

■ News In Brief

Climb aims to boost charity

GRANDMOTHER Kirsty Parris is hoping to raise £3,000 by climbing Ben Nevis in aid of the Cystic Fibrosis Trust. Kirsty, partner at Ad Valorem Accountancy Services in Newport Pagnell, made the climb last month and has raised more than £1,800 so far.

Her nine-month-old granddaughter Madison suffers from the disease.

Kirsty, who made the climb with Madison's other grandparents Mitch and Gail Canvin, has set up a JustGiving account www.justgiving.com/Madison-Parris. She said: "Only half of those living with cystic fibrosis are likely to live past 41. There is presently no cure. Every penny will be gratefully received." Donations can be made until November.

Feat of clay for alliance

A CLAY pigeon shoot organised by chartered surveyors Robinson & Hall has raised more than £1,300 for rural campaigning group the Countryside Alliance.

The event, which took place at Sporting Targets in Riseley – one of the UK's largest clay shooting grounds – was the 13th organised by the Bedford-based firm, bringing the total raised to £22,400.

Andrew Capel, senior partner and head of rural businesses, said: "What a record-breaking year - clays hit were up by 15 per cent on previous years."

Dons welcome new Frontline

TRADES and labour recruitment agency Frontline has become the newest club-platinum member at Milton Keynes Dons FC. A spokesman for the Bletchley-based firm said: "We always decided we wanted to get involved with supporting local sports teams and MK Dons is obviously the biggest opportunity the city has to get on the sporting map."

NEWSDESK

e: news@businessmk.co.uk

The curse of the living planners

Theo Chalmers



Theo Chalmers is managing director of Verve Public Relations and chair of Urban Eden
www.urbaneden.org
www.vervepr.co.uk
e: t.chalmers@vervepr.co.uk
Tel: 01908 275271

EVER since the disbanding of the Milton Keynes Development Corporation, the land it controlled, the determination as to who buys it and for what project and the right to grant planning permission has been sucked back into a faceless entity once called English Partnerships and now known as the Homes and Communities Agency. In reality it is still legally the Commission for the New Towns. In June 2004 in an effort to convince us that planning for the use of Milton Keynes land would be considered locally, EP set up a body called Milton Keynes Partnership with full planning powers.

Despite many claims since then that it was independent, or honestly represented local interests, it was very clear that it was created as a Trojan horse to squeeze Milton Keynes for as much cash as possible, all of which goes straight to HM Treasury. For instance, any independent representation on the committee was appointed solely by it, thereby guaranteeing compliance and in any event the majority of members were government appointees so it could never lose a vote to local interests.

According to its website, MKP currently controls the Northern, Western and Eastern Expansion Areas and remaining sites within the existing grid squares of Oxley Park, Tattenhoe Park and Kingsmead. MKP is the local planning authority for land adjoining the A421 containing Eagle Farm and Glebe Farm, identified as "strategic reserve" sites. It also controls the available land in the centre of Milton Keynes.

Any hopes that it was "created to ensure a co-ordinated approach to planning and delivery of growth and development in the 'new city'" were soon dashed as it abandoned the grid roads in the new areas of development such as

Western and Eastern Expansion Areas, built the much-hated 'city streets' in their place and introduced plans to build over the green borders of our existing grid roads. Proof positive of their '*we really don't care what you want*' attitude is not hard to find. One example came when they commissioned the infilling of underpasses, installation of traffic-lit pedestrian crossings, narrowing of boulevard building lines and erection of Milton Keynes' most execrable development, TheHub.

In recent years the chair of MKP has been local resident Dr Ann Limb - that very honourable lady, with her honorary doctorate, honorary fellowship, honorary professorship... and a BA

'The MK planning sub-committee still stalks the meeting rooms of CMK like some money-lusting zombie'

(Hons) in French she actually earned. The truly amazing part of this story is yet to come, however.

Milton Keynes Partnership was officially disbanded following its final meeting in March 2011. So everything is OK, now, right? No, far from it, actually. Astonishingly despite it no longer existing, the MKP planning sub-committee still stalks the meeting rooms of CMK like some hand-outstretched, money-lusting, blank-eyed zombie.

The sub-committee is chaired, you will not be surprised to learn, by the 'Multi Honorary Doc' herself: Ann Limb.

Now for those reading this who think I must be unfairly characterising Ann Limb - that very honourable lady - and that I am a tasteless bully attacking a defenceless public servant, cast your eye over her resume, posted online. I quote: "Ann worked with the current Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg when he was an MEP, (was) an independent member of the Education Committee of David Cameron's Public Services Improvement Policy Group and a member of Tony Blair's Digital Inclusion Panel."

You may conclude that it reads like a modern version of the Vicar of Bray, a poem about a man who despite constant changes of monarch and state religion always kept to his one principle, to live and die as the Vicar of Bray.

It has been suggested that the reason for the continuing presence of a compliant MKP is to allow all the grid road destruction and high density housing to

be agreed by them and then blame the previous government, leaving us to live with the consequences. So I imagine you might be asking whether there is still hope for Milton Keynes.

Thankfully there is. Our current council has been in difficult negotiation with the HCA for some months to acquire the remaining commercial elements of MKP land - the non-commercial elements having already gone to Milton Keynes Parks Trust, about which I wrote recently. Obviously this land will not be cheap and the council is not exactly flush with cash although, judging by the amount questionably poured down the maw of its business services provider Mouchel, you might reasonably think otherwise.

Nevertheless it seems that a deal has now been done and by the time this column is printed it may well have been announced. If it has, it seems likely that the land comes under council control on December 1 this year.

This, of course, is very good news. However financial pressure will now be on the council to create further Hubs in areas such as B4.4 opposite Vizion. When that pressure starts - and sadly it will - we must help the council to gird its loins, steel its nerves and fight it.

As for Ann Limb, please do not worry about her. She will be around for some time to come. She has collected an OBE, been appointed Chair of the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership and become Deputy Lieutenant of the county of Buckinghamshire. SEMLEP, incidentally, is one of 39 private-sector led economic development partnerships set up by the Coalition Government to "stimulate innovation, inward investment, economic growth and job creation". More jobs for the girls, I expect.

Hey ho... and cheerio.



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