

## **PRESS RELEASE:**

# **COMMUNITY SUCCEEDS IN OBTAINING FUNDING TO HELP LOCAL BUSINESSES**

(12 September 2008)

Cirencester's community leaders as part of the "Our Future Cirencester" community plan have been successful in obtaining funding from the Rural Renaissance programme of the County Council for a £40,000 research project into how to protect local businesses.

The project is timely because of the worsening economic climate - local business will need all the support and help possible to weather the coming storm. We have already witnessed the sad closure of shops in the town centre in recent months - we do not want to see any more.

The project will form the basis of future work in the town and should lead to an improved trading environment. It is meant to:

- Help maintain the unique character of Cirencester's retail and service providers;
- Keep Cirencester competitive with other forms of retail and service provision, such as the internet, and other towns in the area;
- Help shoppers identify what is produced locally so that their money stays in the local economy;
- Encourage local businesses to work together by using local suppliers and offering each other support and advice;
- Test how a Business Improvement District might benefit Cirencester;
- Identify means of delivering targeted skills and training to increase productivity.

Consultants are being invited to bid for the project which will begin in earnest in October. A big part of the study will be to work directly with local business people from a wide range of sectors to learn their views. The project's organisers understand that the solutions need to be identified locally and not imposed by distant local government chiefs in other parts of the region.

The project will be overseen by a hard-hitting working group including representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, the editor of the Wilts and Gloucs standard, professionals in the field of economic development and elected members.

David Fowles, Chairman of the working group, active member of the Chamber of Commerce and District Council cabinet member said:

*This is a very exciting venture coming at a time when local businesses are feeling the pinch. As a member of the Chamber of Commerce, I know how worried some local business people are feeling right now. We hope that through this work, we will be able to find quick and practical solutions that will help Cirencester face the recession and beat the competition from other larger towns in the area.*

This project is one of 16 in the newly launched community plan, prepared by "Our Future Cirencester".

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