



**Somerset Market Towns Forum**  
**LADT Office,**  
**Bow Street, Langport,**  
**Somerset, TA10 9PR**  
**Tel: 01458 252005**

*Jane Wilson, Forum Officer*  
*Matt Day, Information Officer*

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**RELEASE: IMMEDIATE – 28<sup>th</sup> November 2007**

**TITLE: Future Plans approved to support rural communities**

### **INTRO TEXT**

The Somerset Market Towns Forum is widening its scope so that anyone involved in improving their communities in market towns and large villages in Somerset is able to get support from the Forum in the future.

### **BODY TEXT:**

The plans, approved at its Annual General Meeting are a step-change for the Forum and mark a new way forward for Somerset towns. Previously, only Community Planning/Regeneration groups could be members of the Forum, but now Town and Parish Councils and single-issue regeneration groups active in their communities can also become members. This will allow more people to access a range of services for free, including case studies of successful projects, useful resources for groups and information sharing via the Forum's regular email bulletins and website.

Anyone interested can find out more at [www.somersetmarkettowns.co.uk](http://www.somersetmarkettowns.co.uk)

Widening the membership of the Forum was one of a number of key decisions made at their AGM held on 26<sup>th</sup> Nov at Great Bow Wharf, Langport, where the members approved a Business Plan that sets out the development of the organisation over the next 5 years. Members, Local Authorities and other organisations who offer services

were consulted during production of this, and the Business Plan reflects members needs and aspirations.

The AGM heard about the work of the two Forum Officers over the last year, which included organising training events for members, consultancy sessions for community groups, delivering a new website and email bulletins, offering an information and signposting service and writing a report into sustainable tourism that looked at local festivals and how communities can get more economic and social benefits from these. This work was funded by Somerset Rural Renaissance Partnership and Somerset County Council, with the website being funded by the Market & Coastal Towns Association.

Matt Day, Information Officer for Somerset Market Towns Forum, said 'The AGM was preceded by a tour and presentation about Great Bow Wharf, which is a wonderful example of a project identified through community planning that has been delivered in part by Langport Area Development Trust, one of the Forum members. It includes serviced offices, a conference facility and a cafe, all within a restored riverside brick warehouse, and utilises sustainable construction methods and technology. The experience gained by LADT and its partners is of great value to other towns hoping to develop similar projects.'

Somerset Market Towns Forum promotes and supports community-based revitalisation of market towns and large villages, through the sharing of experience between communities involved in improving their towns across Somerset. The Forum organises regular networking events around the County for members and provide information-sharing, networking and training services to member towns and information-sharing to others involved in regenerating communities. They are funded by Somerset Rural Renaissance Partnership, Somerset County Council and the Market & Coastal Towns Association and are hosted by the Community Council for Somerset.

More details about the Forum can be found at [www.somersetmarkettowns.co.uk](http://www.somersetmarkettowns.co.uk)

## **PRESS RELEASE ENDS**

### **FURTHER INFORMATION – CONTACT DETAILS**

Matt Day  
Information Officer  
Somerset Market Towns Forum  
Tel: 01458 252005  
Email: [matt@somersettrcc.org.uk](mailto:matt@somersettrcc.org.uk)

### **PHOTO/IMAGE OPTIONS**

Attached to email. Credits reqd on all – ‘photo; Somerset Market Towns Forum’.

1. Exterior of Great Bow Wharf
2. Interior of Conference and cafe space
3. David Gordon explains how Great Bow Wharf happened
4. Outgoing SMTF Chair Mike Murphy and new Vice-Chair Jennifer Trotman welcome Peter Berman to the Steering Group
5. Outgoing SMTF Chair Mike Murphy at the AGM
6. Forum Officer Jane Wilson presents the work of the Forum over the past year

### **NOTES FOR EDITORS**

Somerset Market Towns Forum was established in late 2003 with the aim of bringing together representatives of all the market towns and larger villages across Somerset in a network, to share issues of common concern, and help in the economic, social and environmental regeneration of the local communities.

#### Objectives

1. To promote mutual support and collaboration between Somerset Market Towns and the larger villages – by sharing good practice through visits, invited speakers and the circulation of information.
2. To develop the capacity of the Forum and its members to serve and assist Somerset’s communities – by organising appropriate seminars and training for its members.
3. To establish an active role for the Forum in promoting regeneration in Market Towns – by acting as a ‘voice’ from across the County in discussions with other bodies and forums.

The Forum is based in Langport. We currently have 14 Members, these are:

Axbridge, Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge, Chard, Crewkerne, Ilminster, Frome, Langport, Martock, Norton Radstock, Shepton Mallet, Watchet, Williton, Wincanton, Wiveliscombe.

Somerset Market Towns Forum is hosted by the Community Council for Somerset. The Community Council for Somerset is a registered charity (no. 1069260) and a company limited by guarantee (no. 3541219). It believes in confident and sustainable rural communities. Its mission is therefore to counter the threats to rural communities and enhance rural life throughout Somerset by equipping and

supporting them to effect positive change using their inherent resources, abilities and commitment. The Community Council for Somerset was founded in 1926 and is headquartered in Taunton.

**'Building the Network' is the latest phase of the Forum's development, delivering new ways to spread information between Market Towns and large villages in Somerset, and is funded by the Somerset Rural Renaissance Partnership.**