

After the interval, John Clayton, Director of Planning for D.D.C., skilfully answered the questions fired at him and, in discussing street furniture, explained the necessity for movable, boxed trees in the precinct, instead of more orthodox plantings, to allow access to public utilities below the paving (thereby making them much more acceptable to one listener).

Mr Fawcus, Property Development Manager for Dover Harbour Board, was able to give some indication of the direction of the Board's thinking and was happy to assure Mrs Walker that consideration would certainly be given to the creation of an open-air market near the water with a pedestrian link to the town centre,

John Owen and John Clayton were likewise willing to receive suggestions, for instance, about further enhancement and extension of the Riverside Walk.

Although the sound system unfortunately failed to amplify the speaker's voices sufficiently for comfortable listening and there was inevitably some repetition of information when Roy Adsett of the Ramsgate Society described the co-operative efforts of local groups, I found it a very interesting, informative and valuable session. We can obviously look forward to some interesting developments in Dover with the aid of IMPACT money and expertise. ◇

Investing in Dover's Future

— JULIAN OWEN, IMPACT Project Manager

"Urban regeneration is not just about bricks and mortar. It is about economic revival, pride of place and a belief in a better future."

Thus did Tony Aldous introduce and summarise a recent article in "Building" magazine, about the IMPACT project in Ramsgate. IMPACT was devised by Kent County Council as a means of targeting urban improvements in areas of economic priority, and will shortly transfer to Dover, in partnership with the District Council.

Living up to its name, IMPACT already has a strong track record of success in Gravesend and Ramsgate, with an emphasis on quality. There's much more to it than just cosmetic improvements, as those members who came to the meeting on 12th October will have heard. IMPACT plays a strong complementary rôle in relation to other economic development initiatives, especially in improving the image and marketability of the area.

IMPACT has pioneered a unique approach, strongly linked with the Civic Trust's Regeneration Campaign, concentrating skilled staff and money on particular towns in a series of three-year programmes. An important feature is the partnership between County and District Councils, with the private and voluntary sectors, to bring about a regeneration package which is not only greater than the sum of its parts, but also establishes the means to sustain improvement in the future.

Each programme is unique, but taking Ramsgate as an example, the programme consists of a mixture of short, medium and long-term measures, such as:

- High quality Improvements to streets and other public spaces, especially on prominent sites, such as approach roads, points of arrival and the seafront. Like the pieces of a jigsaw, the projects work together to upgrade the image of the town for visitors and locals alike.
- Major developments and other changes – a special emphasis in Ramsgate on traffic management, to assist economic regeneration, because this would ease pedestrian access to core problem areas, but also looking at development/marketing briefs for major sites.
- Encouraging Investment in buildings, especially in historic buildings which are seen as some of the town's major assets, but also in shopfronts and façade improvements.
- Heightening awareness of environmental issues, involving the local community as widely as possible, and using the project as a spring-board from which to launch a new town centre management partnership, so that the momentum is not lost.

IMPACT'S present base is a listed shop, which we have restored as a demonstration project, in the core "problem" area of Harbour Street, Ramsgate. Society members who visited us on 15th October saw how the shopfront and independent image of the project are designed to give local ownership.

An experienced and highly-committed team are on hand, not only to design and consult on IMPACT projects, but also to advise on and encourage others.

The Ramsgate premises are also the venue for regular meetings of FORS (the Forum of Ramsgate Societies), whose rôle was explained at the meeting by Roy Adsett from the Ramsgate Society. FORS, drawn from both amenity and private sector groups (such as the Chamber of Commerce) acts both as a consultation forum and as an initiator \of projects, also providing members for joint working groups\ on particular topics.

What next? The Kent County and Dover District Councils have both committed £400,000 per annum for each of the next three years for the Dover project, which will also include some work in Deal. The funds will be pooled and will be looked after by a small joint committee of County and District Councillors, who have already agreed some broad priorities. Experience has taught us the need for adequate preparation and consultation, but things are moving fast; we should have settled on premises very soon and hope to be in situ very early in 1993.

As for projects, we are suggesting a strongly targeted approach. The main priorities at present are along the new A20 corridor throughout its length – including work in conjunction with Dover Harbour Board, and with the residents and traders of Snargate Street. This will become Dover's new "front door", and together with the other town centre "edges", such as York Street and Townwall Street, it is urgently in need of attention. The links between various parts of the centre, especially Bench Street/New Bridge, but also links from car parks, the station and the riverside walk are also seen as important.

The IMPACT team have welcomed the enthusiasm and commitment of the District Council, the Dover Society and others – including Dover Harbour Board and the *Dover Express*. We look forward to a challenging but rewarding partnership. ◇