



Viewpoint

OUR popular Viewpoint feature allows readers to share their prized photographs with Citizen First readers.

If you have a photograph you

would like others to see then email it to us as a jpg to editorial@mkcitizen.co.uk (minimum file size 300k) or send your prints to Viewpoint, Citizen

First, Napier House, Auckland Park, Bletchley, Milton Keynes MK1 1BU. Please supply full details about the location, why you like it and where you live.



TIME FOR TEEPEE: A walk in the woods can be very satisfying, especially with a carpet of bluebells and a rather ramshackle looking teepee in view. Pamela Tarshish took this picture, far left.

BUTTERFLY BEAUTY: This newly emerged peacock butterfly was snapped by reader Jane Oakley.



>> Film director and screenwriter Segun Oguntola arrived in Milton Keynes in 2007 after growing up in Greenwich, South East London, and spending five years developing a film industry in The Gambia, West Africa.

>> He was immediately struck by how so many backgrounds and cultures were represented in the new city's population – and set out to find why so many people come here to make a new start, and become part of the MK mix.

>> The people Segun meets feature in this regular Citizen First focus.

the mk mix

>> What attracted to you come to Milton Keynes?

My husband was offered a job in a Japanese company to head up a finance department. I followed him to this city.

Before I even came to live in the city, something always fascinated me about it – it was a new, young, thriving city, full of opportunities. We had no family or friends in the city, but that was fine – we made our own.

>> What's the most striking difference you've found between MK and the place you've lived the longest?

Modern infrastructure, open spaces, 'can do' attitude, roundabouts, indoor snow.

I like Milton Keynes because it is spacious, very green, the traffic flows swiftly, and there are lots of walking places.

The city is very tranquil.

>> How are you involved in MK life?

As director of Milton Keynes Equality Council I have the opportunity to get involved in the different diverse communities of Milton Keynes.

We have in the past developed school projects with a view to promoting race equality.

I also work very closely with the voluntary sector, statutory/public sector and the private sector, Thames Valley Police, the Primary Care Trust, the Open University and various other organisations, promoting equality of opportunity for all.

>> Have you found the city welcoming?

I have been living in the city since 1989. At that time it was still finding its identity. I would say that since then the city has come a long way in terms of race equality.

In 1989 you would barely see any black minority ethnic employees, but now the workforce is becoming more diverse.

The city still has a long way to go, but the journey on the road to equality has started.

>> How far have you spread your net so far? Are you happy with your opportunities to make contact with all the city's many communities, or have you been frustrated along the way?

We have worked very closely with Campbell Park Parish Council in hosting 15 spotlights on the different cultures in Milton Keynes.

It is never easy for newcomers because there is just so much to see and learn about the systems which may be different from where they have come from.

We have tried to make it as easy as possible by being a first call of contact so we can put individuals in touch with the right networks.

Various networks and support groups have been established but they all need resourcing badly.

We recently put on a spotlight in partnership with Virtual Viewing on Poland. This is a new community that is settling down in Milton Keynes.

>> Navrita Atwal is the director of Milton Keynes Equality Council, formerly known as the Milton Keynes Racial Equality Council.

>> Her family is originally from the Punjab in northern India. Her working life has included spells in public relations, training and race equality. Before coming to Milton Keynes, she worked for BAA as a public relations executive.



They have established a nursery, an internet website to keep in contact with the Polish community and to signpost each other, share any concerns and views. I would class this as best practice.

This has been possible because the person behind it is a Polish web developer.

There are more than 100 community groups in MK. Some have a very short life and fold up after a few months due to lack of resources.

Then new communities come along and try to formulate new groups.

We work very closely with communities to see how we can support them and their aims.

>> Are you planning to stay in MK for a fixed time for work or family reasons, or do you think you're here for good?

I have no plans to leave Milton Keynes. I consider this city as my home.

>> If someone who had never been to MK before was considering moving here to make a new life, what's the best piece of advice you could give them?

They need to make sure that they have somewhere to stay. The council and housing associations operate a waiting list system which can be quite long.

They need to conduct their own research about the job opportunities in the city to suit their skills and qualifications.

Without a roof over the head and a

job, any city can be daunting.

You need to come to Milton Keynes with an open mind. People can always make a new life here.

There will always be opportunities and challenges, but MK welcomes new talent and new/innovative ideas.

Some things are learnt just through time and cannot be taught. Everything seems hard when you don't have the right answer, but as soon you have the answer, the process seems very easy and straightforward.

No matter where you live or decide to settle, you always need to do your own research.

These days, things are made quite easy if you are IT literate and have access to the web. Information and knowledge is at a click of a button.

>> What would you say to people who can't find anything good to say about the city?

Milton Keynes is a great city. It all depends what you are looking for.

If you like a lot of hustle and bustle, then one needs to explore London.

If you like tranquillity and harmony, then Milton Keynes is definitely the city for you.

People have tried to compare MK with London. I don't think MK will ever be like London, but it will always have its unique qualities of being interesting, exciting, different and welcoming.



The MK Mix is supported by the Ramada Encore Milton Keynes in Midsummer Boulevard, CMK. Find out more about the hotel at www.encoremiltonkeynes.co.uk or by calling 0870 428 1438