

Good evening Mr Mayor, councillors and visitors.

My name is Cindy Squire and I live in South Street, Hatherleigh.

Save our Market!

If anyone were to be asked to describe the town of Hatherleigh many thoughts and ideas may arise - but the most prominent characteristic that everyone would probably mention would be The Cattle Market!

The market has been central to Hatherleigh since the time of Henry III. In 1220 Hatherleigh was given the status of a 'Market town', from then until now there has always been a cattle market held weekly in Hatherleigh. This must surely not be allowed to cease – particularly as due to the charter, Hatherleigh has the right to hold a market within the town!

Because of the market, Hatherleigh has literally been 'placed on the map', bringing in visitors and locals alike to one of the oldest well supported markets in the West Country. People from neighbouring towns, villages, hamlets and farms all crowd into Hatherleigh on market day. Why? Because - it's held in the centre of Hatherleigh, it has the history behind it, there is room to park, there are real animals to buy, there is an amazing selection of stalls and because it's a great friendly, social day out. Nowhere for miles around comes anywhere near the standard of Hatherleigh Market!

The current stall holders take over the huge central area of the market and the old covered pig selling area. The atmosphere is electric. Here the traditional past meets the modern visitor and shoppers alike! There are approximately 60 stalls each week. Some stall holders have been coming to Hatherleigh for over 40 years! In the current climate when we are all encouraged to support our local producers and to shop local - the market offers a perfect opportunity to do both at the same time.

Although since foot and mouth the cattle trade has never returned to the regular Tuesday slot, the sale of poultry and pets has. Buyers and sellers of rare breeds come from all over the South West. The auction attracts huge crowds, and often there are no cages left if the seller arrives a little too late! One really

has to squeeze around the pens as there are so many people trying to bid or sell, in what is really quite a small auction area. There is also a live auction of furniture cum bric-a-brac with over 1000 lots and even the recently formed 'In the pen' Arts and antiques section.

Then of course there are the market stalls selling anything from cucumbers to mole grips!

Today, Tuesday 9th August 2011, at 11.30 a.m. there were 582 cars parked in the lower car park, and 51 in the pay and display car park. That's 632 altogether. If every car had on average three people in them that would have been 1,896 people visiting the market at that time. That would not include everyone walking to the market, catching the bus or indeed anyone who parked on the roads! Over 2,000 must have been in and around Hatherleigh this morning!

A group of us brought our petition to the market. Almost everyone signed immediately. I wish you could have heard the remarks. There were many locals exasperated that their local market was in jeopardy. Visitors told us that they were only visiting Hatherleigh because of the market, of which many subsequently went on to visit the town centre itself. There were buyers from Bideford to Plymouth and we had visitors from as far afield as Leicester, Somerset and even Germany!

The people from the surrounding farms and villages attend the market, and this provides many families the 'once a week' chance to catch up with the latest news, particularly for individuals who live on isolated farms. This social opportunity on market day transforms the town into a bustling happy environment where business, trading and happy conversations mingle to give Hatherleigh its unique atmosphere. Local groups and charities hold weekly coffee mornings in the Methodist chapel and the Old Schools on a Tuesday morning, collectively raising in excess of £250 a week. Sandra Trenaman told me that the Methodist coffee mornings are just as busy in the winter as they are in the summer, reflecting the sheer number of regular users to the Market every Tuesday throughout the year.

This not only serves as a great way to raise funds, but again, offers the chance for people to meet and socialise; a vital element to provide a sense of

community in a rural area. We have all seen in the past few days, the devastating effects that a lack of community can lead to.

Furthermore, as a consequence to any development there will be no room for the infamous carnival to operate from, and therefore would certainly mean the end of the traditional carnival.

Finally, it must be questioned whether one family should be able to shape and dictate the future of a whole community, without challenge and question, since the closure of the market and the introduction of 170 houses would inevitably change the town unrecognisably.

The market is at the heart of Hatherleigh. It is what makes our town stand out from all the other towns and villages for miles around. It is essential this heart keeps beating.

Thanks to Trish, Jane, Louise, Eliza and Jess who helped me comprise my speech.