

Come and Join•up•the•Dots

This special edition of our Newsletter comes with a booking form for FbRN's forthcoming national conference

...Joining-up-the-Dots...

**at Friends House near London's Euston Station
 on Tuesday 31st March**

from 10.00am till 4.00pm

We are aiming to join up faith based groups with the rest of the voluntary and community sector, the public sector, including local, regional and national government and the private sector.

Faith based groups have a great deal to contribute to communities, to cohesion and to social economic development. When they are well linked with other parts of the VCS, and organisations in the public and private sectors, they have access to better resources and support. They are more effective and thrive. They are better able to carry out the work that their faith impels them to do in their communities.

Our conference will help organisations from outside the faith sector to build their profile with faith groups. They will develop their understanding of what faith based groups need and how best to work with them.

Statutory and Private Sector: **£100**

Funded Community and Voluntary Sector (including faith): **£50**

Unfunded Community and Voluntary Sector (including faith): **£25**

Some bursaries are available for registration fees and travel expenses. A block booking of 3 or more will attract a discount. Please enquire for details.

So return your form to us or go to our website

www.fbrn.org.uk/dots

to book online.

Doreen Finneron
 Executive Director



Working together at an FbRN seminar

What you can achieve when you Join-up-the-Dots

page 2	Working together in Woking
3	Building Bridges Pendle
4	A letter from Amanda Greenwood (Chief Exec of Community Development Exchange & Chair Community Sector Coalition.)

Working Together in Woking

Lake View Community Action Group (LCAG)

LCAG grew from the early informal meetings, begun in 1996, at which local residents, representatives from Woking Borough Council's Housing Department, staff from several local Churches, the Diocese of Guildford, Health Visitors, the Police, and other agencies playing a part on the estate, discussed ways forward.

Leading, at that time, to the formation of a mother and toddler group, Roadrunners (a youth initiative), and a community fun day.

The main issues

- one of the two most deprived areas within Woking
- low skills and qualification levels within the area
- unemployment levels the second highest in Woking
- high proportion of lone parent households, in the top 3% nationally
- high level of child poverty
- maisonettes with poor access

Aims

- the common desire to work together for the good of Lakeview estate
- to work with local people in prioritising needs
- to explore ways of working with other agencies to help meet those needs
- to help develop patterns of working between the groups involved which are based on mutual trust and support

Rev Richard Cook, Bishop's Adviser for Inter Faith Relations (Diocese of Guildford)

In 2004 a Lakeview Community Development Worker was appointed with joint funding from Woking Borough Council, Surrey County Council, the Diocese of Guildford, the Bishop of Guildford's Foundation and the Safer Woking Partnership. This appointment proved to be pivotal and the activities, initiatives and engagement that have been achieved to date are significant, particularly for a small pocket of deprivation in an otherwise wealthy area.

Community Development is about enabling and empowering others. It combines various functions: helping people set up groups, supporting forums and networks, and organising events and activities that enable people to work together across organisational and community boundaries. It actively tackles the divisions, social exclusion and discrimination that deter some people in communities from participating in activities and

decision-making. It also works with public authorities and agencies to help them understand and engage with the communities they serve, and facilitates links upwards, downwards and horizontally across communities and agencies.

The strength and success of the LCAG is due in the main to the partnership method of working. The joint working between local residents, local champions and a number of agencies and organisations has enabled the group to be rooted in the local community and to respond effectively to local issues and need.

Working in true partnership has also maximized the benefit of combining limited financial resources, expertise and goodwill. This approach offers an excellent method of working which is proving extremely beneficial to both the local community and the various agencies and bodies involved in the area.



The social centre on litter pick day

Building Bridges Pendle

Rauf Bashir

The foundations of Building Bridges Pendle have been firmly built on the grassroots of our community. We have been in existence for over 15 years and operational as a community organisation for nearly ten years. We have grown 'organically' over this period and have never lost the focus of where we want our work to have the greatest impact.

Our Education Programmes have become an integral part of curriculum-based community cohesion education in primary and secondary schools in Pendle. We are now experiencing a growth of this project as the delivery of our education programmes moves into schools in the boroughs of Burnley, Hyndburn and Preston.

Our engagement with faith communities includes Interfaith Seminars which are delivered across the borough where people of faith and of no-faith are invited to attend. These sessions are used to stimulate discussion on a wide range of contemporary issues. Cultural Awareness events provide families and

friends with a living experience of celebrating diversity through arts and culture. We place an emphasis on using a wide range of different faith venues to expand participants' experiences. Families and friends are provided with an opportunity to spend a full day together and build relationships on a trip out of the local area. We also have an innovative friends and families scheme to encourage cross-cultural relationships.

Our engagement with the grassroots communities, and a co-ordinated campaign of partnership-working with groups over recent years, has seen Building Bridges Pendle take a lead role in promoting and consulting on community engagement beyond the Borough of Pendle.

We have developed links at a strategic level whereby we are able to influence strategies and policy development, by Pendle Borough Council and the Police (Pennine Division), in the area of cohesion, social inclusion and preventing violent extremism. Through linkages with the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), we have helped in the development

of community cohesion action plans for over five years and are a main partner in the cohesion aspects of the 'Sustainable Community Strategy' for Pendle.

Through our links with regional and national strategies, we have consulted on processes which are seeking to develop long lasting community cohesion initiatives. Building Bridges Pendle was the first organisation to be visited by the Commission for Integration and Cohesion outside of London in October 2006. We have also been acknowledged in the policy document launched by the Department for Communities and Local Government in July 2008 *"Face to Face and Side by Side: a framework for partnership in our multi-faith society"*.

This National profile is a positive reflection of our community and shows the strength of commitment all partners have to creating a positive Pendle. Our commitment to partnership work with organisations, agencies and with Central Government will continue and God willing, Building Bridges Pendle's vision of a strong and cohesive Great Britain will be realised.



Pendle faith leaders event

A letter of support and encouragement

from **Amanda Greenwood**

Chief Executive of Community Development Exchange and Chair of the Community Sector Coalition.

The Community Development Exchange (CDX) has been involved in work with FbRN, over a number of years, relating to community development and faith based social action in supporting communities. Now, as I embark upon my new role as Chair of the Community Sector Coalition (CSC) I would like to take this opportunity to encourage you, and your organisations / groups, to think about your connections and the contribution you make to the voluntary and community sectors (VCS), particularly as we hurtle into uncertain and difficult times with the recession now taking a grip.

The role of faith based groups involved in social action is hugely underestimated, widely unseen, and somewhat taken for granted, in the mainstream of civil society.

In an increasingly secular society, uneasy with a role overall for faith and religion, it is also difficult to actively promote and accentuate the value that faith based social action brings to the wider voluntary and community sectors for fear of isolating further the faith contribution.

The reality of course is complex. It is absolutely essential that not only does the wider Voluntary and Community Sector encourage and accept the vital role that faith based groups play within it and wider society but, equally, you as faith based groups and organisations need to see yourselves as part of this bigger picture.

The CSC is trying to ensure that there is a voice for the community sector not least at a time when the smaller and less well funded charitable and community organisations are struggling to survive. The complicated patchwork of numerous, varied and small groups is exactly what makes the 'third sector' vibrant and a necessary part of society. By linking up and doing a bit of 'practising what we preach' we can help raise the profile and importance of this range of diverse needs by working collectively on the issues that we have in common.

So, please come along to the FbRN event; replenish your stocks and reserves of energy and inspiration for the work you are doing, but also take the time to reflect on how people you don't know, and who don't know your work could make the road if not easier then at least a shared and less lonely journey. Who knows what is possible then?



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Using the FbRN website www.fbrn.org.uk

We have been improving our website over the past year and it is, of course, an on-going process with new sections in development. You can send items for inclusion to me at valr@fbrn.org.uk or for jobs, events and news you can choose either to input them yourself or send them to me. Many of the items are also used in the e-bulletins which means that they reach a few thousand people around the country.

And it's all free! **Val Rushton**