

Tewkesbury to shine in retail spotlight

Tewkesbury will be in the national spotlight when its shops are featured in a flagship business affairs television documentary.

The town was one of three places filmed for a new series of BBC2's The Money Programme.

The programme (the third in the series titled Mary Portas: Save Our Shops), will be broadcast at **9pm on Tuesday 23rd June** on BBC2. It will show what happened when retail guru Mary Portas came to the town in April. The straight-talking BBC star is one of the UK's foremost authorities on retail and is credited with turning Harvey Nichols into a household name.

After visiting shops in Tewkesbury, she chaired a meeting to find out how businesses were faring during the recession, what might be done to help and how the high street of the future might look. She listened to retailers' and shoppers' concerns and brainstormed ideas to help create a vision for the town centre. The meeting – called Save our Shops – was filmed for the programme and parts of it will be shown next week.

She also visited the town's Food Festival and spoke in detail to two traders – Amanda Fisher at clothing boutique Dusk Til Dawn and Jon Benns at The Music Trade.

They were filmed as part of a study at how Britain's retailers, large and small, are coping in the current recession. The programme will feature three areas - London's West End, Dunstable in Bedfordshire, a town feeling the full effects of the downturn; and Tewkesbury. This will be shown as 'every town' – a place with some difficulties but opportunities too and somewhere between the other two extremes.

"We were particularly interested in Tewkesbury, not only because it is typical of many market towns but because of all the efforts that it's making to help itself," said Emily Hughes, the programme's Associate Producer.

"Mary was very impressed to hear what was being done to try to reinvigorate it but she also had lots of ideas about what else could be done."

When Mary visited the town it had just launched the Tewkesbury Regeneration Initiative (TRI) to boost the local economy. As a result of her visit, work is underway to brand the town as part of a marketing push.

Now traders, business and civic leaders hope that being featured on the Money Programme will give another boost to the town's revitalisation.

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"We're incredibly lucky in Tewkesbury to have a range of good shops, including a great selection of independent stores," said David Bloxham, Chairman of Tewkesbury Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

"However, we are not complacent. We must show that Tewkesbury is a thriving market town which can continue to hold its own throughout the current economic climate and as we move out of the recession."

"As Mary recognised, it has a lot to offer but there is more we can do, not only to show it's a great shopping experience but a great tourist destination too. We can only do that by working together. A number of organisations and individuals in and around the town are doing that and it's vital that it continues."

The programme will also show Music Trade owner Jon Benns in his other guise – as part of local five piece band The Happy Accidents. When producers heard them play, they asked them to perform a short piece for a musical interlude.

Unfortunately, Jon and the rest of the band – Caroline McQuillan-Benns, Jesse Benns, Debbie Lannen and Vicki Wagsatff – will have to record The Money Programme rather than watching it live. On 23rd June, they will be performing at The Roses Theatre in Tewkesbury.

Note to newsdesks

For more information or to arrange an interview with the Money Programme's Director Martin Small or Series Producer Hamo Forsyth, contact Hilary Allison at Vivid on 01684 854421 or email hilary@thevididconsultancy.com

Mary Portas is one of the UK's foremost authorities on retail and brand communication and is credited with turning Harvey Nichols into the modern fashion powerhouse that it is. Apart from her popular "Mary, Queen of Shops" series on BBC Television, she regularly travels around the world advising on retail strategy and frequently lectures on the theme of brands and retail. Her first book, *Windows - the Art of Retail Display*, was published in five languages and quickly became the worldwide authority on the subject. For more information, see www.maryqueenofshops.com

Tewkesbury Chamber of Commerce & Industry represents the interests of all businesses in the town and the surrounding area. It is dedicated to improving and promoting trade and commerce on a local level. It also takes an active interest in all aspects of the general economic well-being of its community. Its chairman is David Bloxham, Managing Partner of Tewkesbury solicitors' Thomson & Bancks. You can see more information about the Chamber at www.tewkesburychamber.org.uk

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Tewkesbury Regeneration Initiative (TRI) is a joint initiative by six groups who want to achieve a level of co-operation and community involvement never before seen in the town. They believe there is a need for concerted action because Tewkesbury lacks a vision for the future and the good work that goes on in the town is not co-ordinated or prioritised. They also feel that many of the resources in Tewkesbury could be better used by greater involvement of the community and that the town is not tapping into existing sources of funding that exist to pay for projects. The six groups are Tewkesbury Town Council's Regeneration Committee, Tewkesbury Forward, Tewkesbury Area Partnership, the Severn and Avon Valley Combined Flood Group, Tewkesbury Chamber of Commerce & Industry and the Civic Society.

The Money Programme is BBC2's flagship business affairs documentary. A new series runs weekly from the 9th June for five weeks. Mary Portas Save Our Shops is episode three. You can see more information at www.bbc.co.uk/moneyprogramme

Dusk Til Dawn is owned and run by Amanda Fisher and is in Church Street, Tewkesbury. You can contact Amanda on 01684 298898.

The Music Trade is owned and run by Jon Benns and is in Church Street. You can contact Jon on 01684 850220 or at sales@themusictrade.co.uk and <http://www.themusictrade.co.uk> You can see more about The Happy Accidents by visiting www.themusictrade.co.uk/the_happy_accidents.html or visit <http://www.themusictrade.co.uk> and click on 'The Happy Accidents'.

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