
Introducing the Market Town Initiative for Wendover 25-7-09

Thank you for being here and demonstrating already that you really care about this wonderful town of ours.

We've invited you here today as the Parish Council wants to understand what the community really wants. We are actively supporting Market Town Initiative and it's Healthcheck process, as we see it as a structured approach to reaching a community view. It includes a detailed process, supported by guidelines, that you'll hear more about later.

The concept of the Market Towns Initiative is to develop local solutions to local problems, and to go on to create the impetus that will actually deliver the action plans

This is achieved by setting up partnerships with representatives from all areas of the community including the voluntary sector, service providers, schools and colleges, business groups and local government. This partnership provides both leadership and support to undertake the Healthcheck. Today's meeting is our first step on that journey.

The objective today is to create a Steering Committee and Working Groups, which will represent this new partnership covering the broad spectrum of Wendover's society.

Community participation is a key element in the Market Towns Initiative as detailed local knowledge and skills are essential in addressing highly localised issues. The Initiative encourages local people to make informed choices about the future they want to experience,

We have to know what we want Wendover to be and then to look at how we can achieve that, we have to understand the strengths and weaknesses. There are some problems in Wendover that need to be fixed or improved, but it's not all about problems – there are some very real strengths in Wendover that we need to preserve and more than that – we can build on and help us to solve some of the other problems.

So What? Why bother?

If we all sit back and say that Wendover is lovely just the way it is and do nothing to ensure its future then decisions will be taken and actions imposed on us by outside bodies and the character and vibrancy of the town will disappear. We will be always on the back foot fighting to stop things we don't like instead of getting what we really want.

The issue is that those outside agencies don't understand Wendover the way that we all do. Those things that we cherish will go – they'll be swamped or simply stagnate to death. Lots of other areas, towns, villages are competing with us – and unless we organise ourselves actively we will lose out. We'll become a complete commuter town with no centre, businesses will move away, there won't be enough money or commitment to sustain the beautiful buildings, green spaces and most importantly the community that we all cherish.

The initial stages that our guest, Malcolm Godwin, will talk to us about are the developing of the action plan based on local knowledge, a thorough review of data and local consultation on priorities. By putting priorities onto these actions we show what really matters and what will make a difference for us.

Having the action plan is great but then what. How do we make it happen?

Firstly it will help the Parish Council by guiding it's decision making and to identify the needs that it can support in a practical way and to establish the funding needed in future years for those projects which come within its scope..

In addition by establishing a series of actions that the community supports and are demonstrably achievable if we all pull together, we can get wider support. AVDC and Buck County and other Gov't agencies are looking to get this input to help them understand what will make a difference and where to put their money.

These documents provide the strongest possible argument that these are the right things for Wendover, so it makes it easy for the Gov't decision makers to give money without fear of getting it wrong. .

However this is not just about telling local government what we want and then sitting back and waiting. This is about taking control locally and making it happen. Many of the actions could well be lead by local

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organisations. We will be looking at ways in which the local organisations, by working together can actually make a real difference to how Wendover develops over the coming years.

Today is our first step in that direction – we want to form a partnership that represents the community and brings together all aspects of Wendover life. That partnership will be the vehicle for developing the action plan and later even more importantly it can become the guiding force in getting things done

The action plans cover a wide scope. Some actions may be quite small while others are more challenging and longer term.

Some examples from other towns as examples:

- providing information on activities which would engage young people
- walking and cycling routes which could help promote healthy lifestyles
- Enhance conservation action to help safeguard historic feature
- Develop a new Wendover web site
- Plant the roundabouts
- Improve access to information for local residents, visitors and businesses which will support local shopping and retention of disposable income within the local area
- Improve physical appearance of town centre and the main entrances into the town to encourage visitors into the town centre to spend money within local shops, pubs and restaurants
- Employment opportunities - A printed booklet which shows you some local businesses that might be good places to work
- Develop a supervised 'walk to school' service by changed job description of the School crossing patrol person
- Redesign bus and train timetables to ensure there is an effective interchange service at all times for the town
- Development of a Village Hall/Community Centre is required
- Development of junior football pitches is required
- Local policing to be more visible
- Improved Library is required
- A study into road safety issues in the town should be commissioned.
- Signage to the industrial areas should be improved

More info – just Google 'Market Town Initiative' and you'll see what other towns and villages have been able to achieve and how they went about it.