



Somerset Market Towns Forum
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Jane Wilson, Forum Officer
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PRESS RELEASE

RELEASE: IMMEDIATE (Website launched 11th July)

TITLE: Somerset's rural communities to benefit from new website

INTRO TEXT

A new website – www.somersetmarkettowns.co.uk – has been designed to showcase communities' efforts at improving rural towns and large villages across Somerset, allowing them to learn from other's experiences.

BODY TEXT:

The site has been developed by Somerset Market Towns Forum (SMTF), a network of community regeneration partnerships from across the County. It currently has 13 Member towns and large villages, including Burnham & Highbridge Regeneration Partnership, the Wiveliscombe Area Partnership and the Langport Area Development Trust, but is looking to welcome new member towns and large villages.

The site features project details, news, events, launches and relevant funding news. It allows a 'conversation' between the towns on good regeneration practice and gives the towns their own page for information, news & events.

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Matt Day, Information Officer for SMTF, said 'A representative from each of our Member Towns has been trained to upload news & events, but we will happily accept news items from anyone who is involved in regenerating their communities in rural Somerset, whether an individual, single-issue group or community planning group. This site has great potential to become a really useful resource, especially for community planning groups, who can often feel isolated and daunted by the size of their task in developing long-term plans or visions for their towns and then delivering projects that come out of their plan.'

Funded by the Market & Coastal Town Association, the site has been designed by Project Cosmic, a social enterprise with much experience of delivering websites and IT training.

The website goes live on 11th July, and will grow over the coming months into a substantial 'hub' of information.

More details about the Forum and its work can be found at www.somersetmarkettowns.co.uk

If you are interested in joining the Forum, please see our website first, then call Jane Wilson on 01458 252005.

To contribute to the website, please call Matt Day on 01458 252005 or email matt@somersettrcc.org.uk

PRESS RELEASE ENDS

PHOTO/IMAGE OPTIONS

Attached to email. Captions & credits

1. Preview of site's Homepage
2. Forum Member Burnham & Highbridge Regeneration Partnership unveiling interpretation panels (photo: Burnham-on-Sea.com)
3. Forum Member Langport Area Development Trust are developing new business units at Great Bow Yard in Langport. Pictured are LADT's Project Worker Rick Coldicott and SMTF's Matt Day

FURTHER INFORMATION – CONTACT DETAILS

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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 13 Members, these are:

Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge, Chard, Crewkerne, Ilminster, Langport, Martock, Norton Radstock, Shepton Mallet, Watchet, Wellington, 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.

The website has been funded and supported by the Market & Coastal Town Association. The Market and Coastal Towns Association (MCTA) is a new and independent organisation which supports the development of vibrant, healthy and sustainable market and coastal towns across the south west. Established in October 2004 and supported by a range of regional organisations including the South West of England Regional Development Agency and English Heritage, the Association is charged with delivering the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative throughout the region. The Initiative is an innovative community based regeneration programme for market and coastal towns and their surrounding areas. It is led by and driven forward by the communities themselves and requires all those involved to think and work differently.