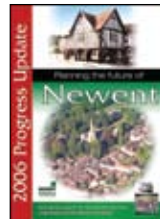
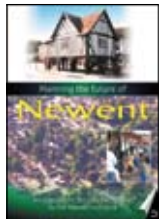




The continuing improvement of

# Newent



The latest progress update on the community plan undertaken by the Newent Initiative Trust

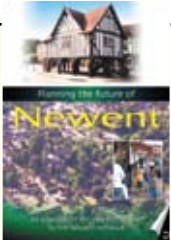
Brochure production kindly supported by McCarthy & Stone and GMTF

## “Using our Initiative has reaped many rewards”

### Introduction

The Foot and Mouth epidemic of 2002 had a devastating effect on Newent's economy, so the Town was awarded £55,000 under the government's Market and Coastal Towns Initiative.

The funding from the South West Regional Development Agency and Gloucestershire Market Towns Forum enabled the town to prepare and publish a Community Strategic Plan for the future and address some immediate issues.



### The Original Plan

In 2003 The Newent Initiative was created from a voluntary partnership of representatives from local organisations, including Newent Town Council, the Civic Society and Newent Millennium Trust, chaired by the town's Mayor, Fred Passant.

An initial list of 'quick-wins', short term projects to enhance the town and the villages beyond, were identified, while research for major schemes, which would need substantial funding from other sources at a later date, was carried out.

We asked you with the aid of public meetings, questionnaires and drop-in sessions what were the important issues and what needed priority - all of the area's groups and organisations were canvassed and school children were also directly involved. A public meeting reported back the findings and set out the way ahead.

All the information went through a town planning consultancy, which picked out Newent's strengths and weaknesses and identified the priority projects for the community.

The 150-page report was circulated to relevant groups closely followed by our first fold-out brochure, which was delivered through every local letter box.

The Newent Initiative Trust is an independent 'not for profit' organisation formed to assist groups who's purpose it is to make Newent and the surrounding area a better place to live, work and visit.

Patron: Mark Harper MP

Chairman: Roger Beard

County Councillor Trustee: Will Windsor-Clive

### What Happened Next...

The 'quick-win' projects were undertaken rapidly to improve parts of the town and the surrounding areas. These were received very well and the secondary, major projects requiring larger funding, were researched and catalogued.

Peter Street was appointed to the post of Project Manager, driving the 47 community projects forward and undertaking the additional task of sourcing funding for them. In comparison to most other towns in similar positions, Newent fared very well with this approach.

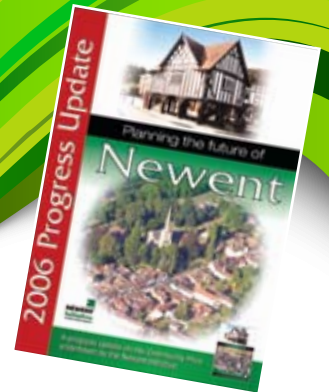
Positive forward thinking from the original Newent Initiative team, Newent Town Council and the Forest of Dean District Council, supported by the Gloucestershire Market Towns Forum, Gloucestershire County Council, GRCC and Rural Renaissance (SWRDA) saw a good number of projects executed quickly and efficiently, benefiting the community. These were detailed in our 2006 update which again was delivered to local households.

The 2007 floods, which caused substantial damage to parts of Newent, saw further funding become available. The restructured Newent Initiative Trust, now chaired by Town Councillor Roger Beard, saw the opportunity to push forward a number of new projects and encourage developers to commit to a speedy completion of ongoing redevelopment work.

On top of this, despite the economic downturn, the Trust was able to secure funding for other projects in the town centre plus several other's identified as being of benefit to the greater community, and continue in its role as 'facilitator' for other organisations in the town.

All of this work would not have been possible without the wonderful support and cooperation of the local traders, businesses, official bodies, schools, local groups, and individuals based in and around Newent.

Please take a look at the following pages to see the tremendous improvements in our town since 2003.



# Town Centre Improvements

**The appearance of Newent town centre has improved immensely over the past seven years with a concerted effort to make it appealing to visitors and residents alike.**

After the Foot & Mouth Crisis, retail and tourism in the area were set back, many shops closed and several large buildings in the town centre became derelict.

Following on from the sterling efforts of a number of individuals and local retailers who introduced the Newent in Bloom project with assistance from the councils and the Newent Initiative, several other schemes have been undertaken to brighten up the streets. The bloom project has won several regional awards and is a credit to those who work so hard each year.

One of the most recent projects to further enhance the town included new information boards. Placed at strategic points they detail the town's history, prominent local people and places of interest. These replaced several original boards which had been subject to excessive wear and tear over the years.

The biggest funding success to date however is the resurfacing of the town centre's roads and



**New information boards have been mounted at five locations around Newent**

pavements as well as the enhancement of the Market Square. Government cutbacks postponed the original plan so the Newent Initiative Trust secured alternative funding to enable Stage 1 'Market Square' to start in October 2010 with Stage 2 'Broad Street' secured for shortly after.

In addition to this work traffic calming in the town centre has also been introduced with a new 20mph speed limit. New signs featuring artwork from local school children have been located on all roads leading into the town centre.



**The Newent Initiative Trust secured funding for the town centre improvements which started in October 2010**



**The original boards had become damaged and the information was out of date**



# Newent Lake & Park

**The lake and park has, for some time now, been the 'jewel in the crown' for visitors and residents alike.**

With changes in tourism habits there has never been a more important time to ensure that Newent retains its status as a popular centre for leisure.



The lake has undergone a number of improvements over the years, including landscaping, the provision of paths and the building of a new stone based stage area by the bridge making it popular for a whole range of outdoor activities.

This has allowed for a number of activities to develop including the very popular brass band concerts throughout the summer months, now in their sixth year. The stage area features mains power and the facility for the erection of an overhead structure in case of inclement weather.

Funds have been raised to repair and secure the banks of the lake, some of which has now been completed. Newent Town Council is continuing with the remaining work through the latter part of 2010.





## Tourism & Leisure

**Along with the aforementioned town centre information boards, Newent Town Council has funded a further print run of Newent's tourist leaflets and distribution to strategic display areas throughout the Forest of Dean and neighbouring areas.**

The four attractive leaflets give details of Newent's many attractions including; The Market House, The Arboretum and Newent Lake. A steady flow of visitors to the town has seen business improve for tearooms, restaurants, local shops and accommodation providers, despite the downturn in the national economy.

The leaflets form part of the town's ongoing tourism strategy which also includes new information boards, walks books (which have also been produced for other areas), a touch screen information point at the Shambles and a full programme of events (detailed opposite), thus ensuring that the town is well-placed as a destination centre for the future.

## Newent Market House

**The Newent Market House, as well as being the iconic feature of the town, is a very popular attraction for visitors.**



In regular use for official meetings the building also houses probably the largest amount of local history artefacts and information in the area.

It has been proposed that more should be made of the Market House's status of visitor attraction by the improvement of its interior layout and displays.

An assessment has been carried out and funding is being sourced to take this project further.



## Healthcare and the Elderly

**The volume of traffic, particularly at school bus time, at the junction of Watery Lane and Broad Street has always caused problems with disabled visitors to Holts Health Centre.**

The recent addition of a new parking bay at the surgery entrance allows pick-up and drop-off without causing disruption to the traffic flow. This has been a simple remedy to a recurring problem in the town and has been appreciated by all concerned



**The great advances made by the Newent Association for the Disabled in the town is well documented. From Trudie Sheppard's original plan of a club for the elderly and disabled residents of the town the organisation now has a large centre and two shops.**

The sterling work undertaken by the team of staff and volunteers has been rewarded even further by the opening recently of the new wing. It features a therapy bath suite and a hairdressers. The addition of a new car park has given more flexibility to utilise the centre's minibus fleet for the community.

There is plenty of scope for additional services and Newent is fortunate that it has this pioneering organisation on its doorstep.



## Events

**Newent sure does know how to throw a good party!**



The Newent Onion Fayre is now in its twelfth year despite floods and major transport problems over the years. This is thanks to a team of fantastically dedicated volunteers who spend much of their spare time ensuring that each year's event is as good as the last. Gloucestershire's largest single day event is now nationally recognised and its mix of music, dance, local food, side shows and entertainment attracts media celebrities with ease.

The Newent Festival, which takes place in July, features the town's art, crafts and talents and provides a festival atmosphere with side shows. Previous years have also included tethered hot air balloon rides.



The Joe Meek Festival in October now features a 60s dance night with live music as a regular feature. John Leyton and Mike Berry and the Outlaws have played recently in celebration of the work of Newent's iconic legend.

A number of vintage car rallies also centre on the area due to the popularity of the Three Choirs Vineyard and the delightful roads and scenery in our area.



Finally, each Christmas, Church Street and the Market Square brings in the festive season in style with the customary procession, hot food, chestnuts, music, fun and not forgetting Santa!



Not a bad year-full of events for a community of less than 5000 people.



## Retail Improvements

**At the turn of the Millennium many thought the writing was on the wall for Newent as a shopping town. It had no 'keystone' store and some shops were struggling to stay open for business.**

But no one had counted on the resilience of the Newent traders who, despite tough economic times and two large derelict properties in the town, were determined to make it work.

Incentives produced by the Forest of Dean District Council provided gift vouchers, shop front improvement grants, a retail magazine, a card discount scheme, training and an awards event were a helping hand at a critical time.

Many retailers in the town took up the programme and with a positive approach and much hard work, transformed Newent's shopping experience. The ongoing campaign by the town's pubs, supermarket, delicatessen, butchers and greengrocers to support local producers has been a great success and the model has been copied by many throughout the country.

A big success story in the retail sector has been the establishment of The Newent & District Business Club which is now in its fourth year of operation. Business owners meet together on a regular basis to discuss local issues, swap information and discuss opportunities. This 'joined up thinking' approach has improved

service and allowed the retailers to have a stronger voice over changes in the town.

Retail units in Newent are always in demand and the new additions in the past year include a tearoom/cafe, take-away, the relocation of the gift shop, Eastern European store and a new bargain shop amongst others.

A great boost has been added with the opening of the former Shambles Museum as a shopping village. The pretty courtyard is filling quickly with start-up retailers taking advantage of viable low rents. Yet again Newent's retailers have shown that despite the economic downturn the town still retains its fighting spirit.

## Newent in Bloom

**Newent in Bloom has been a resounding success with the group winning a string of awards in recent years.**

The team's enthusiasm has been mirrored throughout the town as local residents vie for the awards presented at the Onion Fayre each year. On top of this, both Glebe and Picklenash primary schools now run thriving gardening clubs where children can engage in the fun.

The establishment of new flower gardens and raised vegetable beds have been a great way of introducing the pastime to the younger generation. With a long history of Newent's Gold Medal success at Chelsea, this promises to be one of the towns most successful projects.



## Transport



**Three new bus shelters purchased for the town have ensured that commuters stay dry.**

National cutbacks in transport have not affected the town, with regular bus services still continuing

to Gloucester, Ross and Ledbury. The outlying villages are serviced well by Newent Dial-a-Ride and the Newent Shuttle which drop residents in the town centre daily.

Gloucestershire County Councils Highways Division completed the enormous task of refurbishing the A40 Over Bridge at Gloucester, which not only had a detrimental effect for local commuters but discouraged visitors to Newent and the surrounding area. This was a very welcome result and Newent residents are pleased that everything is back to normal.

## Youth Facilities



Thanks to a £15,000 grant from The Rotary Club, the town's popular Chill Out Zone is now in its eighth successful year and has benefitted from a major refit recently. This has allowed it to develop its services to be used as a community café, a centre for the 'Fair Shares' organisation as well as the original youth café where local teenagers meet safely after school and during the evenings.

## Team Leaders and Training

Part of the Newent Initiative trust's role has been to develop project teams who, in the future, would be self sustaining organisations equipped to run the different aspects of the town. Successes to date have been the Newent In Bloom project, Newent Festival and the Newent & District Business Club.

The Initiative has been successful in securing funds for some of these organisations and building contacts with business owners and other groups to assist with the smooth running and growth of the organisations.

The Market 4 Learning project was launched in the town and further programmes such as the First Stop Local Shop IT and Marketing training courses have seen Newent's skill base improve further.

# Community Facilities

Quite by chance, a falling polystyrene ceiling tile led to the refurbishment of Newent Community School's main hall.

An assessment of the hall indicated that for health and safety reasons the whole false ceiling should be replaced. Whilst the work was being undertaken improvements were made to decor and the stage lighting was upgraded plus a 24 channel system with digital patching along with 3 phase electricity was installed bringing the school up to the highest standards for school theatres.



St Mary's Church is established as a visitor attraction in Newent as well as being a lively church for locals.

But recent surveys have shown essential repairs are needed to the building's fabric due to Death Watch Beetle infestations in the past. Whilst this work is being undertaken, there are plans to level the floor and replace some of the pews with chairs to allow flexibility to the main part of the building and enable a wide variety of community events to take place.



This was a tremendous boost for Newent as the hall is also used by the local primary schools, a local church and the wider community for a wide and diverse range of events through the whole year.

**The installation of the play wall at Watery Lane recreation area that featured in our last brochure, was an instant hit, bringing ball games back to the playing fields.**

Evidence of it's heavy usage being the patch of well worn earth under the basketball hoop! Inspired by this success, the next phase of the £30,000 improvements to the site saw the installation of an all weather shelter and new play equipment for the young children.

This new equipment is sectioned off with fencing to keep dogs clear of the equipment and a further measure was the removal of the tall hedgerows and its replacement with fencing to the roadside, which helped curb vandalism and increase visibility for security reasons.

The whole area is now very popular with all ages and forms a large part of the town's commitment to facilities for families.



**Sports facilities provided by the Forest of Dean District Council at Newent Community School provide a wide range of activities for all ages. As well as the popular swimming pool, the gym and sports hall are appreciated by the community.**

The facilities are heavily used and over recent years had started to show their age in certain areas. Funded by the District Council a refurbishment programme took place in 2008.

Changing room facilities were improved dramatically by a complete rework of the internal layout. New wooden faced lockers, showers and changing benches created a much cleaner looking and contemporary environment while the addition of a steam room by the pool made swimming sessions more of a treat.



Pacer's Gym was relocated nearer to the entrance of the building and a pleasant colour scheme, mirrors, wooden floor and a complete new set of up-to-date equipment has seen a steep growth of interest in the facility.

**The sports facilities at the Community School now include a number of new tennis courts, available for use by the whole community.**

Outside, in the summer months the floodlighting allows evening play. Being located on the school grounds also ensures that they are less subject to vandalism.



## Business

The business community in Newent appears to be robust despite the turndown in the national economy.

The town's business parks have expanded with the new development at Mill Lane due to favourable rents and the locality to the M50 and M5. The completion of the new A40 has eased the traffic congestion experienced recently and things looking very positive.

In addition, plans are at an advanced stage for a major employer to relocate to Newent which would bring 150 jobs to the town. Along with the benefits of future employment this will be great news for the retailers in the town who will enjoy more footfall from lunchtime trade. Several other smaller companies have relocated to the town and some existing ones expanded, taking on new units and more staff.

## Broadband

Newent is fortunate to have an independent local broadband supplier in the area in addition to the national providers.

Loop Scorpio's success with its community networks and rural services has led to the company developing a business service for heavy users in Gloucestershire. With 100Mbps feeds being offered in some areas, it is hoped that the symmetric service will be introduced into Newent in parallel with a fibre optic feed to the town centre.



## Community Centre

**Newent Community Centre has been considered for redevelopment for many years.**

However, the Newent Initiative with the Town Council has more than once headed off plans to demolish the site for housing, however it is agreed the site is under utilised and is not the most economical use of space.

It's been proposed that part of the land be offered to development of a hotel, which would bring more visitors to the town and help support the H&G Canal. Some of the land could be developed for affordable housing and a further part would be earmarked for a small business office complex.

The Newent Initiative is keen to ensure that any development in Newent is not at the expense of existing community facilities or parking, which need securing for the future growth of the town, such as the area behind the library. To this end any proposals for key sites will be approached with careful consideration.

## Building Developments

**Many improvements have been made to three sites in the town by private developers and there is much for the local residents to be proud about. Take a look at these familiar views of the town and see how they have improved.**



The impressive Falcon Court development in the town centre opened after the former Bennion's site lay derelict for many years. Plans were submitted for an attractive scheme of mixed housing with the original building frontages returned to their former glory, while the courtyard behind is now a pleasant mews development.

## Police & Security

**Newent and the surrounding area now benefits from a full time Council-funded Police Officer assisted by four Community Support Officers based at the Police Station.**

The town's officer PC Brian Howard and his team aim to spend approximately 80% of their time visibly working in our neighbourhood, tackling local issues for Newent people and keeping the town safer for residents.

Crime, which is reasonably low in the area, has shown a downward trend since May 2008 with burglaries reduced by a third.

The upgrade of the town's CCTV presence to a high-definition digital system has allowed recorded imagery to be used as evidence, helping to bring offenders to justice through clear identification. Further upgrades are planned for the cameras in the future.

Developers also built the attractive St Mary's Court, a row of mixed style town houses paying tribute Newent's wide variety of architectural styles at the former Newent Co-op site and last year McCarthy & Stone completed their luxurious new development of retirement apartments at the junction of High Street and Watery Lane, blending it in so well with the adjoining properties that it is almost impossible to differentiate the join between the established houses and the new.

Onslow Road has seen a quality development proceed at Oak Park with some impressive family homes which bring Newent's housing stock into the new millennium. Consultation with developers has avoided the adoption of high density models experienced in other towns and the end result is pleasing and appropriate.

# Look at what's been achieved!

From the Newent Initiative's list, drawn up in 2003, it can be seen over 91% of the proposed projects have now either been completed or are noted as work in progress.

Many of these projects have been undertaken by organisations other than the Newent Initiative Trust, but with its help, encouragement, determination and constant search for funding and partnerships, the Trust has proved its worth over the years - without it, your town might not have been the vibrant, lively place we see here today. Here's that list:

## Town Centre Improvements

- Market Square paving
- Court Lane improvements
- Former Bennion's development
- Old Co-op site development
- Shop appearance
- Bus stops and shelters
- Re-siting of town clock
- Newent in Bloom project
- Implementation of County Council traffic strategy

## Employment Skills & Training

- Improvement of business parks
- Secure broadband
- Marketing of the business parks
- Develop a skills strategy
- Define a tourism development strategy

## Tourism Development & Promotion

- Create a Tourism Information and Development Centre
- Support and market existing attractions
- Support for new attractions
- Establish an annual programme of events
- Develop a visitor accommodation database
- Support of H&G Canal Trust
- Promote local food, drinks and products
- Further develop the Newent-online.co.uk website
- Enhancement of the Market House Heritage Exhibition

## Community Safety

- Improve CCTV
- Town policing

## Accessibility & Movement

- Support of B4221 Action Group
- Cycling and walking networks
- Village public transport
- Dial-a-ride integration

## Community Development & Amenities

- Support for Chillout Zone youth café
- Newent Community Centre
- Review of youth facilities
- Provision of bowling facility
- Refurbishment of sports centre changing rooms
- Provision of tennis facilities
- Upgrade and provision of new children's play areas
- St Mary's Church improvements for community use
- Renovation of Cemetery Chapel and Mortuary
- Implementation of a regular Art Festival
- Recreation ground play-wall
- Lake pathways and woodlands improvement
- Tree and flower planting
- Provision of disabled access to market house
- Additional facilities at Sheppard House

## Capacity Building

- Training for individuals to run projects
- Employment of community agents
- Development of project teams

### Key

- Projects addressed: 36 (previously 31)
- Work in progress: 7
- Projects being addressed shortly: 4



## We welcome your feedback!

The Initiative team don't want to rest on the town's achievements. If you have any comments regarding the projects undertaken so far or you would like to address an area of the town for future consideration, please use the panel below and post it or drop the form through to the address below.

**(You don't have to disclose your contact details)**

---

---

---

---

---

Please return or post to: **Newent Initiative Trust**  
c/o The Chill Out Zone, 36 Broad Street, Newent, Glos. GL18 1AJ.

The Newent Initiative Trust is not a Town Council body

Chaired by a Town Councillor, the Newent Initiative is a voluntary organisation formed by representatives from a number of Newent's organisations, societies, trusts and schools. Also invited are representatives of the Newent Town Council, Forest of Dean District Council, Gloucestershire County Council, Gloucestershire organisations, members of the public and other interested parties. **Under the Data Protection Act 1998, your details will only be used as a point of contact in connection with information regarding the Newent Initiative and will not be disclosed to other organisations.**

Or...

### Do you want to get involved?

The Initiative team are keen to move forward and have been encouraged by the help received by volunteers so far. It doesn't have to be a firm commitment or endless meetings; if you want to just lend a hand occasionally, maybe an hour a month, that's fine - every little bit helps. Just supply your telephone number, mobile or email and we will contact you.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel/Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**NEWENT**  
**Initiative**  
**TRUST**  
A FORWARD THINKING COMMUNITY