



# SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF TUNBRIDGE WELLS & DISTRICT

Press release 7 May 2007

“Around the Clock”: Survey of users views about improving Five Ways

## FIVE WAYS IS DRAB AND UNWELCOMING SAY THE PUBLIC

In a recent street survey carried out by Tunbridge Wells Soroptimist Club at Five Ways, four fifths of those interviewed described the area as drab and unwelcoming. The Soroptimist report on the survey “Around the Clock” found that people want to see Currys wall cleaned up, more greenery and flowers, more seating, and steps taken to make it feel safer.

Many people felt intimidated by some of the other users. 40% referred to “tramps” “undesirables” “drunken weirdos” and a quarter disliked the crowds of congregating school children and the skateboarders.

The report calls on Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and KCC to set up a joint Task Force to take action to brighten the area up. “There seems to be no guiding vision about preserving the features of the attractive Victorian and Edwardian streetscape around this key landmark at the heart of our shopping area” says Club President Lorna Blackmore “As one of the tourists we interviewed observed - “they would never let this happen in Harrogate”. The Council and local shopkeepers need to get their act together. That includes Kent Highways whose crude pavement repairs are a disgrace”.

Key recommendations in the report are to

- clean up Currys grubby sidewall with new “heritage” quality standards for shopfronts and signs in the area generally
- instal hanging wall baskets, and greenery
- provide more seating and café tables subject to a strict code of practice on litter prevention.
- challenge poor pavement repairs and low maintenance standards
- reduce street clutter and remove intrusive advertising
- create interesting things to look at such as art displays, a buskers pitch and market stalls
- improve the public’s sense of security by relocating skateboarders and motorbikes, speedily installing the promised taxi rank, street warden patrols and attention to lighting and CCTV

For the longer term the Council should create more “landmark” sunny green spaces with seating to reduce pressure on Five Ways. The Soroptimists believe that a new small park in the public space in front of the Town Hall would be a worthy way to mark the Royal Tunbridge Wells Centenary and they suggest further “Green Oases” with landmarks as part of the Town Plan and the redevelopment around the cinema site and station.

“Royal Tunbridge Wells is about a great deal more than just the Pantiles and Decimus Burton” says Mrs Blackmore. “Cleaning up around Five Ways will benefit everyone and is vital for the prosperity of the heart of the town around the clock”.

#### Notes for editors

For further information contact Programme Action Officer June Bridgeman on 01892 525578 [jbman@btinternet](mailto:jbman@btinternet) or Club President Lorna Blackmore on 01892 543805 [Lorna.Blackmore@btinternet.com](mailto:Lorna.Blackmore@btinternet.com)