



**The principal aim of VocalEyes is to help ordinary people turn IDEAS into ACTION.**

It does this by combining innovative digital and traditional methods of communication, improving and transforming democracy, empowerment and self organisation at the most local level within our communities and groups of interest.

**Community Voice**

We are a social enterprise, "LocalEyes" (limited by guarantee) and have been working on a service called "Community Voice" since 2007 and would like to take this opportunity to tell you about it as it resonates largely with the recent Community Voice funded initiative led by the Big Lottery.

Community Voice is an aspect of the VocalEyes service (within LocalEyes) and is tailored to engagement within geographic communities.

The UK has almost 10,000 electoral "wards" that all have governing parish, community or borough councils depending on which country they are located in and whether their location is urban or rural.

VocalEyes provides a service that is specifically designed to enable a dialogue within any of these 10,000 communities and when a person registers they are automatically joined to the community where they live that has been identified by their postcode. This service is called "Community Voice" by default but the name can be adapted to make it specifically relevant to a local area.

**EXAMPLE: Milford Haven Voice**

In the case of this pilot project that is expected to start in summer of 2012, we will be calling the service the "Milford Haven Voice"



Specifically the service will cover the wards of Milford: Central, Milford: West, Milford: Hakin, Milford: Hubberston, Milford: East & Milford: North

**Transforming Local Infrastructure**

The Community Voice has been developed to transform the local communication infrastructure of our communities to enable them to leverage emerging proven concepts of Crowd-Resourcing and Crowd-Funding, empowering local people to turn ideas in action, creating new local enterprises and better informing governing councils of the communities priorities.

VocalEyes is a key digital and engagement partner in a £350k project led by Herefordshire Voluntary Action (HVA). The application was recently approved by the Big Lottery with the aim is to transforming local infrastructure within the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector in Herefordshire over the next 18 months. This project starts on April 1<sup>st</sup>.

More info: [http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog\\_transforming\\_local\\_infrastructure](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog_transforming_local_infrastructure)

**Turning Ideas into Action** - The process is split into;

### **IDEAS > PROPOSALS > ACTIONS.**

The Community Voice empowers residents enabling them to raise ideas which can be prioritised, voted on and committed to. These ideas will lead to real entrepreneurial projects to be led individually or collaboratively by the community. Each new idea that is turned into action in the form of a viable project will create new jobs and volunteering opportunities.

Once the Community Voice is sufficiently tested, it the model can be scaled swiftly across other communities.

#### **Prioritising Ideas**

Community Voice enables the community to prioritise ideas into lists within any number of topics (such as "How can we improve our community?", "Ideas to bring jobs to our community"). These ideas are suggested, debated and rated by members of the community themselves and when published, this will most likely be the first time residents clearly see the popularity of ideas across their community.

Below is an example list of ideas as suggested and prioritised by residents of The Havens Community in Pembrokeshire and published in The Havens Community Diary

**(see 5. The Havens Diary-January2008 - print page 4)**

	Idea Title	Average Rating So Far
1	Local Organic Food Box Scheme	4.7
2	Going Carbon Neutral Group	4.6
3	Wind Energy in The Havens	4.5
4	Lots of New Houses to be Built	4.5
5	Broad Haven Board Walk	4.1
6	Stocking Fair Trade in Local Shops	3.9
7	Londis & Local Produce	3.7
8	Water Saving (group buying containers)	3.7
9	Plastic Bags Alternative in Local Shops	3.5
10	Grow Your Own Fruit & Vegetables	3.5
11	Group Buying for Oil	3.4
12	Making Landlords Responsible For Energy Efficient Housing	3.4
13	Neighbourhood Watch Scheme	3.2
14	Derelict Caravans (dotted around Broad Haven)	3.1
15	Community Allotment	3.1

*COMMERCIAL EXAMPLE:* The IDEAS into ACTION logic is well demonstrated by Starbucks ( <http://mystarbucksidea.force.com> )

It is no coincidence that this company have announced the creation of 5000 new jobs in the UK <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-15980160> .

#### **Voting Proposals**

In cases where commitment is required to bring an idea to action, the Community Voice

enables voting proposals to be created. These proposals may be asking residents for a commitment of time, money or some other form of support. Local residents can then vote/commit and if the required number of people are identified to make the idea a success then the initiators of the idea can move ahead confidently toward action.

*EXAMPLE: In The Havens community, the idea "Local Organic Food Box" was the most popular and this was then turned into a voting proposal and local people were asked if they would commit to spending £5 or £10 / week on purchasing a food box. The vote showed that at least 37 people were prepared to commit to this expenditure, with numerous others requesting more information and consequently the food box initiative was started 3 weeks later.*

*(see attachment: 4a The Havens Community)*

### **Engagement Strategies**

It is crucial that the digital & technical aspects of the Community Voice are accompanied by strong engagement strategies to ensure participation by the community. Such as;

- Publicity via local newspapers / publications
- Engaging through social groups in the area, giving presentations and interactive sessions
- Presenting & engaging the local councils
- Working with local schools & colleges
- Other networking events & via the business community
- TXT messaging, QR Codes, JTC codes, internet, telephone, land mail
- Interactive touch screens in community centres, post offices, pubs etc.
- Train at least one "Community Builder" to support the project

### **Publicity via Local Newspapers (Publications of any kind)**

A symbiotic relationship exists with local publications whether they be newspapers, newsletters, magazines or local diaries. Community Voice can provide these publications with entirely new content emerging across the relevant communities. It can provide:

- Prioritised lists of ideas emerging from each community (these can be narrowed down by topic where appropriate)
- Proposals calling for engagement and participation from local people in projects that have already been identified as popular
- Actions arising from the process

*(see 2. Community Voice Newspaper Mock-up)*

Publications can use any of this new information to form the basis for news articles and editorials

### **Milford Mercury & Western Telegraph**

In Pembrokeshire, The editors of these newspapers, (part of the Newsquest group), can see the synergic relationship between the paper and Community Voice and **have agreed to publish the Community Voice on a weekly basis in the Milford Mercury, free of charge.** The Milford Mercury has a readership of 9 / 10,000 and a distribution of 3,500 papers.

*Once the Community Voice is proven to add value to the Milford Mercury, the editors have expressed a keen interest to scale up the project and promote the service to the remaining communities in Pembrokeshire, publicising the activity via the Western Telegraph which has a readership of approx 70,000.*

### **TXT Messaging**

We envisage TXT messaging to be a powerful and inclusive way for local people to engage with the Community Voice. It will enable people to read an article and respond instantly. It will also enable people to come together in social spaces such as a community hall and participate in real time voting as seen on TV programmes such as Who Wants To Be A Millionaire (Ask the audience).

*PAVS (ICT Support) are assisting us in the development of this functionality in terms of programming/testing.*

## **QR & JTC Codes**

Quick Response (QR) & Jump to Content (JTC) codes are used as often as possible within the publication to enable readers to interact easily with what they are reading. This might to comment on, rate or suggest an idea or to vote and commit to a proposal.



Over 3 million people now own Smart phones in the UK and the number is growing fast!

For those with older phones or interacting via a normal PC, the JTC codes provide these people with direct access to the content they are interested in from the front page of the website or via txt messaging.

## **Reaching the Hard to Reach**

For those people without access to mobile / SMART phones and the internet, a telephone number and postal address can be given for more traditional means of engagement. Also, interactive touch screen kiosks can be purchased and placed in popular locations within the community

Surgeries can also be set up where members of the younger generation assist those lacking confidence or experience with the necessary technology.

## **Community Builders & OCN Qualifications**

The local college are keen to support the project by training students as "Community Builder" to support and stimulate the Community Voice project while they earn relevant OCN qualifications. These individuals would have the following roles & responsibilities:

- Provide support within presentations and interactive sessions
- Assist new users with familiarisation of the process
- Provide online, email & telephone support to groups
- Research local communities to help kick start the process

## **More Information**

If you have any queries or would like to discuss how the Community Voice could empower and benefit local people in your area please feel free to contact us.

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