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Local RSA Networks and Activities

FROM a visibility point of view what is important is what individual Fellows are doing in their local communities, however defined.

Progress with re-establishing an RSA Network in Oxfordshire is carefully moving forward. A key issue has been to be clear whether this is an Oxford Network or one for Oxfordshire generally – possibly with quite different audiences and expectations. The RSA Milton Keynes Network, with support from RSA House,

met for the first time in December last year and its regular meetings have now begun. The 'We Are Bedford' project has had its launch arts weekend event and a new RSA Network has also met for the first time in Bedford (pg8). Thanks are due to a number of local Fellows for getting these Networks going as well as to the universities in both locations for providing venues and other encouragement.

Greg Slay, Chairman

Annual dinner treat at Pallant House

FELLOWS will have the chance to not only savour wonderful food but also experience one of the best collections of Modern British Art in the UK on Saturday 21 May 2011 at this year's Annual Dinner for the Region.

Walter Hussey, Dean of Chichester Cathedral, left his personal collection to the city in 1977 with the condition that the collection be shown in Pallant House, a grade 1 listed Queen Anne town house dating from 1712. In 1979 a restoration programme began and in 1982 Pallant House Gallery opened – a unique combination of historic house and modern art gallery. A new wing was added to house the expanding collections and the Gallery's activities which opened in 2006.

Fellows, who will have exclusive access to the gallery, will be able to see the new exhibition entitled 'Design and the Modern Interior', which will showcase more than 50 Lucienne Day textiles alongside early furniture by her husband, Robin Day, such as the Royal Festival Hall lounge, dining and orchestra chairs.

Robin (1915 – 2010) and Lucienne (1917 – 2010) attained celebrity status for their best-selling iconic designs, such as Robin's multi-million selling 'Polyprop' chair, and Lucienne's revolutionary Calyx textile (above). With their shared commitment to low-cost, mass-produced, good quality furniture and fabric, the Days were pioneers of modern design in the 1950s and 1960s.

Pallant House Gallery, 9 North Pallant, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 1TJ, 01243 774557, www.pallant.org.uk

Full details of the dinner can be found via the Fellowship pages on the main RSA website, booking via Eventbrite. Closing date for bookings, 10 May 2011. <http://frsascannualdinner2011.eventbrite.com/> If you can not book online or have a query, contact the Hon Committee Secretary Caroline Short at Long Paddock House, Droxford, Hampshire, SO32 3RA or on Tel: 07771 631804.



EVENTS

17 May 2011, 6.15pm - Valuing Failure.

Speaker David Hillson FRSA and editor of the book following the RSA project 'Glorifying Failure'. Joint event with the Chartered Management Institute, at Mott McDonald, Southampton. To book: click here then choose 'South East' and then 'CMI Solent' for 17 May. Full details on page 5.

Sat 21 May 2011 - Annual Regional Dinner; Pallant House Gallery, Chichester. Drinks reception at 5.30pm with an introduction to the Gallery, which contains one of the country's most impressive collections of 20th century art, displayed in an historic Grade 1 listed town house in Georgian Chichester's Pallants district. Booking details on left.

11 & 12 June 2011 - RSA SC stand at The Garden Show at Stansted Park, Hampshire.

For the first time this art and design garden show will provide an opportunity to promote sustainability issues. In a new move, the RSA South Central will have a presence at The Garden Show at Stansted Park, near Rowlands Castle, to promote the sustainability agenda following discussions with an RSA Fellow who is an organiser of the show. The RSA stall over the weekend show will be used to promote RSA Fellowship and the various strands of work being supported in the region. Could you volunteer to help run the stall? Speak to Graham Rawlinson FRSA on 01243 790328.

As events are finalised, full details and booking forms together with links to the online booking system can be found at:

<http://www.thersa.org/southcentral>

This newsletter was first published in April 2011. The cover photo shows the work of the RNLI, more on this story on page 5.

Fellowship Profiles

Rt Revd Jonathan Frost FRSA, the Bishop of Southampton



We welcome Bishop Jonathan to the region which will now be his home, following his appointment and consecration as a bishop in the Church of England in December 2010.

He grew up in Surrey and has most recently served as a Residentiary Canon of Guildford Cathedral alongside his work as Chaplain to Surrey University before moving to Southampton to take on his new role. As a suffragan bishop in the Anglican Diocese of Winchester, he has responsibility for Bournemouth, Christchurch, Eastleigh, the New Forest, Romsey, Southampton and the areas in between.

He has carried out significant work in the area of faith groups co-operation and dialogue including serving as the Bishop of Guildford's Adviser for Interfaith Relations. He is a keen sportsman and a lifelong supporter of Fulham Football Club, enjoys running and has completed two London Marathons for Water Aid. He also enjoys live music and reading, and has been a Fellow and supporter of the RSA for almost five years. He is a graduate of the Universities of Aberdeen and Nottingham and prepared for the ordained ministry at Ridley Hall, Cambridge in the early 1990s.

Talking about his new role, he said: "I will want to listen to those on the ground who know the histories and contours of each particular place. I believe the stories we tell about ourselves and our communities matter enormously: they are part of what shapes our identities and disclose points of connection and possibility."



PHOTOGRAPHY: © ABHA THAKOR & PETER LANGDOWN

The strength of the RSA

Inspiring others through the power of words

'Encouraging others is what the RSA Fellowship means'

Feature

Interview with Barbara Large FRSA

By Abha Thakor

Winchester-based Barbara Large FRSA is passionate about encouraging aspiring writers and creating a thirst for reading. The same passion lies behind both her current commitment to, and her late husband's support for, the work of the Royal Society of Arts.

When she is not lecturing on creative writing across the country, writing short stories, or giving advice to aspiring and established writers here and abroad, Barbara feels it is important to attend her local RSA Network in Winchester and take part in the discussions and sharing of ideas.

Barbara's academic career has included being commissioned to a Home Office Education Service project within the prison service to develop literacy, numeracy, technical and musical opportunities for prisoners that would reduce recidivism and support prisoners' families in the community. She was awarded a MBE for this work. She also founded the Writer-in-Residence Scheme in all prisons across the UK which brought many prominent authors into prison classrooms to encourage creative writing as a therapy. She is an Honorary Fellow of the University of Winchester and Senior Lecturer in Creative and Critical Writing.

For the last 31 years, she has been the figurehead and the heart of the internationally renowned Winchester Writers' Conference, Festival and

Bookfair, as its well-connected Director. The Conference is held annually in late June and has seen the birth of more than 100 published authors including Martina Cole, Lesley Horton, Judith Allnatt, and Jack Sheffield. Guest speakers at the Conference have included such luminaries as Dame Beryl Bainbridge, Michael Morpurgo, Peter James, Baroness James, Carol Ann Duffy and Terry Pratchett. Conference delegates come from across the UK and also from further afield including New Zealand, India and China.

Barbara said: "The thing that makes the Winchester Conference special is the opportunity for people from many different backgrounds to come together in a warm, supportive atmosphere on campus and to be able to attend a huge choice of 60 lectures, 43 workshops and 500 one-to-one appointments. In addition, 18 writing competitions are offered to all writers, even if they cannot attend. All of these opportunities are designed to support writers whether they want to write for their own pleasure or for profit or both! It is vital to provide ways of encouraging talent and creativity if we are committed to making progress in building our 'new society' and to encouraging people to think creatively and have the confidence to believe in themselves.

"The Writers Conference contributes to the cultural value of the community. It reaches out to all writers

is in the work & commitment of its Fellows

and particularly to young people who are trying to access the commercial world and to make a success of a profession that is difficult to embrace without support," said Barbara.

"It is all about encouraging quality in our writing and an interest in reading as broadly as possible. The appreciation of good literature and the contribution that good books and the access to well stocked libraries make to the general well-being of both individual writers and the larger community is a worthy investment for all communities.

"One of the most enjoyable projects at the Winchester Writers' Conference is the Young Writers' Poetry Competition which last year attracted more than 800 entries. This year the competition invites two age groups to write a poem on the subject of Healthy and Happy Eating."

Barbara wrote her first crime fiction when she was nine years old, inspired by her literature-loving grandfather. She said: "He would read to me and take me to the library. This was the foundation of my love of literature. Very often, it is a family member, a librarian or a teacher who has had a strong influence on that child's love of dipping into a good book or the inner urge to write stories, poems and plays. This is why events like the Winchester Writers' Conference are so important. They provide creative support to everyone, especially those who have not received that kind of encouragement in their lives."

Barbara's late husband, Professor John Large was the founder of the University of Southampton Science Park in Chilworth, Southampton, a centre for academic research and commercial development. He had been an active Fellow of the RSA for 30 years and had given many lectures for the society from his background as Director of The Institute



J. GILBEY

of Sound and Vibration Research and Dean of Engineering at the University of Southampton.

Barbara said: "John believed in the founding principles and ethos of the RSA. He was an advocate for research, encouraging students to discover knowledge and to learn creative ways to solve modern world problems. He had contributed many research papers and given countless lectures for the society on the theme of applied acoustics and aeronautical development. After his death in a road accident, the RSA invited me to continue my relationship with the society by becoming a Fellow. This gave me the opportunity to contribute to the vast store of knowledge in the society, raise awareness of knowledge, industry and commerce in the community and to enthuse and support others to make a difference to our community."

The Winchester Writers' Conference 2011 at the University of Winchester is planned for 1-3 July. More information at www.writersconference.co.uk

■ Email your ideas for Fellows in the region who could be featured in a future edition to the RSA South Central communications group at: rsasouthcnews@btinternet.com

RSA SC

Empty shops transformed



A recent RSA Catalyst grant beneficiary, Kayte Judge FRSA, held a launch for her project in Bedford in March. She received an award of £1,000 from the RSA

Catalyst Fund to assist with the development of temporary arts spaces in dis-used shops in Bedford's town centre.

Kayte Judge FRSA writes

I decided I wanted to do something about the empty shops in Bedford town centre. Together with my co-pilot Erica Roffe, we put in a bid to the RSA Catalyst Fund to temporarily transform the empty shops into arts venues. We attracted a lot of support and became a community group known as 'We Are Bedford'.

We negotiated access to seven retail units in The Castle Quay area of Bedford to put on 'The Castle Quay Weekender' in mid-March 2011. The event featured galleries, craft, workshops, music, comedy and much more. We were able to encourage some exceptional Bedfordians to take part including the poet John Hegley, Max McMurdo (Dragons Den, Reestore), the installation artist Jane Edden, Jane Perrone (Gardening Editor for The Guardian), The Ouse Valley Singles Club (comedy) along with a host of other performers, artists, makers and volunteers.

There were a variety of free events and some ticketed performances. The project, which was entirely run by volunteers, received fantastic support from the business community including assistance from a design agency and editorial support from the local paper as well as council support.

We were delighted to welcome support from Fellows in the area and have the opportunity to share the project wider. You can follow our progress at: <https://wearebedford.wordpress.com/>

More on Milton Keynes and the Bedford Networks on page 8.



New developments on the Regional Social Innovation Fund and links with the national Catalyst Fund will be announced soon. Tony Hoskins FRSA, Deputy Chair of the Region (pictured left), will give an update in the next edition.

Meet the Committee

Interview with Abha Thakor FRSA



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South Central Committee and communications group member Abha Thakor first became a Fellow of the RSA about 11 years ago, interested in the RSA's links to learning and encouragement of individuals and how they can play roles in the community.

Building on her degree in Government and Economics, she trained in journalism and later in PR and communications, and was recently awarded both Chartered Manager and Chartered PR Practitioner. She has worked for the last seven years as the Director of Communications for the Diocese of Winchester & Lord Bishop of Winchester's Press Secretary, previously working in government communications.

Abha has a long standing interest and involvement in citizen empowerment and engagement. With a passion for professional development and enabling others, she has been involved in a number of projects which have brought business and organisations together with community groups and she is Chair of the Chartered Management Institute Solent and Women in Management Hampshire and West Sussex.

She said: "Through the RSA we have a chance to not only find out more about the issues that affect society at large but also to make a difference through local and regional projects as well as national campaigns. This can be from simply improving our understanding and thereby our communication of issues to practical assistance through using our own personal skills to help groups or community projects. The committee is working hard to help make these connections, build partnerships and skills sharing."



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RSA FELLOWSHIP active in the regions

Fellows engage with local issues and help make connections for wider understanding

THAMES Valley Fellows held their own version of Question Time inviting local MPs to speak on the major issues in their constituencies.

Maidenhead MP Theresa May felt the key issue was to maintain public vibrancy and develop quality of life. She gave an example of the new campaign 'Enjoy Maidenhead' aimed at encouraging people to use the town centre. She also highlighted the need to ensure that the public and private sectors work together.

John Howell, MP for Henley, talked to Fellows about the science centre in his constituency which was on the cutting edge of science and nuclear fusion. He called for a liberation in the excessive red tape which he felt hindered planning particularly in the Thames Valley.

MP for Bracknell Philip Lee spoke about his excitement in the developments in the area with so many new companies and the new science park in Reading. He felt that sustainable growth was the way forward and not growth at all costs.

Alok Sharma, MP for Reading West, agreed with his colleagues and felt very positive about the future for the area. He wanted to see the 'burden of tax' kept down particularly with the

large number of high-tech multinational companies in the area. He highlighted the importance of infrastructure and the advantage offered by Reading railway station as a major changing point for trains from all over the country.

The issue of homelessness was also addressed at the meeting and many were surprised to hear there were some people sleeping rough even in the affluent and idyllic areas. The support and time commitment charities and their volunteers provide was praised.

The meeting agreed on the need for more local planning to be determined by locals without facing excessive bureaucracy, though there was a warning about 'nimbysm'.

The panel also shared similar views on the need for the town centres of 2030 to become leisure experiences rather than major shopping with so many stores moving to out of town shopping parks leaving empty shops.

The MPs were keen to see the RSA further involved with local projects. One MP suggested opportunities for local Fellows and others to discuss issues and work on projects. In the South Central region, this role is being undertaken by some of the local Networks, as featured throughout this edition.

Challenges of running a regional theatre

FELLOWS and their guests will be able to enjoy a talk by Hedda Beeby, Artistic Director at the Watermill Theatre, on the difficulties faced by regional producing theatres and how local theatres provide a focus for arts in their communities. After the talk on Wednesday 8 June, Fellows who have booked for this event will watch a performance of Moonlight & Magnolias by Ron Hutchison, a play about the re-scripting of Gone With The

Wind just five days before filming started.

The Watermill is a resource for the surrounding community and beyond. It takes its shows to villages to provide access to professional theatre in rural areas, helps schools and colleges to deliver their curriculum; businesses to be more effective and creates opportunities for local people to be involved in the activities of their theatre.

The visit to Watermill gives

Fellows an opportunity to experience theatre management and development for real! The event at Bagnor, Newbury, will run from 6pm to 10pm. Bookings closed 21 April. Details previously issued.

To keep up-to-date with future events in the region, visit the RSA South Central webpages. The committee is limited to the number of postal newsletters it is able to arrange and reliant on the resources available.

Why is it important to value failure?

Dr David Hillson FRSA and editor of the book 'The Failure Files' will talk on 17 May about 'how to be a successful failure'. Everyone experiences failure, we don't like it, and we see it as 'a bad thing'. This presentation by Dr David Hillson explains why this is the wrong conclusion and offers a structured response to failure, drawing on the presenter's many years of experience as a 'successful failure'.

It explores the links between success and failure, including the Failure Formulae and the Success/Failure Ecocycle. Discover the underlying characteristics of failure and understand the multiple dimensions of failure. True failure comes from not trying at all, giving up too soon, and not learning or changing.

David is an international consultant and trainer, an author and a speaker on risk management. He is a Chartered Manager, Fellow of the Chartered Management Institute and Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (RSA). He has been involved with the RSA's Risk Commission and its Glory of Failure project. The goal of this project is to change society's attitude to failure, encouraging a more healthy approach to risk taking and removing the taboo around failure.

He has worked in more than 40 countries and runs a business known as 'The Risk Doctor'. He is particularly interested in improving project and program risk management, risk psychology and proactive opportunity management within the risk process. He will speak on developing creativity within organisations from failure.

This is a joint event with the Chartered Management Institute Solent and the CMI's Women in Management Network Hampshire and West Sussex.

Event: Tuesday May 17, 2011, 6.15pm - 8.15pm

Location: Mott McDonald, Southampton, SO50 9NW (close to motorway exit and short journey from mainline train station). Please note some satellite navigation systems have an error for this location, directions will be emailed out to

delegates.

Cost: Member £10, Non-member £15 includes refreshments (Mott MacDonald staff no charge). The Member rate applies to CMI, WiM, RSA Fellows and IoD members.

To book for the RSA South Central and CMI Solent's event with David Hillson on 17 May, click here then from the 'South East' events list choose the 'SE Hampshire' event on 17 May. You can book and pay online. RSA Fellows can pay at the member price of £10 and bring along guests at the non-member price.

Please email cmisolentevents@gmail.com once you have booked your place online with your fellowship number or if not known, your address and indicating that you are a Fellow of the RSA so that directions and further joining material can be sent out to you. If you experience a booking issue, email the CMI Solent branch at cmisolentevents@gmail.com. If you do not have web access, please send a cheque in favour of the 'Chartered Management Institute' together with your name, address and phone number to Tim Groves (CMI Solent), Mott McDonald, Stoneham Place, Stoneham Lane, Southampton SO50 9NW.

Our thanks to Mott McDonald for its support of this event and to David for donating his time for the RSA and CMI.

We are pleased to be able to offer Fellows the opportunity to book at the member rate of £15 for the **11 June 2011** regional CMI and IoD event on **Managing your career and organisation - strategy and tactics for this period of austerity** to be held at the Fishbourne Centre, near Chichester, West Sussex. For details of how to book, contact the organisers at cmisolentevents@gmail.com or send a cheque with details as above. Further details will also be available at: www.managers.org.uk/solent



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FELLOWS EXTEND THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF LIFEBOAT CENTRE

THE work of the RNLI has captured the interest of RSA Fellows and led to three successful group trips to its Dorset HQ. Fellows were able to take a close look at just some of the different style of lifeboats and hear about the training in which lifeboat crews undergo. There are a total of 4,660 volunteer crew members in the UK.

Demand for the 2010 RNLI trip was so high that another event was put on earlier this year by organiser Hilary Carrington FRSA. She said: "This is a fascinating place to visit and see first hand the work that goes into keeping the lifeboats and their crews available across the UK and running such a big charity. The trip gave Fellows an insight into the training facilities, size of the boats and contribution they all make to public safety. There was something for everyone to discover and take back and share with others. Fellows came from across the region and from different backgrounds."

Fellows were able to see first hand the different kinds of lifeboats and the simulator in the training area. Ian Gibb FRSA, who has had long connections with the RNLI, has been instrumental in arranging previous fellowship visits.

The RNLI receives no state funding and is reliant on donations and legacies.

RNLI
www.rnli.org.uk

North Oxfordshire Network Launch

Thursday 19 May, 6.30pm

Ye Olde Reindeer Inn, Parsons St, Banbury

ANOTHER new RSA Fellows' network will launch this summer, this time in North Oxfordshire.

As part of the launch, Tony Baldry, local Fellow and MP for North Oxfordshire, will be talking about the challenges and successes of the Banbury & Bicester Job Club scheme. There will also be a discussion on how to harness the skills and experience of local Fellows to benefit the community.

Come along, meet other Fellows in your area; feel free to bring anyone who may be interested in the RSA.

If you have any questions or would like to help organise please contact RSA Networks Manager for the region, Andy Kirk, on: 020 7451 6909.

To find out more and register to attend, please visit our event page. <http://frsanorthoxon.eventbrite.com/>

Thursday 12 May 2011, 6pm-10pm

Guided tour of Cookham Festival Sculpture Garden

AROUND 30 professional sculptors from as far afield as West Wales, Norfolk and Yorkshire will show their work in the outstanding gardens of the Odney Club. The site is privately owned by the John Lewis Partnership but generously open to everyone for this event only.

This is an exceptional setting for sculpture and a rare opportunity to enjoy so much work in one venue.

Sculptors Dick Budden, Lydia Karpinska and Lucy Ryan will walk Fellows round the Sculpture Garden and offer informal chats about styles, the making processes, and the place of art in society. You will discover that there is more to being a sculptor than making work in the studio! Contact Steve Breibart on 01628 627677 or at slbreibart@tsocommunication.com

Bookings can also be made on Eventbrite via the RSA South Central web-page (listed at the top of this page).

RSA Committee

AT the regional AGM and lunch on Saturday 16 July, near Winchester, you will be able to hear a fuller account of the work and future plans for the region. Feedback from the Fellowship shows that there is support for the stewardship provided by the Regional Committee and the general direction of travel. We would like to see more Fellows at the AGM and being able to talk with you about both the RSA nationally and locally.

As always, if you have (or haven't) been involved in any local RSA activity near where you live and/or work, we would appreciate hearing from you with your feedback. Your local feedback will supplement the postal sample survey that the RSA Trustee Board agreed

From the Chair – Greg Slay FRSA

should take place nationally later this year.

The role of the regional committee is essentially to provide the governance of the work of the RSA within South Central region. The committee meets on four evenings each year to report on, and track, progress with delivering the RSA's objectives. The region continues to get a small contribution each year from RSA House - related to the number of Fellows in the region - which we use to subsidise event costs where required (particularly events that are provided at nil cost to Fellows). As always we look to locally-based Fellows to play the greater part in keeping our Local Event Groups and Networks alive and functioning, but start-up support, including financial

assistance, is available from the regional committee.



There will be some changes on the committee at this year's AGM, with a number of people coming to the end of their term of office or have stepped down due to other commitments. We will need to elect a new deputy chair, who will go on to become the regional chair in 2013 (and may be required, by then, to be formally voted in by Fellows in the region). If you are interested in this role or joining the committee in a wider capacity, please contact me for an informal discussion as soon as possible (pg8 for contacts).

RSA Fellowship

Changes proposed in governing the RSA

THE RSA Governance Advisory Group, the subject of a successful motion at the recent RSA AGM, held its first meeting on 21 February, and plans to produce an interim report by the end of this summer. There are twelve people on the Group including three regional chairs. We have offered the Group the opportunity to contact South Central and discuss with us our experience with the RSA's existing regional governance toolkit. We currently use this as the framework for all our current arrangements associated with the regional committee.

The Governance Advisory Group is also considering the proposals that came from the Fellowship Council's 'review of regions' project. An exploratory survey last year of members of regional committees/ panels provided much useful information for the Fellowship Council. The findings however did not contain much in the way of surprises. There was a

recognition that Fellows needed to feel connected – without barriers and bureaucracy getting in the way – but that there also needed to be a structure for the regions and nations that met the requirements of both the Charity Commission and the RSA's Charter.

One of the suggestions was that there should be a 'regional team'. This would include an elected chair, treasurer, Fellowship Council representatives, the RSA's own Network Manager, and a number of co-opted Fellows who would represent RSA activity in the region. This is remarkably similar to the existing governance arrangement in South Central region. I personally do not think it is likely that the Group will stifle local and regional initiatives. We await its report and proposals with interest.

Greg Slay FRSA

AS an aspiration for the future in terms of active citizenship, community development and engagement, the Big Society is inspiring national and local discussions. Within the region, the framework provided by our Social Innovations Support Fund, and the funding that accompanies it, has already been used to part-fund a low carbon village initiative in Buckinghamshire, an education technology project in Reading, and the sustainable schools work of the Sustainability Centre on the South Downs. You will have read about these in a previous issue of this regional newsletter, and we look forward to further developments with these in the future.

But progress has been slow in taking the Fund further. The regional committee has therefore decided to align our approach more closely with the RSA's own, and more recently developed, national Catalyst Fund. To this end we are proposing to provide our Fund as a ring-fenced funding stream for Fellows in the region who apply to Catalyst and whose project proposals do not justify the full Catalyst funding but may be eligible for lower levels of Catalyst funding. We would of course continue to publicise regional projects - whether partly or fully funded by RSA Catalyst.

A good example of local engagement comes from the RSA Brighton Network, where there is a "Dragon's Den" type approach at which local Fellows pitch ideas for prospective development on a regular basis. Meanwhile, Alex Watson, who co-ordinates the Catalyst Fund for the RSA, has also already been out and about in South Central

attending local Network meetings and will continue to make himself available in that role to support local exploratory discussions. This is helpful because the Big Society has to be more than just a few selected projects within the region that only involve their creators in a conversation with RSA House. To be meaningful these discussions need to involve all of us chipping in with our ideas and suggestions.

If the Big Society is to be further realised within the region it will require a contribution from both within and across communities to supplant that already existing around for example, community safety partnerships and single-issue campaigns. Indeed the RSA's own recent (2010) report, 'Connected Communities: how social networks power and sustain the Big Society', highlighted the importance of online communities and the role that social media can play in bringing like-minded people together to influence and shape societal change.

The idea of the Big Society has a long history through different governments and has been developed by a variety of organisations including the RSA and Demos. Fellows were able to hear more about the history of the Big Society at a recent talk given by Peter Murray FRSA.

When you think about it, our work in South Central, focusing as it does on engaging Fellows with the national RSA agenda and/or encouraging local events and projects where the starting question is 'What can the RSA, and I as an RSA Fellow, bring to this?' is very much in line with the national approach to civic engagement and responsibility.
Greg Slay FRSA

The RSA report 'Connected Communities' highlights the role of social networks

HOW YOU CAN CONNECT WITH THE RSA LOCALLY & NATIONALLY

Useful RSA dates & web links

Local Network monthly meetings

Bedfordshire: dates tbc

Milton Keynes: first Wednesday

Reading: third Monday

Coming soon – North Oxfordshire

Chichester: third Monday

Portsmouth: first Monday -network dates tbc

Winchester: third Wednesday

Are you connected on the RSA ning?

<http://southcentralfrsa.ning.com/>

The ning operates wider than South Central and includes Buckinghamshire & South Wiltshire.

RSA Comment - Consider, Comment, Contribute

Created as a response to Fellows' suggestions for a space where they and others could share their views about the 'live' issues of the day. Its primary purpose is to provide Fellows with a space to write one-off pieces where they can share their analysis opinions, ideas and arguments for change. RSA Comment aims to reflect the diversity of opinion amongst the Fellowship. <http://comment.rsablogs.org.uk>

New networks come to life offering Fellows a chance to meet, share ideas and develop projects

A NEW network evening in Milton Keynes launched in April with the help of South Central committee member Judith Woodhead FRSA.

The network will meet on the first Wednesday of every month and will be an informal gathering where Fellows can discuss local issues, share ideas for projects and get to know interesting people from a range of backgrounds. The first event in April began a quarterly series of debates based on either a screening of a recent RSA lecture or a topic initiated by a guest speaker.

Networks Manager Andy Kirk said: "We want to hear your ideas about how the RSA can make a difference - how can we combine and harness the wide range of skills, experience and expertise in the local Fellowship?"

The Network was launched in December

2010 with 40 local Fellows and their guests bracing the freezing temperatures to lend their support. The Open University Centre in Milton Keynes provided a neutral, flexible and interactive space. Andy posed a question to all - 'what does Milton Keynes mean to you?'

**Fellows
can shape
local events
and projects**

Andy went on to talk about how 'it is the Fellows who own and shape their local RSA networks'. Chris Dunkley, a local new Fellow, then facilitated a timed 'pitching' exercise. Each small group, after introductions, co-created an imagined project with enthusiasm and passion, identifying where they would need additional skills and funds for

implementation. The room buzzed with ideas and humour.

One group member then fervently 'sold' their group's idea to all. The five projects were: the development of Milton Keynes' Redway footpath and cycle way system, the use of local football to develop young peoples' skills and employability, a project using a city status bid to bring communities together, a project to get a wide range of grassroots views before creating projects, and a project to involve 13 to 14 year olds as experts in civic society. After one key question to each presenter, all attendees were able to vote on their favourite.

Judith said: "With a shared commitment to future meetings, we were able to launch what will I am sure be another creative new network for the RSA."

BEDFORD launched its own Fellows Network this spring, as this newsletter went to print. At future events of the Network, Fellows and their guests will be able to meet others in their local area to find ways in which RSA Fellows can make a difference to the community.

At the launch event which was due to be held at the University in April, Fellows joined the audience for a performance of three short contemporary dance pieces, hosted by Prof Helen Bailey FRSA.

If you would like to be involved in either this or the Milton Keynes network, you can find further details on the RSA South Central website www.rsa.org.uk/southcentral, through the regular emails from the Networks Manager or by initially contacting Regional Committee member Judith Woodhead FRSA at: judith.woodhead@mac.com

Through events, the website and the newsletters, you can find out what Fellows networks across the region have been doing, connect with local RSA Fellows in an informal setting and discuss how local RSA Fellowship can have a positive impact on the community and wider society.

The hidden stories in wood – project helps to bring people together

FELLOWS discovered a living archive of people's stories and lives all revolving around the natural commodity of wood. A 30 foot seafaring vessel is being made from the donated wooden items, each with their own story. The event, organised by the RSA Chichester Network, was held in April at the

Thornham Marina, Emsworth, Hampshire.

Since February 2011, the artistic company Lone Twin has been inviting the public to donate their wooden belongings to this project which forms part of the Cultural Olympiad.

Mundane or extraordinary, your donation can be small or large, but it must have a story you can share.

Do you have an item which you could donate which has played a part in your life? A video on the project is available, click here

There are opportunities to donate wood at the shed at Thornham or at locations across the south east from May to July.



The RSA Chichester Network meets on the third Mondays of every month from 7.30pm to 9.30pm at its new location, The Bull Pub, on Market Road, Chichester. It is an informal gathering where Fellows can discuss local issues, share ideas for projects and get to know interesting people from a range of backgrounds. In March, it looked at how the RSA can have a positive impact on the community and wider society in 2011. You can book online or contact Graham Rawlinson FRSA (pictured above) on 01243 790328.



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