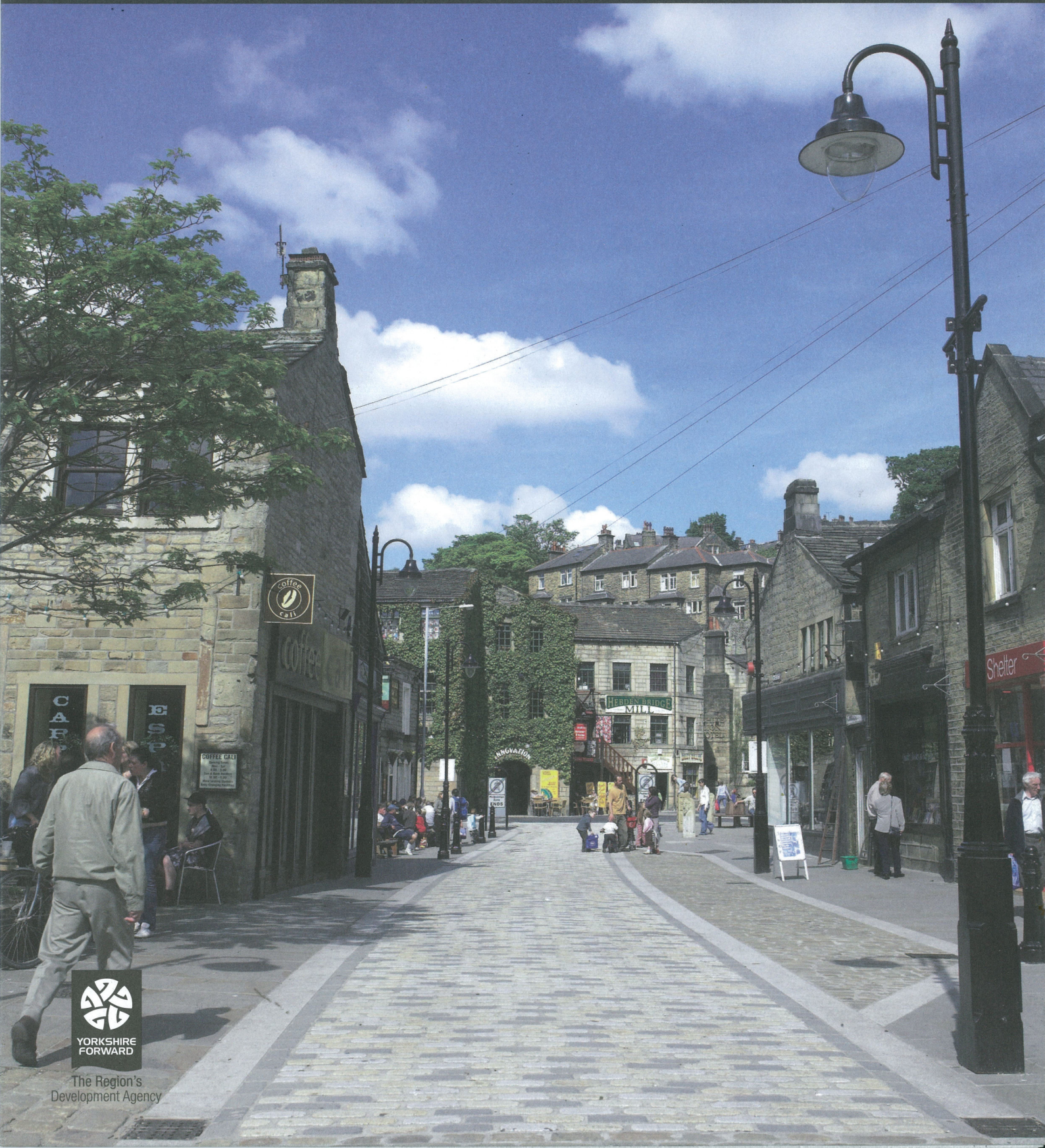


ANOTHER RENAISSANCE MARKET TOWNS SUCCESS STORY

Pedestrianisation scheme, Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire



YORKSHIRE
FORWARD

The Region's
Development Agency

A pedestrianisation scheme was implemented in the heart of Hebden Bridge to create a safer and more attractive environment.

Supported by Yorkshire Forward's Renaissance Market Towns (RMT) programme, the traffic elimination scheme has created greater accessibility for both locals and tourists, creating a unique sense of place and improving publicly accessible areas adjacent to the river. As a result, shopping has become much more enjoyable and the general renaissance of Hebden Bridge has been boosted with the restoration of much of the town's character.

The background

Hebden Bridge is a market town of over 4,500 people within the Calderdale Borough of West Yorkshire. Located in a river valley eight miles west of Halifax, it serves a wide rural hinterland and is well-known for its independent shops.

The town's centre is a designated conservation area but the quality of the public realm did not adequately reflect that status. Due to its success as a tourist destination the town suffered with growing traffic and accessibility problems.

Plans and surveys

Under the RMT programme, a valley masterplan was published in 2003. This identified five 'transformational' projects: one for each of the towns in the Upper Calder Valley Renaissance. In addition, a draft Hebden Bridge Action Plan was produced in 2005. In both of these plans, the stated intention was to improve Hebden Bridge's town centre.

An extensive traffic management review was carried out with public consultation, which aimed to improve the environment through various means, including:

- Pedestrian priority
- Re-routing of traffic
- Vehicle-speed reduction measures
- Landscaping and general improvements.

To assess the full impact of these proposals, two surveys were carried out pre- and post-pedestrianisation. The first of the two, in April 2005, recorded the performance of traders and the problems they faced. The second survey monitored progress and improvements to the town's commercial centre.

Consultation, consultation, consultation

As part of the RMT programme's regeneration strategy for Hebden Bridge, the scheme's steering group was made up of representatives from



Hebden Royd Town Council; Calderdale Council ward members; business leaders; Metro and traffic consultants. Managed by Calderdale Council, the steering group met every month to discuss any issues or concerns that had been raised.

Consultation was key to the project's success, demonstrating that most respondents were in favour of the regeneration strategy. Leaflets were delivered to 10,000 households in the district, and a shop was rented in the town centre for six weeks so that locals could see the various options and voice their opinions. Approximately 1,800 questionnaires were returned, showing 85% support.

This first stage was handled by Bertram Shepard, a consultant who developed the transportation feasibility study and recommended strategic measures throughout the town (for example kerbside management, parking, traffic re-routing, the closed-road pedestrian area concept, pedestrian crossings, signal junctions and public transport access). Public consultations were undertaken until the council cabinet's approval.

With a detailed brief confirmed for design and implementation, the project was then handed over to the council's highways team and an exhibition was held to highlight various options. In a triumph of local democracy, the option chosen by the public was the one which went ahead.

Calderdale Council liaised closely with each retailer about the work done to the front of their premises. Improved access and safety, and a greater paved area, enabled some – particularly cafés – to expand beyond their doorsteps.

Best of all

Of all the improvements made, the most significant were the pedestrianisation of Bridge Gate (a main street in the heart of the town) and the creation of a new market place in St George's Square.



As well as enabling Hebden Bridge to realise its full economic potential, these have been important for a range of social, cultural and community activities. The picturesque part of town, popular with tourists, greatly benefited from becoming a vehicle-free zone.

Aside from concerns about the loss of some parking spaces, and a lengthy 12-month construction period, most shopkeepers were very supportive.

Responding to objections

Overall, there was a lot of support from the community representatives on the committee. Significant opposition did come, however, from a vocal group of objectors via a local community web forum.

Following completion of the scheme in 2007, the planning team at Calderdale Council conducted a satisfaction survey of the townspeople. It became clear at that point just how effectively a new focal point had been created in the town. Those on the side of town where the scheme had been implemented were happy – but those on the other side of town saw business suffer.

New signs were put up, redirecting people to attractions elsewhere in town and identifying where the parking places were. Leaflets were also produced to inform visitors.

Key successes

- As a direct result of the pedestrianisation, there has been a clear improvement to the visual impact and function of the town, making it a better place to live, trade and visit.
- The scheme has gained national recognition:
 - The British Council for Shopping Centres' (BCSC) National Town Centre Environment Award 2007.
 - Second prize in the environment category of *Local Government News* magazine's annual awards.



- Making the shortlist in the pedestrian environment category of the National Transport Awards 2007.
- Coverage in The Guardian colour supplement.
- The creation of a shared open space has had a great effect on the town's urban environment. The seven cafés within the pedestrianised area have used the space to their own, and their customers', advantage – with new licensed outdoor seating. One of the awards judges described this as having created a Mediterranean feel.
- Footfall has increased by 100% along the upgraded streets and by 25% in the town as a whole.

Lessons learnt

- Dealing in public art has been an 'eye opener' and something that the Council would approach with caution again.
 - As part of this project, Calderdale Council commissioned sculptured masonry bollards. Each cost only £700 and, collectively, they were seen as a minor scheme embellishment. A Hebden Bridge-based artist (who had worked for the council in the past) was approached directly, without other local artists having the chance to compete. With hindsight, this could have been approached differently as the town has a large artistic community who were frustrated at not being given the opportunity to compete for the work and a degree of fellow critique came to the fore, disproportionate to the £6,000 spent which represented just 0.5% of the total budget.
 - Another piece of commissioned public art was a 3m bronze and stainless steel gnomon. This cast a shadow onto a sundial laid into the floor of St George's Square. Based upon a fustian knife, this was meant to reflect Hebden Bridge's textile heritage. Instead, it caused much controversy. Some said it was too aggressive; others were concerned it would occupy an outdoor performance space. Although granted planning permission, it drew 50 registered objections. After an aesthetic redesign, these fell to 15. There was much praise, however, when it was eventually unveiled on the summer solstice.
- Parking is still an issue. 35 parking spaces were lost as a result of the kerbside review. Although 29 spaces have now been replaced, many locals believe additional parking is required because, ironically, the traffic measures have brought more tourists to the town. The number of spaces stands at 400. Additional parking provisions are currently being explored.

Project milestones

2003

February Steering group set up.

June External consultant Bertram Shepard appointed.

2003–2004

Traffic review undertaken. Briefing/options questionnaire released to public. Evaluation of strategy.

2005

Yorkshire Forward funding secured.

February Firmed-up design brief taken back in-house for detailed design.

2005

Associated traffic circulation measures implemented.

October Pedestrianisation options publicised.

2006

Associated kerbside management/TRO implemented.

February Appointment of tarmac construction.

April Commence on site.

June Interregnum funding secured.

2007

April Substantial completion of works.

2008

June 20 mph zone introduced across the whole town.

August Sundial and gnomon installed; full-scheme completion.

Financial summary

Capital costs

Costs	Feasibility stage	On completion
Pedestrianisation	£750,000	£878,00
Fees/development costs (including £100k external consultants' fees)	£180,000	£200,000
Advance materials*	£55,000	£55,000
Total	£985,000	£1,133,000

(N.B. £100K additional spend was authorised when interregnum funding was awarded halfway through construction.)

*'Advance materials' refers to the stone and paving materials which the council stockpiled in advance of the construction works starting, rather than make it the contractor's responsibility. This was done because it was cheaper to source direct from the suppliers and overcome the 16-week delivery period for quarried products.

Funding sources

Source	Feasibility stage	On completion
Yorkshire Forward's RMT programme	£300,000	£300,000
Interregnum bid (see note above)	£0	£100,000
Calderdale Council LTP budget	£600,000	£733,000
Total	£900,000	£1,133,000

CONTACT US

If you would like to know more about our work in the region's market towns contact our rural capitals team on 0113 3949600 or email holly.forquilha@yorkshire-forward.com or visit www.yorkshire-forward.com/markettowns

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