

## Feature

Their first task was to work with the market traders already trading there whilst introducing new retailers that sold lines that did not conflict with the established stall holders.

They also wanted to extend the trading area into Wote Street, which links the market square with the undercover shopping area at Festival Place. To introduce new stalls into Wote Street, they had to be very sensitive to the existing shops and businesses by not obscuring their frontages, displays and access. This of course meant that they could not introduce the usual, traditional market layout of a long bank of stalls, as this would effectively create a wall between the footfall and the very shops and businesses they were attempting to assist. They have managed to achieve this with sensitive planning and hence the layout is guided by the amount of blank wall space available.

Lew went on to say, 'Since April we have introduced approximately 30 new traders and during the period many have not stayed the course which is regrettable, but anticipated, as we considered this to be a building phase. We did find that some were able to make it pay and have become regular traders with an established repeat business. Wote Street is now, to all intents and purposes, full. Our attention is focussed on trying to fill



**Keith Eaton with some of his quality fresh produce**

the adjoining streets at our disposal.'

On the recommendation of Hughmark, the council have introduced new signage near every pay and display payment point, to advertise the Wednesday and Saturday market. Lew commented that 'it is paying dividends because the attendance by the public is growing as the awareness also improves.'

As predicted by the company, the Wednesday market is improving faster than the Saturday but Lew expects in time it will even out but not necessarily with the same traders at both as some are already committed to other Saturday markets.

Since they took over, Lew and his son have introduced three specialist markets, something that they have an experience of hosting. The first was a large French market which filled up all of the allocated area and was held together with the existing market on a normal market day, to ensure that the regular traders benefitted from the extra footfall the French market attracted. This was followed by an Italian themed market and later an International market. There is no frequency to these events currently, but plans are in place to introduce one each month from next year.

I interviewed the traders, new and old, to find out what they thought of the improvements to their market. I was there for the midday rush and there was a positive vibe running throughout the market - stall holders shouting their wares and a street musician playing away. It also helped that it was a fine day, unlike the previous Wednesday's trading and so footfall was good and shoppers took the time to browse and purchase.

I started at the top end of the market on Wote Street which leads down to the shopping precinct. The first stall I came across was the 'E-liquidator', specialising in e-cigarette products. From Selsey, some 40 miles away, the 'E-liquidator' has been trading on Basingstoke's Wednesday market for 7 months. He has regular, repeat business, helped by a promotion that he has run. He said 'Everyone here is really friendly, there is more footfall now and the market has improved. The managers are nice people and very supportive.'

**Left: Delicious Thai food is available every Wednesday and Saturday at Basingstoke Market**

**Right: Mark is a well known face (and voice) of Basingstoke Market!**

