



An artist's impression of the improvement proposed for the Sea Front/New Bridge area

IMPACT

ACTION IN LOCAL IMPROVEMENT

UPDATE:

1 DECEMBER 1994

IT IS NOW rather more than a year since the IMPACT team arrived in Dover, to play its part in what has to be a long-term programme for regeneration, not only to absorb the effects of the wide-ranging physical and economic consequences surrounding the Channel Tunnel, but also in the face of growing pressures on town centres. It is a time which has seen major changes, especially in the area of the A20, but also with the development of plans for the Western Docks.

THE NEW "FRONT DOOR"

The facelift for Snargate Street is now nearly complete, and it is a credit to the town. There are some finishing touches yet to come – the one listed building in the street is still undergoing careful restoration by the owner, working with the architect from our unit and Dover District's conservation officer. Flower troughs on the safety barrier will be replanted in autumn and spring, litter bins will be going in, and we hope to be putting back (as near as practicable to where they belong) the rescued plaques commemorating the position of Snar Gate and the Royal Hippodrome. New businesses are moving in, and it would be good to see so much history, and the cohesive qualities of the street, recognised through uplifting to Conservation Area status.



The rehabilitation of Snargate Street in progress in 1994

A DIGNIFIED SETTING FOR A UNIQUE MONUMENT

At the far end of Snargate Street, our plans are now complete for the faithful reconstruction of the arch which once marked the street entrance of the Grand Shaft, including a better ticket kiosk and interpretive material. We will be inviting tenders for the work very soon, hopefully so as to have the work complete before the site re-opens to the public in the spring.

STEMBROOK – ANOTHER PIECE IN THE JIG-SAW

The busy Kwik Save store in the old B & Q unit has given a new boost to in-town shopping, at a time when town centres are increasingly under threat. The addition of Argos, B'wise and Spacesavers are other healthy signs. From our point of view, Kwik Save have funded the first part of our improvement scheme for Stembrook and Church Street – which includes the first use of the new pattern for reproduction of the Leopard Head bollards. The IMPACT committee has accepted the £12,000 tender for the remainder of the scheme, but, in order not to disrupt conditions for traders, shoppers and worshippers in the run-up to Christmas, we will be starting this work in January. The scheme includes new pavements, re-surfacing of St. Mary's Passage, and providing mature trees and reproduction lighting similar to that in Castle Street.

During the summer we ran a major international competition, inviting ideas from professional artists for an important part of our joint scheme with the Harbour Board for improvement to the Sea Front.. The site lies on the key axis of New Bridge, and as with the scheme as a whole, we are looking for a response both to the spirit of Dover and to the sensitivity of the Regency setting. Advertised in this country, France, Germany and Spain, the competition drew a lot of interest and eighty-one entries. Assisted by Kent County Council's Arts Development unit, a short-listing panel chaired by Dover's Chief Executive, John Moir, included Lawrence Gage, representing the Dover Society, and drew in Dover Harbour Board and Kent County Council.

The entries varied widely, in form, content and concept; they included a sprinkling of frankly wacky and insensitive ideas, as well as some which were merely mundane, but in general they were of a very high standard. Using criteria which sought above all response to the site, and to Dover, as well as seeking work of real artistic merit and of international standing, the panel was eventually able to whittle the list down to three artists (two British and one French). These three have now been asked to develop and discuss their work in more depth, with a view to a public exhibition in February, before any choice is made. They will also be asked to develop their ideas in consultation both with local people and with the architects for the seafront scheme, who are endeavouring to provide better settings for the many memorials.

Snargate Street restored to much of its former glory, 1994



As another part of our work with the Harbour Board on the seafront, we have been looking at the possibilities for improving the facilities (and appearance) of the water sports organisations and buildings. They are a major asset not only for rowing and sailing in the area (including training of hundreds of young people), but also to the liveliness of this part of the harbour. Working with another part of the KCC – this time the sports development unit – we jointly sponsored (with DDC, DHB and Sports Council) a major study, some of whose suggestions are now being discussed with the user groups. Watch this space!

LOOKING AHEAD

The Town Centre Management initiative is a key part of our activities, working with the Chamber of Commerce, the Dover Society and other groups to promote the town as well as improve it. A high quality shopping guide is being produced, and a promotion programme being developed as part of the “Dover – open for business” initiative. As far as further physical improvements are concerned, we will shortly be putting schemes for the New Bridge area and Ladywell car park to committee, and comments will be welcomed.

The links between the various parts of the town centre remain a key concern. One of the main points to come out of the town centre management working groups was the need to create a greater sense of unity for the heart of the town centre by strengthening the link between the two halves of the pedestrian precinct. Responding to this, IMPACT has re-shaped its programme, and next year when we expect a number of schemes (such as Stembrook, Grand Shaft, Mill Lane, Townwall Street car park) to be actually underway, we will be working with the Town Centre Management partnership to take a hard look at the Worthington Street/Biggin Street/Priory Street area.

Wherever you think the focus of the “town centre” lies, the fact remains that the strength lies in the whole. There are no instant or easy answers, except to build on what we’ve got; the town *is* the department store. What matters is our ability and inclination to use it, and the quality of life that it offers.

JULIAN OWEN

Answers to the ‘Old Dovorians’ Quiz

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| 1 In Queen Street – as a Cinema | 8 At 56 St James's Street |
| 2 At 94 (Old) Snargate Street | 9 At 96 Folkestone Road |
| 3 At 8 Townwall Street | 10 A running fire of rifles |
| 4 In Liverpool Street (No. 13) | 10a On the Sea Front |
| 5 On the wall at the end of the Gateway Flats | 10b On the King's (or Queen's) Birthday |
| 6 Near the top of Northampton Street | 11 The Wine Lodge, The Robin Hood, The Chandos, the Granville and the Sussex Arms |
| 7 At 151 & 153 Folkestone Road | |
| 7a Business premises for WERU Ltd. | |