



Far left: Eynsham is blessed with specialist shops such as the Cornucopia Delicatessen. Middle: The Eynsham Community Initiative was launched by Witney MP David Cameron. Left: May Day celebrations in Eynsham. The village enjoys a very strong community spirit.

Enterprising Eynsham

Eynsham is a very well kept secret, with its specialist shops priding themselves on personal service, but its business community is now joining forces to raise awareness and show people far and wide they have something to shout about.. .

VISIT Eynsham and you'll find a treasure trove of unique shops and services located in an historic village which boasts 92 listed buildings and an 18th century toll bridge described as 'one of the finest bridges over the Thames'. People who already know Eynsham drive in from miles around to visit their favourite shop, and to enjoy the kind of personal service that makes shopping there a pleasure. Those that don't know about Eynsham might pass by on the A40 oblivious of the unique shopping experience they'll find. But now, the businesses of Eynsham have joined forces to form a new group – currently using The Eynsham Business Network as a working title – to raise awareness about its thriving business community.

"Everyone in the village is passionate about promoting business in Eynsham," says proprietor of the Eynsham Emporium Corin Willett. "Eynsham is unique and we want people to realise we can offer a complete shopping experience."

With the help of the Market Towns Initiative, the business network aims to create a stronger voice by all 200 businesses working together. The Eynsham Community Initiative was launched last May by David Cameron, who commends the work of the Market Towns Initiative. "Keeping our market towns and villages like Eynsham strong and vibrant is essential for the future of West Oxfordshire," says Mr Cameron.

With the help of SEEDA (South East England Development Agency) the Eynsham Community Initiative (ECI) was established to identify community needs. Subsequently, via the ECI and with the help of the Oxfordshire Town and Community Planning Project, which is sponsored by the Carnegie Trust, the Eynsham Business Network was formed to raise awareness about its thriving business community.

"Our strength is our unity," explains Corin, one of the business owners involved in setting up the Eynsham Business Network.

The aims of the business network are to create a greater presence and promote the village to a wider audience.

"The business network is a lobbying voice for businesses in Eynsham, aiming to improve visitor awareness such as better signposting for car parking and places of interest to show visitors what's available in the village," adds Corin.

“ Keeping villages like Eynsham strong and vibrant is essential for the future of West Oxfordshire ”

David Cameron, Leader of the Conservative Party and MP for Witney

"Launching the business network will strengthen the village and help businesses here to continue to thrive. Working together we can create a greater synergy."

And the Eynsham Emporium has maximised its own synergy with a unique business model that sees two shops in one location – Cookshop and Flowers Talk – to offer customers a unique shopping experience. On its premises in Mill Street, you'll find a specialist cookshop, coffee shop, florist and gift shop, which offers an exciting range of contemporary gifts, cards,

handbags and jewellery in addition to an expert floristry service. Both businesses work side by side, co-leasing the shop, to lower overheads and share marketing expenses and provide a unique combination of services that make it a shopping destination. Even the building, a former bank, now restored to the open barn space it once was, is an experience to visit with an immense vault door dominating one of the corners of the shop.

"People come from miles around for our expertise and advice, unique gifts and products only found in some of the biggest department stores," adds Corin.

On a Saturday morning, the Emporium also hosts an organic farmers' market thanks to Worton Organic Farm which brings its organic fruit and vegetables to the village. Every Thursday the village also hosts a market at the Village Hall with fresh and local produce from Eynsham Country Markets.

Capturing the zeitgeist of the cooking trend, the Eynsham Emporium offers an array of specialist cookware and designer gadgets which would take pride of place in any fashionable kitchen. With a background in manufacturing and product development, Corin can offer her customers guidance and advice on products that best suit their needs. The Emporium also sources unusual cookware for its customers who can also sit down in the coffee shop and browse the library of catalogues.

Flowers Talk proprietors Sheila Quinn and Rachel Budd echo the business community's ethos that the 'customer is key'. "Every business in the village offers a traditional, personal service – we are all very focused on our customers. Every shop owner will go that extra mile," says Sheila.

Their business model sharing premises and overheads enabled Flowers Talk to open in the village. "By sharing the premises we are



Corin Willett of Eynsham Emporium (right) with Flowers Talk florist Rachel Budd.

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Sophie's choice



Celebrity TV Chef and Oxfordshire resident Sophie Grigson is an enthusiastic advocate of Eynsham and its businesses. "Eynsham is a very pretty place and is a vital resource for me for kitchen equipment - I regularly visit the Eynsham Emporium as it is the best kitchen equipment shop in the area and offers expert advice," says Sophie. "Eynsham has a great deli, The Cornucopia Delicatessen, and butcher and as I have an Apple Mac, I also depend on Oxford Macintosh Solutions for help and advice."

Living near Oxford, Sophie finds Eynsham an accessible and friendly shopping destination. "The businesses always offer a very friendly service and what's also helpful is that each shop gives recommendations to other businesses in the village so you can always find what you need. "It's also great for parking and because of its size is very manageable to get around, so offers the best of both worlds."

also multiplying the number of customers into the shop," says Rachel. "As a business model it's been very successful, especially in a village location such as this."

Eynsham's best current 'window' on local business — and the community at large — is its official website Eynsham Online, launched 18 months ago by the parish council at www.eynsham.org.uk and run by Joan Stonham, former manager of the County Council website. The ECI has used Eynsham Online to maximise their exposure and to display the vast array of shops and businesses on offer in Eynsham.

The Eynsham Directory includes over 230 shops and services (with more emerging as they register the benefits of networking). The latest is a suite of high-spec training rooms, all broadband enabled and bookable online, while Evenlode DIY is an Aladdin's cave and a village institution.

The attraction of Eynsham is its specialist shops, including among many the Cornucopia Delicatessen. Run by long-term resident Sandy Hellig and partner Nick it offers high quality ingredients, from local suppliers and producers who are conscious of food miles, along with fresh, home cooked food — from snacks to dinner dishes, parties, picnics and gift hampers. Specialities include a fantastic range of cheeses (many British, a few local), olives marinated in store, salami and honey roast ham prepared on the premises.

The industrial estates on the outskirts boast over 70 firms, including a number of high-tech companies; some of international status. The largest, Siemens Magnet Technology, has 600-plus employees. A snapshot survey taken last year for the Eynsham Parish Plan found that 35.5 per cent of the working population work in

Eynsham. Compared with a typical 15 per cent in rural areas it shows that Eynsham is something special.

Iain Nicholson, a director of the Oxfordshire Towns Chamber Network (www.otcn.co.uk) has brought his wealth of knowledge to the project, identifying successful working models in other towns and villages and applying them with the unique elements of Eynsham.

"Across Oxfordshire town chambers and business groups are doing great work promoting their towns and the shops, venues and commercial businesses in them," says Iain. "It is very encouraging to see the passion, enthusiasm and expertise that is helping to set up a new group in Eynsham and brining in some of that good practice to benefit the village and its businesses."

The Eynsham Business Network also hopes to create a Visitors Guide — a map of the village to show visitors what's on offer to overcome the logistical problem of businesses scattered around the village. "We need to tell people we're here — we've certainly got a lot to shout about," adds Corin, a resident of Eynsham for 11 years, and a passionate advocate of living in the village. "We have a great community spirit and once people move here they don't want to leave," she says.

Clubs and societies of every description are very active in the village and the 4,665 population also enjoys some typical English pubs with an award-winning Indian restaurant called the Bayleaf. In the summer The Star pub will re-open after a complete transformation and under new management by owners Vanessa and Oliver Sampson.

"The village is unique and Eynsham has a large core of involved community members that are positively changing the direction of

Eynsham," says Vanessa and Oliver. "The village is becoming lively and more interactive, reflecting the needs of a growing group of people."

Boasting a rich history and beautiful gardens, The Star will be completely refurbished inside to create a clean and crisp environment. "Simply, we wanted to create a place where we, and our friends and family, would get together to celebrate life," adds Vanessa and Oliver.

Eynsham Hall will be the latest addition to the Business Network, realising the benefit of being part of the business community. The stunning Grade II listed manor house has three centuries of history at its 3,000-acre estate in North Leigh and has just opened its newly-refurbished contemporary bar to the public for the very first time, welcoming the wider community into this elegant country mansion.

"Now that Eynsham Hall has launched its new bar, The Gun Room, we hope to be part of the integral hub of Eynsham and its business community," says General Manager Jeremy Wall.

"The Gun Room and Sun Terrace are ideal for business or pleasure, private parties as well as business meetings," adds Jeremy. "Being part of the Business Network will be an important step in uniting Eynsham Hall with the local community." ■

For more information on the Eynsham Community Initiative contact eynsham-ci@ntlworld.com. The Eynsham Emporium, Mill Street, tel: 01865 731717, www.eynsham-emporium.co.uk. Cornucopia Delicatessen, High Street, tel: 01865 882229, www.cornucopia-deli.co.uk. The Star Inn, Witney Road, tel: 01865 881287. Eynsham Hall, North Leigh, tel: 01993 885200, www.eynshamhall.com.