

Townpeople can give views on future of Christmas event

Magical or commercial? Have your say on market

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A survey has been launched to canvass opinions on Tenterden's Christmas market.

It comes after this year's Christmas market, organised for the first time by a commercial operator, The Market Square Group, attracted a flurry of complaints.

The change came because Tenterden Chamber of Commerce said it no longer had the resources to stage the big event.

Previously the market had been based around a late-night Friday shopping evening but this year it became a three-day affair, spread across the whole town centre.

Some shopkeepers were unhappy with the new set-up.

Among them was Kevin Bryant, owner of High Street business Truffles At Coco, who said: "The High Street has sold out to a commercial operator who has no interest in the community and this is against what a small town should be about and the sense of Christmas spirit.

"This year's market lacked community spirit and that is



Visitors explore the fair and, inset, Cllr Sue Ferguson, who has launched a consultation



the most important thing that was lost."

Other traders and residents lamented the passing of the smaller, more informal market, while others said they had enjoyed the spectacular, which was every bit as magical as previous years.

Paul Kennedy, spokesman for the Market Square Group, said the market covered seven zones and as much as the High Street as possible.

He said free places were given

away to seven charities, adding: "Traders did good business and the event was well attended.

"We would view this event as a success. I am sure that majority of the public would agree."

Now Cllr Sue Ferguson has launched the consultation in a bid to fully assess people's reactions.

Forms have been delivered to businesses across the town asking for views on whether the market had been a success.

A feedback session has been

organised for Wednesday, February 22, at Tenterden Town Hall by the town council's tourism and business committee.

It takes place at 6pm and all are invited to give their views.

Alternatively, feedback forms can be picked up from Tenterden Town Hall or completed online at www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/5KNMS22.

All forms must be returned to the town hall by Wednesday, February 15.