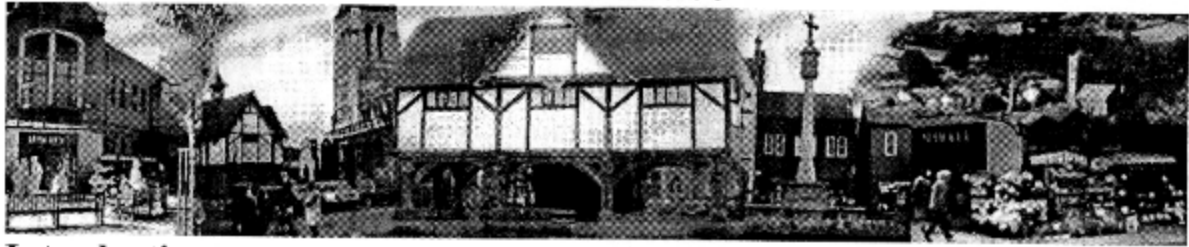


A Template for Future Prosperity:

East Midlands Market Towns Initiative



Introduction

Market towns are important to the region's economy. They play a key role in the economy and social fabric of rural areas as centres, for both the town and their rural hinterland, providing employment, shopping, entertainment, services and facilities. However, due to changing patterns of retailing and service provision, many towns, especially the smaller ones, face an uncertain future. Action is needed now to ensure their continued viability and future growth and prosperity.

The Countryside Agency and the East Midlands Development Agency are taking the lead to work with Market Towns in various regeneration programmes to secure their future as sustainable communities for the towns themselves and their hinterland.

The Market Town Invitation: HealthCheck and Action Plan

We are inviting representatives from Market Towns in the East Midlands interested in taking part in community led regeneration to let us know if their town is keen to carry out a HealthCheck.

The HealthCheck will identify the individual town's economic, social and environmental health through using worksheets to answer a large number of detailed questions. From these answers an Action Plan that will be drawn up that will set out the needs of the town in the form of projects and initiatives for the coming years.

HealthChecks are available to all towns and the template for them is available on: www.countryside.gov.uk/market-towns. However, the Countryside Agency and *EMDA* will provide extra resources to enable selected Market Towns to effectively carry out a HealthCheck and drive forward the Action Plan for the town.

They will do this by:

- Providing support to carry out intensive consultation techniques with the local communities, local authorities and other agencies to identify social, economic and environmental strengths and weaknesses.
- Provide support for community coordinators and teams of professionals to provide advice and gather data (100% funded for up to 6 months)

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- Assist in the implementation of Action Plans by seeking funding from a range of other sources (50% funded for 1 to 3 years.)

What Happens Afterwards?

The East Midlands Development Agency, the Countryside Agency and all the members of the Market Towns Forum (see list) are committed to helping the Market Towns of the East Midlands establish themselves as thriving communities that provide vital support for their rural hinterland. Whilst there is no guarantee of funding for specific projects identified in the Action Plan, all of the Market Town Forum members recognize the importance of this approach and are committed to considering suitable project bids.

Members of the Market Town Forum may be able to provide direct help to towns on the basis of the information they provide on the attached expression of interest form.

Expression of Interest Form

This is a community led initiative and we would therefore recommend that if you do not already have a local partnership established, you begin by bringing together a broad partnership, including members of local chambers, town council/parish council, community and voluntary organisations.

We will also need to know about any other initiatives that have been carried out in your town and any problems already identified. We will be aiming to work with towns in a range of different situations.

How will we choose towns for HealthCheck support?

We will be selecting towns by:

- **Population Size**

Towns must have a maximum of 25 000 inhabitants.

Joining urban areas will be taken into account even if parish or other boundaries intervene because such boundaries are artificial and the larger settlement will function as one urban area.

Generally the population will be over 2000 people. Exception may be made in particularly isolated areas where a smaller settlement may offer a higher level of services to its hinterland. The Forum will be looking for a range of different sized of towns.

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□ **Geographical Location**

There needs to be a spread of towns throughout the region. Selections made in previous rounds will be taken into account.

□ **Relationship to Rural Priority Areas (RPAs)**

There will need to be a balance between towns in or near RPAs and those outside the RPA.

□ **Function**

There will need to be a balance of types of town, for example **seaside towns**, **mining towns** as well as **traditional market towns**.

□ **Need**

We will consider statistics identifying need, including

- ✓ Index of Multiple Deprivation
- ✓ Unemployment Index
- ✓ Educational Attainment
- ✓ Income Levels and Types

□ **Other Information**

Information provided by the towns themselves in their applications
Particular issues and priorities of the East Midlands Market Town Forum
Sub regional Partnerships and similar organisations
Comments from other key organisations.

Timetable

Invitation Launch: **5 December 2001 at the Market Towns Workshop**

If your town is interested in carrying out a HealthCheck with extra support please complete and return the attached Initial Expression of Interest by:

Closing Date for completed forms: **Tuesday 8 January 2002.**

Following this a shortlist will be drawn up on the **16th January 2002**. Shortlisted towns at this stage will be asked to provide further information in a broader application.

A formal announcement will be made in late **March 2002**.