

# Economy

## **Employment land**

A restraint of the development of increased employment and economic activity is the availability of the right land and buildings for business use. Calne has a good industrial estate at Porte Marsh and brown-field space to create new business parks. Historically, there have been restrictions of these opportunities by the policy of development being limited to Strategically Significant Towns, but with the change in policy Wiltshire Council can support developments in Calne.

## **Porte Marsh Industrial Estate**

Previous community plans have highlighted the need for the Porte Marsh Industrial Estate and Calne Town to work and integrate more closely together. This integration is slowly evolving and the Town Council, supported by the North Wilts Economic Partnership hosted a Porte Marsh Forum lunch on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2010 to develop this integration. Further events are planned to improve this work.

## **Business Improvement District (BID)**

Recent feedback from some businesses has shown an interest in Porte Marsh and other potential development sites in Calne establishing themselves as a BID. This is a co-operative of local business ratepayers in a precisely defined geographical area. It is a business-led initiative that gives businesses the power to manage their own operating environment so that it directly benefits their business, employees, clients and customers.

Together, businesses identify projects and services that they think are needed to add value to existing services and agree, through a formal ballot process, to a level of investment to ensure their delivery.

Business ratepayers within a BID area decide what they want to do to improve, If they vote for a BID, the activity they want is funded via a small supplement to the business rate, which in turn can attract "matched" funding from other sources. This topic is ongoing.

### **Broadband**

The last community plan update recorded this topic as complete, and certainly, the broad band service within the Calne Community Area had improved, but is not universally available. With the greater dependence that our community area has on small and micro businesses, the need to have ever improving broadband access is vital for our rural and town businesses.

Wiltshire Council has undertaken to deliver a broad band review by September 2010 when mapping of the super-highways in Wiltshire are defined and further improvements to the broad band service can be considered and evaluated.

This topic now goes back into the community plan ongoing list.

### **Retail provision in Calne**

Despite the recession, the number of shops open in Calne has decreased by one – there have been other losses but these have been replaced with new businesses started. Calne is in a better position than many of our neighbouring towns and around the country.

The loss of the Woolworth's shop to Calne was a setback but the decision of the developers to proceed with the building work despite the lack of a tenant was appreciated. Wiltshire Council has improved the look of the empty shop by the window display, and conversations continue to attract a suitable business to this prominent shop.

Many shops are still empty particularly where the property is deteriorating. We understand that a vacant shop in the High

Street will be window dressed by Wiltshire Council and Calne Chamber of Commerce is considering dressing another vacant shop window. Boarded up shops cannot have their frontage dressed without the owner's permission.

This continues as an ongoing project.

### Retail business in rural villages

Developing new retail provision in the rural areas has been reduced by the recession which requires urgent attention to help sustain rural communities and reduce traffic flows.

### Traffic Congestion

Wiltshire Council's decision to change to the Curzon Street road layout continues to cause significant congestion in the town and along the A4. A petition lodged with the Council asked that a full review of this congestion and the alternatives considered – this full review has been promised.

### Car Parking

Car parking charges and infringement penalties give a good income to Wiltshire Council. The Council has already increased charges in towns throughout Wiltshire and stated that they wish to harmonise rates in all towns. Calne charges may increase as in other market towns in Wiltshire.

The Council stated that they cannot embark on a town by town review as it would be too difficult and costly.

The impact on employment and businesses in Calne will be severely affected by the imposition of higher car parking charges. Low paid shop workers and part time workers in Calne centre will be disproportionately affected. Shops that are already struggling through the effects of the recession will have their customers use large shops that offer free car parking in the neighbouring towns.

This is potentially the most damaging threat that currently faces Calne retailers, and is a topic that is going to attract more attention from businesses. The Council will be starting a public consultation starting on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2010 and businesses need to share their views with the Council and the Economy theme group.

#### School to work transition

A survey conducted in January on behalf of the North Wilts Economic Partnership raised a concern about school young adults training for the transition from school to work life. The Chamber of Commerce have worked with The John Bentley School to develop a mentoring programme and which is ongoing.