



Ready for the off ... The Newmarket SOS bus with, Joe Carter, of Newmarket Racing Partnership, Sue McAllister, Newmarket Community Partnership, Ian Richardson, Davis Charitable Trust, Mike and David Gazeley of Gazeley Horseboxes and Chief Supt Paul Marshall of Suffolk Police.

N090605016

SOS BUS READY FOR ACTION

Safe haven for clubbers takes to streets this summer

A BUS offering counselling and a safe haven for clubbers who get drunk or suffer from the effects of drugs will be hitting Newmarket High Street this summer.

The West Suffolk SOS Bus will cost around £100,000 a year to run but those backing the project, including the police, local businesses, the racing industry, health trusts and the Newmarket Community Partnership, believe it will make the town centre a safer place and free-up police to concentrate on more serious law and order issues.

Similar SOS bus projects have already proved successful in other towns and cities including Belfast and Norwich where the idea was pioneered.

They are staffed by trained volunteers and offer help for clubbers who are injured or feeling threatened.

Newmarket's SOS bus has been specially refitted by Gazeley Horseboxes and includes a medical area which will be manned by St John Ambulance staff.

by Alison Hayes
alison.hayes@
newmarketjournal.co.uk

Alongside them, volunteers will be on hand to offer help, advice and information.

Earlier this year, Chief Supt Paul Marshall, police commander for Suffolk's western area, who chairs the committee behind the project, told town councillors that Home Office funding of up to £30,000 has been earmarked for running costs. Other funders include West Suffolk Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, which provided an initial £20,000, and £4,200 from the West Suffolk Local Strategic Partnership. Then the project still needed to find up to £30,000 to get it up and running.

Since then the Davis Group Charitable Trust, a trust linked with the Newmarket-based commercial insurers, now called Bluefin, which provides support for young people, has stepped in with financial backing for the project.

Trustee, Leigh Smart, said: "It is a fantastic local initiative to support with huge benefits to our community. We hope that our help will be useful in getting this project off the ground and will encourage

other Newmarket businesses and charities to do the same."

Joe Carter, addiction support adviser to the Newmarket Racing Partnership said: "Racing organisations such as Racing Welfare, the British Horseracing Authority and the National Stud have been keen to be a part of this project and it has been a pleasure to be involved with such a progressive and commendable community project."

It is anticipated that the bus may be used at some of the Newmarket Nights race and music nights which regularly attract crowds of up to 20,000.

During the daytime it will be used as a community resource, possibly as a mobile youth centre, and for hire by local health and education authorities.

Project co-ordinator, Sue McAllister, said they were now looking for volunteers to work on the bus. "Volunteers will need to work non-judgmentally with patience and tolerance and with the desire to communicate and deal with vulnerable members of the public," she said.

Anyone interested should ring 01638 664480 or visit the website on www.west-suffolksosbus.org

The bus will be on display at Newmarket Carnival on Saturday July 4.

It's the 1/1
Wato

MUST END
SATURDAY
13TH JUNE

Par
Jewellers

personal service, 6
always

TAKE A TOUR OF THE SOS BUS ON OUR WEBSITE www.newmarketjournal.co.uk