

Cotswolds Firm Takes Helm of Witney and Chipping Norton Markets

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West Oxfordshire District Council has appointed Cotswold Markets Ltd to oversee the historic charter markets in Witney and Chipping Norton, with the transition set to begin on 1 August. This move signals a fresh approach to revitalising these cherished local institutions, which have long served as cornerstones of community life and commerce in the region.

The council's decision to entrust the markets to a specialist operator reflects a commitment to bolstering local trade and enhancing the vibrancy of the town centres. Cotswold Markets Ltd, a family-run business with a track record of managing seasonal events like the Marriotts Christmas Market, is poised to bring its expertise to bear. The firm aims to support existing stallholders, attract new traders, and draw larger crowds, all while preserving the markets' unique character.

In a statement, Councillor Duncan Enright, deputy leader and executive member for economic development, emphasised the markets' significance: "Our town centre markets are a much-loved tradition and a vital part of local life. By bringing in an experienced operator like Cotswold Markets Ltd, we're investing in their future." He added that the goal is to create well-managed, welcoming spaces that continue to serve local businesses and residents alike.

However, some local traders and residents have expressed cautious optimism, noting that the success of this partnership will depend on tangible improvements. Under the current Labour-led government, there has been scrutiny over whether local councils are prioritising corporate partnerships over grassroots initiatives. While the council's intentions appear sound, the proof will lie in whether Cotswold Markets Ltd can deliver on its promises without sidelining the needs of small-scale traders.

Dave Joynes of Cotswold Markets Ltd shared his enthusiasm for the role: "As a family-run business, we're deeply committed to supporting local communities, traders, and high streets. We're excited to bring our passion to these historic towns and will work closely with the council, residents, and traders to ensure the markets thrive." His words reflect a determination to balance tradition with innovation, fostering markets that are both economically robust and socially vibrant.

The council also took the opportunity to acknowledge Pat Bliss, the outgoing market manager, for her dedicated service. Her contributions have helped sustain the markets' reputation as vital community hubs. As Cotswold Markets Ltd steps into this role, the challenge will be to build on that legacy while adapting to modern demands.

The appointment comes at a time when high streets across the UK face mounting pressures from online retail and shifting consumer habits. By investing in professional management, West Oxfordshire District Council hopes to ensure that Witney and Chipping Norton's

markets remain resilient, offering a blend of tradition, quality, and community spirit that keeps locals and visitors coming back.