

REPORT FROM CHILHAM'S FUTURE DELIVERY BOARD

In the last year we have created our own website www.chilhamsfuture.co.uk and set out our main objectives, who we are, progress so far and current issues. Anyone needing information on our project can either find the answer to their question on the website or raise a question using the feedback form. Anyone who doesn't have internet access can contact the parish clerk and he will be able to get the answers for them.

We have also been exploring funding opportunities and strategies to move the project forward.

From surveys undertaken during the 2006 feasibility study and earlier in the 1995 parish appraisal we know that the parish is agreed that 'something needs to be done to improve the Square'.

The feasibility study undertaken by award winning urban designers proved that something could be done. It went on to draw up a costed scheme for the purposes of securing a design framework and funding for a project that would deliver a revitalised village square. In order to gain the funding required to move this project forward to a detailed design stage, we need support from the key stakeholders in the Square (residents, businesses, school, church) to a specific scheme. This will be a mandatory requirement for any funding.

Kent Downs AONB have advised that the best way of achieving this is a community engagement exercise involving these key stakeholders.

The key issue to be addressed would be to understand the effects of the main thrust of the feasibility study proposals, ie reducing parking in the Square and encouraging visitors to use Taylors Hill car park.

We plan to involve experts in the field of urban design and community consultation to establish the basic principles of this approach and introduce the concepts of shared space. With this expert input we hope the key stakeholders can engage with each other to agree a specific scheme that achieves the aims of the project, ie:

- 1) help to achieve the revitalisation of the economic and social heart of Chilham and enable local businesses to fulfil their potential
- 2) encourage sustainable tourism and stimulate new rural businesses and associated activities such as local craft and other activities
- 3) offer the best means of protecting and conserving a beautiful and historic built asset for the benefit of all

and benefits the local community as a whole.

In stark terms, the possible outcomes are:

- 1) all key stakeholders agree to a specific scheme
- 2) key stakeholders cant agree - we are forced to abandon the project

It will be a great opportunity wasted if the project peters out into the second outcome, but if the parish is to take full advantage of the work done during the feasibility study then we need to be able to demonstrate that the key stakeholders are committed to a specific scheme.

We will ask the parish council to endorse this next phase at their May meeting.