well as earning higher visitor income by doing more to promote the cultural appeal of the Cotswolds. Fortunately, the destination’s year-round diary of festivals and events is truly impressive.”

The visitor guide is a collaborative effort on the part of five local authorities in Gloucestershire and our hard-working local tourism industry, with hundreds of businesses backing the publication with their own money. Distribution of the guide, which features Cheltenham, Cirencester, Gloucester, Stroud, Tewkesbury and the villages of the Cotswolds, is now underway.

# New local companies take control of leisure facilities at Fairford and Tetbury

Cotswold District Council recently transferred ownership and management of its two remaining leisure facilities - at Farmor's School, Fairford and Sir William Romney's School, Tetbury - to new companies set up by each school.

As part of the transfer arrangement, the Council will pay a grant to the new companies to support the provision of the leisure facilities for use by the general public over a six-year period. All relevant staff currently employed by the Council have transferred to the companies established by the schools under Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations legislation which safeguards their terms and conditions.

Commenting on the transfer to the new local companies, CDC Cabinet Member for Leisure, Cllr Barry Gibbs, said: "This benefits everyone. The Council will save money for tax payers, locals will get a bigger say in the provision of leisure facilities, and the public will still be able to enjoy excellent amenities.

"This change should appear quite seamless to customers as they will continue to see the same people when they walk in through the doors. We are confident that the two companies will do an excellent job running the leisure centres at Fairford and Tetbury and we believe that they will continue to provide quality, affordable services."

Matthew Evans, Headteacher at Farmor's School, Fairford, said: "Farmor's is looking forward to the challenges this will bring over the next few years, and will work with the local community to ensure that the provision at Farmor's Sports Centre meets the needs of the community it serves."

Steven Mackay, Head Teacher at Sir William Romney's School, Tetbury, added: "We will be working with the local community and encouraging them to play a big part in the success of this new venture. We are very excited about the future and we have plans to make immediate improvements to the leisure centre, with some of these being in place in for the start of January 2014."



L to R: Cllr Barry Gibbs, Rev Barbara Bridges (Chair of Farmor's School) and Matthew Evans, Headteacher at Farmor's School

## Landscape Protection Campaigners praise Cotswold developments

The Gloucestershire branch of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) held its annual awards in the Autumn and singled out the new Kingshill Meadow housing development in Cirencester as the best of its kind in the county. These awards are especially prestigious because the CPRE do not present many - in fact, there were four in total and three of them were for sites in the Cotswold district - Kingshill Meadow, the Meysey Hampton Village Hall and Stonesfield Close in Southrop.

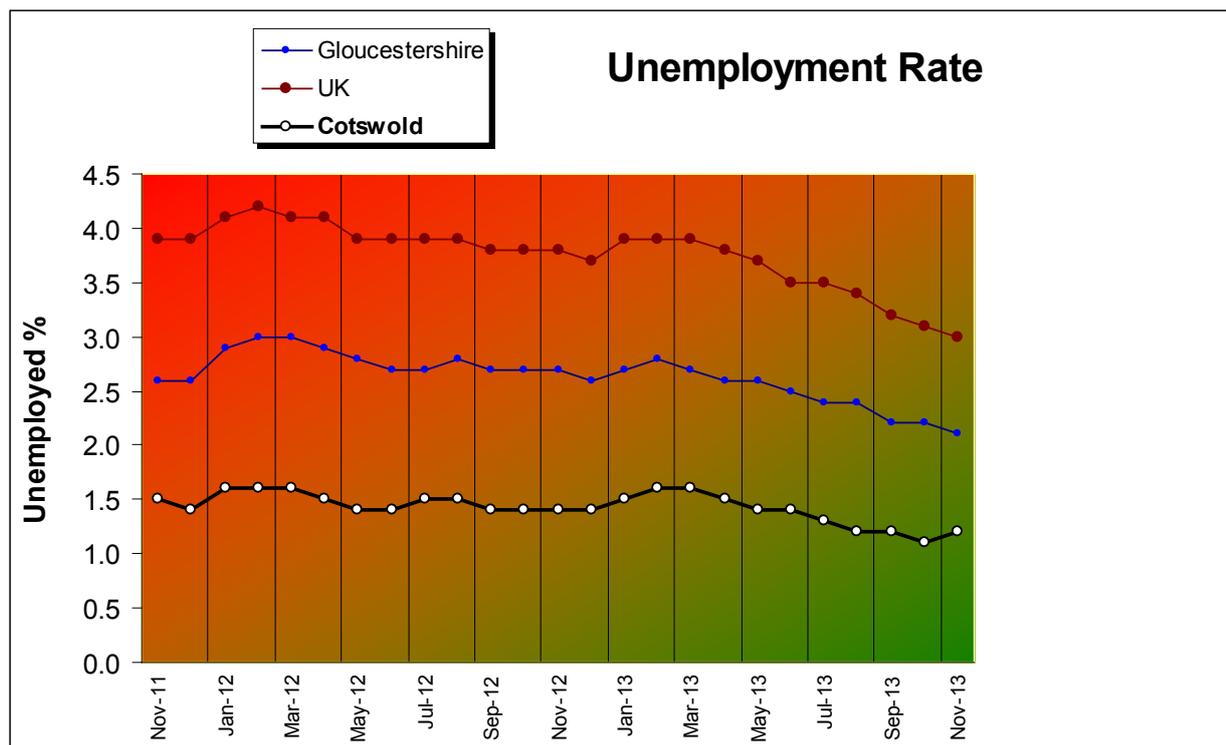
The Kingshill award was particularly noteworthy because it was the first time that the CPRE had celebrated a large-scale housing development. Gloucestershire Vice-President Viscount Bledisloe presented the award to representatives from Berkeley Homes, Housing 21 (extra care housing at Mulberry Court), Bromford Housing (Fortuna affordable housing) and members of the Cotswold District Council Planning and Heritage and Design teams, who all worked together on the Kingshill Meadow development.

Subsequently, Cotswold District Council arranged a small ceremony where Cllr Sue Jepson, Cabinet Member for Planning and CPRE Gloucestershire Vice-Chairman Richard Lloyd congratulated Cliff Buddery (Chief Architect, Berkeley Homes), and Mike Napper (Major Developments Officer, CDC) on their achievement. Cllr Jepson commented: "It's so important to ensure that new developments will enhance the Cotswolds, and it is praise indeed when the CPRE choose to bestow an award. I would like to add my congratulations to all involved in the Kingshill Meadow development - it looks superb and blends in well with the local scenery.



L to R: Cliff Buddery, Richard Lloyd, Cllr Sue Jepson, and Mike Napper with the CPRE citation.

# Around the Region



*Unemployment continues to fall nationally and within Gloucestershire. In Cotswold there was a small increase from October to November 2013, but this is likely to be as a result of seasonal trends – Cotswold district tends to experience slight increases over the winter months.*

## Calendar

### CIRENCESTER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Meetings take place on second Wednesday of each month from 6 pm to 8 pm. If you would like to receive a regular reminder, send your details to [secretary@ccoc.org.uk](mailto:secretary@ccoc.org.uk)

#### Wednesday 15 January

2014 Cirencester Business Awards launch. From 6-8 pm at Corinium Museum. For further details consult [www.ccoc.org.uk](http://www.ccoc.org.uk)

### FAIRFORD AND LECHLADE BUSINESS CLUB

Evening meetings are held at 7.30pm and breakfast meetings quarterly (March, June, September and December) at 8am on the fourth Thursday of the month. See [www.flbc.org.uk](http://www.flbc.org.uk) for details.

#### Friday 7 February

Business Awards ceremony and dinner

7:30pm to 11:45pm at Hatherop Castle School, Hatherop near Fairford. More details to follow at [www.flbc.org.uk](http://www.flbc.org.uk)

### TETBURY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

Committee meetings take place on Thursday evenings from 6.30 pm to 9 pm. Contact 01666 502436 for details or go to [www.tetburychamber.org.uk](http://www.tetburychamber.org.uk)

#### Thursday 6 February 2014

An Evening with David Wilson, Duchy Home Farm