



IDELE

Identification, Dissemination and Exchange of good practice in
Local Employment development and promoting better governance

UNITED KINGDOM MARKET AND COASTAL TOWNS INITIATIVE

General details

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Details of activity

Background to the case study	Aims and objectives The vision for the Market and Coastal Towns Association (MCTA) is to create vibrant, healthy and sustainable market and coastal towns in Southwest England by helping local communities and their partners to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prepare plans for their future covering all aspects of community life in their towns and surrounding rural areas• Develop their skills and organisational capacity to be effective partners• Share good practice and learn from local, regional, national and international experience• Secure funding and professional assistance The Association provides: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Professional information, advice and guidance• Bespoke training and mentoring• Access to best practice, expertise and learning resources• Partnerships and networking• Research and analysis• Website• Newsletter
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	<p>Rationale</p> <p>Southwest England has a rich history of market and coastal towns which have for many years acted as focal points for both social and commercial activity. Today, these towns face changes to their traditional role, most notably the decline of agriculture and fishing, the lack of affordable housing and the changing nature of tourism. These changes in circumstance and the new challenges that ensue can often be traumatic for local communities. The businesses and communities in these towns need to respond to their changed circumstances to maintain their physical fabric, economic vitality and a good quality of life for people both in the town itself and the surrounding rural areas. The Initiative recognises the important contribution that market and coastal these towns make to the rural economy and can provide the building block for the future sustainability of their communities.</p> <p>Implementing organisation: Market and Coastal Towns Association</p> <p>Funders: South West of England Regional Development Agency English Heritage</p> <p>When activity started October 2004</p>
<p>Description of activity</p>	<p>Outline of programme / activities and approaches used</p> <p>The Initiative is built around extensive engagement and consultation with local communities. The core to the work is an eighteen month process that asks the fundamental question of the community “What would you like your town to be like in 25 years time”. To support this core process, the Association has adopted the following business objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To facilitate a Community Strategic Planning process (CSP) or elements of the CSP in all of the region’s market and coastal towns that wish to participate in the Initiative • To ensure the quality of the CSP process • To promote the value of the CSP process for statutory community planning and the new planning framework

- To develop the towns' skills and organisational capacity to be effective partners
- To develop an effective network for lobbying and sharing information
- To facilitate the attraction and allocation of resources to support the Association's work

Origins

The Market and Coastal Towns Initiative was launched in 2001 by a regional partnership of organisations in response to a variety of UK Government and south west regional policy initiatives. Its fundamental purpose was to promote the regeneration of market and coastal towns. The importance of market towns, serving their rural hinterlands, had been previously identified in a range of key policies including:

- Rural White Paper
- SWRDA Regional Economic Strategy
- Countryside Agency's Market Towns Programme
- Regional Planning Guidance

The role of the settlements had also been prioritised in various other initiatives within the region, including Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) programmes (such as the Cornwall SRB2 "Developing in Partnership" programme) and the Gloucestershire Market Towns Forum. Arguably other programmes, such as the English Heritage HERS Schemes and the South West Housing Corporation's Investment Programmes also include some focus on market towns because of their importance in the settlement patterns of the region. The rationale for developing an independent Association to deliver the Initiative was developed as a result of an evaluation of the programme in 2003.

Who was involved in the design, management and delivery of the programme

The design of the Initiative was instigated by the South West of England Regional Development Agency, supported by a number of strategic partners, mostly public sector. The process detail was designed by Alan Caldwell Associates, a private consultancy and by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.



	<p>Recognition – has the programme been recognised as good practice?</p> <p>In 2005, the Market and Coastal Towns Association received a national award from the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) within the "Planning for Sustainable Communities" category. The judging panel highlighted MCTI as "a model of good practice that deserves widespread acknowledgement of how to achieve community planning at the local level. Vibrant and healthy communities will only come about if they believe in themselves and have ownership of their future. This Initiative makes this happen."</p>
<p>Policy context within which the programme operates</p>	<p>Is there an explicit relationship between policy priorities / local activities?</p> <p>The policy context for the Initiative operates on several levels - at a national level, the Rural White Paper identified market towns as key service and employment centres within the country's rural areas. Regionally, the Regional Economic Strategy identifies this Initiative as being essential in enabling market and coastal towns to play their role in supporting the regional economy. Locally, the Initiative links to county level community plans and the emerging planning framework.</p> <p>Is the policy context supportive / prohibitive?</p> <p>The policy context is broadly supportive but does not provide detail.</p> <p>Has the policy context changed during the life of the activity</p> <p>In some instances this is the case; specifically the outbreak of foot and mouth disease (2001) in the UK caused a major focus to be placed on the Initiative in the south west region.</p> <p>Which came first – local activities or policy priorities (i.e. is activity leading or following policy priorities)?</p> <p>Initially there was a national policy drive from the Rural White Paper.</p>
<p>Geographical focus of the case study</p>	<p>The MCTI is a south west England regional initiative delivered at a local level. (NUTS 3)</p>



<p>Impact</p>	<p>Outputs – scale and scope of people reached through the programme</p> <p>The Initiative is targeted at communities of 2,000-25,000 people of which there are approximately two hundred within the south west region.</p> <p>Outcomes: at local level – what difference at local level and at regional and / or national level – what difference made?</p> <p>At a local level, the Initiative has stimulated a significant investment programme from the SWRDA amounting to £15m over three years. The real value however is in attempting to redefine the economic context within which these towns operate.</p> <p>Any impact at European level?</p> <p>Too early to cite, but quite unlikely other than from a good practice perspective.</p>
<p>Partners’ details</p>	<p>The Association works with a wide range of local and regional partners including local authorities, rural community councils, SWRDA, English Heritage and the Lottery Distributors.</p>

Theme-Specific Questions

<p>Who was targeted by the programme?</p>	<p>The Initiative is targeted at communities of 2,000-25,000 people at which there are approximately two hundred within the south west region.</p>
<p>Which levels of government were involved, informed or consulted?</p>	<p>National and local government were involved, informed and consulted.</p>
<p>What actions resulted in mainstreaming?</p>	<p>The Initiative was very much a pilot programme and as such is unique and has not been replicated to date.</p>
<p>Sustainability</p>	<p>The Association is in the process of examining its sustainability plan. This is likely to be built on the development of an asset base to generate long term revenue streams.</p>
<p>Successes / lessons learned</p>	<p>The Initiative has been built upon extensive consultation with end users - town partnerships and their communities.</p>



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	<p>What lessons have been learned</p> <p>It's not easy and it's certainly not quick!</p> <p>If they had their time again what would they do differently?</p> <p>Earlier rounds of the Initiative were left very much to local discretion in terms of the process. The Association is finding however that far stronger guidance and tools are needed to avoid people wasting their own time as the process is very much built upon volunteer support.</p>
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