

Portas Rumours abound



Portas Rumours abound: Excitement in the retail community at the moment due to a series of phone calls from someone researching our Portas Application, making us think that we might be on a shortlist of some kind...but it might not be that at all so we're all trying not to get our hopes up too much.

The Partnership are really proud of our application and have published a pdf on the About Us page of this website that gives more information about it, but it all hinges on winning the money from Communities and Local Government to provide the funding to put these projects together. The announcement is expected soon.

Add your voice to the many supporters of our bid by going to our facebook page Portas Application Abingdon on Thames.

A lot of people have queried whether Abingdon has a hope as we don't have as many empty shops as some towns and our "grime and crime" is pretty well controlled already. We are basing our application on the fact that we understand the point of this exercise is to find innovative new solutions for all towns to follow to bring back the heart to the High Street. We therefore cannot see the logic in giving money to towns that have not even got the basics right. If a town hasn't worked out whose job it is to empty the bins, what hope of them delivering innovation as a beacon for others?

Abingdon has put itself forward as a town that is poised to push back the boundaries of town centre management and see what else we can do over and above the basics, and see *whether these things work*. We have lovely independent shops who deserve to succeed. They are struggling against a

tidal wave of mighty competitive threats, but they are still full of ideas and enthusiasm and are willing to work together to try them out.

I for one will be annoyed if the government dishes out money to towns that have so far failed to keep their streets clean and crime free. I am sure they will see some very successful "pilots" where crime reduction and a clean up campaign will bring back some of their lost shoppers, but that's hardly innovative; town centre management needs some genuine new ideas to take us all to next base and tackle the problems that were correctly identified in the Portas Review, issues like disinterested landlords, divided responsibilities and loss of connection with local people. These are a lot more complex than getting the bins emptied and it will take a competent team to pull off some new projects that make a difference here.

Let's hope CLG agree with me! HB

