



The Local Column

4th December 2004

The news publication from The Local Channel

Happy Christmas from all at The Local Channel

Hope you're on top of the shopping!

Well Christmas is once again upon us and another year is coming to an end. Everyone at The Local Channel wishes you a very merry Christmas and a big thank you for your support and hard work this year. Christmas is a time for fun, joy and reflection; however The Local Channel knows that it is a busy and expensive time for councils. We work hard to try and add a little value for, you, our customers; the following article while relevant to Christmas can be taken advantage of all year. Our latest partnership will allow all of our gold accredited parishes to receive a 15% discount on all Christmas and festive lighting.

To find out how to become a gold accredited site, see "from the Editor" on page 11



Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year



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15% savings

We are delighted to announce that TLC has negotiated a 15% product discount with Blachere UK, a market leader in Christmas and festive lighting. This discount is available to all communities who have reached Gold level on The Local Channel.

Blachere UK are also offering TLC communities help and advice on how to boost your community's lighting budget as well as **free** project management, **free** design service and a **free** infrastructure health check to help TLC users bring the festive spirit to their towns and villages. Visit www.blachereuk.com for more information.

Managing Director of Blachere UK, Ronnie Brown, expressed his excitement at the launch of this new partnership: "Having worked with UK communities for over 20 years, I am frequently saddened to hear that they still struggle to secure funds for Christmas and festive lighting. At Blachere no budget is too big or too small. I have been impressed with The Local Channel and aim to work in partnership with them to support UK communities".

Blachere supply and install Christmas lighting all year round, and also offer refurbished products at competitive prices.



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TLC Forthcoming Events

The Local Channel is constantly on the road, attending association events to encourage local councils to participate in the fastest growing local network. We will be at the following events:

Date	Event	Location
3 rd December	SLCC Regional Conference	Bristol
9 th December	Association of Town Centre Managers conf	London
10 th December	SLCC Regional Conference	Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire
25 th January 05	SLCC Regional Conference	Warwick

More to follow in the New Year!

For more information of forth coming events contact Haydn Selwyn-Jones on 0800 38 986 38

Our friends in Wales

Keith Cooper & Haydn Selwyn-Jones went wandering in North Wales. Haydn and Keith actually attended the SLCC conference at a truly wonderful and historic place called Gregynog Conference Centre in Tregynon near Newtown. What a great place, steeped in art, some of the pictures were even alarmed! Both Haydn and Keith enjoyed our visit and made many new friends, while saying Hi to a few old ones. We are very pleased to say that we have 65 Community and Town Councils in Wales using The Local Channel. It was good to see you guys and thanks for making us welcome.



Gregynog Conference Centre a beautiful house with ornamental gardens set in some 750 acres. The gardens are listed as a site of special scientific interest. A real shame it poured with rain all day!



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Hints and Tips

Council Section

Our website is dealing with a whole range of areas involved within the community and of course a very important part is the council section. As you are aware we have been constructing a new council section for the site, you can now view the information from your community home page, under the menu tab "**local council**".

To add to your council section simply **sign in**, select **communities**, then in the newly designed menu at the top of the screen, select **local council**. You will now have a sub menu showing: councillors, Meetings and agendas, and Planning applications. Simply select one of these sub menu options to add or edit your council information.

Putting an image in to the site

To upload an image to a webpage within The Local Channel, please **sign in**, select **communities** and then the item you are updating i.e. news web pages or councillor details, then simply click the **browse** button to select a file from your computer, select go and your image will be saved on the site.

Most people have taken pictures of landmarks or landscapes of their community with a digital camera, and then saved the image to their computer. That is great, and what we want people to do, but digital photos are very high resolution, which makes them quite a big file size.

What we suggest that once your photo is on your computer check the size. We advise not having an image on the website larger than 200x200 pixels or with a file size of more than 50kb.

To change the file size open it up in an image editing program, most computers have a standard program, if you are on windows use "Paint". Once open, go to **edit** and resize the photo using "image" / "stretch and skew" entering a lower % than 100% and save it as a "Jpeg" file.

Hope these tips are useful and we shall have some more coming to you in our next issue. Please send in any tips you may have, that we can share to. ed@thelocalchannel.co.uk



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Community news

Since the release of our new software The Local Channel website has been attracting great interest from all over the UK.

Below are the latest communities in England and Wales that have signed up with The Local Channel, we welcome the following communities and their councils:

Communities	Primary Administrator			Secondary Administrator
Rampton	Mr	Trevor	Millar	
Isley cum Langley	Mrs	H	Fitzgibbon	
Heckington	Mr	Trevor	Page	
Kerry	Mrs	Jane	Rees	
Ratley and Upton	Mr	M	Booth	Simon Gilbert
Samlesbury and Cuerdale		P A	Mulrooney	
Ashmansworth	Mr	Alan	Cox	
Peakirk	Mr	Henry	Clark	
Hayton	Mr	P G	Wilson	
Rogerstone	Mr	Colin	Atyeo	
Burneside		Jannice	Wilkinson	Kevin Price
Chesterton	Mr	David	Chapman	
Coggeshall		D	Warren	D Wilkins
Wadworth	Mr	Keith G	Brough	Mrs M Davies
Little Milton	Mr	David	Haenlein	
Llanddoged & Maenan		Delyth	Algieri	
Stoke Fleming		B J	Morris	
Idmiston		E B C	Aitken	
Chilton Polden		D E	Howe	
Streatley	Mrs	S E	Mcleod	
Fownhope	Mr	Neil	Moorcraft	
Prees	Mr	John	Schofield	
Idridgehay and Ashleyhay	Mr	Phillip	Marks	

Total Adoptions of communities who have signed up with The Local Channel so far is

932



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The Local Channel Usergroup

From The User Group Chairman

I'm pleased to say that User group feedback is beginning to filter in to the live TLC website and this month we have significant progress with the re-introduction of a Parish Council 'tab' that provides for the display of councillor names, minutes, agendas, and planning applications.

Now however, and with Christmas coming up fast on us, I expect we're starting to get distracted by the usual activities that communities engage in during the festive season. This is in part an apology for the shortness of my article for this month, but in the New Year we shall be launching a poll of all TLC users to gauge opinion and seek new suggestions for how you would like your website to evolve.

In the meantime, do have yourselves a very Merry Christmas ... and how about placing a seasons greeting to your fellow parishioners on your website too!

Graham Cowley
TLC User group Chairman
e-mail: support@tlcusergroup.co.uk

TLC Christmas e-mail

I wonder what you will think of the TLC video e-mail that you will receive shortly, please let me know, ed@thelocalchannel.co.uk .

This is a new product that The TLC is testing; the video e-mail can be used to communicate just about anything. It can be tailored for any business or application. The one you have seen is designed for the smaller business or council and is self-recorded using a simple web camera. While the product is not yet available we would like to know what you think. Another option exists for larger organisations involving the use of professional recording and production team, this product is already available. For more information e-mail Xavier.anderson@thelocalchannel.co.uk



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Letters

It's nice to receive a letter from our readership. This one is from Gordon Curtis the Parish Administrator and Councillor for Worth. Thanks Gordon.

Hi

For a nice change I thought that I would let you know how pleased I am with the improvements to the site - not completely there, but a lot closer than before!

The full page links are now fine as is the new Local Council button.

When I first tried the Local Council button and then Minutes & Agenda I was disappointed but further investigation showed that it would achieve all that we wanted. It is just necessary to decide what you think that the public will want to see and work back to get all the right headings in the Administrator section.

I meant to add that the administrator section is now not the nightmare that it was and is much easier to use.

The operating windows are a better size and the scroll bars are accessible.

Regards

Gordon

The following is from June Stait who Haydn and Keith met at the SLCC conference in Wales, good to see you June.

It was nice meeting you at the Society of Local Council Clerks training day at Newtown, and I will update my Local Channel site so that you will be proud of me - just as soon as I get a minute, honestly!

June Stait

Thanks to June and Gordon, if you would like to make a comment please e-mail ed@thelocalchannel.co.uk and it may even get published! If you would prefer not to see your comments in the news letter just note it in your e-mail.

Ed



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Secret update Monday Night

Over Monday night the 22nd of November-2004 your Local Channel website was upgraded. (Did you notice?) The upgrade was carried out as part of our ongoing improvement programme. Here is a summary of the improvements and what you can look forward to soon:

Enhancements made this month:

1. New Local Council section with all the minutes and councillors details from the Parish Council Committee being moved into this
2. Separate section for Council Minutes and Agendas on the site
3. Enhancement to the Text Editor – which now accepts tables and does not enter any return gaps
4. The planning application reference number is now appearing on the site
5. Useful links and web pages have been split up in the content manager giving administrators more space to view the option boxes to add pages
6. Useful links on the website now break out into a new browser window
7. The menus are clearer and bigger

Enhancements being worked on over the next month:

1. Ability for administrators to assign other users as administrators of their website, business etc
2. Simplify navigation with the use of categories for business and organisation etc
3. Committees to be viewable from the Community site
4. Text wrapping around picture within News items
5. New home page (www.thelocalchannel.co.uk home page)
6. Removal of banners from content manager
7. Improved Diary functionality including a Calendar

Please note that this work list might change dependent on user feedback and how they are prioritised. If you feel that something is not listed here that you would like fixed then please do not hesitate to contact us and we will add it to the work list. Email info@thelocalchannel.co.uk

Known system problem

In this version of the website a problem exists when working on any committee items. After working on committee items, if you move to the Local Council sections any input made will appear in the previous committee. To avoid this, close and re-open your browser before proceeding from working on committees to working on the Local Council Section. We are working to fix this problem. Our Apologies.



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UK small businesses flock to the web according to the DTI

Recent publicity surrounding research undertaken by the Department of Trade & Industry suggest that even the smallest business is now recognising the value of being on the web as evidenced in the following article on businessseurope.com

New research conducted for the Department of Trade and Industry shows that seven out of ten businesses in the UK are now using broadband connections, a rise of 11% in 2003 alone.

Even more encouraging, the report indicated that small businesses are following their multi-national counterparts in adopting modern technologies.

The proportion of businesses with less than 50 employees and using a website has increased by 16%. Currently 30% of micro businesses are trading online up 17% in 2003 while 31% of small businesses are trading online, up from 22%

E-commerce minister Mike O'Brien said: "The increase in the proportion of business connected by broadband shows that UK companies are embracing the opportunities that ICT can bring.

"It is particularly encouraging to see that small businesses are beginning to narrow the digital divide that appeared to have opened up in recent years."

O'Brien also pledged government support to help more businesses get online and build e-commerce applications.

"Government will play its part in cultivating an environment where information and communication technologies can flourish. The report's clear message is that effective use of ICT can bring real improvements in business performance for all businesses, including the smallest."

What better (and easier) way for a small business to embrace the worldwide web than via The Local Channel – please let your local businesses know about our great special offer as released in your separately sent TLC news item.

This article has been reproduced with the kind permission of www.businessseurope.com Thanks guys' important information for local communities



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Spam free e-mail

The Problem:

The creation of the Internet and its ever growing evolution as a virtual and highly complex communications platform has proven to be one of the most significant introductions of the 20th century. For those of us using the Internet, our lives have been transformed by the power of email both as a tool to conduct business and provide a social medium to our lives.

However, one drawback, common to all of us, is the ever-present and unsolicited communications that constantly circulate commonly known as Spam and Viruses, both of which subject us to misery especially when they arrive without warning into the mailbox clogging it up, or in the case of a Virus, may destroy files or hard disks.

In the past, one of the concerns in trying to address the above was that when administrators email addresses were automatically placed on their community home page, some of these email addresses were spammed. The Local Channel responded to this by removing the link, but this raised other concerns with regard to effective communication insofar that administrators then lost a valuable contact reference point. The Local Channel now has a better solution.

The Solution:

The Local Channel, in partnership with a company called Morgle, can offer you a spam and virus free email system that works in conjunction with your current email system.

The solution is a "Linkmail" which lets you email anyone from your Personal Outgoing Mail Centre while keeping your own email address secret. This **STOPS** incoming Spam and Viruses entering your account. In summary, this allows registered people using The Local Channel to be contacted by others within their community without ever disclosing their personal email addresses.

This system prevents individuals being spammed by other companies ensuring that any mail received via the "Linkmail" system will be virus free.

More



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Spam free e-mail (continued)

How do I take advantage of this facility?

By signing up to Morgle and the "Linkmail" you will be given an address link that you can place anywhere within your site see the Morgle banner on www.thelocalchannel.co.uk . When people select this link they will be directed to a page where the email can be typed. Once typed this can be sent directly to you (The originator will also receive a copy) without the originator actually seeing the email address they are sending to. As a security feature, the originator will have to enter their email address to send an email to you.

Benefits:

- Spam free email system for use within The Local Channel
- Virus free emails – Preventing viruses from people giving feedback on your site or who submit content to your site.
- Offers registered users a link for people to email without disclosing their email address – with your privacy being maintained.
- Enables registered users to use their personal email accounts without having to create a separate email account for use with their site.
- The system is secured by Secure Socket Layer (SSL) which makes it a secure encrypted site – a security feature used in most recognised sites when information is transferred on the web e.g. purchasing items on the web.

For further information please call 0800 38 986 38 or email us info@thelocalchannel.co.uk



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From the Editor

A very merry Christmas dear reader

I have to say pulling The Local Column together is a great deal of fun, I hope you will forgive or even enjoy a little festive spirit in this a month's edition, after all it's fun to do.

But I digress, on page 1 there is an article that offers parish councils a discount on festive lighting (not just for Christmas but all year round). The offer is possible because of our new partnership with a company called Blachere UK and is open to all of our parishes with a gold status. To find out what a gold status site looks like why not visit www.thelocalchannel.co.uk/Broughton , www.thelocalchannel.co.uk/RomseyExtra , or www.thelocalchannel.co.uk/Slindon .

Any parish can attain gold status simply by ensuring that your website has met the following criteria: -

1. 5 organisations listed
2. 5 business listed
3. Councillor details complete
4. Home page
5. Diary entries
6. 3 Useful links
7. News items
8. Meeting minutes posted

Once you have completed the above please let us know e-mail info@thelocalchannel.co.uk and we can send you your gold certificate, by the way, if you believe you already meet these criteria let us know and we will check your site.

Just a few suggestions as it's Christmas how about a news item that lets people know where the nearest duty chemist is covering the public holidays. Even an article showing which shops will be open, is very useful especially petrol stations!

We'll have a lovely Christmas and let's look forward to a prosperous new year.

Ed

Ps A bit light on feedback last month, come on guys I need to know some of you are reading it.....see next page.



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Please remember that your feedback is important, so let us know: -

1. What would you like to see in the newsletter
2. How often would you like to receive the newsletter
3. Would you like to be a regular contributor to the newsletter
4. Send an e-mail on a local government issue, It may get published!

Please e-mail your suggestions to ed@thelocalchannel.co.uk.

If this communication has reached you in error please let me know at this address and we will remove you from our list.

The Local channel can be found on www.thelocalchannel.co.uk and contacted at

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**Wishing you a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year
from
The Local Channel**



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