



# MELKSHAM SKATEBOARDERS

Wiltshire

Living Spaces Grant: £41,500

The Wiltshire town of Melksham was a typical example of what happens if young people have nowhere to socialise - skateboarding was going on in busy streets and car parks, causing danger and being seen to encourage anti-social behaviour. The difference in Melksham was that a local group decided to involve the youngsters in doing something positive about the problem.

The only skating facility had been a 15 year old ramp, removed from a local park because it was dangerous. Local residents arranged to take a group of skaters to nearby Chippenham, where they gained ideas and were able to start making their own plans, including applying for a Living Spaces grant. With 100 plus skaters involved locally, the project grew and fundraising events included 'skatathons', raffles, 'bag packs' at supermarkets and auctions of promises.

The project was supported by the whole community and the youngsters themselves were encouraged to take a leading role. Attending Town Council and group meetings they were able to have their say about the park and make it their own. Thanks to the adult campaigners keeping in constant communication with the young people, they built trust and involved them in fund raising and publicity events including the annual Melksham Carnival. So impressive was their contribution, since the project was completed the skaters have won financial support from the Carnival committee to organise a 'Skatejam' with live bands,

DJs and demonstrations by professional skaters.

A true grass roots development, the skate park has become what organiser Janice Viveash describes as "Probably the best asset this side of Bristol". As she says "We were fed up with the kids making a nuisance on the streets, now half the village come out to see them each year in the party in the park".

