

# One Town Partnership

His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales also launched the first BiC One Town Partnership in 1987 in Yorkshire. With the aim of demonstrating how a private/public partnership can contribute to the improvement of the economic base of a whole town, 'The Calderdale Partnership' will be the prototype of a new approach to local economic development, rebuilding links between the community and companies where they are based or trade.



## The Calderdale Partnership

At the Annual General Meeting in New-castle, December 1986, HRH The Prince of Wales announced a new venture for BiC: the experiment of a 'One-Town' partnership. The idea was to see if we could work with a range of groups in a single borough to help in the process of economic regeneration. We chose Halifax in Calderdale, and its surrounding valleys and towns, because a population of 200,000 people suggested a manageable size and because a number of imaginative projects were already afoot. Dean Clough Industrial Park, the brainchild of pianist and property magnate turned social entrepreneur, Ernest Hall, had transformed the world's largest (empty) carpet factory into a complex of 170 small businesses with 1,200 jobs. There was a thoughtful group of councillors with no party in overall control and with an exceptional chief executive; and a lively refurbishment scheme 'the Inheritance Project' was cleaning up and restoring major sites and buildings.

After some intensive research, meetings

and discussions, the partnership was launched on 6 February 1987 by BiC's President, The Prince of Wales. He said two important things: one, that he would come back to see how it fared; and second, that if it was successful, perhaps this pilot could indicate ways to work elsewhere. The impetus was to be two-pronged, to secure investment to bring jobs and wealth, and to work as closely as possible with all sectors of the community.

There has been some progress in a process that must be long and steady – some notable, some more modest but nonetheless significant in what is a team game. Marks & Spencer Plc lent a management trainee to help a small engineering business that needed marketing and administrative help; Samuel Webster Wilson Ltd, brewers of the famous Yorkshire bitter improved some untidy land on a suburban housing estate; JCB lent us a yellow and black digger to help with environmental work and trained two lads to drive it. Major impact came from Rowntree's establishment of a £200,000 Fund for Calderdale, for

low-interest loans to help people do up shops, houses or buildings, in key sites on the basis that a clean, bright town inspires confidence and pride and confidence fuels business success and investment.

Bradford Pennine Insurance has expanded its fast-growing computer company within Calderdale. Crucial for jobs and the income that a major tourist attraction can bring, has been the 'Eureka' project. This 'learning centre' for children, part educational and part entertainment, is being set up by the Vivien Duffield and Clore Foundations and is expected to attract up to half a million people a year from all over Britain.

Central to the encouragement of investment in an area which has the physical advantage of magnificent countryside, fine stone buildings and good communications and access, but few, if any, cash incentives, has been a series of visits by senior industrialists from BiC companies. A tour of Calderdale's assets – some good, some still to be improved - has brought encouraging responses from some leading businessmen. Return visits and further discussion about possibilities are on the schedule. But while some explore business opportunities, others discuss training needs, how schooling is addressing employers' needs, or the ravaged silhouette of a semi-derelict housing estate. At the local level the Inheritance Project, with BiC, is travelling from town to village to suburb to show what can be done and how, perhaps, groups there can encourage the pride of place and confidence that builds the upward spiral of regeneration.

