

IMPACT

ACTION IN LOCAL IMPROVEMENT

UPDATE by LINDA WADE

Uppermost in our programme at the moment are thoughts of what happens in Dover when the IMPACT project comes to an end next year, but Julian Owen will undoubtedly give you more details about this when he speaks at the Dover Society Annual General Meeting on 22 April 1996.

A commitment to the town centre by way of continuing action on issues which affect its prosperity was also very much in the minds of the group of people who have been meeting together to discuss the progress of the "*Dover - open for business*" town centre management organisation. The formation of a limited company is likely with the appointment, by early next year, of a Town Centre Co-ordinator. A package of funding partners from both the public and the private sectors is now being drawn together and will be firmly in place by the time the IMPACT programme comes to a close in March 1996. This will make sure the town centre management company takes a firm step forward into its first few years.

Christmas Package

"*Dover - open for business*" has already produced some "packaged" promotions designed to increase town centre footfall and to make the town centre more lively and welcoming for customers.

The forthcoming run-up to Christmas will be no exception. Many of the town's retailers have agreed to stay open into the early evening on the three Thursdays before Christmas and the feeling of festivity will be inspired by school choirs singing carols in the streets. There will also be a range of street entertainment, free parking in the District Council's town centre car parks and a special competition to encourage more people to come into town. "*Dover - open for business*" has pack-

aged these and other activities to help promote shopping as a pleasurable experience for visitors in the town centre at this special time of year.

Priory Station

As pointed out in the Society's brainstorming questionnaire three years ago, a large number of visitors arrive for the first time in Dover when they travel by train and alight at Priory Station. In view of its status as an important point of arrival, IMPACT with, in this case, its partners South Eastern, Dover Harbour Board and RAILTRACK, have granted vital improvements to the station forecourt. There include new surface treatments, clear pedestrian walkways and improved lighting. Visitors using the station will now experience a better sense of welcome than previously. The contract is to be completed by Christmas.

Seafront Promenade and New Bridge.

Meanwhile work has proceeded at a rapid pace on the seafront and adjoining New Bridge. IMPACT has worked alongside Dover Harbour Board's consultant architects to produce a scheme which is simple, graceful and respects its immediate surroundings.

Ray Smith, the artist who was commissioned to create the sculpture "On the Crest of a Wave", which is now in place on the seafront, spoke at a public meeting in St. Mary's Parish Centre on Monday evening, 6th November about his wide-ranging work and the place of art in the town centre environment. Ray Smith has involved himself with local schools and has run practical workshops with groups of sixth formers from Astor School and Dover College as well as young pupils from Vale View Primary School.



AN IMPRESSION OF THE PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS AT THE PRIORY STATION

Castle Hill

The need for a basic Kent County Council highways scheme to improve safety on Castle Hill has offered an opportunity for the design team at IMPACT to respond to and upgrade it through the use of quality materials. This is, of course, not only an important entrance into the town, with a unique character of its own, but also the setting for one of the country's most important monuments.

Mill Lane and Flying Horse Lane

Another area which gives a crucial first impression to any new visitor to Dover is Mill Lane, a key riverside entrance to the town. The first part of the improvement scheme involved IMPACT working with KCC Highways Bridge Management Unit on the reconstruction of the river wall and pedestrian bridge, a new riverside walk and balustrades with new paving, lighting and landscaping. The second phase which will come on site shortly after Christmas will improve Flying Horse Lane and the link from the multi-storey car park to the Market Square.

Education Issues

Increasingly in recent months, the work undertaken by IMPACT and other initiatives in Dover has drawn a great deal of interest

from further educational establishments both in this country and in Europe.

We have received visits by business studies students from the London Borough of Hackney, architecture students from the University of Lille in Nord/Pas de Calais and landscape design and architectural students from the University of Greenwich at Dartford.

All are interested in examining how the town has fared as a result of numerous adverse economic threats and have been greatly encouraged by how vitality can be returned to the high street when all private and public sector organisations with a vested interest, work together.

Still on Target

We have a very busy period ahead of us as the end of our time in Dover rapidly approaches. The projects still to be done are on target and are planned to be in place before we finally pack our bags. There will always be areas still to be tackled and a request to IMPACT to leave behind a "shopping list" of ideas of areas still needing attention illustrates the willingness and determination of all concerned to continue to work to improve Dover town centre.

Your views, as always, are welcomed on any of the projects.