

Beyond the recession

The Action for Market Towns 2009 Convention

including 'Towards a Rural Services Manifesto' in association with the Rural Services Network

Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire – 13 & 14 October 2009



The AMT Convention 2009 is made possible by support from:



Supported by

The National Lottery®

through the Big Lottery Fund



Rural Services Network
England's largest rural partnership



**Leicestershire
County Council**



Beyond the Recession

The Action for Market Towns 2009 Convention
including *'Towards a Rural Services Manifesto'*
in association with the Rural Services Network
October 13th and 14th, Melton Mowbray

Action for Market Towns has joined with the Rural Services Network to plan a national convention in 2009 which will both look at practical steps which towns can take to get through the recession and prepare for the upturn, and also help the process of drafting a Rural Services Manifesto, which will be launched in November.

The Convention will take place in Melton Mowbray on October 13 and 14 and will be based on the theme 'Looking beyond the Recession'. The second day will include workshops examining and developing drafts of a Rural Services Manifesto, which will be launched in November. This will be a major opportunity for town partnerships, local authorities and other rural service providers to come together to help craft this important manifesto for future development in our towns and rural services.

The first day will be principally of interest to Action for Market Towns delegates, although RSN delegates are welcome to attend for the whole Convention. The second day is structured to allow RSN delegates to attend for a single day if they wish and to participate in the development of the Rural Services Manifesto.

Day One – Tuesday, 13 October

9.30onwards – Registration at the PERA Centre

11.30 Introduction and welcome by Catherine Hammant, Chairman of Action for Market Towns

11.40 Welcome by Cllr Malise Graham, Leader of Melton Borough Council

11.45 Policy issues affecting towns and rural areas: Philip Dunne MP (Chairman of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Rural Services) followed by questions

12.15 Dr Bryan Jackson OBE, Chair of East Midlands Development Agency

12.30 Beyond the recession - setting the scene: Chris Wade, Chief Executive, Action for Market Towns

1.00- 2.00 Lunch and networking and fringe events:

Knowledge Hub: There are approximately 1600 market towns across rural England with almost 11 million people living in them. Despite this, however, they are seldom directly referred to in Government policy, and since the Rural White Paper of 2000, little intervention has taken place from the central level to continue to support them. **Come and find out more about what Action for Market Towns is doing to address this through the Knowledge Hub element of our Towns Alive programme. Policy Manager, Alison Eardley, will be on hand to take any questions in the Pera entrance foyer. She will also be giving a presentation about AMT's current policy direction.**

Town4Towns: Katie Fewings, AMT's Towns4Towns Co-ordinator will be available in the Pera entrance foyer to talk about the Towns4Towns exchange programme and also other Towns4Towns events.

1.50 Welcome from the Mayor of Melton Mowbray

2.00 Study Tours

Delegates may select one study tour

A. Melton Mowbray -a rural capital of food and drink

Melton Mowbray has achieved EU protection for its most famous product – the Melton Mowbray Pork Pie- and, similarly, Stilton Cheese is only allowed to be produced in Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire.

This study tour, led by Matthew O' Callaghan, Chair of Melton Food Partnership, will look at how local food production assists with the branding of the town and helps tourism, including the annual food and drink festival. Economic development activities, including support for new rural food and drink producers, will also be outlined together with future plans for a rural food centre and food and drink college. Of course, the study tour will also include visits to local food and drink producers and the Museum of Food and the opportunity to sample some of the areas products.

B. Cattle market as potential regeneration

Many towns will have a site in the centre previously used for other purposes and whose regeneration will benefit the town. But how do you go about it? This study tour takes the case study of the Melton Cattle Market to see how Melton Mowbray is approaching the regeneration task. The challenge is how to retain and improve the cattle market, but also look at redeveloping the rest of the site.

The study tour will be led by Harry Rai, of Melton Borough Council (MBC) and will include a visit to the site and meeting with Cattle Market businesses / partners as delegates consider MBC's regeneration plans. This is a great opportunity to explore regeneration issues as they are in progress, rather than when the project is finished.

C. Neighbouring Towns working together in the Welland

This study tour will explore ways in which groups of market towns can work together to their mutual benefit. Led by Catherine Hammant, it will look at co-operation between the 14 Welland Market Towns in two areas:

- The Welland Benchmarking Project, a previous Market Town Awards winner, which has developed a range of Key Performance Indicators to measure how a town is progressing and how it shapes up compared to others. This benchmarking system is now being marketed to other towns up and down the country.
- Partnership working with other Welland Market Towns through the Welland Challenge Fund, which provides funding for local projects in the towns. Projects include the Melton Bag; Shop Front Scheme; Shopmobility; Sherrard Street enhancement scheme

There will be a visit to the town centre to look at the Sherrard Street and Shopmobility projects.

D. Tackling financial exclusion in a Credit Crunch

Why is financial inclusion important to market town economies and communities? What practical ways can help be given to the financially excluded?

This study tour, led by Mark Shields, Financial Well-being Manager, Melton Borough Council, will include and strategic view of financial inclusion, as well as practical tips and guidance, including how to establish a Credit Union in a small market town. The study tour will include a contribution from John Wood,

Clockwise Credit Union, and a visit to the Credit Union premises in the town centre. There will also be a local residents' perspective from Doris Cook (Resident Association).

E. Masterplanning in Melton Town Centre

Melton Mowbray town centre has undergone significant public realm regeneration. This study tour will examine how this has been possible in the current economic climate and look at how the town centre masterplan was created, funded and is being implemented.

The study tour will be led by Helen Harris, of Leicestershire County Council's Better Places Team, and will include a visit to the town centre to look at examples of new public realm improvements, such as Sherrard Street enhancement scheme and lighting strategy for 2009/10.

F. Think Melton;Shop Melton - Tackling the Economic Downturn in a Market Town

Think Melton-Shop Melton is an initiative to tackle some of the problems faced by town centre businesses. The study tour will be led by Melton Town Centre Managers Lisa Hammond and Shelagh Core and look at themes including the disproportionate impact of business closures; rapidly rising unemployment and the need for holistic approach to supporting retail businesses in the town. There will be a visit to the town centre and meetings with new start-up businesses and well as Longstanding businesses. The practical details of the Think Melton-Shop Melton campaign will also be covered including the shopping guide; the Melton Bag; events (discount schemes, etc); the Shop Front Improvement Scheme.

G. Melton Learning Hub - Supporting young people to learn and achieve

The Melton Learning Hub is a 2006 regional winner in the Market Town Awards. It offers an alternative learning opportunity for young people who are disruptive at school and run the risk of exclusion. This selected group is treated as individuals and engages in a range of alternative learning activities to improve their life chances and employment opportunities.

This study tour, led by Ronan Browne, MBC and David Cowell, Learning Hub, will deal with issues including supporting young people to learn and achieve; tackling crime and anti-social behaviour; young enterprise activity; involving young people in their local community and supporting the regeneration of the town, such as students' involvement in design of 'The Melton Bag'.

There will be a visit to the Hub, to understand what goes on and to meet the students, and a look at examples of projects, such as Devil's Kitchen, Melton Bag.

3.45 Tea

4.00 Market Town Awards showcase.

First introduced in the 2008 Convention in Skipton, this session gives each of the eight regional winners of the Market Towns Awards to chance to give a short presentation on their winning project – and also receive their framed winner's certificate.

There are some unusual and inspirational projects – and it is the last chance for the regional winners to impress the judges before the announcement of the national winner at the Convention dinner.

5.15 Action for Market Towns Annual General Meeting.

5.30 Free time for networking.

7.30 Drinks reception followed by Gala Dinner at which the national winner of the Market Town Awards will be presented. During dinner, music will be provided by local group 'Encore' and there will be a light-hearted commentary and quiz on local food with delicious food prizes for the winners!

Day Two – Wednesday, 14 October

9.30 – 10.00 Coffee and registration for delegates attending for day two only

10.00 – Setting the scene – Why do we need a Rural Services Manifesto: Graham Biggs, Chief Executive of the Rural Services Network outlines the work being undertaken in the run-up to the general election.

10.20 - Dr Ray Pahl, Action for Market Towns Board Member will introduce the Action for Market Towns Policy Forum and chair the session on:

Understanding the Needs of Different Rural Area: a plenary session on some exciting research into different types of market towns and how a new typology of towns can have important practical consequences in tailoring services and economic development to meet local needs , by **Liz Price of the University of Lincoln**, who will also be referring to research work by Professor John Shepherd of Birkbeck University of London.

11.00 – Sustainability in rural areas and market towns: Leslie Watson, Director, Sustainability South West

11.30 - Workshop programme (*coffee will be available to take into workshops*)
Workshop themes include:

Rural Services Manifesto workshops

The following workshops will deal with issues surrounding rural and market town services, including commenting on the relevant section of the draft Rural Services Manifesto.

1. Supporting local business, economic and skills development

This workshop will look at challenges facing independent businesses in towns and rural areas. It will cover joint proposals from Action for Market Towns and the Commission for Rural Communities to government on how to respond to recession, with a presentation from Mike King of amt-i on research work on market towns and the recession. It will look at skills training as a way to boost local businesses and how Shop Local campaigns can help independent small businesses in towns, including a presentation on loyalty schemes by Steve Wylie, Managing Director of Savvy, a company which provides technology for a number of loyalty schemes.

2. Vulnerable rural communities and sustainability

This workshop will consider how addressing rural fuel poverty is good for people, good for the environment and good for the local economy. It will do this against a background of looking at how the Sustainable Communities Act and the power of well being can be applied to benefit rural communities.

3. The challenge of delivering rural services

This workshop is based on the joint research between Action for Market Towns and the Rural Services Network into the problems of delivering quality services across broad geographical areas and how these can be overcome.

4. Affordable housing

House prices may have fallen, but mortgages are hard to come by, so what is the current position with regard to affordable housing in our towns and rural areas. There has been the Affordable Housing Commission report, the Matthew Taylor report, now this workshop will look at the current challenges for affordable housing. The workshop will be led by Cameron Watt, Rural Housing Policy Lead from the National Housing Federation.

Policy into practice workshops

The following workshops will deal with policy issues and their practical implications for towns and their hinterland.

5. Transforming Towns through Culture and Sport

Living Places is a new initiative on the role of culture and sport in uplifting towns, with a practical toolkit on how to apply this to your town. The workshop will be led by the Living Places national team.

6. Delivering the Rural Development Programme for England

The new Rural Development Programme for England is under way. This workshop particularly looks at funding available for rural economic and community development with a focus on the LEADER approach and how it can benefit market towns and their rural hinterland. The workshop will be led by the East Midlands RDPE team.

7. Sustaining Town Partnerships

This workshop is on sources of funding for projects and how to apply. It includes an introduction to new Action for Market Towns diagnostic and training programmes in the area of funding, as well as a look share issues as a way of funding for social enterprise. The workshop will be led by Sally Williams, the Market Towns Academy Manager at Action for Market Towns.

8. Going Green

Faced with the “triple crunch” of the credit crisis, climate change and peak oil, many communities have become “Transition Towns” – joining a new international movement that started in a UK market town, which focuses on taking positive action to achieve a sustainable and resilient local economy. This workshop looks at the case for action on these issues and details what Transition Towns are achieving on the ground in the UK. The workshop will be led by the Leicestershire Transition Towns Team.

12.30 – Lunch and networking. **The Knowledge Hub and Towns4towns** fringe events will be in the Pera entrance foyer.

1.30 – Repeat of workshop programme.

2.30 – Closing Debate: **Should Climate Change be the Main Driver for the Future Development of the Rural Economy and Services?**

Light green, dark green or just plain skeptical? This debate will help you decide where you stand on one of the big talking points of our times. Should green concerns be balanced with social and business interests or are they too important to risk being overlooked in this way? Will a focus on climate change and dwindling fossil fuel supplies create new opportunities in rural areas or compound existing disadvantage. You will get your chance to cross examine the expert evidence.

3.45 - Closing remarks by Catherine Hammant

Cost

All inclusive (convention, dinner and accommodation):

AMT Members £295, non-members £435

Convention only two-day pass:

AMT Members £230, non-members £370

Convention only one-day pass:

AMT Members £130, non-members £195

Special Volunteer Discount

We know that independent town partnerships and volunteers find it difficult to raise the finance to attend the AMT Convention. To help them attend, there is a special volunteer discount for independent partnerships (provided they are AMT members). Prices are:

Two-day convention only pass £150

One-day convention only pass £75

Overnight hotel accommodation is available for £80. Alternatively, delegates may wish to book their own guest house accommodation.

Save £50 on AMT membership fee

Non-members who join AMT when they book for the convention can save £50 off the normal membership fee – and pay the discounted convention fee. Go to: www.towns.org.uk for details.

More information and booking

Put this important date in your diary today – 13 & 14 October.

The online information pack and online booking form is available from the AMT website – www.towns.org.uk

For general enquiries about the convention, e-mail: john.pole@towns.org.uk or tel: 01430 441557