

For immediate release

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OUR FUTURE: participating pupils from South Wilts Grammar School in Salisbury

Some of Salisbury's brightest young minds got to grips with the tough challenges facing the city.

Nearly 25 pupils at South Wilts Grammar School (SWGS) shared ideas and proposals about the future of Salisbury with a receptive audience of local councillors and community organisations.

The girls identified pressing problems, such as traffic congestion and an over reliance on the Cathedral as the city's main tourism attraction.

They then came up with a wish-list following the workshop, which addressed the challenges of a sustainable environment, the well-being of local communities and the quality of the built environment.

The pupils were taking part in a pilot event, called the Big Project and organised by the Salisbury Royal Society of Arts (RSA), which is set to be rolled out across secondary schools in the city.

Through the citizenship project, local teenagers are encouraged to explore how they can shape the future of their city and its communities under the banner 'Our Place: Our Lives.'

The pupils' wish-list included congestion charging on city gateway roads, live performance events to attract extra visitors to the Market Place, improved public spaces, more street lighting at night-time and more fashion shops geared up to teenage boys because 'they only have two while we girls have 10'.

There were also calls for coffee shops to stay open in the evenings, a bowling alley in the city centre, a youth club, a local university to stop a 'brain drain' and Wiltshire College Salisbury to provide higher education and more courses.

The children, aged between 11 and 14, also called for a wider range of jobs, in order to retain talent, and for the bus station in the city centre to be replaced with something more suitable, such as a leisure centre.

John Potter, from the Salisbury RSA Forum and vice chairman of Salisbury City Community Areas Partnership, an attendee, said: "The future of our city and its communities belongs as much – arguably more – to the younger generation as it does to us.

"Today's pilot project, which we will look to roll out to local secondary schools, was an overwhelming success, showing that youngsters have a genuine desire to see a city with an improved quality of life for residents, businesses and visitors."

Lindsay Chamberlain, the SWGS teacher in charge, said: "The pupils felt that Salisbury's future as a premier regional centre for business, tourism and retail is not assured unless difficult steps are taken, such as congestion charging during rush-hour. The lack of a university was also an issue they felt held the city back."

Graham Gould, the director of Salisbury Vision, who also attended, said: "The pupils – the next working generation – showed they don't want Salisbury to be sold short through a lack of vision, and that doing nothing is not an option.

"Reassuringly, they felt we are right on track with Salisbury Vision's regeneration programme, which is aimed at making the city a better place to live in, work in or visit."

Ends

Notes

The Salisbury Vision project is a joint private and public sector initiative to revitalise key areas within the city of Salisbury whilst ensuring that its historic uniqueness is protected.

The partnership's aims are to create high-quality facilities, new jobs and an improved and sustainable environment for the people of Salisbury and beyond.

The Salisbury Vision Board is responsible for delivering the Salisbury Vision regeneration programme. It is led by the private sector and its members are:

- **Salisbury Civic Society**
- **South Wiltshire Economic Partnership**
- **Salisbury City Centre Management**
- **Salisbury & District Chamber of Commerce and Industry**
- **Salisbury City Community Area Partnership**
- **Wiltshire Council**
- **Salisbury City Council**

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