


Stroud District Market Towns Study

Phase III Report

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Atkins was commissioned by Stroud District Council in October 2003 to undertake a study aimed at supporting the work of partnerships in Berkeley, Dursley, Nailsworth, Stonehouse, Stroud and Wotton-under-Edge. The study aims to provide baseline information to feed into an analysis of need in the towns and then provide guidance and advice in relation to various aspects of the development of Town Action Plans under the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative and Countryside Agency Healthcheck Programme.

BACKGROUND CONTEXT

- 1.2 This report represents Stage III of the Stroud District Market Towns Study. Stages I and II of the study were concerned, respectively, with baseline data collection and the development of a 'vitality index' framework for market towns. The latter was firmly embedded in research and consultation into local needs and aspirations and review of best practice guidance published to date.
- 1.3 This third phase aims to bring together the work undertaken at Stages I and II of the study, cross-referencing the baseline data and vitality index to provide communities with guidance on the following:
- ◆ practical and written advice on the use, marketing and promotion of the information to wider audiences, including the general public and key agencies/organisations; and
 - ◆ detailed procedural guidance on good practice in the production of action plans for market towns and how to publicise the final product.
- 1.4 This report is supported by six data compendiums – one each for the towns of Berkeley, Dursley, Nailsworth, Stonehouse, Stroud and Wotton-under-Edge. These contain a wide selection of the findings of the baseline data collection undertaken in Phase I of this commission, specifically concerned with the following:
- ◆ pedestrian surveys – providing statistical analysis of pedestrian flows at different points in the town, compared with previous survey data where appropriate;
 - ◆ land use surveys – providing statistical analysis of land uses and vacancy rates within the town cores, cross-referenced to illustrative mapping of the main land uses at ground and first floor level, contained in the main Phase I report;
 - ◆ transport inventory – written details of current transport provision in and around the town, cross-referenced to illustrative mapping provided in the main Phase I report; and
 - ◆ shopper surveys – statistical and graphical representations of some of the key findings from the shopper surveys carried out in the town, together with basic analysis of some of the main trends. Reference is made to the full raw data tables, which are included in the Phase I report.

REPORT STRUCTURE

1.5 This report is structured as follows:

- ◆ **Section 2: Use, Marketing and Promotion of Data** – provides an overview of the principal applications of the combined datasets: the baseline surveys completed under Phase I of the study; and the completed vitality indexes for each town. This is then supported by recommendations pertaining to the marketing and promotion of the complete index as a tool to generate public interest as well as assisting access to potential funding sources;
- ◆ **Section 3: Action Planning: good practice guidance** – provides details of a tried and tested procedural framework for the development of robust and comprehensive action plans that is sufficiently flexible to adapt to the needs and skills of each community and be carried forward to implementation;
- ◆ **Section 4: Case Studies** – provides a selection of references to examples of good practice in successful action planning as a means of illustrating different ways in which the good practice framework presented in Section 3 can be interpreted to achieve positive change.

2. Use, Marketing and Promotion of Data

- 2.1 Stroud District Council has been instrumental in ensuring that the market town partnerships in the district now have a wealth of high quality statistical data and a growing range of qualitative indicators from which to source information pertaining to the vitality, strengths and weaknesses of their towns. The development of additional data collection methodologies and completion of analysis under the vitality index will serve to further strengthen this resource, adding a social capital and creativity dimension.
- 2.2 These resources are something of which the local communities should be proud – they can be adapted to a wide variety of applications and the District Council has strong aspirations that the development of the Vitality Index could ultimately be rolled out on a county and regional basis as an example of innovation and good practice. This section therefore sets out some of the principal applications of the datasets, as well as making recommendations with regard to the marketing and promotion of the data and vitality index.

USE OF DATA RESOURCES

- 2.3 The data resources provide coverage of quantitative (statistical) and qualitative (consultation findings, survey results, focus group opinion based information) data covering the following six main themes:
- ◆ environment;
 - ◆ economy;
 - ◆ social and community;
 - ◆ transport;
 - ◆ social capital; and
 - ◆ creativity indices.
- 2.4 The range of data types, indicators and collection methodologies means that there is considerable potential for a wide range of applications. However, the main intended uses are as follows:
- ◆ **baseline data to inform the action planning process at the individual town level:** fully completed, the Vitality Index will result not only in the collection of a wide range of different coverage and types of data, but the scoring system will also enable the identification of issues that need addressing in the town. The intrinsic ranking used in the Index will enable communities to prioritise the most important issues and then open discussions as to how best to address these as part of the action plan for the town's future.
 - ◆ **annual update to provide a tool for monitoring trends and 'progress' in each town;** it is recommended that communities develop a programme to enable annual updates of the vitality index – this will enable progress and trends to be identified year on year and ensure that changing priorities are identified quickly and efficiently. This will then feed into the review of the action plan to

ensure that it continues to address the main issues of the particular town and community that it is aimed to help.

- ◆ **the identification of tangible ‘outputs’ that can be used to support and substantiate funding bids and applications as part of the implementation process;** one of the most effective ways (and often essential pre-requisites) to obtain funding through a competitive bidding process is to demonstrate a clear need for the project or proposal. The completed Vitality Index will provide a full suite of data covering all aspects of community ‘health’ and ‘vitality’ and will therefore form a strong and coherent set of ‘evidence’ to support bids and applications for regeneration funding.
- ◆ **as a tool to influence strategic planning of the town centre, through collaborative working with the local authority;** the Vitality Index will provide a comprehensive assessment of the state of the town focussing not only on tangible factors, but also intangible, opinion-based issues. As such, it will generate a clear indication of both actual and perceived problems which is a very useful basis for planning the strategic growth of the town.
- ◆ **a means of comparing vitality and ‘progress’ across towns:** by setting a clear and specific methodology and utilising the same set of indicators for each of the towns, the completed Vitality Indices will be directly comparable between towns. This will enable the relative state of ‘vitality’ to be assessed and may also be useful in highlighting instances where one town is performing well and others are not. This in turn will indicate where there may be benefit in undertaking inter-community consultation and knowledge sharing in order to combat ‘problems’ by discussing potential ‘solutions’.

2.5 In order for the above to be achieved, it will be of fundamental importance that the partnerships within each of the six market towns make a commitment to work together. This is essential to ensure that each town adopts the same methodologies and sampling frames to make certain that data quality remains consistent and output is directly comparable. The district council will have a significant part to play in this process, acting as a co-ordinating body and offering guidance, experience and resources.

Future Uses

2.6 It is inevitable that as the data collection process and the ongoing update of the vitality index progresses in the coming years, recommendations will be made with regard to improvements to the methodologies or scope, simplification of data collection and enhanced data presentation and analysis techniques. Such changes should be open to consultation and evaluation between partnerships so that blanket changes to improve the process may be made on the basis of partnership consensus.

2.7 Once the process becomes familiar, however, there may be opportunities to roll the index out across the county and, potentially, the region. As such, it will be important for existing links between the market town partnerships and higher level government to be maintained and strengthened so that desired functionalities can be explored in preparation for wider application of the index. This will also serve to enhance and strengthen the reputation of Stroud District Council as a Beacon Council for certain aspects of its work.

MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Marketing

- 2.8 The successful use and dissemination of the available information will be dependent on public awareness of the resources that are at the disposal of local people and professional organisations. The marketing and promotion of the information will therefore be critical to securing financial and community support for the continued annual data collection programme and analysis, as recommended under the vitality index that has been developed as part of Phase II of this study.
- 2.9 A very useful point of reference is the document '**Prove It! Measuring the effect of neighbourhood renewal on local people**', which was produced in July 2000 by a partnership of Groundwork, the New Economics Foundation and Barclays plc. The contents of chapter 10 of the document, entitled 'Communicating Progress' are reproduced here as they are considered to provide an excellent justification for the value of marketing. The document was produced by the partnership as part of a research project examining and developing indicators to assess the effects of neighbourhood renewal on local people, largely through survey and consultation work. Therefore, although direct references are made to this work in the extract, the overall content of the guidance is directly applicable to the Vitality Index.

Why communicate?

The whole point about doing the indicators is to measure and promote positive change. The more people who are aware of them, the greater the chance of this being the case.

When to communicate

Some indicators may be relevant after the first round of measurement as they give a snapshot of the community. It has been useful to learn that in the 16 pilot project areas, over half of the people felt safe out and about in their communities at night. However, the second and later rounds will tell more of the story about the impact of the project. After the second round you can see whether things are really changing locally or not.

What to communicate

What changes do you want to see, and who could help to make the changes? Once you've worked this out, you can start thinking about what to communicate to the people who can really make the difference – probably different people/groups for each indicator.

Who to communicate to

An important part of the getting started phase of the project is identifying relevant stakeholders. Certain indicators will be more relevant to some stakeholders (people affected by the project in different ways) locally, and you can target the message you send to them accordingly.

It is important to give feedback to those who participated in the survey. If people have spent time answering questions they deserve to find out about the results! Invite interviewees and others to a presentation, distribute results in the local paper, in a mail-out or on notice boards. This is also a way for you to get their feedback on the results. Be as creative as possible.

The survey can deliver a much-needed boost for volunteers and community workers alike. Sometimes community workers can feel undervalued, and some have found that the social capital survey meant they could at last prove their worth and that they were having an impact.

There may be messages from the indicators that need to reach those that it has been difficult to involve in the project, for example local government and business. Don't forget to communicate with them.

How to communicate

You need to make sure that you use whatever language (words, pictures, images) will stick most in people's minds. This will be different for different groups.

It may be that certain audiences respond to something more visual! In a Reading park, a class of children who were fed up with the dog mess decided to take direct action. One Saturday morning, they planted 900 flags in each pile of dogmess, and invited the press to take pictures. The message obviously got through – as on the next count, only 250 flags were used.

SOURCE: Chapter 10 from: 'Prove It! Measuring the effect of neighbourhood renewal on local people', which was produced in July 2000 by a partnership of Groundwork, the New Economics Foundation and Barclays plc

2.10 The most effective method of marketing a product is to present it as an innovation that is both useful and workable for a variety of applications. The product must be 'well packaged' and presented in a manner that is memorable, easy to understand and capable of appealing to a wide audience. When these principles are applied to the marketing of the Vitality Index, it is possible to identify the following as key elements of a successful marketing approach:

- ◆ the full scope of the data should be explained in general terms in a clear and unambiguous manner;
- ◆ the range of data available is vast thus it is unlikely that the majority of people will be interested in accessing all of it. As such it should therefore be broken down into either topic based information, sub-divided by town, or alternatively, town-specific information, sub-divided into discrete topics;
- ◆ the final format of data analysis should be clear, colourful and produced to a high standard of presentation. There may be scope to use symbols to 'jazz-up' graphical datasets – simple bars on a transport mode graph could be replaced with pictures of trains/buses/people walking; or spend in a town could be shown by different sized money bags;
- ◆ the development and use of indicators relating to the emerging fields of social capital and creativity is highly innovative and adds another dimension to the

- scope of the existing healthcheck process – this represents a ‘unique selling point’ and should be strongly emphasised in marketing material;
- ◆ case studies of the application of the index will become available in the future as the information begins to be used as a basis for action planning in the district’s market towns – as examples become available they should be added to the marketing material to highlight the practical benefits of adopting the Vitality Index approach;
 - ◆ marketing material produced for each of the towns should be co-ordinated in appearance to reflect a consistent approach to analysis – ongoing consultation between the towns will enable the pooling of ideas, which should help to ensure that the overall appearance remains fresh and is subject to periodic update;
 - ◆ there may be merit in producing an ‘executive summary’ of the main findings of the data in the form of a marketing brochure. This should include a strong visual element and pick out key local issues – a good mix of colourful graphs, large-font quotes and short bullet point statements will help to engage the reader and keep their interest. Such a brochure should also incorporate contact details and indicative examples of the range of analysis and applications offered by the data resources and vitality index.

Promotion

- 2.11 At its most basic level, promotion essentially equates to a large scale process of ‘awareness raising’. Once it is completed, the marketing material will need to be actively promoted to the desired target audience – local residents; influential actors within the local community; possible partners; potential funding sources; neighbouring districts. Particularly important will be the active promotion of successfully implemented projects – one of the most effective ways of motivating communities is to show that good things are not just being talked about, but are actually happening.
- 2.12 The Case Studies and references cited in Section 4 of this report provide examples of the most common and effective means of promotion of regeneration information of this sort, particularly in relation to the process of community-led action planning. The Vitality Index and associated data sources are an integral part of the action planning process (explained in greater detail in Section 3 of this report). As such, the promotional mechanisms utilised in the Case Studies may prove to be equally effective for the Stroud communities. Detailed here is a series of recommended routes for promoting the work of this study – these have been amplified by examples and information contained in ***‘Prove It! Measuring the effect of neighbourhood renewal on local people’***.

Report

- 2.13 There will need to be a basic and clearly illustrated report to promote the purpose and findings of the Index to local people. The data compendiums represent the basic startpoint for these reports, however in order to be promoted to the wider audience their contents will need to be expanded to encompass the full Vitality Index. In addition to this, to assert community ownership and the town identity it is recommended that the format be re-worked and thought be given to presenting the material in a visually appealing and stimulating manner.

2.14 The report will need to have a basic written form, however could also be adapted to create display material suitable for public notice boards (libraries, leisure centres, community halls and council offices may be possible locations for siting this material). The 'Prove It!' report suggests that the ingredients for a good report should include the following:

- ◆ *“Visuals! For example show the rise/fall of indicators over time as a graph. Belfast used the height of chimneys to track air pollution and piles of briefcases to track visitors to the city;*
- ◆ *explanations of what you hope will happen with each indicator, and a couple of stories;*
- ◆ *ideas of what people can do next;*
- ◆ *clear contact details;*
- ◆ *ways for people to feed back ideas and get involved.”*

Public Exhibition

2.15 Public exhibitions would offer an excellent opportunity to showcase marketing material and promote the data and Vitality Index to a wide audience. This approach has the advantage of being less formal or intense than public meetings or focus groups, yet still offers adequate opportunities for people to ask questions and provide feedback through comments forms or attendee questionnaires.

2.16 It should be noted, however, that in order to secure high attendance levels, thought and effort will need to be given to publicising the exhibition to an appropriate audience. The local press, media and invitations disseminated through schools are a good medium for reaching the general public. Securing the attendance of potential funding partners and/or government bodies and regeneration organisations is more successful through the distribution of personalised letters of invitation, which also offer an opportunity to provide some background to the study.

Local Press

2.17 Regional newspapers have an estimated readership of over 80% of people over the age of 15 (cited in the 'Prove It! report) and can often prove to be very influential. As such, the local press represents an effective mechanism for raising local awareness of issues and regeneration proposals. By portraying the dataset and Vitality Index as a positive element of achieving beneficial change in the town, the press may also serve to foster a greater degree of locally-based support in the work of the market town partnerships.

2.18 Partnerships should invite representatives of the press to meetings and/or presentations regarding the data collection, Vitality Index and action planning processes. The ideal outcome of involving the press would then be the publication of a feature or series of articles promoting the data and index as an integral part of the process aimed at achieving the comprehensive regeneration of the local market towns.

2.19 Once project progress begins to be achieved there may be further opportunities to develop larger public events that the press may wish to become involved in. The

'Prove It!' document provides the following ideas for 'creativity', some of which communities may wish to pursue, or may act as a catalyst for communities to generate their own ideas:

- ◆ *"flags on school fence illustrating good and bad things;*
- ◆ *Swingometer;*
- ◆ *PC Terminal with results;*
- ◆ *Interactive exhibits;*
- ◆ *Create local banners or booklets, or walking trail through the area;*
- ◆ *Make banners;*
- ◆ *Ask people to take pictures or draw things for the display when you present the information;*
- ◆ *Get a local artist or pupils at the school to design an interesting display;*
- ◆ *Parish 3D map;*
- ◆ *Photograph the area and residents before starting the projects and after completion;*
- ◆ *Make a very large scale wooden jigsaw;*
- ◆ *Link into a local history/futures project with tape recordings of people telling stories behind the indicators;*
- ◆ *Video of young people "telling it how it is";*
- ◆ *Drama workshops/show (this is how it is/this is how we would like it to be/this is how we'd achieve it);*
- ◆ *Involve a celebrity;*
- ◆ *Have an event with a theme linked to some of the survey findings e.g. Area pride with different people/groups contributing."*

Regeneration Newsletter

- 2.20 Stroud District Council is currently looking to producing a 'regeneration newsletter' for the work of the Council and its constituent towns and communities. This would offer each of the towns the opportunity to provide regular updates on progress through a mixture of photographs, articles and illustrations. The newsletter would also offer a medium through which communities could publicise forthcoming events – meeting; displays; workshops and the like. Contact details could be provided together with an invitation for readers to send in comments and suggestions or highlight local issues that they feel should be addressed, thus establishing a mechanism for feedback and community engagement.

Meetings, Presentation and Workshops

- 2.21 The consultation event hosted by Stroud District Council as a part of this study was well attended by a wide variety of people and organisations with an interest in the future of Stroud's market towns. Positive feedback from delegates at the event indicates that there is already a considerable level of interest in the study and its aims – town partnerships should seek to maintain the impetus fostered by this initial

event, following it up with further meetings, presentations and workshops as development progresses over time.

- 2.22 These events could also be used as a means of updating existing partners as well as inviting and informing potential partners from across the region. Progress within the communities can be described and the events, such as those outlined in 2.19, could also be used as a means of promoting and marketing the Vitality Index as an innovative and effective tool to assist in community-led regeneration, with the potential to be introduced on a wider scale across Gloucestershire and the south west.

World-wide Web

- 2.23 The internet represents a relatively inexpensive, easily accessible and updatable means of accessing and disseminating information on a global scale. The Case Studies in Section 4 provide examples of community regeneration partnerships that have already taken advantage of this medium by developing their own websites, which host a range of information pertaining to the development of their towns including action plans, progress updates, facilities for guests to make comments and opportunities for visitors to subscribe to receiving regular updates via electronic newsletter.
- 2.24 The work of the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative is publicised on a number of different websites including those hosted by SWRDA, south west towns web, the Countryside Agency and the Government Office for the South West. All of these sites include links to information relating to specific towns involved in regeneration initiatives connected to their respective organisations.
- 2.25 Careful consideration should be given to the most appropriate use of this highly effective medium as a promotional tool – options include using the local council's website (which is already done by Stroud communities to some extent); applying for updated information to be posted onto the websites of larger partnership/funding organisations; or investing in the development of a new website for the Vitality Index which provides space dedicated to each of the towns. The Gloucestershire Market Towns Forum website also offers local communities within the County the opportunity to develop their own 'town' site to display and promote information and progress – if this is to be used then there will need to be a system established for regular updates.

3. Action Planning: good practice guidance

INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 Action Planning can be considered as a rigorous means of examining the state of development of a town or area in its entirety, taking stock of the existing situation together with proposed changes and development schemes, then setting a clear framework of goals to identify planned progress for future change. Undertaken thoroughly and inclusively, the action planning process is excellent for identifying principal issues and concerns unique to a particular community, thus highlighting areas in need of, or offering, clear opportunities for improvement.
- 3.2 By looking at a town or area holistically it then becomes possible to ensure that incremental changes are either replaced by, or embedded within, a coherent and co-ordinated approach. This will result in complementary development and the achievement of long term goals and aspirations, as opposed to short term 'quick fixes' that may merely serve to move problems around or between towns.
- 3.3 Each Action Plan will necessarily be unique to the town or area with which it is concerned. However, there are a series of steps and tasks that should be undertaken to ensure that the process is as inclusive and rigorous as possible. These can be considered to be essential characteristics to ensuring that the final plan becomes a useful tool for obtaining the support of both the community and influential actors in the regeneration process and, ultimately, securing funding for implementation of the plan. The recommended tasks can be broken down into six main stages:
- ◆ **Stage 1:** Introduction and Background Context;
 - ◆ **Stage 2:** Asset Review, Identification of Key Issues and SWOT Analysis;
 - ◆ **Stage 3:** Vision;
 - ◆ **Stage 4:** Identification and Evaluation of Projects;
 - ◆ **Stage 5:** Final Action Plan;
 - ◆ **Stage 6:** Delivery and Implementation.

PROCEDURAL GUIDANCE

- 3.4 The six stages identified in paragraph 3.3 represent a simple yet effective framework for the organisation of the various tasks involved in the development and implementation of a successful Action Plan. There is a great degree of flexibility within this framework; however, the principal tasks under each stage are described here. It is envisaged that this framework can be carried forward by the Stroud communities, the stages forming the overall structure of the final Action Plan document for each town.

Stage 1: Introduction and Background Context

- 3.5 An Action Plan will ultimately form the basis for 'selling' a town to potential funding partners who, in some cases, may have little or no prior knowledge of the town and will often be faced with difficult decisions regarding the selective allocation of a limited budget of regeneration monies around a large number of competing towns and projects. As such, it is essential that the need, and therefore the justification, for development within the town is clearly stated from the outset.
- 3.6 This first stage of the Action Plan should therefore provide the contextual background for the study, encompassing as a minimum, the following:
- ◆ *historical development of the town* – highlighting any locally important or distinctive aspects, for example: important events that have shaped the town, local legends, famous people associated with the town, historic buildings, archaeological sites, historic routeways and heritage based attractions;
 - ◆ *review of previous studies* – there may already have been previous studies undertaken or strategies completed for the town. These will provide a useful, if sometimes outdated, background to previous issues, which the Action Plan will need to revisit. As such, they should be reviewed to identify the key findings;
 - ◆ *planning background* – it is important to review the planning background of an area to understand what type of changes and development are already supported by the local authority with regards to the town. An understanding of the planning policies applicable to different geographical areas and the general aims for the future development of the district and county will be fundamental to ensuring that Action Plan projects are compatible with the relevant planning context. This will minimise delays in the process of applying for planning permission, as well as rendering it easier to achieve local authority support for the Action Plan.
- 3.7 It is useful to illustrate this section of the report with location maps that show the town in its wider context, clearly highlighting links to other major towns and arterial infrastructure in terms of major roads and railways, coastlines, canals and major topographical features such as valleys and hills. The geographical extent of the study area should also be set at this stage and it can be useful to highlight major services and facilities such as roads, schools, employment centres, the core of the town centre, main shopping areas and so on.

Stage 2: Asset Review, Identification of Key Issues and SWOT analysis

- 3.8 The aim of this stage of the action planning process is to identify what the town already offers, what it is lacking, what opportunities may exist for beneficial change and any perceived barriers to development. This analysis will form the basis of the long term Vision for the town which, in turn, implicitly sets out the main criteria for projects that will feature in the final Action Plan. It is therefore essential that all aspects of the town are examined and understood in detail.
- 3.9 The most effective means of identifying the existing assets of the town and highlighting key issues that require addressing will be the use of a combination of the existing information gathered under the MCTi and healthcheck processes and the completion of the Vitality Index, the constituent elements of which are set out in the

Phase II report of this study. Taken together, these will provide a comprehensive profile of the town, encompassing issues relating to all of the following:

- ◆ the natural environment;
- ◆ the built environment;
- ◆ the state of the economy;
- ◆ the skills and structure of the local population;
- ◆ the range and quality of social and community facilities;
- ◆ social capital; and
- ◆ a measure of creativity in the town.

3.10 The completion of the grading system recommended as part of the Vitality Index can then be used to inform the completion of a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis of the town, drawing out and categorising issues as follows:

- ◆ **Strengths:** key assets of the town (graded 4 or 5 in the vitality index) – the list should be as full as possible. It could include a wide variety of strengths encompassing both the physical environment as well as identifying people or groups that are active in the town. Examples include: an active chamber of commerce; a strong voluntary sector; a successful orchestra; an excellent swimming pool; access to a river; a long distance recreational route in or near the town centre; an inter-city railway station etc.
- ◆ **Weaknesses:** aspects of the town that detract from the overall appeal of the town or may serve to undermine development schemes (grade 1 or 2 and perhaps 3 in the vitality index), for example: high proportional vacancy rates; poor quality public realm; severance by a road, railway or watercourse; traffic congestion; poor accessibility; fear of crime; lack of open space; dereliction of buildings; lack of evening economy etc.
- ◆ **Opportunities:** relate to conditions or proposals that have the potential to improve the town but are not being capitalised on at the present time. Examples include: availability of regeneration funding such as Objective One or Market and Coastal Towns Initiative; strong local authority support for community-led development; proposed private sector development; imminent development of a tourist/recreational route (i.e. canal, Sustrans route); proposed highway improvement; building or groups of buildings that are ripe for redevelopment or new retail development.
- ◆ **Threats:** represent possible constraints to development that cannot necessarily be overcome in the short term, for example: a need for land reclamation; areas of high flood risk; lack of community support or enthusiasm; restrictive land use planning policies, lack of local skills etc.

Stage 3: Vision

3.11 The development of a specific Vision is a key aspect of action planning. It defines and steers future activity in the town by setting overarching long term objectives around which partners can unite. The Vision should be developed from a sound understanding of the aspirations of all those involved in the town, as well as addressing the key issues identified through the Vitality Index and SWOT Analysis.

- 3.12 The Vision should take the form of a clear statement that recognises the town's potential and seeks to ensure that this is developed effectively in order to regenerate the economy and community life. It should be phrased with specific reference to the town and be prescriptive about the community's aspirations with regard to what the key characteristics of the town should be in 20 years time.

Stage 4: Identification and Evaluation of Projects

Identification of Programme and Projects

- 3.13 The consideration of issues in the town, coupled with the consultation that forms an integral part of the data collection in Stage 2 and Visioning exercise in Stage 3 of the action planning process should serve to make the partnership well aware of ongoing projects and community aspirations. These should be combined with the partnership's own ideas to provide a full list of projects that will fall into two broad categories:
- ◆ ongoing – projects that are either currently being completed or already proposed for implementation in the short term; and
 - ◆ potential projects – possible projects that could be developed to capitalise on an identified opportunity (e.g. funding/site availability/local skills) to fulfil a particular need (e.g. provision of specialised facilities/re-development of an underused site/local employment).
- 3.14 A list of **all** projects should be compiled at this stage, regardless of whether or not they are considered likely to attract funding or be achievable. Descriptions of the main constituent parts of each project should be developed and it may be useful to augment this with illustrations.
- 3.15 It may be possible to group projects thematically or geographically, which can be useful in structuring the overall Action Plan in Stage 6. However, what is important at this stage is to be able to demonstrate that the 'net was cast as wide as possible' with regard to considering possible projects for inclusion in the final Action Plan – the justification for inclusion or exclusion of particular projects will come next.

Evaluation of Projects

- 3.16 The final Action Plan needs to be realistic in terms of the number of projects that can be supported, funded and realised over the next 10-20 years. It also needs to identify a range of projects that, taken together, will be successful in achieving all aspects of the Vision, yet can also be of value as individual projects. The emphasis should be on identifying and focusing efforts on developing a selection of individual projects that can be pursued as opportunities arise, within a robust, vision-led framework that will ensure that all of the proposals fit together. At this stage it is also important to ensure that the projects are assigned a target timescale, for example:
- ◆ short term – realised in the next 1-2 years;
 - ◆ medium term – to be realised in the next 2-5years; and
 - ◆ longer term – over 5 years (but within the lifetime of the 'vision').

3.17 In order to achieve this, it is important to judge all projects objectively against a set of agreed evaluation criteria. There are no strict rules regarding the precise nature of these criteria, however the following represent some guiding principles for good practice in selecting projects for inclusion in the final Action Plan:

- ◆ it should be possible to demonstrate how the project contributes to the Vision;
- ◆ the project should be supported locally and meet an identified 'need';
- ◆ every effort should be made to incorporate ongoing projects into the overall action plan – this may be assisted by the identification of complementary projects;
- ◆ projects should be assessed for feasibility and assigned indicative costings to ensure that they will not be prohibitively expensive or physically unworkable;
- ◆ projects should fit within the existing planning policy framework or, if they represent a departure from policy, should achieve local authority support prior to inclusion in the Action Plan;
- ◆ the final selection of projects should address a wide range of issues across the town and avoid focusing too closely on only one or two aspects;
- ◆ projects should represent long term solutions as opposed to 'quick-fixes'; and
- ◆ the inclusion of some projects that will be reasonably swift to implement can be an excellent way of gaining the support of the community by showing physical change on the ground in a short space of time.

Stage 5: Final Action Plan

3.18 The final Action Plan will comprise the shortlisted projects that meet the criteria of the evaluation process in Stage 4. These should be described in detail, illustrated where appropriate, and costed using the services of a quantity surveyor where necessary. Once this exercise has been completed, research should be undertaken into potential sources of funding – the local authority may be able to provide some guidance in this respect, however, the internet is also a very useful resource in identifying funding opportunities and assessing projects against funding eligibility criteria.

3.19 It is also very useful, for the purposes of gaining the support of potential partners, obtaining planning permission and seeking funding, to provide a visual representation of how all the projects will fit together – this can be done in a single plan or through separating the projects into the short, medium and long term and indicating how change is envisaged over time. The provision of a strong contextual background, supported by a clear and coherent vision, will serve to instil confidence in the people and organisations that will be instrumental in securing the implementation of the projects under Stage 6.

Stage 6: Delivery and Implementation.

3.20 The completion of the final Action Plan is only the first stage in achieving the delivery and implementation of the projects contained within it. Stage 6 will require commitment and dedication from the partnership, which will be tasked with turning the document into reality.

- 3.21 In reality, the successful implementation of an Action Plan can be dependent on ever-changing priorities and capitalising upon unique opportunities. However, in order to be aware of such changes, the partnership will need to focus its efforts on the following:
- ◆ continuing dialogue with the main public agencies and potential funding partners (e.g. the district and county councils, the Regional Development Agency and the Countryside Agency);
 - ◆ take action to publicise the Action Plan and its constituent parts both to the local community (exhibitions, press coverage, media exposure and newsletters can all be useful tools for this) and potential funding sources (trusts, the National Lottery, the regional tourist board, Sustrans and the private sector are some examples); through consultation, meetings and marketing and promotion (as set out in the previous section); and
 - ◆ committing to the continued collection of the 'key measures' in collaboration with neighbouring market towns to provide an up-to-date representation of the situation in the town. This will enable change to be monitored, progress towards the Vision to be assessed and comparisons to be made with surrounding market towns.

EXAMPLES

- 3.22 Provided here are some extracts from published action plans. They have been included in this section to provide an indication of the level of detail and content that can be achieved and should not, therefore, necessarily be considered as examples of good practice in terms of presentation quality.

Minehead Community Plan

- 3.23 Minehead was selected as one of the nine pilot projects for the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative when it was first launched in 2001. The Plan area encompasses the six parishes of Carhampton, Dunster, Selworthy, Timberscombe, Withycombe and Wotton Courtenay.
- 3.24 Minehead Coastal Town Initiative began work in 2001 – the Community Planning Group formed as the project steering group, supported by seven working groups. One of the main starting points was the production of a Strength Weakness Opportunity and Threat (SWOT) Analysis, the following synopsis of which is provided in the Executive Summary of the resultant Community Plan:

“The positive aspects included: natural resources and unspoilt beauty, a safe community with a good community spirit, good local attractions and the tourism industry. The areas of weakness were identified as seasonal employment, poor diversity of the local economy, poor communications and transport infrastructure, the neglected needs of young people, poor marketing of the town and resistance to change within the community.”

- 3.25 The SWOT and other appraisal work assisted in the identification of six key priority themes around which action projects have been based. This work has been amplified and brought together into the Minehead Coastal Towns Initiative Community Regeneration Plan, extracts of which are provided here.
-

Figure 3.1 – Extract: General Summary of Minehead Action Plan

The Community Planning Group has identified Six Key Priority Themes

1. *Developing and implementing an overarching economic regeneration strategy*
2. *Learning and skills development*
3. *The provision of a wide range of cultural and sporting opportunities and facilities*
4. *Enabling access to a wide range of services and facilities*
5. *Supporting community safety initiatives and the provision of high quality Social Care for all*
6. *The ongoing process of community development and involvement*

These cross cutting themes provide a framework in which action projects have been prioritised. The Community Regeneration Plan describes a programme of action. These priority projects are shown in the Table below. The first priority is to develop and implement an overarching economic regeneration strategy for Minehead and the rural hinterland. The other themes have equal priority.

Overarching economic regeneration strategy	Learning and skills	Culture and sport	Access and Transport	Community Safety & Social Care	Ongoing community development and involvement
1. Develop a new Civic & Business Forum led by current work being carried out by Exmoor Coast & Countryside Partnership and Western Somerset Development & Access Strategy (EDAW) 2. 'Scenario Planning' to address current & future threats and opportunities 3. Develop the local food economy 4. Specialist marketing & business support for tourism promotion 5. Develop awareness of I & C Technology advantages for businesses 6. Engage specialist marketing support to promote the area's unique identity 7. Promote community businesses to deliver 'social need' services 8. Review the future of the town centre 9. Develop Visitors Centre	1. Promote & support The Learning & Leisure Centre Project 2. Promote & support Learning Later in Life	1. A new Civic, Cultural and Community Centre including new library facilities and The Arthur C Clark Archive 2. Develop The Regal Theatre to fulfil its full potential 3. Develop a Skate Boarding Park	1. Subject to a feasibility and business case study provide a deep water jetty and Ferry Service 2. Identify community transport needs 3. Lobby for early completion of the rail link from Minehead to Taunton 4. Provide tailor made transport solutions, especially for the teenagers and older people	1. Extend and improve existing CCTV systems in Minehead 2. Improve safety in Blenheim Gardens 3. Extend and improve street lighting in Minehead 4. Support and develop the Venlands Road Project 5. Support and develop the Alcombe (Sure Start) Project	1. Develop and implement communication strategy 2. Widen the membership of the MCTI Community Planning Group 3. Organise & lead a successful Brokering Table Process 4. Secure a paid Project Officer 5. Form a legally constituted new community development organisation 6. Train community agents alongside existing elected members

SOURCE: Minehead Coastal Towns Initiative Community Regeneration Plan

Figure 3.2 – Extract: Selected Minehead Community Action Plan Projects

Learning and Skills Development				
Project	Now	Soon	Later	Estimated Cost
West Somerset Leisure and Learning Centre	Continue to build a funding package	Confirm the availability of land to build the centre	Build Centre	£5 million (est) £16,000 (est)
Life Long Learning for the Retired		Develop the proposal with partners		
Culture and Sport				
Project	Now	Soon	Later	Estimated Cost
Develop a new Civic, Cultural and Community Centre	To formalise the partnership and agree to work together to implement the proposal (subject to a Feasibility Study)	Commission a Feasibility Study to test the proposal Secure site for the Centre	Secure funding package for Centre	£30,000 (est) To be confirmed
			Commission a design for the Centre Build Centre	£150,000 (est)
The Regal Theatre and MATA		Meet the access needs for disabled people Improve the signage outside the theatre		£4 million £150,000 (est)
		Refurbish front entrance		£5,000 (est)
Provide affordable Skate Board facility	Develop a business plan			£25,000 (est)
		Secure Site Continue to encourage input and support	Commission design and construction of facility	£3,000 (est) To be confirmed £150,000 (est)

SOURCE: Minehead Coastal Towns Initiative Community Regeneration Plan

Newent Community Strategic Plan

- 3.26 The 'Newent Initiative' is a partnership that was established in 2002, tasked with preparing a 'Community Strategic Plan'. This was defined as the process by which the community makes plans to:
- ◆ identify a clear vision for the future;
 - ◆ bring together information on the area;
 - ◆ identify the main goals to be achieved; and
 - ◆ identify priority projects and actions.
- 3.27 The process of meetings and consultations were completed by October 2002 and culminated in the publication of strengths and weaknesses and draft recommendations for action under the four themes of economy; social and community; transport and accessibility; and environment. Healthchecks were then sent out to community groups and their analysis resulted in the completion and production of the plan itself, with the support of WM Enterprise Consultants.
- 3.28 Provided here are extracts from the plan document – the first details a thematic project chapter; and the second is an excerpt from 'the way forward', which assigns responsibilities for specific actions.

Figure 3.3 – Extract: Tourism and Development Chapter (Newent)

THEME	PROJECT
3. Tourism Development and Promotion	14. Create a Tourism Information and Development Centre in town centre
	15. Define detailed tourism development strategy for Newent
	16. Support and market existing attractions
	17. Support new attractions (e.g. Canal)
	18. Establish a programme of events & festivals
	19. Develop varied visitor accommodation base
	20. Promote local food, drinks and products
	21. Further develop the Newent Website
	22. Enhancement of Market House Heritage Exhibition

3.2.3.1 Without doubt one of the great strengths of Newent's economy is its diverse range of tourist attractions that it has to offer. However, Newent's comparatively low visitor numbers would suggest that there is a need for a more co-ordinated approach to marketing the existing facilities if the town and its rural hinterland is to achieve its maximum potential as a tourist destination.

3.2.3.2 Seen as critical to the marketing and co-ordination of Newent's tourist facilities is the development of a new multi-purpose visitor centre. Newent's current tourist information centre is accommodated within a one-stop shop, however, the lease on the premises is soon to expire.

- 3.2.3.3 Funding was actively sought by the Newent Millennium Trust to purchase Albion House, which, located on the Market Square within the heart of the town, recently went up for sale. A Business Plan was written for the centre and architects plans commissioned and drawn up for the conversion of the building into a multi-purpose tourist visitor centre, which would have included a cafeteria and craft centre. However, despite the efforts of the Newent Millennium Trust to acquire Albion House, the building was sold and alternative premises are currently being examined by the Trust.
- 3.2.3.4 The promotion and marketing of Newent as a visitor centre is taking place through a variety of methods including via Newent's dedicated website (Newent online) and various leaflets and brochures, all of which continue to promote Newent's retail outlets, tourist attractions and events including Newent's renowned annual Onion Fayre.
- 3.2.3.5 A comprehensive list of potential funding partners for the project has been drawn up, which includes the South West Regional Development Agency, Forest of Dean District Council, Newent Town Council, Business Link Gloucestershire, Gloucestershire Learning & Skills Council and The Countryside Agency.

Figure 3.4 – Extract: 'The Way Forward' (Newent)

THEME	PROJECT	LEADER /COORDINATOR	OTHERS
1. Town Centre Improvements	1. Market square paving	John Burr	County Council (CC), Town Council (TC), District Council (DC)
	2. Town centre / Court Lane paving	John Burr	CC, TC, DC
	3. Bennion's site development	John Burr	DC, TC
	4. Co-op site development	John Burr	DC, TC
	5. Repair / repaint certain shop fronts	John Burr	Chamber of Trade, DC
	6. Renew bus stops / shelters	John Burr	CC
	7. Re-site town clock	John Burr	TC
	8. Implement County Council traffic strategy	Peter Pain	CC, TC
2. Accessibility and Movement	9. Support B4221 Action Group	Peter Street	TC, Viv Ferguson, Glos. Rural Community Council (GRCC)
	10. Review cycling / walking networks in and around Newent	Peter Street	CC, villages, GRCC

4. Case Studies

- 4.1 This section provides a selection of case studies relating to market or coastal towns in the UK that have successfully prepared an Action Plan for their town and are currently in the process of procuring funding for the implementation of the projects within their respective plans. They provide an indication of the range of approaches to regeneration and Action Plan development, as well as highlighting what can be achieved and how to go about it.
- 4.2 Following the specific web-based case studies is selection of web-based links to useful information and resources. It is recommended that local communities visit these websites to gain an understanding of what is happening elsewhere and help to inspire the communities to develop and implement their own ideas.

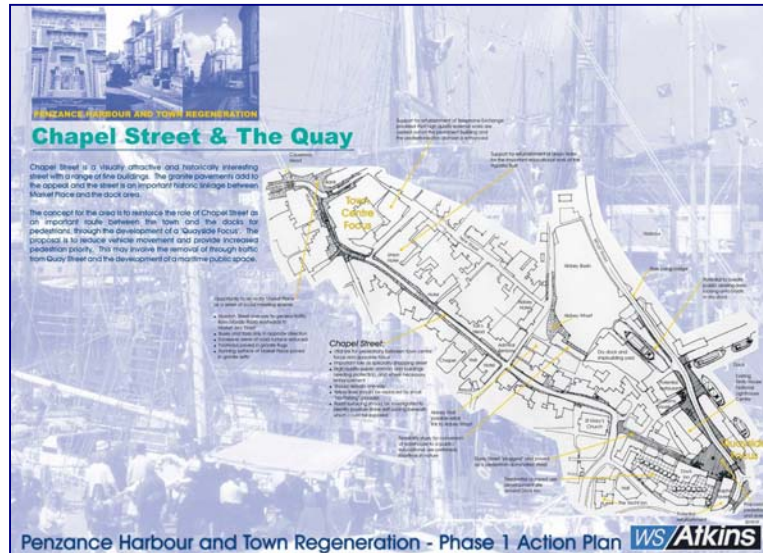
PENZANCE, CORNWALL

- 4.3 Penwith District Council and Cornwall Enterprise led a consortium of organisations that together commissioned consultants to develop an Action Plan for the regeneration of Penzance harbour and town centre in western Cornwall. The Action Plan was developed in consultation with a wide range of community organisations and a joint public exhibition of the action plan proposals and other local initiatives was held in the town. This event was instrumental in raising awareness in the town and the subsequent posting of display material in public buildings (library and council offices) coupled with the publication of a number of feature articles in the local press has helped to maintain public interest.

- 4.4 Subsequent to the publication of the Action Plan in 2001, the Penzance Harbour and Town Centre Regeneration Steering Group has been formed. The Steering Group has developed its own website –

www.crownedchild.co.uk/webpzs/index.htm

– which has a professional and attractive appearance with a good balance of text and illustrations and is regularly updated. This site contains links to the full action plan document (which is available in downloadable pdf format) as well as providing summaries of headline statistics and key projects. Progress updates are posted onto the site, links to project sponsors are included on the home page (offering extra publicity) and visitors to the site are offered the opportunity to sign up to receive newsletters and/or make comments regarding the proposals and process of action plan development and implementation.



LOWESTOFT, SUFFOLK



- 4.5 The government white paper 'Delivering and Urban Renaissance' was the catalyst for the commissioning of a study resulting in the formulation of the 'Sunrise Scheme' – the South Lowestoft Regeneration Strategy. The strategy has the support of Waveney District Council, which has published the full proposals on its own website – www.waveney.gov.uk.
- 4.6 The website contains illustrated concept plans and links to a variety of different aspects of the work: latest news on progress to date; press releases (in downloadable pdf format); grants information; and links to the project sponsors and partners, providing additional promotion for them. As such, the website represents a useful resource for other communities to draw experience and access relevant websites.

GREAT TORRINGTON, NORTH DEVON

- 4.7 The Great Torrington community is involved in the official Market and Coastal Towns Initiative and has successfully undertaken the healthcheck process to produce a Vision for Great Torrington and District (26 surrounding parishes). The MCTi Community Strategic Plan was published in June 2003 and the Community Initiative has chosen to use the south west towns website (www.southwesttowns.net) as a portal for accessing a marketing leaflet on the priorities and progress to date, an extract of which is provided below:

Welcome
To the Great Torrington and District

Market and Coastal Towns Initiative

Parrotier Market

The Vision for Great Torrington and District describes our Community as:

*'A Great Place Live – A Great Place To Grow Up – A Great Place To Work –
A Great Place To Set Up A Business – A Great Place To Visit -
A Great Place To Learn – A Great Place For The Environment -
A Great Place To Return To.'*

Area of benefit 27 parishes including Great Torrington

MCTI AREA OF BENEFIT

The Great Torrington and District Market and Coastal Towns Initiative Area of Benefit include the Town of Great Torrington and 26 of its surrounding parishes.

AL VERDISCOTT	HUISH	PETERS MARLAND
SEAFORD	HUNTSBAY	PETROCKSTOWE
BUCKLAND BREWER	LANDCROSS	ROBROUGH
BUCKLAND FILLEIGH	LANGTREE	SHEBBEAR
DOLTON	LITTLEHAM	ST GILES IN THE WOOD
DOWNLAND	LITTLE TORRINGTON	SHEEPWASH
FRITHELSTOCK	MERTON	WEARE GIFFARD
GREAT TORRINGTON	NEWTON ST. PETROCK	WINKLEIGH
HIGH BICKINGTON	PARKHAM	YARNSCOMBE

Ongoing Developments:
Additional Outputs are anticipated from many other Parishes within the MCTI Area of Benefit and further projects are currently being developed, including:
A Village Outreach project that is aimed at providing the whole community with access to information and support and specific services aimed at Youth Inclusion.

A Business Support Day at RHS Rosemoor Gt. Torrington

Publication of the MCTi Community Strategic Plan in June 2003.

Working Together:

Working together has been the key to the success of this Community Initiative, with active support from the South West of England Regional Development Agency, The Great Torrington Community Development Trust, Devon County Council, Torridge District Council, Great Torrington Town Council, The Health Check Coordinator, The Chamber of Commerce, The Great Torrington Care Forum, Members of the MCTI Steering Group and the people of the Villages and Town. *Thank You All.*

For more information about the Great Torrington Market and Coastal Town Initiative please contact: cdt@great-torrington.com or writing to MCTI Co/ The Great Torrington Community Development Trust, Castle Hill, South Street, Gt. Torrington EX38 8AA



The Community of Great Torrington and its surrounding villages came together in November 2001 to consider issues of importance and make plans for the future.

Several 'Priority Areas' were identified and Working Groups were set up to develop proposals and projects and work towards the creation of a Community Strategic Plan.

The Priority Areas were defined as:

Economic	Housing	Environment	Transport
Youth Issues	Child and Family	Social and Cultural	
The Arts	Village Projects	Rural Inclusion.	

The following is a list of Proposals and Projects under each of the Priority Areas developed, so far, by the Community for inclusion within the Great Torrington MCTI Community Action Plan:

Economic

- Regeneration and Project Delivery
- Tourism and Marketing
- Business Support (one stop shop for business information and support)
- Farmers and Local Producers Market

4.8 The marketing material includes an invitation to contact the Great Torrington MCTi via the Great Torrington Community Development Trust and full contact details are provided. As such, it represents an excellent way to raise awareness as well as offering other communities the opportunity to share experiences and gain knowledge.

NEWENT, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

4.9 Newent was awarded £55,000 to prepare a Community Strategic Plan through involvement with the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative. Details of the approach to the work have been provided in Section 3 of this report, together with extracts from the resultant action plan.

4.10 As part of the process of promoting the work and seeking to obtain both community and stakeholder support for the projects within the Plan, Newent Initiative (in association with Walker Consultancy.com) has produced a glossy fold out summary brochure. This is available from the Gloucestershire Market Towns Forum (PO Box 9030, Gloucester, GL1 2YD) and extracts are provided here.

Figure 4.1 – Extracts from Newent Community Strategic Plan



LYDNEY, FOREST OF DEAN

- 4.11 Similarly to Great Torrington, the community of Lydney in the Forest of Dean has successfully applied for membership of the MCTi. The community partnership has taken advantage of a wide range of different web-based hosts to publicise the completion of the action plan and ongoing progress. Information can be accessed via the SWRDA MCTi pages, through the south west towns website and on the Forest of Dean's promotional website – www.fweb.org.uk/dean/towns/lydney.htm - this focuses primarily on tourism, emphasising the range of activities on offer.
- 4.12 The information contained on the south west towns site – www.southwesttowns.net – includes a full timetable of proposed actions. This enables potential partners and funding organisations to identify, at a glance, the progress of the partnership's work and when they may be able or requested to assist with the implementation of the programme of actions.

HELPFUL WEBSITES AND EXAMPLES OF SCHEMES

- 4.13 Provided here is a list and links to websites that, at the time of writing, are considered likely to be of use to the communities in informing a tailored approach to the action planning process. For reasons of copyright and accuracy, the contents of the websites have not been reproduced here. It is also important to note that the information and comments provided here are the consultant's interpretation of the website and are not intended to represent the views of the website hosts/authors. Furthermore, as time moves on, there will be more resources available and as such, this list merely a selection of what is currently available – it is advised that communities continue to extend their list of resources and share useful information with other communities as the action plan process progresses.

Examples of Schemes

Fenland Market Towns Initiative

<http://www.fenland.gov.uk/services/property/pag12mti.htm>

- 4.14 The Fenland Market Towns Initiative in Cambridgeshire encompasses the towns of Chatteris, March, Whittlesey and Wisbech, all of which are working in partnership to achieve the following common objectives:
- ◆ *“to improve the appearance and character of the town's built and natural environment;*
 - ◆ *to improve town centre facilities and promote events and activities;*
 - ◆ *to attract additional investment and visitors to the town through marketing events and promotion of tourism;*
 - ◆ *to improve access to and links with the villages;*
 - ◆ *to support small scale, community based projects;*
 - ◆ *to develop signage and information projects;*
 - ◆ *to encourage economic development for continued local enterprise and job creation;*

- ◆ *to enhance the opportunities for training and skills development.”*

- 4.15 In addition to listing the objectives, as stated above, the website details what types of projects have been included in the initiative and provides links to town-specific events and programmes, together with contact details.

Launceston

<http://www.launceston-town.co.uk/infopage.asp?infoid=72&infopage=index>

- 4.16 Launceston in North Devon is, similarly to Cam and Dursley and Stroud, part of the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative. The Launceston Town website provides an update of progress within the town, the extract below highlighting how the partnership is demonstrating the way in which community input, through consultation, is being used as a tool to shape the development of the town and the area that it serves.

“A public exhibition held over 6 days in March followed by a community workshop event have provided a wealth of comments. Over 500 people visited the exhibition and 40 organisations attended the community workshop event.

Priority issues and opportunities to emerge from these discussions include:

- ◆ *Opportunities for some form of pedestrianisation of the Town Square;*
- ◆ *Improved use and operation of public transport services;*
- ◆ *The need to pursue high quality jobs;*
- ◆ *Maintaining and improving the historic assets of Launceston Town Centre;*
- ◆ *Addressing the need for affordable housing;*
- ◆ *Promoting the Launceston area as a visitor destination; and*
- ◆ *Improvements to sports facilities.*

We will now be developing these issues into a Community Strategy, with an Action Plan of projects that can start to bring new ideas and initiatives forward for the area. This is an exciting time for the Launceston area and we hope that people will want to be involved. A number of people who visited the exhibition and attended the workshop have already come forward and volunteered to help in this next stage. We welcome all expressions of interest from people who would like to help. If you are interested please contact Peter Casey, Launceston College, Tel 01566 772468.”

The Countryside Agency

http://www.countryside.gov.uk/NewEnterprise/MarketTowns/mt_programme_national_update.asp ,

- 4.17 This section of the Countryside Agency website provides links to the newsletter, useful leaflets, discussion papers and the following twelve case studies:
- ◆ [Todmorden case study](#)- a town centre improvement project in Todmorden in West Yorkshire
 - ◆ [Faringdon case study](#) - a rural business incubator project and a mobile youth cyber cafe in Faringdon, Oxfordshire

-
- ◆ [Hexham case study](#)- a transport project from Hexham in Northumberland
 - ◆ [Evesham case study](#)- a town gateways improvement project from Evesham in Worcestershire
 - ◆ [Spalding case study](#)- a town centre improvements project from Spalding in Lincolnshire
 - ◆ [Minster case study](#)- development of Minster in Kent as a cultural and heritage centre
 - ◆ [Longtown case study](#)- a tourism project in Longtown, Cumbria
 - ◆ [Bentham case study](#)- a rural business incubator project and improved sports facilities project from Bentham in North Yorkshire
 - ◆ [Melksham case study](#)- a youth cafe and skateboard park in Melksham, Wiltshire
 - ◆ [Manningtree case study](#)- improvements to the market place and a new community room in Manningtree in Essex
 - ◆ [Bewdley case study](#) -town centre improvements and emphasis on economic growth, including broadband in Bewdley in Worcestershire
 - ◆ [Thorne case study](#) - a new information shop in Thorne, South Yorkshire
- 4.18 The site contains links that allow the downloading of the toolkit, healthcheck handbooks and worksheets. The page accessed via the link also highlights information that is new and should therefore be checked by communities on a regular basis.

Helpful Websites

Government Regional Co-ordination Unit

- 4.19 The Government's Regional Co-ordination Unit has a Market Towns Initiative homepage:
- http://www.rcu.gov.uk/abi/results/abi_result.asp?searchID=60
- 4.20 The website sets out the overall aim of the Market Towns Initiative and defines 'market towns' as follows:

“To reinvigorate small rural towns, help them meet the needs of local people and provide access to a wide range of retail, leisure, professional and public services.”

Market Towns are defined as rural towns with populations between 2,000 and 20,000, with a history, or potential, of supporting and servicing their surrounding areas. There are over 1,000 such towns in England. Some are adapting to changing demands and thriving, but there are several which have suffered from the decline of agriculture, mining, textiles or other industries”.

- 4.21 The Site also provides a database of 'Area Based Initiatives', which can be accessed to provide communities both with general ideas, but also identify relevant area-based initiatives that their project proposals could complement and/or contribute to.

Action for Market Towns

- 4.22 'Action for Market Towns' is promoted as a 'national network for local action'. It offers membership to the organisation, stating that it is dedicated to promoting:

"...the vitality and viability of small towns, support and assist small towns in tackling the challenges they face, provide a national focus for action on issues affecting small towns. This is why Action for Market Towns exists. It is a national membership group that provides small towns, local authorities and others with: Information and advice, Examples of best practice, National representation."

Support for Learning

- 4.23 Support for Learning has developed a website to assist community development, community work, regeneration, social work and social care and online communities:

<http://www.support4learning.org.uk/community/comdev.htm>

- 4.24 In terms of community resources, the site includes links to: carers resources; funding for communities; regeneration; neighbourhood renewal; selected government sites; local authorities and local government; voluntary work and the voluntary sector in terms of jobs; youth work and provides a community index with further links to specific issues. In addition to this, the site includes numerous links to specific community and neighbourhood resources, a selection of which are as follows:

- ◆ **Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE)** - including press library, communications, policy, projects, events, publications, village halls support <http://www.acre.org.uk>
- ◆ **ADEPT community development agency** - useful community information resources in the site for community groups and advisers <http://www.adept.org.uk>
- ◆ **Community Development Foundation** - key information on community development resources, policies & theories <http://www.cdf.org.uk>
- ◆ **Community Matters - National Federation of Community Organisations** - information sheets, online discussion group through Smart Groups <http://www.communitymatters.org.uk>
- ◆ **Community Research & Development Information Service - Europe** <http://www.cordis.lu/en/home.html>

Regional Websites

Gloucester Pro-Help

http://www.bitc.org.uk/regions/bitc_in_your_region/south_west/programmes/prohelp/gloucester.html

- 4.25 Run through the 'Business in the Community' organisation, this website provides a link to Gloucester ProHelp, which was formed in 1988. The service is described as follows:

"If you live in Gloucestershire, are a not-for-profit Voluntary/Charity organisation and are in need of Professional Advice, then please get in touch with us. We will be happy to talk through with you how ProHelp can assist your group. Alternatively, if you would like to volunteer and are a member of a professional firm, we would be

glad to hear from you. Norman can be contacted on 01452 652525 or emailed at derek.acock@british-energy.com

Gloucestershire Market Towns Forum

<http://www.ukvillages.co.uk/gmtf.nsf/b?open&showpage=AllAboutTheForum&s=webpage>

- 4.26 The Gloucestershire Market Towns Forum serves as a portal to a wealth of useful information directly relevant to the communities that form the focus of this study. The site bills itself as a 'vital and practical resource full of details of useful organisations and examples of community projects around Gloucestershire'. As part of this service, it incorporates a link to an on-line toolkit produced by the forum itself in partnership with Gloucestershire County Council and a 'Four Steps to Success' guide':

"The Toolkit was produced by the Gloucestershire Market Towns Forum in partnership with Gloucestershire County Council and the Gloucestershire Neighbourhood Projects Network. It is hosted 'on-line' thanks to the support of the BBC in Gloucestershire at www.bbc.co.uk/gloucestershire/communitytoolkit

The Toolkit includes a 'Four Steps to Success' guide to getting a community initiative off the ground at www.bbc.co.uk/gloucestershire/communitytoolkit/success.shtml"