

Parish Plans

Guidance for parish and town councils



Working for people and places in rural England

The Countryside Agency

The Countryside Agency is the statutory body working to make:

- **the quality of life better for people in the countryside;**
- **the quality of the countryside better for everyone.**

The Countryside Agency will help to achieve the following outcomes:

- **empowered, active and inclusive communities;**
- **high standards of rural services;**
- **vibrant local economies;**
- **all countryside managed sustainably;**
- **recreation opportunities for all;**
- **realising the potential of the urban fringe.**

We summarise our role as:

- **statutory champion and watchdog;**
- **influencing and inspiring solutions through our know how and show how;**
- **delivering where we are best placed to add value.**

The Countryside Agency is funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Defra is a major customer for our work.

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Parish Plans

Guidance for parish and town councils

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Foreword

In the Rural White Paper – *Our countryside: the future*, we set out our agenda for the countryside. A countryside facing change. But change set into a context of reform, not only in how we govern, but also how we plan. This guidance for parish and town councils is an important step in helping local rural communities to take charge of their own destinies and also an opportunity to strengthen the first, and most local form of government we have in this country.

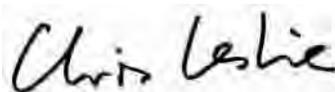
Village appraisals and village design statements have demonstrated the value in whole communities coming together to set out their vision and ways of achieving it. Parish Plans build on this experience. They can provide you with a blueprint for the future survival of your rural community. They are able to influence local strategic partnerships and the preparation of community strategies, and now there is a new opportunity for Parish Plans to form part of the bed rock of the new local development frameworks that will be prepared by every local planning authority to replace existing local plans. So Parish Plans are already influential and will become increasingly important.

You know what people need locally. You know what services your community values, and why and who in your community is not getting their fair share of support or even having their voices heard. Perhaps it's a shortage of affordable housing. Or perhaps the lack of transport to nearby employment or training opportunities, or the lack of social activities for young people. You know what existing skills, expertise and knowledge exists within your community to help yourselves. And you know what support and reciprocal arrangements you'd like to set up in partnership with your local authority and local businesses. You also know what you can do, and where you need the help of others to achieve action. Parish Plans will capture all this and lead to more vibrant rural communities.

As the elected leaders in your community you are well placed to lead your communities to help shape and run their own affairs. We urge you to seize this opportunity and give everyone in your community the chance to plan for their future.



Alun Michael
Minister for Rural Affairs, Defra



Chris Leslie
Parliamentary Under Secretary for Local Government,
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

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1. Introduction

An opportunity to shape your future

There is a revolution going on in local government and parish councils are at the core of it. The Government wants local communities to take more control of their own lives, to say what they want doing in their own neighbourhoods and to engage with other powers to get it done.

This means an opportunity for everyone in your community to make themselves heard. An opportunity for you to say if you want more open spaces, more effective public transport, affordable housing, better access to health care, a chance to buy local food at local shops, and to choose how your community helps everyone in it to relax and make the most of their social and leisure time.

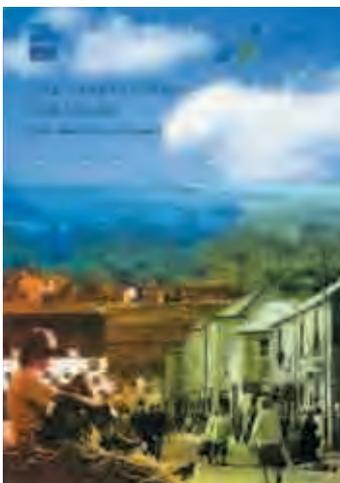
A Parish Plan will help you find out what your local community wants and work out how to deliver it. It is in your interests to read on...

About this guidance

This Guidance is to help your town or village produce a Parish Plan. It explains what a Parish Plan is and what it could look like. It sets out the advantages of producing a Parish Plan, who needs to be involved and how the process can be tackled. Some aspects are considered in more detail in the accompanying resource pack.

You are advised to seek advice and help from your local rural community council (RCC) whose officers will be working with other parishes in your area and will be able to share their experience with you. Although parish councils, town councils and parish meetings can prepare a parish or town plan, throughout this guide, for convenience, we use the term "Parish Plan".

Parish Plans and Vital Villages



Rural White Paper

Parish Plans were announced in the 2000 "Rural White Paper" which set out the Government's plans for the countryside. They are intended to develop previous work such as village appraisals and village design statements and set a framework for communities to plan their own futures.

In November 2000 the Government's Rural White Paper *Our Countryside – The Future* launched the concept of the parish and town plans whose purpose is to:

"... set out a vision of what is important, how new development can best be fitted in, the design and quality standards it should meet, how to preserve valued local features and to map out the facilities which the community needs to safeguard for the future."

Plans should “identify key facilities and services, set out the problems that need to be tackled and demonstrate how distinctive character and features can be preserved.”

Who is this guidance for?

The guidance is aimed primarily at parish and town councils. Once the decision has been taken to go ahead with a Parish Plan it should be made available to those involved in the detailed work.

How to use the guide

The guidance is in two parts:

1. The main booklet which explains the process of preparing the Parish Plan, from starting off to acting on the conclusions.
2. A resource pack which provides further information on a range of practical issues and helps to answer detailed questions you may have.

We suggest you read through the main guidance to get an overall picture of the process, then work through again in more detail as you go through the different stages. The resource pack provides further detail for different stages in the process. Throughout this booklet references to the resource pack are clearly highlighted by a flag in the margin. Other specialist publications are listed in the appendix and signposted at relevant points in the guidance.

2. What is a Parish Plan?

What is a Parish Plan?

Parish Plans are “holistic” or comprehensive in scope. They should set out a vision for how the community wants to develop, and identify the action needed to achieve it. They can include everything that is relevant to the people who live and work in the community, from employment and playgrounds to the design of new buildings and protection of hedges and ponds. They can include any social, environmental or economic issues. **It is up to you, the community to decide, what is important to you.**

Parish Plans have the potential to influence a wide range of organisations and processes which affect the lives of rural communities. They should complement and help deliver local planning policies and frameworks but they cannot override adopted planning policy. They should influence local housing and land management strategies. They should also contribute to the way local services are managed and delivered.

A Parish Plan is a statement of how the community sees itself developing over the next few years. It:

- reflects the views of all sections of the community;
- identifies which features and local characteristics people value;
- identifies local problems and opportunities;
- spells out how residents want the community to develop in the future;
- prepares a plan of action to achieve this vision.

Who decides?

The Parish Plan gives everyone a chance to say what they think about the social, economic and environmental issues affecting their community, and how they’d like to see it improved in the future. It is important that the whole community is involved in producing the plan, not just those people who usually come along to parish council meetings.

What’s it leading to?

The Parish Plan needs to consider local problems and opportunities as a whole. It makes the links between these issues and sets out a broad vision for the future – where the parish wants to be in 5 or 10 years time. But achieving this vision will require action. This includes both:

- action which the parish itself proposes to undertake;
- policies, decisions and action carried out by other bodies which the plan might influence.



Preparing a Parish Plan should give anyone the opportunity to discuss issues affecting the community.

“ We will set out the community’s aspirations for its future over the short, medium and long term, to enhance the social, environmental and economic well-being of all its inhabitants. We will not be confined to projects within the powers of the parish council or the community to achieve on their own, and will identify those we need to persuade to assist us, and the criteria we need to meet to enable them to do so.”

Somersham Parish action plan.

What does the plan look like?

There is no standard format for a Parish Plan and no prescriptive list of the subjects it should address. It is up to the community to set out its vision, decide which issues it would like to tackle, agree priorities for action and present the information in a way that is interesting and attractive to everyone.

A practical way to present the plan could be in two parts:

1. A detailed report explaining how the consultation has been carried out and conclusions drawn. It could take various forms, including photographs, documents, sketches or even a video.
2. A succinct action plan clearly setting out what needs doing, when, why, by whom and at what cost.

We’ve done all this before!

Many parish councils have had experience of producing a community-led action plan such as a village appraisal, a housing needs survey or a village design statement. A Parish Plan will bring all this together and create a basis for action in future. But it is important to review and consult the whole community to make sure the issues and actions identified in previous surveys are still relevant, especially if previous action plans were produced more than three years ago.

Summary

- Parish Plans are local, action-based plans which address a range of problems and opportunities affecting rural communities.
- They can include social, economic and environmental issues.
- The **whole community** should be involved in producing the Parish Plan, with the parish council taking lead responsibility.
- The Parish Plan must be **consistent** with related policies set out in the local authority’s planning documents and local strategic partnerships.
- The plan should be based on information provided through **survey, research, consultation and community participation**.
- **A grant** to assist with the production of Parish Plans is available from the Countryside Agency. **Advice** and **help** with producing the plan and involving the community **are available** from the rural community council.
- **Parish Plans should identify actions** which can be taken forward by the parish council, by other individuals and groups within the community or by other service providers and statutory bodies. These should have a clear focus on Who? What? Why? How? When?

3. Why produce a Parish Plan?

It is Government policy to increase individual participation in public life and for public bodies to consult communities about the delivery of services. As part of this policy of “active citizenship” the Government wants to give more power to parish councils to decide what’s best for their own communities.

If you as a parish council can show you are taking your future seriously, a Parish Plan might increase your chances of getting local authority support to enhance your parish’s economic, social and environmental well-being.

It will give you the evidence to help inform policy-making by a range of organisations, from the local planning authority to police and health services. It will also help you to develop and maintain effective working relationships with all those outside bodies who provide services to your community, now or in the future.

Funding the production of your Parish Plan

Between March 2001 and March 2004 the Countryside Agency ran a demonstration project giving 1,000 rural communities the resources to produce a Parish Plan. The average grant request was for £3,200, with many excellent Parish Plans produced for much less. It was also proven that the less expensive Parish Plans, printed on home computers, were just as effective as the glossy magazine publications with photography.

When your plan steering group has calculated the cost of producing its plan, it is worth approaching your local authority, as many recognise the importance of local community planning and are able to offer support to communities undertaking this type of activity, if not in cash, in valuable support.

Parish councils can also precept to support this activity, or raise money in traditional ways such as jumble sales and coffee mornings.

Most communities that were involved in the Countryside Agency demonstration project reported that considerable new resources were attracted into their community as a direct result of the production of their plan, which far outweighed the original outlay.

Influencing local authorities & other service providers

Local authorities are continuously involved in drawing up and reviewing land use plans as well as deciding individual planning applications. A Parish Plan can potentially influence both these processes. It might do this by:

- identifying local needs for affordable housing or community facilities;
- producing a design statement for new development;
- identifying which open spaces are needed and valued for community use;

- in the longer term, in line with government proposals for a reformed planning system, there could be an opportunity to feed into the new Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) which are due to replace Development Plans. See 'section 12 Parish Plans and the statutory Planning System' in the resource pack.

"People in our village used to think nothing could ever get better. Now we've got a bus and people come up to me and say "can we have it on Monday and Friday as well ?". We consulted them once - now they feel they can ask.

There's one old woman who hadn't been out on her own for five years. When the bus service started she spent three days going round and round the village. That bus has become a hotbed of social interaction!"

Jane Holden, Killamarsh Parish Council, Derbyshire.

Local authorities are also required to draw up 'community strategies', to promote or improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area. This is usually achieved through parish councils, involving representatives from public, private, voluntary and community bodies. The main aims of a community strategy are:

- to identify what sort of services, activities and support are needed;
- to make links between services and organise them better to avoid overlaps;
- to promote local people's involvement in planning and improving services in the areas where they live.

In addition, most county and unitary authorities have signed up to negotiate a Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) with central government, comprising a dozen or so specific targets to improve local services such as health and police. LPSA authorities are encouraged to involve local partners, particularly through the parish councils and the community strategy, in drawing up and delivering these targets. A Parish Plan has the potential to influence LPSAs through such community strategies.

There are structures which exist to help deliver social and community services at ground level. A Parish Plan can help feed into these processes and give your village a real voice and influence in the wider community.

"We wanted to be more pro-active, not wait to have things imposed upon us. Higher levels of government have their own strategic plans, we wanted to match them."

Mark Bennett, Comberton, Cambridgeshire

Integrating the local economy

The economic life of rural communities is undergoing a period of change. Declining rural services, increasing traffic, a shortage of affordable housing, and a crisis in farming culminating in the Foot and Mouth epidemic require urgent attention.

Finding solutions to these problems is often difficult as one size rarely fits all. But a Parish Plan can help. By taking a holistic view of a



Countryside Agency/ Andy Tryner Photography

Affordable housing, Portesham, Dorset.



community and its surrounding environment it provides an opportunity to find local solutions to local problems. For example, it could:

- identify a redundant farm building that might be developed into workshops for a new local business;
- encourage a local farmer or producer to sell their produce in the local shop or to local pubs, hotels and restaurants;
- persuade a local landowner to donate a parcel of land for a children's playing field or local nature reserve;
- develop and market an area for tourism;
- provide support for the increasing numbers of people working from home, eg. by building telecottages;
- support environmental conservation measures, such as protection of wildflower meadows.

The character of the countryside around a village is an integral part of its identity. It should be managed in a way that takes into account its aesthetic and economic importance to the village. See section 13 'Introduction to landscape character' in the resource pack.

Planning action that the local community can undertake itself

Many of the issues and opportunities identified by rural communities are things that local people could tackle themselves, given the right support and funding. Such actions will help foster a sense of ownership of the plan, too, for example:

- encouraging the setting up of a parent and baby group;
- creating a new play area and place for young people to meet;
- improving liaison with the police and establishing a neighbourhood watch scheme;
- reopening a closed village shop;
- providing community transport;
- calling for the establishment of quiet lanes where traffic and speed is restricted;
- protecting locally distinctive hedgerow or landscape feature;
- establishing a local food network;
- creating a local nature reserve.

"If I were asked "would I do it again?", I would!

It was certainly a worthwhile thing to do...people feel they have been consulted...it does pay a parish to do it and we will persevere with the district council and others to make sure it produces results."

Derek Chislett, Chalvington with Ripe, East Sussex.

Bidding for funding

Organisations offering grants to rural communities may want to see written evidence of need, community consultation and plans for implementing the project before they will consider offering funding. The Parish Plan could be used to provide this information and to accompany the funding bid.

"Perhaps the most positive outcome came from the supplementary sheet that went out with the questionnaire asking for volunteers. Lots of people offered to help with all sorts of activities- so that worked very well as a by product."

Derek Chislett, Chalvington with Ripe, East Sussex.

Community spirit

People who have taken part in similar projects, like village appraisals and parish maps, say it's a great way of bringing people together. It taps local talents and enthusiasms and helps foster a real sense of community. It can revive interest in local democracy and demonstrate the importance of the parish council in the democratic process. These benefits can often lead to fresh initiatives which otherwise would not have happened. They can also be hugely enjoyable as social and creative projects in themselves.

It's worth the effort!

Drawing up a Parish Plan offers a great opportunity to bring together everyone in the community to work together and decide where the parish is going in future. It will take time, energy and commitment. But it will be time – probably about 12 months – well spent.

Summary

Parish Plans provide:

- a way to influence decisions by other authorities;
- a basis for action by people in the parish;
- a route to winning funds for local initiatives;
- a boost to parish councils' standing.

4. Who should be involved?

Parish Plans belong to the community but to be most effective you need to make sure you have the co-operation and advice of everyone who might be affected:

- **everyone who lives or works or plays some part in the community;**
- **everyone who has an impact on what goes on in the community;**
- **everyone you hope to influence.**

The parish council

The parish or town council ultimately takes responsibility for producing and endorsing a Parish Plan, but this does not mean the parish clerk has to do all the work! Only the parish or town council can apply for funding from the Countryside Agency and they should be accountable for the final plan. However where a parish council does not exist a parish meeting group can apply. Ideally most of the work will be done by a steering committee and working groups, who should be drawn from all sections of the parish to ensure the plan represents the views of the whole community. The parish council's role is to support them in that work, and have a representative presence on the committee.

The community

Everyone in the parish should be given an opportunity to contribute their views and their skills, energy and experience to produce the plan. It is particularly important to include people who traditionally do not involve themselves in parish affairs, for example young people, senior citizens, less able-bodied people, people living in outlying areas, and people who work shifts or long hours.

Countryside Agency/Tina Stallard



It is important to ensure everyone in the community gets involved in developing the plan.

Include people who may have a common interest even though they are not members of a formal club or association - for example dog walkers, young parents, visitors.

See sections 8&9 'Involving the Community' & 'Consultation and information gathering techniques' in the resource pack.

The Countryside Agency

You should have a look at the Agency's website which carries information about other parishes that have applied for grants, and examples of completed plans.

" Be warned - consulting the community is like opening up a Pandora's box. Once you've started you may not be able to stop, people are so delighted to be asked, to feel empowered".

Jane Holden, Killamarsh Parish Council, Derbyshire.

Rural Community Councils

Rural Community Councils (RCCs) are working in partnership with the Countryside Agency to help communities draw up Parish Plans. The staff at your local RCC have wide experience of working with communities. They will be able to help you plan and organise the process of producing a Parish Plan. They will be able to advise you on the best ways of involving the whole community. They can also offer training in techniques and facilitation. In most instances this advice will be offered to you free of charge. If the RCC is unable to provide this help they will put you in touch with someone who can. *Rural Community Councils are listed in Appendix 1.*

The local authority

Speak to officers in the planning department at the district or county council or unitary authority, at the outset and tell them you intend to produce a Parish Plan. They may be able to help you interpret local planning policies and advise how to implement them at parish level. See section 12 'Parish Plans and the statutory planning system' in the resource pack.

As you begin to develop the scope of your plan and identify the issues you wish to tackle, you should talk to other officers within the local authority such as officers in the housing or environment departments. They will be able to give you specialist advice and point towards other sources of information. They might also suggest some questions they would like you to research for them.

You should also make contact the district council officers responsible for the community strategy. They should be able to advise you on potential links between the Parish Plan and the community strategy.

A list of all the departments based at your district council, county council or unitary authority can be found in your local telephone directory. Make sure your local councillors on the district and county

councils (or unitary authority) are aware of your intention to produce a Parish Plan. They may have advice to give and may live locally and wish to be involved in the process of drawing up the plan.

The County Association of Local Councils

County associations assist the work of town and parish councils by providing legal and procedural advice on day to day issues. They also liaise with district and county councils to maintain a flow of information and effective joined up government. They may be able to give advice, organise training and put you in touch with other parish councils who have started to produce a Parish Plan. *Contact details can be found in Appendix 1.*

"Our community has pockets of deprivation, and the local authority were concerned. They wanted to do something and so did the parish council and community association, so the Parish Plan idea grew out of that. Plus the Primary Health Care Trust were already doing a survey, so we've planned a series of events to make sure we've got everybody's views."

Nicki Oliver, Wickham, Hampshire. Neighbouring parish councils.

Many issues affecting parish councils have a geographical basis, and may have implications for neighbouring parishes. You should talk to your neighbours early in the process of preparing a plan, and also at a later stage when the issues and action you wish to take become clearer. Find out whether they have done, or are doing a plan, and what issues might overlap with your parish.

You may wish to work in partnership with one or more neighbouring parishes.

Some parishes have worked together to produce their own 'chapters' in a joint plan; others have worked separately while supporting each other. Both methods allow the clusters to pull out 'common threads' which might be used to apply for larger pots of money, for example in co-ordinated transport schemes.

The advantages of this approach are:

- parishes can pool resources to buy expert advice for all in the group;
- shared resources might finance more sophisticated information gathering tools for all in the group;
- smaller parishes might benefit from linkage with bigger ones;
- promotes better co-operation between neighbouring parishes;
- if all plans are produced in the same format it might make them more useful to local authorities and other potential partners;

If working jointly you should be prepared to:

- allow more time to get things started;
- draw up a constitution as early as possible in the process;
- agree for one parish to act as 'banker';
- be clear about how the grants will be divided up;
- make sure the smaller parishes are fully involved at every stage.

Other organisations

All sorts of organisations will be able to offer advice on different aspects of community services, activity and features. Some may also be able to offer help, such as publicity, meeting places and consultation methods. They might also have useful documents and maps. Of course, they will want to promote their particular interests, but it is up to you to weigh up all the evidence.

Such groups might include the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE), the National Farmers Union (NFU), local amenity societies, Planning Aid, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) or the Country Land & Business Association (CLBA). Appendix 2 contains contact addresses and telephone numbers for these and other organisations which may be able to help you.

Check: Have you contacted:

- Parish council.
- The community.
- The Countryside Agency.
- Rural Community Council.
- District or County Council or Unitary Authority.
- County Association of Local Councils.
- Neighbouring parishes.
- Special interest groups, societies and organisations.

5. Preparing the ground

Having made contact with everyone who might be involved, it's time to start thinking about how you're going to get things moving. Next steps are to:

- Get the community on board;
- Tell your local councillors and council officers about your plans;
- Find someone to help you;
- Set up a steering committee and agree a working protocol;
- Estimate the costs of the project;
- Identify sources of funding or help in kind.

Get the community on board

Before you start you need to make sure there is enough interest and enough people willing to help. The parish council may take the lead in proposing the idea of a Parish Plan, but the decision to go ahead needs to be made jointly with the community, and the community needs to be fully informed and involved right from the beginning. The key is plenty of good publicity. One way to do this might be for the parish council to organise and promote a special meeting, at which the idea of a Parish Plan is presented and explained.

The local Rural Community Council (*See Appendix 1*) may be able to give a talk at this initial meeting, and may advise you on how to publicise the event and encourage people to come along. Other organisations, like those mentioned at the end of Section 3, might also be willing to come and offer their views. Other ideas for telling people about the Parish Plan could be:

- articles in the local newspaper, parish magazine and other village newsletters;
- produce a leaflet or "flyer" and distribute to every household;
- write to and talk to all the groups, clubs and societies in the village.

At this stage, your aim is to gather community support and interest. Later on you will need to get residents involved in the practical projects, and to encourage people to come up with ideas, views and opinions. Through your early publicity and events, you may be able to start recruiting volunteers.

Note issues which people are starting to raise and make a list of skills and resources available to help produce the plan. Keep your eyes and ears open for people who have certain skills, interests, energy or spare time available and may be able to help in all sorts of ways. Don't be afraid to ask people to help.

Once the decision to proceed has been taken there are several key stages in getting the process under way.

Contact potential partners

Identify and contact all the people, authorities and groups who might be involved, including all those mentioned in Section 3 – the local authority, councillors, RCC, CALC, neighbouring parishes and special interest groups. They may be able to help with the process, or with making sure it achieves results. If you involve them from the start they are more likely to co-operate when you want to influence them.

Find someone to help you

It is very important that people in the community do as much of the work to produce the plan as possible. However it is advisable to get the help of an experienced community ‘facilitator’ who will be able to help you ask the right questions, plan your work programme, and point to further sources of information. The Rural Community Council should be able to help you find such a person, either from their own staff or from independent sources. Initial advice from the RCC should be free, although they may make a charge if you need more than two or three days of their time.

▶ If you decide to pay for such advice see *section 5 ‘legal and technical issues’ in the resource pack* which will help you draw up a contract.

▶ Later, you may find it useful to “buy in” additional advice or expertise, for example from someone who can develop a detailed questionnaire or analyse more complex information (See *‘section 7 Contracting Consultants’ in the resource pack*). You may wish to pay someone to write up the results of survey work and draft out the action plan. Again, it is best for this to be done by someone who lives within your community. You should *not* hand over the preparation of the whole Plan to an external consultant.

The philosophy behind Parish Plans is that communities are best placed to identify their own needs and tackle their own problems. You will get better results, and a stronger sense of community ownership if the plan is produced by the community for the community.

Set up a steering committee

You will need to set up a steering committee to do the detailed planning and co-ordinate the project. You may wish to start this at an open meeting, but be prepared to approach people personally and ask for help. Ask for volunteers through village newsletters, and through clubs and organisations.

Before you start it is advisable to write down agreed roles and responsibilities for the steering committee. This could be in the form of a constitution, or ‘terms of reference’. It should clarify how money will be spent and what is expected of, and offered to, volunteers. This will help everyone to understand the nature of the task and the role that they have to play.



A steering group should represent a cross-section of the people in the community.

Be sure also to clarify the relationship with the parish council, which is ultimately accountable for any spending involved. See Sections 3 and 4 of the resource pack for a specimen constitution and an example of terms of reference.

When setting up your steering group the following are useful principles to adopt:

- involve the wider community;
- limit the size of the group to between 8 and 15 members, two or three of whom might be parish councillors;
- appoint a Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. You might also consider allocating other tasks such as publicity, or volunteer co-ordinator, to individuals;
- make sure the group is a representative cross-section of the people in your community, including at least one person who is under 20 years of age;
- involve people with a range of skills and experience;
- be prepared to bring in new people and ideas as the project evolves;
- try to find a task for anyone who volunteers help.

The steering committee **do not** have to do everything themselves! You may decide to set up working groups to look in detail at issues the plan is addressing.

Estimate what you will need

It will be important at this stage to estimate in broad terms the money and person-power needed to produce the plan including:

- publicising and promoting your ideas and activities to the community;
- carrying out surveys, buying in specialist advice;
- organising meetings and events aimed at getting everybody involved;
- administrative support costs, stationery, postage, telephone calls;
- printing and distributing the final action plan.

No volunteer should be out of pocket unless they have agreed to donate their costs. You don't have to use special equipment or computer software to produce a Parish Plan – choose what best suits your purposes. But the final report and action plan should be word-processed and copied or printed.

See Section 5 'Guide to Budgeting' & 7 'Legal and Technical Issues' in the resource pack.

Identify sources of funding

To meet these costs, potential sources of financial and other support should be identified, including:

- local authority grants;
- local sponsorship (including help in kind, eg. photocopying);
- fundraising events eg. village fêtes/car boot sale;
- voluntary time – to be matched against financial grants;
- parish council funds.

“I was surprised how easy it was to fill in the forms, much simpler than some other grant applications we've had to complete!”
Derek Chislett, Chalvington with Ripe , East Sussex.

Check:

- Everyone is on board.
- Contact potential partners.
- Identify a facilitator.
- Set up steering committee.
- Estimate costs.
- Funding sources.

6. Developing the scope of the plan

Now you know who's going to be steering and helping with the project, and roughly what it's going to cost, you need to work up your ideas into a concrete proposal.

- **Choose your subject areas.**
- **Review existing appraisals, surveys and plans.**
- **Identify special designations such as AONBs, SSSIs etc.**
- **Sound out the community.**
- **Draw up a plan brief.**

You decide

Parish Plans can cover a wide range of issues. They can address any aspects of rural life - social, environmental, and economic - which are of interest or concern to the community. These will vary from parish to parish. The real challenge is to identify the action needed to tackle problems and take forward opportunities, and to know what you can do yourselves and where you need to forge partnerships with others to take action on your behalf.

Review existing appraisals

If you have produced other community-led action plans such as a village appraisal or village design statement in the past three or more years, you should review the information in it to check which issues and actions are still relevant and which could be rolled forward into the Parish Plan.

Consider related plans

When your plan is finished it may become part of a network of other plans or designations that have a bearing on the parish. Before you begin try and gather information about as many of these as possible and consider their relevance to your parish.

These might include:

- Community strategies, Local Transport Plans (LTPs), housing strategies.
- Local authority planning documents – district plan, unitary development plan.
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) management plans.
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) management plans.
- National Park Plans.
- Land Management Initiatives (LMIs).
- Agri-environment schemes such as Environmentally Sensitive Areas or Countryside Stewardship Schemes.
- Plans of major landowners like the National Trust, Forestry Commission and Water Authorities.

A list of these and their originating authorities can be found in Appendix 2. Relevant publications are also listed at the end of this guidance.

Consult the community

The steering committee should not make assumptions on behalf of the community. You need to involve as many people as possible in identifying the issues the Parish Plan could address. Some of the issues which cause concern may have already been flagged up at your initial meeting, or put forward as a response to publicity about the proposed Parish Plan. See section 8 'Involving the Community' in the resource pack.

Do a local skills & resources search

Find out what local businesses might be able to offer in terms of equipment, photocopying etc. Also ask around for volunteers and people with particular skills, such as:

- volunteers willing to do administrative tasks such as filling envelopes;
- door to door deliveries;
- artists or designers for creating eye-catching posters and leaflets;
- computer literate people to collect or collate information, work with websites;
- the local Volunteer Bureau might be worth consulting.

Countryside Agency/Andy Tryner Photography



Find out what skills volunteers have and use them to collate and manage your research.

Possible issues

Some of the issues you may wish to examine are listed below. This is not a comprehensive list, just some ideas to get you started.

Social & Community

Democracy - Does your parish council represent the community effectively? Do you have a say in things that affect you? Are some people left out or barred from some activities or facilities? Are young/old people encouraged to get involved?

Information – Do people know about social opportunities? Do you need a parish newsletter or magazine or more noticeboards? Is there a village website? Is the internet used as a communication tool?

People – Who are the people who make up the community? Where do they live and work?

Pubs – Who uses them? Could they be used for other purposes?

Village halls/community buildings – Who uses them? What facilities do they offer? Who could use them if they were improved or adapted in some way?

Volunteering – Is this encouraged? Is it given enough support?

Young & old people - You should also look at the needs of particular groups of people, for example pre-school children and their parents, teenagers, over 60s, people with hearing, sight, language or mobility difficulties, people who work shifts or long hours, ethnic groups.

Services

Ambulance/fire/police response rates – Are you adequately served by the emergency services?

Carers – People caring for sick or disabled friends or relatives may be isolated and need support or needs assessments.

Childcare – Is there an after school club? Demand for better childcare facilities?

Community information – Access to library services, village newsletter, web site, internet access.

Crime and safety – Neighbourhood Watch, community policing.

Education & training – Pre-school, primary school, secondary, vocational & adult education. Could the school be used for other purposes? Could more use be made of the school bus?

Health and personal care – Access to GP surgeries, drop-in clinics for the young and the elderly, chiropody, dentistry services.

Housing – Is there an adequate supply of rented and privately owned accommodation? Is it affordable? Do you need a housing needs survey?

Laundry facilities – For private or business use? Is there a dry cleaning service?

Lighting – Is there enough? Too much? Is it in a style sympathetic with the character of the village?

Public telephones – Are there enough and are they reliable?

Public toilets – Are there enough and are they maintained adequately?

Public transport – Who needs transport? Where do they live and want to go to? Consider doing a transport needs assessment, maybe with a view to accessing help from other Vital Villages schemes and tying in with the Market Towns Initiative.

Refuse collection/provision of litter bins – Is it collected often enough? Are there enough bins for public use?

© Tony Bartholomew



Lack of childcare facilities can often be an issue for parishes.

Economic

Employment needs and opportunities – What exists already? Is more needed? Is there a shortage of skilled labour? Does the community make the most of its home-grown skills and products, crafts etc.?

Food – Access to supplies and the origins; is it locally produced, are there delivery schemes? Is it fresh and of good quality? Are there organic alternatives?

New technology – Is there a public internet terminal? Faxing facility?

Not-for-profit enterprises – Are they adequately supported and promoted?

Recycling and energy efficiency – Are there recycling facilities? Are they well-used? Could homes and community buildings be made more energy efficient?

Retail services – Where do people shop? Which banks and post offices do they use? Can everyone get to them? Are services under threat of closure? Are there mobile services?

Land & environment

Built environment – Traditional and modern styles. Village form and layout. Opportunities and prospects for new development. Would a village design statement be helpful?

Historic sites and heritage features – Are they well managed, appreciated, promoted? Do they contribute to the quality of life in the village? Do visitor numbers create a problem or an opportunity?

Landscape – Are there local or national landscape designations? Has a Landscape Character Assessment been produced for the area? Could landscape be improved? Is it likely to change?

Parish assets – Historic buildings, places and features that might be used to promote local tourism/business.

Traffic speed and volume – Road safety, parking and access.

Wildlife and natural habitats – Which sites/species are important and why? Do people visit and appreciate them? How are important sites being managed?

Leisure

Access to the countryside – Is the Rights of Way network well signed, waymarked and maintained? Is there provision for walkers, horse riders and cyclists? Is it accessible to wheelchairs, people with pushchairs and others of limited mobility?

Children’s interests - Are there safe and interesting places for children to play and explore?

Sport, recreation and social activities – What do people do in their spare time? Is there sufficient provision for all age groups and interests?

Visitors and tourism – Who visits and why? What are their accommodation, refreshment, transport and information needs?

In deciding the scope of your plan, take account of issues arising from all groups and individuals in the community, not just the ones with the loudest voices. Take particular note of the concerns of those whose voices are not always heard, such as the young and older people.

Every issue that has been suggested needs to be investigated to some degree, but you will have a better chance of sustaining interest and achieving results if you narrow them down to sensible proportions.

The steering committee needs to make sure this process is clear to everybody, so no one can accuse them of having their own agenda or ignoring suggestions. Think about your community’s strengths and resources as well as its problems and challenges.

See sections 8 and 13 “Involving the community” and “Introduction to landscape character” in the resource pack for further ideas on developing the scope of your plan.

Draw up a plan brief

Once the scope of the plan has been agreed, the steering committee can prepare a more detailed brief which sets out:

- what kind of information is needed to produce the plan;
- how this information will be collected; see section 9 ‘Consultation and Information Gathering Techniques’ in the resource pack & chapter 7 in this Guidance – under ‘Working Groups’;
- how much it will cost and what sources of financial and other support should be approached;
- what, when and by whom the information-gathering tasks should be undertaken;
- what the final plan will look like.

Setting all this out in a plan brief will ensure that everybody involved in the project knows what is happening, who is doing what, why and when. Be realistic and keep it relevant.

Don't be too ambitious in the early stages of the project. Try to tackle some issues where you know you will be able to take action. This will give you some momentum throughout the project and when you start to implement your plan.

How long will it take?

You should attempt to produce your plan within a year of starting the process. If you take longer you might lose momentum. It may be difficult to keep people interested and informed.

Give some thought to what time of year you start the process. Do not hold public events and consultation exercises at the beginning of the school holidays for example, when many people will be away.

Check:

- Have you chosen subject areas?
- Reviewed existing appraisals?
- Located relevant plans, designations and landscape character?
- Sound out the community – who's going to help?
- Drawn up a plan brief?

7. Getting down to business – collecting information

Now you have decided the scope of the research, you know which other plans it might relate to and who's going to be involved you can start in earnest:

- **set to work with an open mind;**
- **get the views of everyone possible.**

Ground rules

You should have already agreed roles and responsibilities and adopted your terms of reference as advised in chapter 5. Some parishes have found it useful to give the process a name and logo, providing it with an instantly recognisable identity. You might decide to hold a competition to design the logo, as another way of engaging people.

It is a good idea also to agree how you are going to conduct the process – for example by agreeing an informal set of ground rules, which might include the following:

- start with an open mind;
- accept that different people will have different interests and priorities;
- accept some people have more time to spare than others;
- avoid jargon;
- be honest, and keep people informed about what you are doing;
- think boldly but be realistic;
- encourage people to work together;
- be flexible;
- work at a pace everyone can keep up with;
- remember a small, well researched plan will be more use than a hefty one that has focused on quantity rather than quality;
- keep a record of everything you do;
- enjoy it!

Working groups

Once you have identified the issues you wish to examine, you should set up a number of working groups. Each group may have different ways of collecting data and information, depending upon the subject they are investigating. There are many ways you can collect the information to inform your plan. You need to decide which will be best for the type of plan you want to produce and which will be most effective in engaging the people in your community.

You could discuss your ideas with the Rural Community Council Field Worker. Many communities have used household questionnaires as the

main method for gathering information to produce a village appraisal. Such questionnaires are tried and tested methods and usually form a good starting point. There are several different computer packages available to help communities collect and analyse information, and new ones are being developed all the time. The RCC will be able to advise and may have cost and licensing agreements with manufacturers.

The RCC Field Worker may also be able to tell you about other ways of finding out what people think about their village. Some parishes have used what are called 'visioning days' when people are invited to drop in to a village hall or meeting room and contribute to a 'wish-list' written up by residents on stick-its. Others have organised guided walks, where a 'facilitator' takes a group of people round the parish while participants point out what they like and dislike – and would like.

© Kippa Mathews



Frodingham Parish Plan involved the whole community with children helping to build their 'planning for real' model.

The important thing is for all parishioners to have an opportunity to contribute their views in a way that is comfortable for them. Not everyone feels happy writing things down, some don't like speaking in public, some might prefer to express themselves in photographs or drawings. Some people won't get involved until they feel the plan relates to them, or because it just sounds boring. Try and think creatively and above all make it fun.



See section 9 on 'Consultation and Information Gathering Techniques' in the resource pack for further ideas.

" This is your chance to have a say about the future of our village. We all want the best for the place that we live in and we can really make change happen (or not happen if that is what we want). The only real problem is that there has never been any collective view of what the people who live here desire. This is the purpose of this questionnaire....."

Somersham action plan, Suffolk.

Informal methods

Be prepared to go out and talk to people in their homes, in the village shop, the pub and other places where people get together. Tell them why you're asking the questions and make sure you write down or record anything they say. You might visit local clubs and societies and hold structured discussions using key questions as prompts.

Record everything you do

We recommend you keep a diary or scrapbook of the whole process, including drawings, pictures and any posters and leaflets you produce. Take photographs at meetings and consultations. Illustrations of the consultation process will show how you've involved everybody and will help to brighten up the final plan. It also helps to make the process more transparent, and shows you have been genuinely open and democratic. And it will enable you to keep track of where you've been successful and not, so others can learn from your experience.

Check:

- Agree the rules for steering committee and working groups.
- Ask the views of everyone.
- Keep a record.

8. Writing up and discussing your findings

You now have a mass of information gathered from existing sources and from your own research and consultation. The next task is to:

- **write it up into a readable draft report;**
- **discuss again with all who participated.**

Produce a draft report

Once you have gathered information from your surveys, questionnaires and discussions, the results should be analysed and written up in a way which:

- explains where your village is, with a map showing the parish boundary, population, history, people who live in it, recent changes;
- gives a key contact name and phone number or email address;
- sets out the context for the project;
 - why did you decide to do it?
 - who was involved?
 - how were people involved?
- sets out the findings of the research, consultations and discussions;
- identifies the issues which need tackling and the opportunities which could lead to action. You may wish to include a summary of the views put forward to illustrate the strength of feeling from residents on specific issues. This may help you identify priorities for action.

Countryside Agency/Tina Stallard



Information gathered should be written up as a draft report clearly setting out the key findings.

" The parish lies within Wealdon District and its boundaries are shown on the map. It lies between the A22 (just to the north) and the A27 (a quarter mile to the south). Despite the proximity of these main roads it retains its rural character. The landscape is flat with the South Downs very prominent some 3 miles to the south. The soil is a mixture of Wealdon clay and greensand, mainly grazed by sheep with, increasingly, turf being grown on a commercial basis ".

Introduction to Calvington with Ripe Parish Plan.

Present the report as an attractive, readable document

The steering group should appoint an editor. That person should take overall responsibility for ensuring the report is clear, accurate and inviting. In particular the editor should ensure the draft report:

- includes a large scale map or drawing of the parish;
- is all written in the same style;
- contains background information that can be understood by a stranger to the parish;
- shows how everyone in the community contributed to the process;
- includes some 'real life' experiences, with examples and quotes;
- uses simple language – no jargon or official-speak;
- is factual and objective – statements are supported with facts;
- is illustrated with charts, graphs, photos or sketches – (acknowledge copyright if applicable – see Section 6 'Guide to likely costs' in the resource pack);
- refers to local history, literary associations, culture, dialects;
- includes everything – however trivial it might seem to you – so everyone feels their contribution is valued;
- is clear about your committee's role. You are technical staff drawing together the results of a consultation - you don't have to defend everything in it;
- if a local organisation is involved, show results, such as "there's been a request for a short mat bowls club and the village hall committee has agreed to investigate".

Once the steering group is in broad agreement that the style and content of the issues report is about right, go back to the community to discuss your findings.

Discussing the findings

You have now written up the results of your research and surveys. You have also begun to identify their implications and possible action for the community. The next stage is to discuss these findings with two main groups of people:

- with the community

Producing your draft report is an important milestone in your project. Many people have worked hard and given a lot of time and enthusiasm to the project. It's worth promoting your efforts widely and celebrating.

This is a good opportunity to hold a special event. Consider having an open day, a conference or exhibition. Make sure the event is well

promoted. You may have to organise childcare and provide refreshments to encourage people to come. Organise workshops or discussion groups to discuss your findings and to propose further research or action if people feel this is needed.

It may be useful to bring in external speakers to help explain more complex issues or to answer questions. This could be a good opportunity to involve those people from other organisations whose help you need to tackle certain issues, for example local authority officers, rural transport advisors, land managers etc.

"More people than expected came to our feedback meeting. They liked to be asked, wanted to have their say in the future of the village."

Mark Bennett, Comberton, Cambridgeshire.

- with the local authority & other partners

You may wish to organise a special presentation to local authority members and officers, or hold individual meetings with other organisations you need to influence. It is important to have a dialogue and build a constructive relationship. Do not expect people simply to accept and endorse your draft written report. You need to work in partnership to explore issues from all perspectives and agree on realistic action.

Check:

- Write findings up as a readable report.**
- Discuss with community.**
- Discuss with partners.**

9. Producing the action plan

All your research is now in a single document, which you've discussed with the community and other partners. The next job is to translate those thoughts and wishes into action. This is the **key stage** in the Parish Plan process.

- **Decide what action is needed.**
- **Prioritise.**
- **Submit plan to parish council.**
- **Design & print.**
- **Distribute to community & partners.**
- **Celebrate.**

"It's given us a logical plan for the future. Instead of each month looking at what happens to be on the parish council agenda because it suddenly needs doing, we can do more strategic planning."

Mark Bennett, Comberton, Cambridgeshire.

Planning the action

The steering group should take responsibility for drawing up policy and priorities and deciding what action is required. You may need to go back to the individual research groups to review the findings of the previous consultation exercise and develop the relevant action points.

You may find there are issues where you are still not clear about the course of action to be taken. You may need to identify the "action" as being a need to carry out further research or consultation. This is fine as long as you are clear about the reasons for this action.

Be creative in your thinking. If an action is to have a bottle bank in the car park but there's concern about broken glass on the parking area, you have two projects – one about getting the bottle bank and one about dealing with broken glass – better than no action at all.

Priorities, partners, payments

The parish council and steering committee should get together to decide which actions need to be done urgently and which can fit into a longer time-frame. You might want to split it into areas of activity, eg:

- high priority – Young people, traffic, housing, community safety;
- medium priority – Environment;
- lower priority – Leisure activities.

Consider who is going to work with you to achieve the results you want. This might be partners at the local authority, health or transport services, or groups or individuals from within the village or neighbouring parishes.

You need to work out how you're going to pay for the work, for example by tapping existing funding streams, applying for new grants, or volunteer effort.

Tips for effective action planning

Developing an action plan requires a methodical (yet innovative) approach. The following checklist of principles might help in carrying out the process.

- **Keep it simple!** A plan needs to be thorough yet simple enough for everybody to understand, especially those that haven't been involved in putting it together. Phrase it in such a way that if the first method doesn't work an alternative will be found.
- **Try to prioritise**, at least into high, medium and low priorities. This will help to identify which actions are needed most urgently.
- **Assign responsibility.** Unless an individual or a small group is given responsibility for making a particular action happen, it certainly will 'gather dust' as suggested above.
- **Set a timescale** – identifying a date by which an action should be carried out will help to ensure it is not forgotten and constantly 'put on the back burner'.
- **Break the action into stages**, defining alternative routes.
- **Build in a review process.** Although an action plan is produced and put on paper, things are actually constantly changing and ideally a plan should be constantly monitored and reviewed and in need of updating. It can be sensible to make one of your actions a specific review of the whole plan on at least an annual basis.
- **Involve Partners.** These days so much action requires a partnership approach with support which might come from within any of the public, private or voluntary sectors.
- **Try not to make the actions sound like accusations** – eg "the county council must..."
- **Be realistic and honest.** This means thinking through the resource implications and possible sources of finance – its no good having a 20 page action plan where 90% of actions can never realistically occur. Make clear if you know some actions are going to be more difficult to achieve.
- **Try and make the actions fun** and easy to carry out, eg. a village tidy-up day, where you can involve lots of people and perhaps get some media coverage.

Types of action

In practice there are various types of action. Thinking about these might help in deciding priorities, which partners will need to be involved and which are the most appropriate sources of funding. The main types of action are likely to include:

- **Low cost/no cost actions** – as the name implies, these are actions that can be put into practice very quickly without a lot of expense or organisation. They are important for the credibility of the process amongst local people as they very quickly show that the

plan/appraisal is not 'all talk'. Examples might include:

- organisation of local 'litter-pick days';
- working with local educational establishments to carry out local surveys eg. of some aspect of local wildlife or potential sites for play areas.
- **Strategic actions** – these will cover vital but longer-term issues that could have a major impact upon the local quality of life. This might cover such issues as housing or transport and will almost certainly involve the local authority(s) amongst other partners.
- **Issue based actions** – this area will cover key issues such as opportunities for young people or looking at crime and anti-social behaviour and will almost certainly have sub-elements that look at possible activities in more detail.
- **Facility based actions** – almost all communities will have opportunities for improvement in relation to the provision of or improvement of local facilities. This might include, for example a community centre, youth club, children's playground or the parish hall.
- **Location based actions** – as with facilities, most communities will have areas of land that are in need of improvement or maintenance or provide opportunities for development. This might include areas of wasteland, areas with potential for wildlife, allotments etc.
- **Support actions** – many groups or individuals will already be carrying out activities that need support either in terms of additional resources, grant aid, more information or physical help.

Get final approval of parish council & others

When the steering committee is satisfied with the content of the action plan, you may wish to take it back to the topic groups and even consult the community again. This will give people an opportunity to check details and make sure they agree with the overall message and priorities. Talk your action points through with other organisations which may have been identified as having responsibility for action.

If you are intending to have the land use planning parts of your Parish Plan considered for adoption as supplementary planning guidance, note that your final draft must be submitted to your local planning authority for approval through committee.

It is important to agree this process with your local authority early on and before the Parish Plan is printed as the final version.

It is the parish council who are ultimately responsible for the action plan, so you should make sure they are happy with the final draft. When you have this formal approval, you are ready to go ahead with design, layout and printing the final version.

"We will set out a plan for how we want the village to develop over the next 10-15 years. In that way, parishioners will have some control over what's happening."

Capt. Steve Gaunt, Pilling, Lancashire.

Polish the content, design and layout

The action plan does not need to be a lengthy or complex document. You should have put all your details and background information into the main report. But the action plan does need to set out clearly:

What is proposed	Why the action is needed	How will the action be implemented?	Who will be responsible for taking the action?	When will the action be taken forward?
Policy or proposal	What you are trying to achieve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specify tasks • Cost • Which people • Materials • Equipment 	Parish council/community group/local authority?	Start date: Finish date:



An example of a model action plan is included in section 11 of the resource pack.

You might decide to produce a summary of your plan as a leaflet, booklet or poster. This will be particularly useful if you want to make a copy of the plan available to every household in the community but do not want to overwhelm everyone with the detailed report. There may be someone in the community with art, photography or design skills who can help you lay it out and illustrate it. Don't be afraid to be imaginative. Use colour, sketches, drawings or photographs. Include quotes from people to make it come alive.

A vision for the future

You might like to preface your action plan with a "Vision" for your community. This might be in the form of a written statement as below.

Bywell Parish Plan (Northumberland) sets out an overall vision for:

" a thriving, vibrant community with the opportunity for all residents, including children and young people, to be involved in social, recreational, life long learning and community activities."

Many communities have found it very effective, and have had great fun producing a map, diagram or picture of how they would like to see their community. An example of a vision for a sustainable community in Sussex is on page 37.

Distribute

- Consider giving every household in the village a copy of the action plan, or a summary leaflet.
- Neighbouring parish councils might like to see one too.
- The parish council should send the final version with a covering letter to all the people and organisations who have been identified in the action plan. Draw their attention to the action they are responsible for and suggest a meeting to discuss how the process can be started. Give them the name and phone number of someone from the community who will be their main point of contact.

- The RCC field officer and any other people who have helped with the plan will appreciate a copy.
- The local authorities involved, and other organisations who've played a part, should be copied in. Include all local authority departments who might be involved.
- Include your elected representatives – district and county councillors
- If you can send your plan electronically either on disc or as an email attachment that would be even better.
- Consider putting the whole document onto a relevant internet website.

It is important to hold events that all members of the community can contribute to.

Countryside Agency/Ann Katrin Purkiss



Celebrate!

It is a good idea to hold a special event to draw everyone's attention to the fact that the Parish Plan is completed. One really effective way to do this, and to start the process of implementing the plan is to have an event which tackles one of the actions identified in the plan. For example planting trees or bulbs, or organising a litter pick. Don't be shy about informing the local newspaper and radio about your celebrations. You may get some media coverage which will make everyone feel special and make the event more memorable. It will also encourage other communities to start the process of producing a Parish Plan.

Don't forget to include in your celebrations – either by invitation, or by a mention in publicity – the people and organisations who have supported or helped finance the plan.

Check:

- Plan includes what, why, when, who, where.
- Prioritise actions.
- Check back with community and partners.
- Parish council approval.
- Design and print.
- Distribute.
- Celebrate.



- Key to Sustainable Village**
1. Build and Train: timber framed houses and flats built by young people who live in them. They were trained as they built, and now have NVQ qualifications including carpentry, plumbing and electrical work.
 2. Workshop
 3. Train
 4. Telecentre
 5. Minibus
 6. Moped Pool
 7. Local Recycling
 8. Vegetable Box Scheme
 9. Woodland Management
 10. Community-owned shop
 11. Solar Panels
 12. Insulation
 13. Nature Conservation
 14. Clothes Fair
 15. Car sharing
 16. Local Exchange Trading Scheme
 17. Weekly Market
 18. Cycleway
 19. Community Farm
 20. Tools and Machinery Ring

10. Implementation, monitoring and review

Monitoring and review

The written work is complete and the action plan has been endorsed by the parish council. Now comes the most important part – making it happen:

- **Parish council adopts the plan as policy.**
- **Encourage the local authority and others to work on their action points.**
- **Steering committee or parish council allocates tasks to working groups.**
- **Open dialogue with partners and funders.**
- **Publicise and celebrate successes.**
- **Monitor and review progress.**

“ Compiling and agreeing the plan was an important initiative and key step. The challenge now is to implement this plan.”
Bywell Parish Council.

Formal adoption by parish council

By this time the parish council will be fully aware of the actions proposed, and will have agreed the final version of the document. If the plan is to influence local authorities and others it must now be formally adopted by the parish council as policy.

It sometimes happens that individual parish councillors, or the whole council, disagree with parts of the action plan. Every effort should be made to reconcile such differences when the plan is being drawn up, but parish councillors must recognise the plan represents the views of the whole community, not just the parish council.

If the parish council refuse to adopt the plan, the steering committee will have to identify which actions can be taken forward without the support of the parish council.

Parish council promotes the plan to the local authority

- The parish council should continue to work with officers at the local planning authority once the planning components have been adopted as supplementary planning guidance, to help its implementation.
- The local authorities should also be clear about the plan’s relationship with the community strategy and how they help each other.
- The parish council should keep in regular contact with the steering committee and keep ‘Parish Plan implementation’ as a standing item on their agenda.

Steering committee reviews its role

The steering committee can be a key motivator in making sure the Parish Plan achieves results. Some members might leave and others join as people feel they have given enough of their time or if different skills and experience are needed. Try to draw in new blood, such as people whose hobbies or interests might be useful in implementing some of the action points.

The steering committee might also use the action plan to encourage local community action either on their own or in partnership with existing networks, such as conservation or food groups.

Activate working groups

One effective way of ensuring action does take place is to establish task groups, perhaps based on the working groups who were involved in producing the plan. They can take responsibility for action. They can monitor progress and feed back regularly to the steering committee and/or the parish council. It is a good idea to pick out some simple tasks from the action plan, to notch up some early wins.

"The offers coming through the questionnaire suggest we have goodwill and a willingness to get involved to benefit Somersham. Of course this enthusiasm means little without being mobilised into hands-on help and for that we need to get organised."
Somersham Community action plan report, July 2002.

Countryside Agency/Tina Sallard



Working groups can help you achieve key tasks quickly and encourage everyone to take responsibility for action.

Approach potential partners

Some of your action points might require collaboration with other bodies, like neighbouring villages, food producers or land managers. Remember also the organisations you've been in touch with along the way. Keeping up those relationships will reap dividends when you want to do something like start a new transport scheme, introduce more traffic control, or open a new facility for the village.

Approach potential funders



You should already have an idea, from drawing up the action plan, about how you're going to fund particular projects. Some are listed in section 9 'Guide to Funding Sources' in the resource pack.

Dealing with contentious issues

Some landowners might object if you plan to promote the use of certain footpaths, republicans will be unmoved by jubilee celebrations, and lovers of classical music won't support a village jazz festival. Every proposed action does not need the support of everyone with a stake in the community, but in drawing up proposals you need to show you have thought about the implications of your plans, and mitigated any problems. For example, good way-marking will help keep walkers from straying off the footpath, the Jubilee celebrations only need to be held once every twenty-five years, and the jazz concerts can finish no later than 11.00 p.m.

Publicise your achievements

Each time you complete a target in the action plan you should let everyone know about your success. Try and make each achievement special, for example with a publicity gimmick like breaking a bottle of champagne over your new community minibus. Write an article for the local newsletter, and inform the press. Let the papers know in advance so they can come and record the event. Take photos for your own records.

Check progress against targets

Whether action plan implementation is monitored by a steering committee or the parish council it is a good idea regularly to check how work is progressing. If the first attempt doesn't achieve results make a note of it and try again. If you meet obstacles try approaching the issue from a different direction. During the process record responses, even – or perhaps especially – if they are negative.

Remember, your action plan has the backing of the community, and has been drawn up after considerable consultation and consideration. As such it has authority and deserves to be treated seriously.

Monitoring and review

- The steering group, if you have one, should meet regularly, perhaps once every three months to review progress.
- Have "Parish Plan implementation" as a standing item on the parish council agenda.
- Report progress back to the community, perhaps through the parish newsletter, and make sure people know your achievements have come out of the Parish Plan.
- Consider having a village suggestion box for comments and queries.

- Publicise and celebrate achievements.
- Review when and why things don't go well and learn from your experiences.
- Aim to update the action plan as circumstances change.
- Think about writing a new Parish Plan after five years.

What if we fail?

It will sometimes happen that circumstances conspire to delay or prevent the publication of the final Parish Plan. The people leading the project may move away from the village, fall ill, or for other reasons be unable to maintain their commitment. Sometimes something happens to divert the interest of the whole community away from the plan; for example a major development proposal such as a road improvement scheme.

In this situation, we would urge you not to put the project on indefinite "hold", but to try and persuade someone else to take it forward. Understanding what went wrong is as important as knowing what went well, so others will be able to learn from these experiences, good and bad.

A final message from the Countryside Agency – Thank you!

Congratulations for all your hard work in getting this far. We're sure you'll be glad you stuck with it – and that feeling will increase as the Parish Plan continues to produce concrete results for your village.

Appendix 1: Rural Community Councils, County Association of Local Councils and Countryside Agency regional office addresses

Rural Community Council Offices

Community Action for Bath and NE Somerset, N Somerset and S Gloucestershire

Church House,
74 Long Ashton Road, Long Ashton,
North Somerset BS41 9LE
Tel: 01275 393837

Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity

The Old School,
Southill Road, Cardington,
Bedford MK44 3SX
Tel: 01234 838771

Community Council for Berkshire

Epping House, 55 Russell Street,
Reading, Berkshire RG1 7XG
Tel: 01189 612000

Buckinghamshire Community Action

Unit B, The Firs, Aylesbury Road,
Bierton, Bucks HP22 5DX
Tel: 01296 421036

Cambridgeshire ACRE

32 Main Street, Littleport, Ely,
Cambs CB6 1PJ
Tel: 01353 860850

Cornwall Rural Community Council

9a River Street,
Truro, Cornwall TR1 2SQ
Tel: 01872 273952

Cheshire Community Council

96 Lower Bridge Street,
Chester, Cheshire CH1 1RU
Tel: 01244 323602

Voluntary Action Cumbria

The Old Stables, Redhills,
Penrith, Cumbria CA11 0DT
Tel: 01768 242130

Derbyshire Rural Community Council

Church Street, Wirksworth, Matlock,
Derbyshire DE4 4EY
Tel: 01629 824797

Community Council of Devon

County Hall, Topsham Road,
Exeter, Devon EX2 4QB
Tel: 01392 382533

Dorset Community Action

Community House,
The Barracks, Bridport Road,
Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1YG
Tel: 01305 250921

Durham Rural Community Council

Park House, Station Road,
Lanchester, Durham DH7 0EX
Tel: 01207 529621

Rural Community Council of Essex

Mackmurdo House,
79 Springfield Road,
Chelmsford, Essex CM2 6JD
Tel: 01245 352046

Gloucestershire Rural Community Council

Community House,
15 College Green,
Gloucester GL1 2LZ
Tel: 01452 528491

Community Action Hampshire

Beaconsfield House,
Andover Road, Winchester,
Hants SO22 6AT
Tel: 01962 854971

Community First, Herefordshire & Worcestershire

41a Bridge St,
Hereford HR4 9DG
Tel: 01432 267820

Community First, Herefordshire & Worcestershire

141 Church Street, Malvern,
Worcestershire WR14 2AP
Tel: 01684 573334

Community Development Agency for Hertfordshire

Birchwood Avenue, Hatfield,
Hertfordshire, AL10 0PS
Tel: 01707 695500

Humber and Wolds Rural Community Council

14 Market Place, Howden,
Goole, East Riding of Yorkshire,
DN14 7BJ
Tel: 01430 430904

Isle of Wight

Rural Community Council
3 Langley Court, Pyle Street,
Newport, Isle of Wight
PO30 1LA
Tel: 01983 524058

Kent Rural Community Council

15 Manor Road, Folkestone,
Kent CT20 2AH
Tel: 01303 850816

Community Futures

15 Victoria Road, Fulwood,
Preston, Lancs PR2 8PS
Tel: 01772 717461/718710

**Rural Community Council,
(Leicestershire and Rutland)**

Community House,
133 Loughborough Road,
Leicester LE4 5LQ
Tel: 0116 266 2905

**Community Council of
Lincolnshire**

The Old Mart, Church Lane,
Sleaford Lincolnshire NG34 7DF
Tel: 01529 302466

Norfolk Rural

Community Council
20 Market Place, Hingham,
Norfolk NR9 4AF
Tel: 01953 851408

Northamptonshire ACRE

The Hunsbury Hill Centre,
Harksome Hill,
Northampton NN4 9QX
Tel: 01604 765888

Community Council of

Northumberland
Tower Buildings,
9 Oldgate, Morpeth,
Northumberland NE61 1PY
Tel: 01670 517178

Nottinghamshire Rural

Community Council
Newstead Miners Welfare,
Community Centre,
Tilford Road, Newstead Village,
Nottinghamshire NG15 0BS
Tel: 01623 727600

Oxfordshire Rural

Community Council
Jericho Farm, Worton,
Witney, Oxon OX29 4SZ
Tel: 01865 883488

Community Council

of Shropshire
1 College Hill, Shrewsbury,
Shropshire SY1 1LT
Tel: 01743 360641

Community Council for Somerset

Victoria House, Victoria Street,
Taunton, Somerset TA1 3JZ
Tel: 01823 331222

Staffordshire

Community Council
Friars Mill, Friars Terrace,
Stafford ST17 4DX
Tel: 01785 242525

Suffolk ACRE

Suffolk House,
2 Wharfedale Road,
Ipswich,
Suffolk IP1 4JP
Tel: 01473 242500

Surrey Voluntary

Service Council
Astolat, Coniers Way,
New Inn Lane, Burpham,
Guildford, Surrey GU4 7HL
Tel: 01483 566072

Action in Rural Sussex

Sussex House,
212 High Street, Lewes,
Sussex BN7 2NH
Tel: 01273 473422

Tees Valley Rural

Community Council
3rd floor, New Exchange Building,
Queens Square, Middlesbrough,
TS2 1AA
Tel: 01642 213852

Warwickshire Rural

Community Council
The Abbotsford,
10 Market Place,
Warwick CV34 4SL
Tel: 01926 499596

Community First

Wyndhams, St Joseph's Place,
Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 1DD
Tel: 01380 722475

Yorkshire Rural

Community Council
William House, Shipton Road,
Skelton, York YO30 1XF
Tel: 01904 645271/2

National Association of Local Councils

109 Great Russell Street,
London WC1B 3LD
Tel: 020 7637 1865
Fax: 020 7436 7451
www.nalc.gov.uk
Email: nalc@nalc.gov.uk

County Associations of Local Councils

Avon

Church House,
74 Long Ashton Road,
Bristol BS18 9LE
Tel: 01275 394571

Bedfordshire

The Old School, Cardington,
Beford MK44 3SX
Tel: 01234 838771

Buckinghamshire

County Hall, Walton Street,
Aylesbury, Bucks HP20 1HA
Tel: 01296 383154

Cambridgeshire

The Primrose Centre,
Primrose Lane, Huntingdon,
PE18 6SE
Tel: 01480 375629/630

Cheshire

Blue Bache Farm, Burleydam,
Whitchurch, Shropshire
SY13 4AW
Tel: 01948 871314

Cornwall

11 Walsingham Place, Truro,
Cornwall TR1 2RP
Tel: 01872 260096

Cumbria

The Old Stables, Redhills,
Penrith, Cumbria CA11 0DT
Tel: 01768 242130

Derbyshire

Agricola House, Church Street,
Wirksworth DE4 4EY
Tel: 01629 824797

Devon

County Hall, Exeter,
Devon EX2 4QD
Tel: 01392 382534

Dorset

Colliton Annexe, Colliton Park,
Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1XJ
Tel: 01305 260972

Durham

The Council Offices,
Civic Hall Square, Shildon,
Co. Durham DL4 1AH
Tel: 01388 772563

East Riding & Northern Lincolnshire

14 Market Place, Howden,
Goole DN14 7BJ
Tel: 01430 430904

Essex

Foakes House, 47 Stortford Rd,
Great Dunmow, Essex CM6 1DG
Tel: 01371 879722

Gloucestershire

15 College Green, Gloucester,
GL1 2LZ
Tel: 01452 528491

Hampshire

St Thomas' Centre,
20 Southgate Street,
Winchester SO23 9FF
Tel: 01962 841699

Hereford

41a Bridge Street, Hereford
HR4 9DG
Tel: 01432 353492

Hertfordshire

2 Townsend Avenue, St Albans AL1 3SG
Tel: 01727 846121

Kent

15 Manor Road, Folkestone,
Kent CT20 2AH
Tel: 01303 248252

Lancashire

15 Victoria Road, Fulwood,
Preston PR2 8PS
Tel: 01772 717461

Leicestershire and Rutland

133 Loughborough Road,
Leicester LE4 5LQ
Tel: 0116 2662905

Lincolnshire

Church Lane, Sleaford,
Lincs NG34 7DF
Tel: 01529 302466

Norfolk

20 Market Place, Hingham,
Norwich NR9 4AF
Tel: 01953 851408

Northamptonshire

Hunsbury Hill Centre,
Harksome Hill, Northampton
NN4 9QX
Tel: 01604 706333

Northumberland

Tower Buildings, Oldgate,
Morpeth NE61 1PY
Tel: 01670 517178

Nottinghamshire

Minister Chambers,
Church Street, Southwell,
Notts NG25 0HD
Tel: 01636 816890

Oxfordshire

Jericho Farm, Worton, Witney OX8 1EB
Tel: 01865 883488

Shropshire

PO Box 484, Shrewsbury SY1 1WA
Tel: 01743 252744

Somerset

Victoria House, Victoria St,
Taunton, Somerset TA1 3JZ
Tel: 01823 331222

Staffordshire

15 Martin Street, Stafford
ST16 2LE
Tel: 01785 277499

Suffolk

Hill View Business Park,
Claydon, Ipswich IP6 0AJ
Tel: 01473 833713

Surrey

6 Bishopsmead Parade,
East Horsley, Leatherhead,
Surrey KT24 6SR
Tel: 01483 285595

Sussex

212 High Street, Lewes,
East Sussex BN7 2NH
Tel: 01273 476342

Tees Valley

New Exchange Buildings,
Queens Square, Middlesbrough,
TS2 1AA
Tel: 01642 213852

Warwickshire

The Abbotsford,
10 Market Place, Warwick CV34 4SL
Tel: 01926 410122

Isle of Wight

3 Langley Court, Pyle Street,
Newport, Isle of Wight PO30 1LA
Tel: 01983 524058

Wiltshire

Wyndhams, St Joseph's Place,
Devizes, SN10 1DD
Tel: 01380 722475

Worcestershire

Station Approach, Malvern,
Worcestershire WR14 3AU
Tel: 01684 573334

Yorkshire

William House, Shipton Road,
Skelton, Yorkshire YO30 1XF
Tel: 01904 645271

**Countryside Agency
Regional Offices****North West Region**

(Lancs, Cheshire, Gtr Manchester
& Merseyside)
7th floor, Bridgewater House,
Whitworth Street,
Manchester M1 6LT
Tel: 0161 237 1061

(Cumbria)

Haweswater Road, Penrith,
Cumbria CA11 7EH
Tel: 01768 865752

Yorkshire and the Humber

4th floor, Victoria Wharf,
4 The Embankment,
Sovereign Street,
Leeds LS1 4BA
Tel: 0113 246 9222

South East and London

(Hants, Isle of Wight, E&W Sussex,
Bucks, Berks, Oxon & London)
Dacre House,
19 Dacre Street,
London SW1H 0DH
Tel: 0207 340 2900

(Kent & Surrey)

Sterling House, 7 Ashford Road,
Maidstone, Kent ME1 5BJ
Tel: 01622 765222

East of England Region

(Beds, Herts, Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambs and Essex)
City House, 126-128 Hills Road,
Cambridge CB2 1PT
Tel: 01223 354462

East Midlands Region

(Leics & Rutland, Derbys, Notts,
Northants and Lincs)
18 Market Place, Bingham,
Nottingham NG13 8AP
Tel: 01949 876200

West Midlands Region

(Hereford & Worcester, Shropshire,
Staffordshire & Warwickshire)
1st floor, Vincent House,
92-93 Edward Street, Birmingham B1 2RA
Tel: 0121 233 9399

Strickland House, The Lawns,

Park Street, Wellington, Telford TF1 3BX
Tel: 01952 247161

North East Region

(Northumberland, Durham, Tyne & Wear
and Tees Valley)
Cross House, Westgate Road,
Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE1 4XX
Tel: 0191 269 1600

South West Region

(Glos, former Avon, Wilts & Dorset)
Bridge House, Sion Place,
Clifton Down, Bristol BS8 4AS
Tel: 0117 973 9966

(Cornwall, Devon and Somerset)

Second Floor, 11-15 Dix's Field,
Exeter EX1 1QA
Tel: 01392 477150

Appendix 2: Other sources of information and useful reading

Organisations

Action for Market Towns

Promotes the vitality and viability of small towns.
PO Box 299, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 1UU
Tel: 01284 755567 Fax: 01284 761816
Website: www.towns.org.uk
Email: info@towns.org.uk

Architectural Heritage Fund

Grants and loans to charities towards the repair of historic buildings.
Clareville House, 26-27 Oxendon Street,
London SW1Y 4EL
Tel: 020 7925 0199 Fax: 020 7930 0295
Website: ahfund.org.uk
Email: ahf@ahfund.org.uk

The Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP)

ACoRP is a not-for-profit organisation which aims to provide impartial support, advice and guidance to anyone who is involved with rural/semi-rural rail services.
Brian Jackson Centre, New North Parade,
Huddersfield HD1 5JP
Tel: 01484 549737 Fax: 01484 544234
Email: train@platform8.demon.co.uk

Association of Historic Towns and Villages (ASHTAV)

Concerned with enhancement of small historic towns and villages.
Ashwood, Broadhempston, Totnes, Devon TQ 6BD
Tel: 01803 812626 Helpdesk: 01926 400717
Website: www.ashtav.org

Awards for All

Lottery Grants for local groups.
For application pack tel: 0845 6002040

British Trust for Conservation Volunteers

BTCV helps volunteers take hands-on action to improve the rural and urban environment.
36 St Mary's Street, Wallingford,
Oxfordshire OX10 0EU
Tel: 01491 839766 Fax: 01491 839766
Website: www.btcv.org
Email: information@btcv.org

Business in the Community (Consultancy Service)

Social and economic regeneration.
137 Shepherdess Walk, London N1 7RQ
Tel: 0870 600 2482 Fax: 020 7253 1877
Website: www.bitc.org.uk
Email: information@bitc.org.uk

Carnegie UK Trust

Charitable grant-giving body.
Comely Park House, New Row, Dunfermline,
FIFE KY12 7EJ
Tel: 01383 721445 Fax: 01383 620682
Website: www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk

Charity Commission

Government department which aims to help charities use their resources more effectively and to provide advice.
Harmsworth House, 13-15 Bouverie Street,
London EC4Y 8DP
Tel: 0870 333 0123 Fax: 020 7674 2300
Website: www.charity-commission.gov.uk

Common Ground (Information and Publications)

Links people and place by focusing on locality.
Gold Hill House, 21 High Street, Shaftesbury,
Dorset SP7 8JE
Tel: 01747 850820 Fax: 01747 850821
Website: www.comonground.org.uk

Clients Advisory Service

(part of Royal Institute of British Architects RIBA)
66 Portland Place, London W1N 4AD
Tel: 020 7307 3700 Fax: 020 7436 9112
Website: www.architecture.com
Email: cas@inst.riba.org

Community Development Foundation

Provides support for community initiatives and promotes best practice.
60 Highbury Grove, London N5 2AG
Tel: 020 7226 5375 Website: www.cdf.org.uk

Community Fund

(previously National Lottery Charities Board)
Distributes grants to charities.
St Vincent House, 16 Suffolk Street,
London SW1Y 4NL
Tel: 020 7747 5300
Website: www.community-fund.org.uk

Community Matters (Advisory service)

National umbrella body for multi-purpose volunteer-led community organisations.
Head Office, 8/9 Upper Street, London N1 0PQ
Tel: 020 7837 7887
Website: www.communitymatters.org.uk
Email: informationandadvice@org.uk

Community Transport Association

CTA operates a free advice and information service giving detailed answers to legal, technical, developmental and other questions.
Highbank, Halton Street, Hyde, Cheshire SK14 2NY
Tel: 0161 366 6685 Advice Line: 0161 367 8780
Fax: 0161 351 7221
Website: www.communitytransport.com
Email: ctauk@communitytransport.com

Council for the Protection of Rural England

CPRE is a campaign group for the protection of the English countryside.
CPRE, 128 Southwark Street, LONDON SE1 0SW
Tel: 020 7981 2800 Fax: 020 7981 2899
Website: www.cpre.org.uk

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)

Environment Action Fund EAF - National Awards:
c/o DEFRA, 6/G9 Ashdown House,
123 Victoria Street, London SW1E 6DE
Tel: 020 7238 6000 Fax: 020 7944 6559
Website: www.defra.gov.uk

EAF (Regional Grants - advice)

Civic Trust, The View, 6th Floor,
Gostins Building, 32-36
Hanover Street, Liverpool L1 4LN
Tel: 0151 709 1969 Fax: 0151 7092022
Website: www.civictrust.org.uk
Email: all@civictrust.local.net

Development Trusts Association (DTA)

(Advisory Service)
To help and support creation of new development trusts.
20 Conduit Place, London W2 1HZ
Tel: 0845 4588 336
Website: dta.org.uk

EAGA Partnership

Grants for energy efficiency measures.
2nd Floor, Eldon Court, Eldon Square,
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 7HA
Tel: 0191 230 1830 Fax: 0191 230 1823
Website: www.eaga.co.uk
Email: enquiry@eaga.co.uk

English Heritage

Responsible for protecting historic buildings, landscapes and archaeological sites.
23 Saville Row, London W1X 2ET
Tel: 020 7973 3000 Fax: 020 7973 3001
Website: www.english-heritage.org.uk

English Nature

Government Agency that champions the conservation of wildlife and natural features throughout England.

Northminster House, Northminster Road
Peterborough PE1 1UA

Tel: 01733 455000 Fax: 01733 568834

Website: www.english-nature.org.uk

Email: enquiries@english-nature.org.uk

Entrust

Sole regulator of the landfill Tax Credit Scheme.

Suite 2, 5th Floor, ACRE House, 2 Town Square, Sale,
Manchester M33 7WZ

Tel: 0161 972 0044

Website: www.entrust.org.uk

Foodlink (East Anglia Foodlink)

- a not-for-profit co-operative representing all the constituents in the sustainable food chain.

49a High Street, Watton, Norfolk, IP25 6AB

Tel: (Clive and Rosemary) 01953 889 200

Tel: (Tully) 0845 3303 965

Friends of the Earth

26-28 Underwood Street, London, N1 7JQ

Tel: 020 7490 1555

The Foundation for Sport and the Arts

Grant-giving body funded by

Littlewoods and Vernons.

PO Box 20, Liverpool L13 1HB

Tel: 0151 259 5505 Fax: 0151 230 0664

Funder Finder

Develops and distributes software to help individuals and not-for-profit organisations in the UK to identify charitable trusts that may provide funding.

65 Raglan Road, Leeds LS2 9DZ

Tel: 0113 243 3008

Website: www.funderfinder.org.uk

Groundwork UK

A leading environmental regeneration charity.

85/87 Cornwall Street, Birmingham B3 3BY

Tel: 0121 236 8565 Fax: 0121 236 7356

Website: www.groundwork.org.uk

Email: info@groundwork.org.uk

Heritage Lottery Fund

Distributes lottery money for heritage projects.

7 Holbein Place, London SW1W 8NR

Tel: 0207 591 6000

Inforurale and Ruralnet

An online, relationship-based peer support network.

Stoneleigh Park, Kenilworth, Warwickshire CV8 2RR

Tel: 01203 690691

Website: www.ruralnet.org.uk

Email: info@ruralnet.org.uk

Lloyds TSB Foundation

Grants for registered charities for social and community needs, education and training.

PO Box 140, St Mary's Court, 20 St Mary at Hill,
London EC3R 8NA

Tel: 020 7204 5276

Website: www.lloydstsbfoundations.org.uk

National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service (NACVS)

NACVS supports its members by providing information, advice, training and a range of other services.

3rd Floor Arundel Court, 177 Arundel Street,
Sheffield S1 2NU

Tel: 0114 2786636

Website: www.nacvs.org.uk

National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)

Provides information and advice to voluntary organisations.

Regent's Wharf, 8 All Saints Street, London N1 9RL

Tel: 020 7713 6161 Fax: 020 7713 6300

Website: www.ncvo-vol.org.uk

Email: ncvo@ncvo-vol.org.uk

The National Trust

Owns and manages much countryside and coast, as well as historic buildings.

36 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW3 1LQ

Tel: 020 7222 9251

Website: www.nationaltrust.org.uk

National Youth Agency

Supporting and improving work with young people.

17-23 Albion Street, Leicester, LE1 6GD

Tel: 0116 285 3700

Website: www.nya.org.uk

Email: nya@nya.org.uk

New Opportunities Fund

Lottery distributor created to award grants to health, education and environment projects throughout the UK.

Heron House, 322 High Holborn,

London WC1V 7PW

Tel: 020 7211 1800 Info line: 0845 0000 121

Fax: 020 7211 1750/1/2/3/4

Website: www.nof.org.uk

Email: general.enquiries@nof.org.uk

Open Spaces Society

This society exists to protect common land and public rights of way.

25A Bell Street, Henley-on-Thames,

Oxfordshire RG9 2BA

Tel: 01491 573535 Fax: 01491 573051

Website: www.oss.org.uk

Email: hq@oss.org.uk

Planning Aid (Royal Town and Country Planning Institute)

26 Portland Place, London W1N 4BE

Tel: 020 7636 9107

ProHelp

ProHelp (under the Business in the Community umbrella) is a mechanism whereby voluntary and community groups in need of professional expertise are matched up with a professional firm willing to give advice free of charge.

BITC, 165 Whiteladies Road, Bristol BS8 2RN

Tel: 0117 923 8750

Ramblers Association

Aims to promote rambling, protect rights of way, campaign for access to country and defend the beauty of the countryside.

2nd floor, Camelford House,

87-90 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7TW

Tel: 020 7339 8500

Website: www.ramblers.org.uk

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

RSPB runs 150 nature reserves in the UK.

The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2DL

Tel: 01767 680551

Website: www.rspb.org.uk

Shell Better Britain Campaign

Enabling effective action for community based sustainable development by providing grants, information and building a network of groups sharing experience and good practice.

King Edward House, 135A New Street,

Birmingham B2 4QJ

Tel: 0121 248 5900 Fax: 0121 248 5901

Website: www.sbbc.co.uk Email: info@sbbc.co.uk

Sport England

Aims to lead the development of sport in England by influencing and serving the public, commercial and voluntary sectors. Also distributes lottery grants for sport.

16 Upper Woburn Place, London WC1H 0QP

Tel: 020 7273 1500 Fax: 020 7383 5740

Website: www.sportengland.org.uk

SUSTRANS (Sustainable Transport)

A charity that works on practical projects to encourage people to walk, cycle and use public transport in order to reduce motor traffic.

35 King Street, Bristol BS1 4DZ

Tel: 0117 926 8893 Fax: 0117 929 4173

Website: www.sustrans.org.uk

Email: info@sustrans.org.uk

Transport 2000 (Advisory Service)

Promotes and encourages sustainable transport.

12-18 Hoxton Street, London N1 6NG

Tel: 020 7613 0743 Fax: 020 7613 5280

The Tree Council (UK)

Promotes the planting and conservation of trees and woods; disseminates knowledge; acts as a forum for relevant organisations.

51 Catherine Place, London SW1E 6DY

Tel: 020 7828 9928 Fax: 020 7828 9060

Website: www.treecouncil.org.uk

Village Retail Services Association (ViRSA)

Works with small rural communities to assist them to keep or revive their retail facilities especially the shop and post office.

The Little Keep, Bridport Road, Dorchester,
Dorset DT1 1SQ

Tel: 01305 259383 Fax: 01305 259384

Website: www.virsa.org

Email: virsa@ruralnet.org.uk

The Wildlife Trusts

The Wildlife Trust campaign for the protection of wildlife and habitats.

The Kiln, Waterside, Mather Road, Newark,
Notts. NG24 1WT

Tel: 01636 677711 Fax: 01636 670001

Website: www.wildlifetrusts.org

Email: enquiries@wildlife-trusts.kix.uk

The Woodland Trust

The UK's leading charity dedicated solely to the protection of our native woodland heritage.

Autumn Park, Dysart Road, Grantham,
Lincolnshire NG31 6LL

Tel: 01476 581111 Fax: 01476 590808

Website: www.woodland-trust.org.uk

Email: enquiries@woodland-trust.org.uk

Publications

Publications that can introduce you to more techniques and methods:

Knowing and Surveying Your Community

An information sheet produced by the Shell Better Britain Campaign providing useful tips on different methods and how to choose the method that suits your parish.

Shell Better Britain Campaign,
King Edward House, 135a New Street
Birmingham B2 4QJ
Tel: 0121 248 5900
Website: www.sbbc.co.uk

Community Work Skills Manual

A large guide that can be purchased from the Association of Community Workers. It contains a selection of best practice, ideas and techniques written by community workers for people who are active in their communities, including a section called "Getting to know a community".

Association of Community Workers,
Stephenson Building, Elswick Road,
Newcastle, NE4 6SQ
Tel: 0191 272 4341

The Community Planning Handbook by Nick Wates

A comprehensive how-to-do-it handbook on public involvement in planning and design which features best practice information on effective methods. A vital reference for practitioners, policy makers and students throughout the world. Tips, checklists and sample documents help readers to get started quickly, learn from others' experience and to select the approach best suited to their situation.

Earthscan Publications,
120 Pentonville Road, London, N1 1JN
Tel: 01903 828 800 (Littlehampton Book Services)

People Make the Difference: Good practice for involving residents in rural regeneration

A good practice guide containing suggestions of how to achieve success in rural regeneration. Section III, entitled "Involving residents - best practice in action", describes methods with case study examples, that you could use to collect information for your Parish Plan.

People make a difference(CAX 43)
Countryside Agency Publications,
PO Box 125, Wetherby,
West Yorkshire, LS23 7EP
Tel: 0870 120 6466
Website: www.countryside.gov.uk

Hear by right: setting standards for the active involvement of young people in democracy

A guide to good practice in working with young people, produced by the Local Government Association in partnership with The National Youth Agency.

Local Government House, Smith Square,
London SW1P 3HZ
Tel: 020 7664 3000
E-mail: info@lga.gov.uk
Website: www.lga.gov.uk

Countryside Character

Produced by the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage.

Countryside Character

Produced by the CPRE.

Web sources

The New Economics Foundation has produced a useful booklet which tells you more about a range of methods for involving your community in decision making: Participation works! 21 techniques for participation in the 21st century. This is currently out of print, but can be downloaded from www.neweconomics.org

Quality of life capital is a tool for maximising environmental, social and economic benefits as part of any land use planning or management. It looks at the benefits that areas or features provide for human wellbeing and provides a systematic and transparent evaluation framework. This internet website includes a number of participative techniques and practical hints and tips about how they are organized. Details on www.qualityoflifecapital.org.uk

The Planning Portal is a new website which offers everyone a chance to find out about how change in the environment of England and Wales is managed and the part we can all play in a brighter future for our countryside, villages, towns and cities.

The portal is for use by everyone. It avoids technical language wherever possible. Major parts of it will inform the general public and other sections will be especially useful to people with a professional interest in need of detailed information and university students.

Website: www.planningportal.gov.uk

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University of Gloucester

Parish Clerks and Councillors

ACRE

Planning Aid

Countryside & Community Research Unit

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National Youth Agency

Community Development Foundation

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County Association of Local Councils

Notes

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(Cornwall, Devon and Somerset)

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Parish Plans

Guidance for parish and town councils



Working for people and places in rural England

The booklet and resource leaflets are designed to work together to provide clear and detailed information on how to produce a plan. Throughout the booklet references to the resource pack are clearly highlighted by a flag.

The contents of this pack act only as a guide. It allows you the flexibility to develop your own ideas, to produce a plan that will work for your community.

Examples of completed plans can be accessed through our website at:

www.countryside.gov.uk/vitalvillages

This pack is aimed primarily at parish and town councils. When you have decided to produce a Parish Plan it should be made available to all those involved in the work.

The guidance pack is in two parts:

- a guidance booklet which explains the process of preparing the Parish Plan from starting off, to acting on the conclusion;
- a resource pack which provides ideas, practical advice and helps to answer more detailed questions.

In both of these documents the term 'parish council' represents town council, parish council or parish meeting.

Contents

These resource leaflets contain a number of ideas and practical advice to help you prepare your Parish Plan. This advice is drawn from real case studies, the experiences of, and questions asked by, other community groups who have started to prepare a Parish Plan.

1. Planning your Parish Plan
2. Frequently asked questions
3. Specimen constitution for Parish Plan steering committee
4. Specimen terms of reference for working groups
5. Budgeting and preparing your plan: some legal and technical issues
6. Budgeting and preparing your plan: guide to likely costs
7. Contracting consultants
8. Involving the community
9. Consultation & information gathering techniques
10. Example of a press notice for the local newspapers
11. A model action plan
12. Parish Plans and the statutory planning system
13. Introduction to landscape character
14. Village appraisals and village design statements
15. Glossary of terms and abbreviations

Frequently asked questions

General

Q. Does the parish council have to do all the work?

A. No. It's far better to involve a wide range of volunteers from throughout the community to prepare the plan. The parish council needs to apply for the grant and should keep an overview of the plan while it is being prepared.

Q. Are the results of the Parish Plan binding on the parish council?

A. The parish council should endorse the final plan and use it as a statement of policy. They may be responsible for taking forward some of the actions, and they should be encouraged to do so.

Q. If we do a joint Parish Plan with a neighbouring parish, can we get a grant each?

A. Yes, up to £5,000 each.

Q. How many applications get turned down?

A. None, while there is still funding available! If the application comes from the parish council of a community of under 10,000 population and, as long as you have filled in all the forms correctly, you will get offered a grant. Larger communities should discuss their ideas with the relevant CA regional office first.

Q. How long will it take to prepare a Parish Plan?

A. Between 12 to 18 months.

Q. If it takes longer will we lose the grant?

A. Not if you notify the Countryside Agency and explain why the process is taking longer than envisaged.

Involving other people/organisations

Q. Is it ok to work with other bodies like the police and health authorities?

A. Yes. Many public bodies now have a statutory duty to consult the public on many issues and you may be able to make a positive contribution to planning and service delivery. It is a good idea to involve these and other service providers at the start of the exercise. They might even help with some funding.

Q. Do district and county councils fully support Parish Plans?

A. Some local authorities have positive policies towards community led action plans. Others are still developing an understanding of Parish Plans and how they might use them to inform policy and decision-making. It will help if you consult your local councillor about your Parish Plan and to try to involve them in the process.

Q. How does the Parish Plan relate to the community strategy?

A. Community strategies are still being developed and the ways in which a Parish Plan could influence a community strategy are still being tested. We hope Parish Plans will provide clear evidence of need and priority in relation to a range of services and that they will be able to feed into the process.

Q. Does the local authority have to take any notice of our plan – does it have any formal status?

A. Parish Plans do not currently have any formal status, and they cannot override agreed planning policy. But, if you start a dialogue with the local authority (and other service providers) at an early stage in preparing the plan, you should be able to identify where they can help you and where you might be able to influence them.

Q. We've got ambitious plans that will cost more than £5,000 – can we get grants from other bodies apart from the Countryside Agency?

A. Only the Countryside Agency is offering grants specifically to prepare Parish Plans, but you might be able to obtain additional funds from a variety of other sources including the local authority, local trusts and charities and the lottery.

Q. The guidance says we can pay for outside professional help – can we pay someone in the village to do it?

A. Yes. There might be somebody in the village with the right skills and experience, for example carrying out a survey, data analysis or writing up the final plan. This might be a student who is currently on vacation, someone who is recently retired and has time on their hands, or even the parish clerk who wants to get more involved with the plan.

Previous village plans & appraisals

Q. We did a village appraisal/village design statement a couple of years ago. Where does this fit in?

A. Such documents are very useful starting points for a Parish Plan. You should review existing plans and see if they are still relevant, which issues still need to be addressed and identify if new issues have arisen. The final Parish Plan might identify building development and design as an issue and one of the actions from your Parish Plan might be to produce a village design statement.

What are the benefits of producing a Parish Plan?

Q. Will it help us get a new village hall/youth club?

A. Yes. If you have consulted widely with the community and come up with clear evidence of need, a Parish Plan will certainly help you make the case to a range of funding bodies for cash for such projects.

Q. We've done this before and nothing came of it – How could we be sure it'll bring benefits to the village?

A. As soon as you start working on the plan consult and involve the people and organisations that might help you achieve what you want (eg. local authorities, health & police). When you produce the final action plan make sure you have nominated individuals or small groups within the parish who will follow up action points and make things happen.

Possible problems

Q. Will we be penalised if we don't do a Parish Plan?

A. Not at all. Preparation of a Parish Plan is entirely voluntary and there is no obligation on you to prepare one. But there are many benefits.

Q. What happens if we lose our main activists and have to abandon the process – will we lose our funding?

A. No. You can still claim grant aid against all expenditure to date. But you must notify the Countryside Agency and let us know why you have abandoned the project.

- Q. *We don't have a parish council – does that mean we're not eligible for a grant?*
- A. If you have a parish meeting you are also eligible for Parish Plan grant. Please contact your Rural Community Council or Countryside Agency regional office to discuss.
- Q. *We're a very poor village and lots of residents are out of work and disillusioned – how do I convince people it's worth doing?*
- A. Preparing the plan will allow everyone in the community to have a say about what is important to them. It will help them to feel valued and might even help create employment, if you decide you need a community transport scheme, or other facility, such as a shop. People who are out of work may be willing to help with the consultation process – you could pay them to help work on the plan.
- Q. *We're only a small village; we don't think we've got enough people to undertake such a massive task.*
- A. Being a small village might be an advantage, since it might be easier to canvass everyone's views and identify the people who can help. You really need 8 to 12 people to take the work forward. Or you could use Parish Plan grant to buy in additional help from outside the community.
- Q. *People in our village seem to have more faith in the residents' association than in the parish council – can't we apply for a grant without the parish council's involvement?*
- A. Sorry, but no. Grants can only be offered to parish/town councils or parish meetings and the Government has set these criteria.
- Q. *If the parish council get the grant from the Countryside Agency, how does the steering committee make sure it's spent the way it wants?*
- A. The steering committee and the parish council need to agree on a project plan which will set out how the grant will be spent and over what timescale. See also in the resource pack advice on "Constitutions" and "Terms of Reference" which should help ensure you're all working to the same agenda.
- Q. *Our parish council is made up of people who've been there for years – they never do anything, let alone a Parish Plan!*
- A. The parish council themselves don't have to do all the work. In fact it is best if volunteers do most of the work, with the parish council in a monitoring role as part of the steering committee. But you will need to convince them that a Parish Plan is a good idea. This could be an opportunity to revitalise the parish council and get other people involved!
- Q. *What do we need to do if we wish to have the land use planning parts of our Parish Plan considered for adoption as supplementary planning guidance?*
- A. It is vital that you involve your planning department before you start the Parish Plan. This will:
- enable you to agree the planning scope of your Parish Plan early on;
 - ensure that you understand the formal process that the local authority needs you to go through to consider parts of your Parish Plan as SPG.

Specimen constitution for Parish Plan steering committee

Many communities have found it useful to adopt a written constitution for the Parish Plan steering committee. It helps give a direction and focus to the process, and reduces the likelihood of misunderstandings. Here is an example of a constitution you could use:

Paradise Parish Plan Steering Committee

Name

The name of the organisation shall be the *Paradise Parish Plan Steering Committee*, hereafter referred to as the committee.

Purpose

The purpose of the committee shall be to act on behalf of the parish council to carry out the following tasks:

1. Investigate and identify support for the Parish Plan.
2. Identify sources of funding in addition to the Countryside Agency grant.
3. Take responsibility for planning, budgeting and monitoring expenditure on the plan and report back to the parish council on these matters.
4. Liaise with relevant authorities and organisations to make the plan as effective as possible.
5. Identify ways of involving the whole community and gather the views and opinions of as many groups and organisations in the community as possible.
6. Determine the types of survey and information gathering to be used.
7. Be responsible for the analysis of the survey, the production and distribution of the final report.
8. Identify priorities and timescale for local action in the action plan including lead organisations and potential sources of project funding.
9. To report back to the parish council on progress, issues arising and outcomes from the exercise

Membership

The committee will include up to 12 elected or nominated members.

No more than two of these members will be members of the parish council.

Election to the committee will take place at a meeting open to the public. Any resident or person, particularly those representing a local group, may stand for election to the committee. Residents may also nominate representatives for election to the committee.

The committee may co-opt additional members at its discretion, so long as the total number of co-opted members does not exceed the number of elected members.

A person shall cease to be a member of the committee having notified the chair or secretary in writing of his or her wish to resign.

Officers

At the first meeting the committee will elect: a chairperson, a vice-chair, a secretary, a treasurer, a publicity officer, and a volunteer coordinator. All other committee members should have a specific role, to be agreed by the committee.

Meetings

The committee shall meet every two months as a minimum, or as may be required. At least five clear days notice of meetings shall be given to members by written notices left at, or sent by post to the member's last known address. All notices of committee meetings must detail the matters to be discussed.

Every matter shall be determined by a majority of votes of the Committee members present and voting. In the case of equality of votes the chair of the meeting shall have a casting vote.

The committee may decide the quorum necessary to transact business – with a minimum of five members.

The secretary shall keep a record of meetings in a minute book, and circulate minutes to members of the committee not more than 14 days after each meeting.

Working groups

The committee may appoint such working groups, as it considers necessary to carry out functions specified by the committee. Each working group should have a nominated chair but this person does not have to be a member of the steering committee.

Working groups do not have power to authorise expenditure on behalf of the committee.

Working groups will be bound by the terms of reference set out for them by the steering group.

Finance

The treasurer shall keep a clear record of expenditure, where necessary, supported by receipted invoices.

Members of the community who are involved as volunteers with any of the working groups may claim back any expenditure that was necessarily incurred during the process of producing the Parish Plan. This could include postage and stationary, telephone calls, travel costs, childcare costs.

The treasurer will draw up and agree with the committee procedures for volunteers who wish to claim expenses and the rates they may claim.

The treasurer will report back to the committee and the parish council on planned and actual expenditure for the project, and liaise with the parish clerk to set up a petty cash system and enable cash withdrawals and payment of invoices to be made as required.

Changes to the constitution

This constitution may be altered and additional clauses may be added with the consent of two-thirds of the committee present.

Dissolution of the committee

Upon dissolution of the committee any remaining funds shall be disposed of by the committee, in accordance with the decisions reached at an Extraordinary Meeting open to the public in the area of benefit called for that purpose. No individual member of the committee shall benefit from the dispersal.

Specimen terms of reference for working groups

If your steering committee decides to divide the work among smaller working groups, you may decide to agree 'terms of reference' for those groups. This will ensure participants understand what they are being asked to do and the limits to their powers. Set out below is an example that you may like to use as a model.

Paradise Parish Plan Steering Committee

Terms of reference for working groups

The purpose of each working group is to assist the Parish Plan steering committee (PPSC) to prepare an action plan for the community. Each working group will tackle a specific issue, or set of issues, or the needs and opportunities facing a specific group of people within the community.

Each working group should:

1. Clearly set out its purpose eg. "to help young people (under 18 years) in the community identify their needs, ideas and concerns and to develop an action plan to meet these needs."
2. Outline how it will gather information and carry out consultations.
3. Set out the timescale and estimated costs of gathering information and carrying out consultations.
4. Produce a short action plan setting out:
 - What** is proposed?
 - Why** the action is needed
 - Who** will be responsible for taking the action?
 - When** will the action be taken forward?
 - How** the action will be implemented and how much it will cost?
5. The working group must be able to demonstrate that projects it has identified have the support of the local community and show that they have, where relevant, discussed projects with other organisations who will be able to assist in carrying out the action.
6. Each working group will appoint at least one, but preferably two members, to attend the regular PPSC meetings (those persons may already be members of the PPSC).
7. Each working group will be responsible for organising its own meetings and must provide a summary progress report to the PPSC meetings.
8. Financial expenditure in excess of £50 must be approved by the PPSC. Receipted expenses for reimbursement should be passed to the steering group treasurer on a monthly basis with reasons for the expenditure clearly given.

Budgeting and preparing your plan: some legal and technical issues

Bodies, such as local authorities, may have grants available to contribute towards the cost of producing a Parish Plan and there is a whole range of fundraising activities that your community can organise to raise cash. There are also grant schemes, such as one administered by Shell Better Britain Campaign, which will contribute towards the costs of visiting other projects, for example, to talk to other communities about what went well for them and ideas to avoid.

VAT

Some of the goods and services you'll need may be subject to VAT. If the parish council is VAT registered, you will be able to claim this back and you should not include the VAT element of expenditure in your grant claim.

However, if the parish council or parish meeting is not VAT registered, you may claim grant against the expenditure, including VAT. But you must be able to demonstrate that you cannot claim VAT, for example by including a letter from the Inland Revenue, confirming this.

Data Protection

If you are collecting information about individuals you should be aware of Data Protection Law, which protects people's privacy rights. Most software packages are constructed in compliance with the law. The eight enforceable principles of good practice say that data must be:

- fairly and lawfully processed;
- processed for limited purposes;
- adequate, relevant and not excessive;
- accurate;
- not kept longer than necessary;
- processed in accordance with the data subject's rights;
- secure;
- not transferred to other countries without adequate protection (*unlikely to apply to Parish Plans!*)

Further information is available on the website: www.dataprotection.gov.uk

Employment law

If you decide to pay volunteers for their services, you may run up against employment law. It makes it easier if the person you employ is self-employed, but in either case it is advisable to seek advice.

Whether you decide to pay volunteers the 'going rate' or just their expenses, it is a good idea to write it down in a 'job description', so you and they know exactly what is expected of them.

There is an organisation called "Community Accounting" (www.communityaccounting.co.uk) which offers advice to voluntary bodies. For example:

"Under Inland Revenue guidelines, the reimbursement of legitimate expenses (against receipts) is allowable. However, payment of other sums could then be considered to be "taxable income" and hence you have an obligation to register as an employer and deduct PAYE and National Insurance."

"All employees (full or part-time) have a statutory right to receive a written statement of their main terms and conditions of employment."

Inland Revenue Employers Helpline: Tel 0845 7143143

Health & safety

If you are using volunteers or paying people to deliver and collect questionnaires, or any other door-to-door activity, you must take reasonable steps to ensure their safety, for example:

- issue badges, containing a logo if you have one, identifying who they are and what they're doing;
- let householders know in advance – eg. via a newsletter – that people will be knocking on their door;
- if the work will be done at night suggest people work in pairs;
- recommend they take mobile phones or alarms, and, if possible, provide them yourselves.

Public liability

You should make sure you are covered in case your helpers suffer or cause injury or damage in the course of Parish Plan work. Most parish councils have their own insurance that should cover you for this. If not your county association may be able to advise on the type and level of cover you should have.

Budgeting and preparing your plan: guide to likely costs

The table below lists the sort of costs you are likely to incur in drawing up your Parish Plan. It is not comprehensive or universal; some costs vary from area to area and you should check the figures against local conditions.

Some services might be available free or at reduced rates from individuals or organisations within the parish. For example a local firm might provide paper and photocopying; the school or church might offer favourable rates – ask around!

Recurring costs

Activity	Source	Typical Cost
Room hire	Eg. village hall, school hall	£60 a day, £30 a session 12 meetings @ £360 2 all-day meetings @ £120
Refreshments	Provided by volunteers	Approx. £1 a head
Communication & publicity	Eg. telephone, postage, email, production & copying documents, flyers, posters, adverts, photos, news releases	A4 sheet costs 5-10p per copy • Village of 1000 households = £50-£100 per flyer • Monthly meetings with 4 pages of minutes for ten committee members = £46.80 (a year)
Meetings, preparing documents, admin etc.	Volunteer time	£50 a day • Assume 12 meetings of 2hrs for 10 people = £1500
Ancillary costs to meetings, eg. childcare	Care costs for parents/carers such as crèche or childminder.	From £3 per hour per child
Distribution of leaflets, questionnaires etc.	Postal costs prohibitive? • Consider inserts in parish magazines • Volunteers or teenagers (see note 3)	Negotiable!
Training volunteers	To facilitate meetings, consultation, design	Two hours for £30 • 2 events for 3 people - £180 • Trainer to run a village session - £75
Equipment eg. Pens, paper		Pack of flipchart paper - £10 Pens - £2.50 Blu-tack or similar- £3
Video hire and do it all yourself • If you want professional help to record and edit a sequence this will cost more – one parish hired a firm for three days and included the result in the final plan	• You can hire the basic equipment • Editing: £60 per hour • Professional camera person: £500 per day (film and tripod extra)	Camera: £50 per day; £150 per wk
Display board hire	Should be able to borrow	
Photography + lamination for display		Photos - £10 per 36 print film Lamination 10-15p per A4 sheet

Activity	Source	Typical Cost
Large scale maps	These may be available from your local authority. If not, Ordnance Survey produce "Superplan" maps to various scales and sizes. Your local RCC might have a licence to produce these, or you could obtain one for yourself from *(see note below)	OS licence: £47.50 Individual area maps are around £25 - £125 depending on size and scale.
Mileage rates	Usually calculated against size of car engine	20p per mile minimum
Insurance	Public liability for an event	£50

One-off costs

Professional support	Typical Cost
Facilitator and/or independent chair	£250 per day
Advice on consultation methods and tools	£250 per day
Preparation and/or analysis of data	£250 per day
Typing, layout and design of final report and action plan	£200 per day
Copyright fees (Copyright Licensing Agency: www.cla.co.uk)	
NB: It is good practice to get at least 3 quotes from different individuals/organisations, detailing what they are offering, how long it will take, and their day rate, and writing a detailed contract for the successful applicant. (see section 7 'Tips on contracting consultants').	

If using computer software for information gathering and analysis there will be a further cost involved. See section 9 'Information Gathering Techniques' for prices.

* Ordnance Survey

An Ordnance Survey Business Use Licence allows you to make unlimited copies of paper maps for internal business use in return for an annual fee. In addition, you will be able to publish OS paper mapping externally for display and promotion purposes, as long as you make no direct financial gain from its use. Your annual licence fee is based on how many of your offices make copies. Fees are calculated on a sliding scale, starting from a minimum of £47.50 plus VAT.

If the parish council wishes to apply for this licence you can do so online at www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk (click on the heading at the bottom of the screen "Copyright and Trademarks" and then the headings underneath "Copying our paper maps".) This will give you a temporary licence number so you can start copying straight away.

Alternatively, if you contact OS with an address, they will send out an application form. However, this will mean a slightly longer wait before you can start copying.

Contact:

Nicola Dobbs,
Customer Contact Executive,
Ordnance Survey,
Tel: 08456 05 05 05
Email: customerservices@ordsvy.gov.uk

Contracting consultants

If you decide to appoint a consultant to help with community consultation or any other task, it is important both parties have a clear understanding of what is needed and what is being offered.

All councils are encouraged to adopt the spirit of “Best Value” and to ensure they get the best value for money when tendering for goods and services.

If at all possible you should aim to get quotes from at least three individuals or companies, even if you expect to appoint someone from within the parish. For simple tasks or smaller items of expenditure, you could obtain three quotes by telephone. For more complex tasks we recommend sending out an invitation to tender, which will be the basis of the contract you issue.

If you issue a contract on a ‘single tender’ basis, a formal contract letter still needs to be issued. There is no harm in implying you are asking a number of people to bid for work, even if you only have one person in mind – this helps to keep the price competitive.

If you run a competitive tender, you must be scrupulously fair. This means being clear about the criteria you will use when choosing who to give the work to. If you provide additional information to one bidder, it should also be copied to the others. People who are not offered the work will usually ask for feedback as to why this was the case. It is good practice (and maintains good relations) to give this – for example, you were too expensive, others had more relevant experience, we felt your approach wouldn’t work in this village.

Success in contracting out elements of parish planning work is much more likely if:

1. You are absolutely clear why you want outside help. Just another pair of hands at high cost can cause resentment. If the work is about expertise, could the consultant train/mentor members of the community, rather than do the work directly?
2. Good lines of communication exist between the consultant and yourselves. Consultants will need to work with lots of people in, and perhaps beyond, the parish. Ultimately, however, they need to work to one appointed ‘contract manager’, who can give them definitive instructions.

The model contract brief and letters in this section can be adapted to suit your needs. Text in these examples, which is printed in red, should be amended by you to fit your requirements.

Further information on contracting consultants is available from:

Community Development Foundation

tel: 020 7226 5375

fax: 020 7704 0313

email: admin@cdf.org.uk

Contracting consultants Example of a tender brief

Community consultation for the new **Paradise** Parish Plan

Introduction

1. **Paradise** Parish Council has decided to produce a Parish Plan for the village. We have set up a steering committee, representing a number of different interest groups. The total project budget is about **£6,000**. We expect to use about **50%** of this money on community consultation work.
2. The greatest challenge facing us is to ensure everyone with a stake in the village has the opportunity to contribute to the planning process, and will feel that they have had a say in what the final plan contains. To help us with this we wish to appoint an experienced, independent facilitator.
3. We are using the Countryside Agency's "Parish Plans Guidance pack" to help us decide on our approach. Consultants should study this publication before submitting a tender.

Scope of the work

1. The person we appoint will be required to:
 - (a) work with the steering committee in deciding on an appropriate strategy for involving all elements of the community in the planning process;
 - (b) help us identify who is best placed to lead the different participation activities;
 - (c) provide guidance / mentoring / briefing notes to members of the steering committee before they undertake consultation exercises;
 - (d) take the lead in facilitating larger scale consultation events, eg. open days/workshops to be held in the village hall.
2. **Paradise** Parish Council and the Parish Plan steering committee intend to develop a close working relationship with the successful tenderer. We need to appoint someone we can take into our confidence, who is aware of issues affecting rural areas like **Paradise**, and who can communicate effectively with all the sections of our community.

Selection process and selection criteria

1. Consultants are invited to tender for this work as specified in this brief.
2. The submission should include:
 - details of qualifications and relevant experience;
 - a description of how the consultant proposes to undertake the work. We are interested in learning about the approach you would expect to take to help us engage successfully with different people with an interest in our village. Please tell us also about underpinning principles which would guide your work;
 - a detailed breakdown of costs, listing expenditure under the following headings:
 - * day rate and estimated number of days;
 - * travel and subsistence expenses;
 - * any other expenses which are not included in the above - eg. office expenses;
 - * VAT - where applicable (please state specifically if you are not VAT registered).
 - information on the nature of your professional indemnity cover, and any other relevant insurance.

3. Please supply FOUR copies of your submission to:

Contact One

Paradise Parish Council

PP1 2XL

to arrive no later than 1.00 p.m. on Monday 4 March 2003.

4. Tenders will be evaluated by a panel comprising:

Contact Three (chair of the Paradise Parish Plan steering committee).

Contact Two (secretary and treasurer of the Paradise Parish Plan steering committee).

Contact Four (member of the Paradise Parish Plan steering committee).

Contact One (clerk to the parish council).

5. On behalf of Paradise Parish Council and the Parish Plan steering committee the panel will be looking to select the best value submission based on:

- i) evidence of successful community consultation work, and/or mentoring or training of local groups;
- ii) ability to work in a creative and developmental way with individuals from the parish council, the Parish Plan steering committee and the wider community;
- iii) value for money.

6. Contractors whose proposals best meet these criteria will be invited to attend an interview with the panel at Paradise Village Hall during the evening of Tuesday 12 March 2002. We will let you know if we would like you to attend an interview, and, if so, to arrange a time. Please keep this evening free so that you can attend the interview. The format for the interview will be a 10-15 minute presentation by you, followed by a round table discussion lasting no more than 45 minutes.

Timing

The provisional timetable for letting the contract is as follows:

Contract out to tender:	Week beginning 3 February 2003
Potential contractors are invited to discuss the brief informally over the phone with George Barford on 01234-567890 or with Linda Snell on 01234-098765	
Deadline for submissions	Weeks beginning Monday 10 February and Monday 17 February Monday 3 March, 2002
Selected tenderers invited for interview	Tuesday 11 March
Contract let	Week beginning Monday 17 March
Initial meeting with the steering group	Friday 4 April
Target date for completing community consultation	End of July, 2003

Contractors are invited to suggest variations to this provisional timetable.

Declaration of interest

Tenderers must declare any connections between themselves/their organisation and members of either Paradise Parish Council or the Parish Plan steering committee.

Copyright

The copyright and all matters in the nature of copyrights in the information, materials and reports submitted will rest with Paradise Parish Council, and may not be produced or disseminated for any other purpose without the written permission of the council.

Project management

On a day-to-day basis project management for this contract will be the responsibility of **Contact Two**, secretary to the Parish Plan steering committee.

Invoicing arrangements

Invoices for this contract should be submitted on completion to:

Contact Two

PP1 2XL

Cost of submissions

Please note that **Paradise** Parish Council will not meet the cost of preparing the tender submission or attending interview or the **Paradise** Parish Plan steering committee.

Contracting consultants
Example of covering letter for invitation to tender

Paradise Parish Council
PP1 2XL
Phone and fax: 01234-567890
e-mail: chief.angel@aol.com
Date: 1 February 2003

Dear

Community consultation for the new Paradise Parish Plan

I am writing to invite you to submit a tender to help us with community consultation leading to the production of a new Parish Plan for Paradise.

I enclose:

- an invitation to tender;
- the village appraisal that we carried out in 1997.

The deadline for tender submissions is **Monday 3 March 2003**. Selected tenderers will be invited to attend an interview on **Tuesday 11 March**. Submissions should be sent to me at the address at the top of this letter. Interviews will be held in Paradise Village Hall.

If you have any questions regarding this invitation to tender, please contact me on **01234-567890**. As an alternative (if, for example, I am not at home) please get in touch with **Contact Two, 01234-098765**, who will also be able to field any inquiries.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Contact One
Parish Clerk

Contracting consultants Example of contract offer letter

Paradise Parish Council

PP1 2XL

Phone and fax: 01234-567890

e-mail: contact.one@aol.com

Date: 12 March 2003

Dear

Community consultation for the new Paradise Parish Plan

Paradise Parish Council accepts your offer to undertake the project named above.

The project will start on 17 March 2003 and finish on 31 July 2003. The project will be carried out in accordance with the parish council's specification dated 1 February 2003 and your tender submission of March 2003.

The contract is subject to the terms and conditions laid out in the tender brief. For undertaking this project the parish council will pay a tender price of:

Fees	x days at £y
Fee total	£xy
Expenses	Up to a maximum of £z
Contract sub total	£xy+z
VAT@ 17.5%	£
Contract Total	£

The contract will be supervised by Contact Three (Chair of the steering committee). All matters concerned with the operation of the project should be referred to this person in the first instance.

Please confirm receipt of this letter by signing, dating and returning the second copy to me.

Yours sincerely

Parish Clerk

Involving the community

The key to a successful Parish Plan is total community involvement. But you should not sit back and wait for people to come to you. You will have to reach out and contact them in ways which are interesting, entertaining and, most of important of all, ways which suit their lifestyles.

Think about how you might involve people who don't normally get involved in parish council or village affairs. Don't assume they will not want a say. Most people will respond positively, if approached in a way that is sensitive to their situation and background.

You might not have all the groups below in your community. But it is important that all those who do exist are consulted and have a chance to contribute to the Parish Plan.

Group	Some suggested methods
Schoolchildren (5-11)	<input type="checkbox"/> Run a competition, getting the primary children to draw what they like and dislike about the community. <input type="checkbox"/> Get the primary school children to make a model of the village (as in "planning for real") which could be used as a feature at a general consultation event. <input type="checkbox"/> If you decide to use a questionnaire, consider doing a separate one for schoolchildren (5-11). NB. Dealing with children and young people requires particular skills and ethics. A useful reference guide is "Hear by right" produced by the LGA and National Youth Agency (contact address at the end of this table). The Children's Society may also be able to advise you.
Young people (11-18)	<input type="checkbox"/> If you're doing a questionnaire, you might consider drawing up a separate one for young people – or even better, get them to draw up their own. <input type="checkbox"/> Young people take a task group or facilitator on a guided tour of the area, pointing out likes and dislikes. <input type="checkbox"/> Young people make a video showing the 'Good, Bad and Ugly' things about the community from their perspective – or a video competition. Result could be part of the Parish Plan document. <input type="checkbox"/> Set up a youth forum for young people to express themselves – this could become an annual event. <input type="checkbox"/> Some young people might be enlisted to help with delivering and collecting questionnaires, possibly for extra pocket money (though be aware of employment law implications – see Section 5 on budgeting). <input type="checkbox"/> Countryside rangers may have ideas for involving young people.
Over-60's	<input type="checkbox"/> A discussion meeting with refreshments, allowing people to talk in a relaxed atmosphere about their hopes and fears. Informality is a key here.
Young + old Carers	<input type="checkbox"/> Older inhabitants discuss their memories with local children. The children then consider what kinds of positive change in their surroundings they would like to see through their lifetime <input type="checkbox"/> See if you can provide a stand-in so carers can take part in events and consultations. <input type="checkbox"/> You could use it as an opportunity also to consult the person being cared for.
People with visual, hearing or mobility difficulties	<input type="checkbox"/> On any publicity include contact numbers for transport to public meetings & events. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure the venue meets their needs eg. wheelchair access. <input type="checkbox"/> Think about recording all information on audio cassette. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider providing a sign interpreter for major events, or use premises already fitted out with an effective 'loop' system.

Group	Some suggested methods
Women's Institute, Townswomen's Guild	<input type="checkbox"/> Write to them inviting comments, and offering a speaker to attend a meeting. <input type="checkbox"/> May be willing to help with providing refreshments at an event, or administrative tasks.
Church + other religious groups	<input type="checkbox"/> Write to them inviting comments, and offering a speaker to attend a meeting. <input type="checkbox"/> May be able to help with an offer of accommodation for meetings. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask if you could include an article in their magazine, or an insert to be delivered with the magazine.
Scouts & Guides	<input type="checkbox"/> Might be enlisted to help with delivering and collecting questionnaires, possibly for a contribution to funds.
Groups with regular bookings at village hall, listed in parish magazines and elsewhere	<input type="checkbox"/> Write to them all, inviting comments. <input type="checkbox"/> Offer to attend one of their sessions to tell them about the PP, and obtain feedback.
Local history group	<input type="checkbox"/> Will probably have maps, surveys and other information you might want to use or update.
Camera or photography club	<input type="checkbox"/> May be able to help with illustrations, or information collection.
Landowners	<input type="checkbox"/> May be able to provide a venue for an event. <input type="checkbox"/> May have influential contacts in local government, business etc.
Visitors	<input type="checkbox"/> Could be invited to post comments in a suggestion box.
People living in outlying or more isolated areas	<input type="checkbox"/> Make sure they are informed about public meetings, events etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Lay on transport for those without it and don't forget to mention this in the publicity. <input type="checkbox"/> Make a special effort to talk to them face to face.
Playgroup	<input type="checkbox"/> Contact playgroup committee members for their input. <input type="checkbox"/> Use a playgroup session to get children to draw or talk about their likes and dislikes. <input type="checkbox"/> You may be able to use playgroup facilities as a crèche when holding consultation other events.
Farmers & agricultural workers	<input type="checkbox"/> Contact through school, pub, social events. <input type="checkbox"/> Make use of their existing networks. <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage them to put up a representative on the steering committee. <input type="checkbox"/> Consult them over timing of events – eg. Avoid lambing, harvest time etc.
Young farmers	<input type="checkbox"/> May be able to help with transport and muscle-power. <input type="checkbox"/> Might have ideas about making public events more fun.
Young people and others who have left the village but might want to come back	<input type="checkbox"/> These people often return for village events like football final, or carnival. <input type="checkbox"/> Contact via friends and relatives, old school newsletters and websites like Friends Reunited.
2nd home and holiday home owners	<input type="checkbox"/> Knock on their doors and leave a leaflet if not there. <input type="checkbox"/> Try contacting holiday home owners through the local tourist office, lettings agency or website. <input type="checkbox"/> The local tourism partnership may be able to help contact them.
Football team and other sports clubs	<input type="checkbox"/> Hand out flyers to spectators at local matches. <input type="checkbox"/> Find out where they socialise or train, and contact them there.
Armed forces	<input type="checkbox"/> May be self-contained, but wives and children often have needs and concerns relating to the area. <input type="checkbox"/> Contact them through their community liaison officer, or the school, or shop.
Housing estates	<input type="checkbox"/> Find out if they have a residents' group or if not suggest they nominate someone to act as their spokesperson.
Garages, petrol stations, garden centres, shops, banks	<input type="checkbox"/> May have comments to offer, as well as window displays for posters and information. <input type="checkbox"/> They might also be able to offer help in kind, such as photocopying or prizes for filling in questionnaires.
Allotments group	<input type="checkbox"/> Identify a spokesperson. <input type="checkbox"/> Visit the allotments to canvas opinion. <input type="checkbox"/> They may have a newsletter which might take adverts or information about meetings, etc.
Travellers	<input type="checkbox"/> The local council may have a liaison officer who will advise about best ways of consulting. <input type="checkbox"/> Visit them and discuss in person.

Group	Some suggested methods
Refugees	<input type="checkbox"/> Contact a spokesperson or local support group. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider translating leaflets or finding an intermediary who speaks their language if necessary.
Black and other ethnic groups	<input type="checkbox"/> Consider if community events will conflict with beliefs and practices. <input type="checkbox"/> Think about how you will promote the Parish Plan and make positive efforts to involve ethnic minority groups.
Health centre/surgery	<input type="checkbox"/> Request for posters to be displayed on notice-boards. <input type="checkbox"/> Involve community based health care professionals such as the health visitor, district nurse or midwife in discussions and consultations. They are often aware of patients needs and concerns.
Campsites	<input type="checkbox"/> Request for posters to be displayed on notice-boards. <input type="checkbox"/> Post leaflets in regular visitors' pigeon-holes or direct to static caravans.
Local tourism partnership	<input type="checkbox"/> Contact a spokesperson. <input type="checkbox"/> Use their networks for reaching members.
Small businesses and self employed people working from home	<input type="checkbox"/> Make sure you include them in your surveys, especially if they live outside the village. <input type="checkbox"/> They may have their own groups and links with other villages.
Shift workers + weekly commuters	<input type="checkbox"/> Remember that different people work different hours, different days of the week and often different hours in different seasons. <input type="checkbox"/> Make sure timing of events and calling times accommodate their availability and if they don't, allow for alternative times or ways of consulting them. <input type="checkbox"/> Think ahead so seasonal workers coming into the community for short periods can be heard too.
Public transport users	<input type="checkbox"/> Contact organisations like rail user groups, transport partnerships, bus and private hire operators. <input type="checkbox"/> They may have newsletters that could carry adverts or information about meetings, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Get a volunteer to ride the route, distributing leaflets.

Further advice may be available from:

Royal National Institute for the Blind: PO Box 173, Peterborough PE2 6WS. Tel. 0845 702 3153.

Website: www.rnib.org.uk

Royal National Institute for the Deaf: 19-23 Featherstone Street, London EC1Y 8SL, Tel: 0808 808 0123 (freephone) Website: www.rnid.org.uk

The Community Planning Handbook by Nick Wates.

“Hear by Right” – setting standards for the involvement of young people in democracy, published by the Local Government Association in collaboration with the National Youth Agency.

“Tools for Participation” – published by the New Economics Foundation.

“Knowing and Surveying Your Community” – an information sheet produced by the Shell Better Britain Campaign, King Edwards House, 135a New Street, Birmingham, B2 4QJ. Tel: 0121 248 5900
Website: www.sbbc.co.uk

“Community Work Skills Manual” – produced by the Association of Community Workers, Stephenson Building, Elswick Road, Newcastle, NE4 6SQ. Tel: 0191 272 4341

“People Make the Difference: Good Practice for involving residents in rural regeneration”
(CAX 43) produced by Countryside Agency Publications, PO Box 125, Wetherby, West Yorkshire, LS23 7EP.
Tel: 0870 1206466 Website: www.countryside.gov.uk/publications

Consultation & information gathering techniques

There are many different ways of consulting the community. There is no specific requirement for you to choose one rather than another. The important thing is for you to choose the methods that best suit your needs.

Think about what sort of people you want to contact. Do they have regular meeting places? Are they mobile? Do they have access to computers and the internet? Are they literate? One of the most effective methods of consultation is simply going out and talking to people, in places where they meet or enjoy a hobby or past time.

Think also about the sort of information you are looking for. Does it only apply to a particular group of people, does it require special analysis, can it be explained in words or does it need to be seen?

Your local Rural Community Council will offer advice on community involvement techniques and facilitation skills.

Informal consultation methods

Method	Description	Pros	Cons
Produce a flyer for every household	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Telling them about the process and how it's to be conducted Remember to include a contact number 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Everyone sees the same written information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Might be expensive Not everyone reads Time-consuming to distribute
Special meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invite everyone to a special event in e.g. village hall, possibly with workshops, facilitators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity for people to hear at first hand and ask questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People might not turn up
Publicity in newspapers – supplements, local news letters etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whatever you decide to do, make sure you tell the local press and radio, including the parish magazine (see specimen news release also in this resource pack) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually free Reach a wide audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May not reach everyone Information may not be accurate May not be included due to shortage of space
Suggestion boxes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Put these at strategic places around the village, inviting comments, suggestions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easy for people to use No pressure on participants Confidential Can be done in respondents' own time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Random Might get vandalised
Informal chats in pub, at a shop, outside school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have a list of questions on a clipboard and ask the same questions to everyone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targets specific groups People might speak more freely Captive audience Gives comparable sets of answers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not necessarily inclusive
Write to all clubs, societies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask members to identify issues of concern, make suggestions Offer to send a speaker/facilitator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covers a range of interest groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not everyone is in a club or society
Hold an 'Ideas' competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A way of stimulating creative thinking and generating interest This could use a variety of media, including drawings, written suggestions, or video 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be infectious Taps hidden talents Can double up as a skills search for use in other aspects of the plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competitive element might put some people off

Method	Description	Pros	Cons
Run a drop-in event one weekend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get people to write up issues or 'wishes' on flip charts or use sticky "post it" labels • Offer drawings or pictures as alternative to written words • Offer refreshments and possibly an attraction • Consider providing a crèche and transport for elderly or isolated residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be an opportunity to socialise and have some fun • Flexible – people can choose when they come and take as long or short a time as they want 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some people might be away or unable to attend that weekend
Run a competition for schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the children to draw pictures of what they like or dislike about the area and what they would like to see 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fun for the children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School timetable may not have time • Some children may not bother to do it at home
Guided visualisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A facilitator first relaxes the group, then reads a script that involves travelling forward a year into the future, talking through 'a day in your life'. Participants then spend time alone recording their own visions of that day, sharing them first with one person then a group, displaying them to create a collective vision that can become a basis for action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OK for any sized groups • Easily recorded • Cheap • Short time frame 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weather-dependent • Might not be so easy for less able-bodied and those with very young children • Not everyone is comfortable with this type of approach
Jigsaw	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People take photos of different parts of the area to illustrate what they like/dislike about it. These are then mounted at workshops and comments invited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual • Can be used to illustrate the final plan • Can participate in the feedback stage, even if don't/can't take photos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not everyone enjoys or feels able to take photographs
Walkabout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people from the village, including the primary school and youth club are invited to join local residents on a 'walkabout' to help generate ideas for improving the area. It involves them taking an hour long walk around the village with the aim of identifying current problems and possible solutions for the future regeneration of the area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sociable and relaxed opportunity to sound out ideas • Group activity generates discussion • Being there may provoke more ideas than an inside event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weather-dependent

Questionnaires and surveys

The questionnaire survey is one of the tried and tested methods of collecting information in rural communities. A well-planned and implemented survey can be very useful in finding out what's most important to people in the village, and as a basis for applying for grants. Before you draw up your questionnaire, talk to people at the relevant local authorities and other organisations such as RCC that might want to suggest areas of questioning or specific questions. This will enhance the value of the final Parish Plan and help those consulted to take the findings seriously, with knock-on benefits for funding and planning decisions.

Planning your survey

Whether you decide to compile the questionnaire yourself, or use one of the computer packages on the market, you will need to make some basic decisions:

- who are you going to ask? Every household or every person over a certain age?
- will you have a separate survey for children and young people?
- how will you deliver and collect the survey? Door to door ensures a good return rate but is time consuming. You could have a collection box in the village shop or accessible public places instead. Alternatively you could buy a licence for a Freepost address for returning the survey. Some parishes have offered prizes for the collector with the highest number of completed forms, or in the form of a lottery attached to each completed form – the prize going to the household whose ticket is drawn out of a hat;
- write a clear introduction explaining why you're asking the questions and giving contact numbers for people needing help filling it in;
- explain that the information will be confidential and not traced back to the writer;
- what format? Multiple choice tick-boxes are easier to analyse than written answers;
- keep the questionnaire as short as possible, focusing on the main issues of concern in the area;
- use simple, direct language;
- avoid personal or intrusive questions (eg. income);
- use coloured rather than white paper;
- test your first draft on some volunteers and amend if necessary;
- allow space for people to make their own comments;
- provide an envelope for return;
- how will you gather information from people with poor literacy and numeracy skills?

Tips on conducting a questionnaire

Your Rural Community Council will be able to give you advice on drawing up a questionnaire.

Most parishes use volunteers to deliver and collect the questionnaire. You should read Section 5 "Budgeting – legal and technical issues" in this pack. Below are a few tips for collection and delivery:

- provide deliverers with identification badges or cards;
- check your public liability cover;
- encourage volunteers to speak to every householder, not just to push the envelope through the door;
- give your volunteers a 'crib sheet', so they can answer questions like "What is a Parish Plan?" "Is it confidential?"
- arrange date and time for collection – about a week after delivery;
- offer to help with filling in if necessary;
- keep a record of where you've delivered and where householder is out;
- on collection, ensure questionnaire is complete – assist if necessary;
- seal the envelope in front of householder, if not done already;
- if offering a prize, hand over lottery ticket on receipt of completed questionnaire;
- keep a record of households which have returned questionnaires;

Consultation and information gathering techniques

Computer software packages for surveys and questionnaires

There is an ever growing range of computer packages on the market developed for communities to carry out their own consultations. Most of those currently available are listed below. Some packages are more complex and will require specialist analysis that is usually done by the software provider. Some Rural Community Councils have purchased or developed software which is licenced for multiple use and they will be able to give advice and training and technical support to community groups.

Computer software packages

Name	Description	Pros & Cons	Contact & Cost
Village appraisals for windows.	Based on the first commercially available community appraisals software, this questionnaire generation and analysis package has recently been improved and updated. Enables users to create a questionnaire using preset questions, or design their own. Software is available on CD ROM and comes with a questionnaire and survey manual	Pros: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tailor-made to suit your village Specifically designed for rural communities You have control over the whole exercise Good value for money 	CCRU, University of Gloucestershire, Francis Close Hall, Swindon Road, Cheltenham, Glos. GL50 4AZ Tel: 01242 544083 Email: jryan@chelt.ac.uk Price: £75.00
Merlinco : Merlin plus.	<p>Merlinco specialise in data survey and analysis services for a professional market. They have developed the Merlinplus package for non-specialist users. This is a comprehensive survey processing system with features for questionnaire design, data capture, analysis and report production. It allows you to design and print a questionnaire, then feed it in and analyse on computer. There is also an 'add-on' module which allows the public to access and complete the questionnaire on-line via a touch screen or via the internet</p> <p>Some Rural Community Councils including Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire have purchased this software and have licences for multiple users and are able to assist community groups with planning and carrying out the exercise</p>	Pros: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questions can be tailor-made for your village, or use a standard set Can make comparisons with other local villages Confidentiality is guaranteed Flexible format – paper, email, touch-screen, etc. Has in-built safeguard against duplication, with unique user ID Can part-complete and return at another time Should be less expensive Cons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only available if your local RCC has purchased it for multiple use. Pros: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above Can be operated via public internet access points Cons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost 	Merlinco Ltd 33 Wellbeck Street London W1G 8EX Tel: 020 7486 6229 www.merlinco.co.uk Prices (approx.): Merlin Plus: £1,000 (depending on number of users) Merlin Add-on: £3,500

Name	Description	Pros & Cons	Contact & Cost
Independent Data Analysis	A sister company that offers a complete survey data processing service. They will construct a questionnaire for you, send it to you to print, distribute and collect, then analyse the data on your behalf		IDA data analysis only: approx. £500 per project Contact via Melinco at above address or see link on website.
Compass for Windows	This is a new software package developed by the Policy Research Institute at Leeds Metropolitan University. It is similar in many respects to the methods mentioned above, including suggested areas of questioning, and ability to pick and mix from list of 400 sample questions	<p>Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to set up and input data • Fairly cheap <p>Cons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less easy if more than one person answering • More difficult to collate & analyse data 	Compass for Windows Enquiries Policy Research Institute Leeds Metropolitan University Bronte Hall, Beckett Park Campus LS6 3QS Tel: 0113 283 1749 Email: compass@lmu.ac.uk Price: £95 + VAT– single site licence £245 + VAT– multi site licence
Infonnaire	<p>There are two products, which have been developed for market town action plans, and Parish Plans</p> <p>1. "Our Town" – virtual reality modelling for people with limited IT awareness. Gives people an opportunity to say what they like about a place and what improvements they'd like to see. The software creates images as alternatives are explored</p> <p>2. Infonnaire – 'Information-rich' questionnaire designed with parish plans in mind. Can be accessed through touch-screens in specially erected kiosks, on PC via the web, or in written form. Can be analysed for the parish alone, or integrated into a district-wide plan. It's also possible to attach relevant information, e.g. on housing, and include in the final report. The developers have honed the questions down to about 11 subject areas and recommend users opt for just five</p> <p>Both systems have been developed and tested in conjunction with Lincolnshire RCC</p>	<p>Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good for hard to reach groups, eg. old, young, disabled • Visual, gives instant illustrations <p>Cons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aimed at bigger settlements <p>Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to access, esp. for disabled people • Flexible format - paper, PC, public kiosk • Portable <p>Cons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need training to analyse results • Have to fill in all in one go if using kiosk or web 	NVisage 9-12 Middle Street Brighton BN1 1AL Tel: 01273 384287 Price: £3,000 (multi-use) £1,200 (single use) Price: Not decided yet

Name	Description	Pros & Cons	Contact & Cost
Market Towns Software	Software developed to assist with producing market town action plans is being modified to help with Parish Plans. Currently under development with assistance from Gloucestershire RCC	A new package being developed for Parish Plans, drawing on the experience of software developed for Market Town Healthchecks	Phil Dolan Jigsaw IT Ltd The Calf Pen Sedgeberrow Evesham Worcs. WR11 7UR Tel/Fax: 01386 881163

Other Techniques

Planning for Real®	Residents create a large 3D model of the neighbourhood, which is used at open meetings. Participants then use suggestions on cards to contribute their ideas. Though developed for urban areas, some rural parishes have used this technique and found it helpful and enjoyable. Some have used the idea of a model without using this particular product, eg. in schools. If you think of using Planning for Real be careful of infringing copyright, and to be most effective you will need the expertise of a trained facilitator	<p>Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very visual format • Good for all ages <p>Cons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is expensive • Aimed at urban areas rather than spread out rural ones • Requires space to use and store the model 	The Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation, The Poplars, Lightmoor, Telford, TF4 3QN Tel: 0870 7700339 Email: info@nif.co.uk Price: £500- £1500
Parish Maps	This is a visual and interactive technique for gathering information about a parish. It encourages people to share and chart information about their locality as a first step to becoming more involved in its care. The map could take the form of a picture, photo montage, banner, mosaic, or tapestry. The final product is a parish map which show what people value, would like to improve or change in the place where they live. This could be a good starting point for a Parish Plan and the map could later kept on permanent display in the parish	<p>Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual • Participative • Cheap <p>Cons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not a comprehensive information gathering exercise, but useful as part of the process 	Common Ground, Gold Hill House, 21 High Street, Shaftesbury, Dorset SP7 8JE Tel: 01747 850820 Price: £2.50 for pamphlets £10 for book

Funding sources

There are nearly 9,000 charitable foundations in the UK, which give well over £1bn a year. In addition, there are many corporate and business organisations, government programmes and individuals that offer funds for community use. In general there are four main sources of funds:

Government and related programmes

These are many and varied and criteria and eligibility for grants schemes often change from year to year. Some schemes will be simple and have a fast turn around time for grant applications. Others may require a detailed submission, possibly in several phases and the grant appraisal and awarding system may be lengthy and more complex.

Information about government programmes can be found on the following websites:

- UK Villages, an independently run information network for rural communities, provides information on a range of grants. Details of their Community Kitty are at **www.UKVillages.co.uk**
- Funding from the National Lottery is available for a wide range of projects and initiatives. Details of all Lottery distributing bodies can be found on the website for the department of culture, media and sport- **www.culture.gov.uk**
- The Government Offices for each of the English regions each have their own websites **www.governmentoffices.gov.uk**
- The European Social Fund: **www.esfnews.org.uk**
- Also try this site for comprehensive information: **www.co-financing.co.uk**
- The 88 areas designated by the Government for Neighbourhood Renewal have access to the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. If you fall within one of these areas you may be eligible for grants.
- Many local authorities have grant schemes for local groups that help support community projects.
- The Regional Development Agencies act as a channel for both UK Government and European Union funding streams and also have funding for community initiatives. Funding availability and criteria will vary according to region. Individual regional development agency websites can be accessed through the following websites
 Advantage West Midlands – **www.advantagewm.co.uk** East Midlands Development Agency – **www.emda.org.uk**
 East of England Development Agency – **www.eeda.org.uk** North West Development Agency – **www.nwda.co.uk**
 One North East – **www.onenortheast.co.uk** South East England development Agency – **www.seeda.co.uk**
 South West Regional Development Agency – **www.southwestrda.org.uk** Yorkshire Forward – **www.yorkshire-forward.com**
- Charitable Trusts and Foundations. Foundations and charitable trusts are generally independent organisations that provide funds for a wide variety of projects and schemes. Again, the range and size of grants is large and varied. There are many directories of grant-making bodies available either to buy or download from the internet.
- An organisation called The Directory of Social Change produces a range of useful publications including “A Guide to the Major Trusts” (three volumes), Guides to Local Trusts in the South of England, the Midlands and the North, and the very comprehensive “Directory of Grant Making Trusts”.
www.dsc.org.uk/bookshop
- The Association of Charitable Foundations **www.acf.org.uk** also produces guidance on applying to trusts and foundations. Its guidance note “Applying to a Charitable Trust or Foundation” contains sound advice on how to make applications.
- There is also a web-based directory **www.funderfinder.org.uk**, which has a computer programme that can help you identify a fund to suit your needs. It requires a licence to access – your local RCC may have one.

Corporate Sponsorship

Large-scale corporate sponsorship can be one of the most difficult ways of obtaining funds. Companies will only finance your product if they think it will bring a benefit to the firm in terms of good publicity and positive image building. Guidance on corporate fund-raising can be found in the Directory of Social Change publications “Corporate Fundraising” and the CD-ROM “Company Giving Guide”.

Some companies set up specific programmes, which you can tap into – one of the best known, and relevant to a wide range of community and environmental projects – is the Shell Better Britain Campaign:

Rather than go for sponsorship from large organisations, you may have more success if you approach medium sized or small firms local to your area. Make the most of local contacts; the director or senior managers of the company might live locally.

Private Donations

These provide a significant amount of funding to non-Government organisations (NGOs) but grants tend to be limited in size, usually less than £60 per year.

Other sources of information, particularly on local donors, can be sought from the National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service (NACVS) at www.nacvs.org.uk and from RCCs. The umbrella organisation for RCC's, ACRE, provides information at www.acre.org.uk General information about sources of funds can also be found at www.mycommunity.org.uk Other useful websites are: www.citizensconnection.net and www.access-funds.co.uk

Example of a press notice for the local newspapers

Paradise Parish Council

News release
(Date)

Your future in your hands

Paradise Parish Council is inviting residents of the village to take it's future into their own hands, by helping prepare a Parish Plan.

Parish Plans help breathe new life into rural communities, and help local people develop their own neighbourhoods the way they want.

Key to the project is that every person living or working in the community will have a say, from toddlers to OAPs.

“This is a great opportunity for our village,” says Parish Council Chair, *Contact Name*, “The important thing about this scheme is that everyone gets a chance to contribute. When the plan is drawn up it will be there as concrete evidence to support our application for grants towards a new lunch club, or even a village hall.”

The council is writing to all groups in the village asking them to put forward their ideas about how *Paradise* should look and run itself in the future. There'll also be public meetings, and a questionnaire for every household to fill in.

The first meeting will be at *Paradise Village Hall*, from *(time)* on *(date)*

Ends.

For further information please contact:

(Council Chair): (daytime): (evenings):

(Council Secretary): (daytime): (evenings):

A model action plan

This is an example of a model action plan in chart form that shows at a glance how actions might be prioritised, implemented and resourced. This is, of course, merely an example of how it might be carried out. Each community must develop a format that is suitable for their own purposes and resources. Many action plans have added a ‘Comments’ column at the end to allow any supplementary information to be included not covered by the other headings.

The Action (low cost/no cost)	How it will be tackled	Priority	Partners	Timescale	Lead Responsibility	Resource implications
1. Development of local notice-boards – use of these for publicising the findings of the Parish Plan.	Three notice-boards are required at the parish hall, community centre and library. Design as per the old library notice-board which needs replacing. Local companies including the timber yard and general dealers to be approached re. sponsorship.	High	Parish council plus local community partnership.	Urgent as needed to publicise the appraisal findings. Initiate immediately.	Chair of community partnership.	Estimated cost is £750 – need to seek sponsors with contribution from parish funds.
2. Organisation of local litter pick days.	Small sub-group to organise local volunteers, liaise with school (Head teacher has already agreed in principle), look at suitable dates and plan locations. The local authority parks department will need to be approached re. the loan of litter pickers equipment.	Medium	Parish council, local authority, local school.	First in early spring, others to follow at bi-monthly intervals.	Parish clerk	Need to assemble local volunteers and/or local school children plus loan from LA.
The Action (strategic)	How it will be tackled	Priority	Partners	Timescale	Lead Responsibility	Resource implications
1. Review of traffic issues including parking, access to public transport and need for traffic calming.	Initial meeting with county council. Research into the possible links with the Rural Transport Partnership (RTP) – early discussions with the Partnership Officer. Ideas for review will include 'Home Zone' proposals, car share schemes, dial-a-bus projects and new cycle routes.	High	Parish, district and county councils plus RTP and private providers such as bus companies.	Initial meeting with partners to be arranged in early autumn. Long-term timescale to be determined at that meeting.	Parish chair to set up initial meeting. Roles to be determined at the initial meeting of partners.	Long-term implications unknown at this stage. Funding will have to come from a variety of sources including private sector.
2. Review of current tourism strategy.	The initial work has already been carried out to identify the key issues and opportunities relating to tourism potential and impacts. Identified needs include: *drawing up of good quality leaflets; *need for additional brown signs on the bypass; *introduction of more events and festivals; *review of public toilet provision.	Medium	Parish, county, and district councils, Local Community Partnership, English Heritage.	Long-term. Initial meeting of partners to be arranged by early Summer.	Council tourist officer	Implementation costs unknown at this stage – council has agreed to cover the cost of plan production.

Others examples of issues included in an action plan might be:

- Issue based
Children’s playgrounds
Youth facilities
- Facility based
Renovation/upgrading of parish hall
Disabled access to youth club
- Location based
Maintenance of the river bank
Landscaping of vacant site
- Support based
Survey for LETS group
Help for credit union to find grant

Parish Plans and the statutory planning system

This section of the Parish Plan resource pack explains how Parish Plans fit with the statutory planning system. It does this in the context of the current system, and proposes how Parish Plans might fit into the reformed planning system from 2004 onwards.

Further advice for community groups on how the planning system functions can be found on www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-advice

The planning policy background

The Rural White Paper in 2000 set out the Government's intentions to encourage parish and town councils to take greater responsibility for running their own affairs and influencing and shaping the future development of their communities, through the preparation of parish and town plans. The design and land use aspects of these plans could be adopted as supplementary planning guidance and would have a real role in influencing and helping to guide planning decisions.

The Rural White Paper also stated that the Government would examine the role of more locally based plans in the planning system. The Government's planning policy statement (July 2002) indicated that there would be greater scope for positive community engagement at the local level in a reformed planning system.

Informing and influencing planning at the local level

Parish Plans currently have no legal or formal status in the town and country planning system. But the information set out in a Parish Plan has great potential to add to and compliment the local development plan, and so has an important role in informing and influencing formal planning processes. The information set out in a Parish Plan can be of benefit in two main ways:

- guiding and influencing local development proposals;
- contributing to the review of broader planning policy within development plans.

A Parish Plan can do this by:

- providing a greater level of detail that the local planning authority might be unable to provide in its own development plan;
- demonstrating a level of community interest and involvement in planning matters;
- ensuring that local characteristics, needs, opportunities and concerns are considered before planning decisions are taken;
- enabling parish councils and local communities to take the initiative in setting out guidance and proposals that are tailored to local circumstances.

A Parish Plan will help your community play a more active role in the future planning and development of your parish.

Parish Plans in development plan policy

Many local planning authorities recognise the value of community led action plans such as village appraisals and village design statements, and have set out positive policies for these in their local development plans. An example of an extract from Stratford District Council is given below. We hope that Parish Plans will be recognised and further integrated with development plan policies and make a real contribution to planning decisions.

“The views of local communities reflected in adopted parish appraisals and village design statements (and their equivalents) will be fully assessed in the planning process. In particular, they will be used:

- to help assess the merits of schemes promoted by communities to meet needs they have identified;
- as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and to assist in identifying the scope and nature of associated planning obligations which might be sought;
- to identify opportunities for environmental and other forms of enhancement...”

(Extract from ‘Local Choice - Policy COM.1’ Stratford-on-Avon District Council Local Plan - Deposit Draft 2002).

In England there is currently a hierarchy of planning policy, guidance and plans, from national to the local level. A summary of who does what at each level is set out below.

Central Government- The Deputy Prime Minister became Secretary of State and took over the responsibility for planning in 2002. Government is implementing wide-ranging reforms to the planning system that will include changes to the structure of the current development plan system. The detail of these changes is still under development but is expected to be phased in from April 2004. Further details can be found on the Planning Portal www.planningportal.gov.uk

Planning legislation is rooted in many different Acts of Parliament. Central Government gives further advice and guidance to planning authorities and other statutory agencies through planning policy guidance (PPGs) and regional planning guidance (RPGs),

At **regional level** - regional planning guidance is produced by the regional planning body or elected assembly, and after public examination is approved (sometimes amended) by the Deputy Prime Minister. Regional planning guidance then informs County Structure Plans and Unitary Development Plans.

At **county level** - County Councils are currently responsible for producing **county structure plans** that apply the regional planning guidance and set out broad policies for development across the county. They are also responsible for preparing county minerals and waste plans. Unitary authorities have a similar function.

The county structure plan or the unitary development plan will set out the strategy for development, including targets for borough and district councils and unitary authorities for numbers of houses and areas of employment land required over the period of the plan, usually ten years.

Borough and district councils develop the strategy set out in the county structure plan and produce a local **development plan** which provides a more detailed policy framework and sets out among other issues, where housing and employment development should take place, where land should be made available for recreation and amenity purposes and where special policies towards conservation or regeneration might apply. The borough, district or unitary authority is responsible for making decisions on planning applications. These must be in accordance with the development plan.

Parish and town councils are usually consulted on planning applications and may make observations and recommendations on proposed developments. Some parish and town councils have prepared **village design statements**. These are documents that describe the characteristics and qualities that local people value in their village and its surroundings. They set out clear and simple guidance for the design of all development in the village. They do not have any legal status, but, if adopted by the local planning authority as supplementary planning guidance, they add weight and local detail to the development plan and can have a significant role in influencing planning decisions.

Influencing development proposals: supplementary planning guidance

The most effective way for a Parish Plan to influence and guide development proposals is for its land use planning components to become adopted as supplementary planning guidance (SPG) by the local planning authority.

Supplementary planning guidance is advice that adds to or refines information set out in the local planning authority development plan. It can be separate to the development plan but must be consistent with its relevant planning policies.

Government guidance on the format and content of supplementary planning guidance is not specific, and different local authorities may have different approaches to SPG. There is, however, a requirement that SPG is prepared in wide consultation with the local community and with other interested parties. SPG needs to be formally adopted by the local planning authority through a council resolution.

The process has been well tested and over 100 village design statements have been prepared and adopted as supplementary planning guidance by local planning authorities around the country.

The land use planning components of Parish Plans

When deciding on the scope of your Parish Plan, you should be aware of the sort of issues and opportunities that are influenced or guided by the statutory land use planning system. These can be broadly considered as those which have land-use, development or design implication - for example guiding the provision of affordable housing, expressing local character and design guidance, creating new play facilities, proposals for new buildings or improving transport arrangements.

As developers, preparing planning applications might later refer to the land use planning parts of a Parish Plan, it is vital that the parts of the plan, which are relevant to land use planning, are written as guidance in clear, simple language. It is worth identifying the land use planning components in the plan by use of coloured text, background shading or using a different typeface. A scale map should be included, if specific community proposals are to be included.

Working with the local planning authority

The above opportunities will be achieved most effectively through clear working relationships between the parish council and local planning authority, characterised by shared aims and good communication.

Parish Plans offer an opportunity for local people to say what is important to them and help to express local circumstances and needs against which decisions are made by the local planning authority. Parish Plans offer local planning authorities ready-made, parish-specific detail that they might not otherwise have the resources to gather. When discussing your Parish Plan with your local planning authority, bear in mind that their resources are often very stretched and therefore you should agree expected level of support early on.

Establish a local planning partnership

The parish council should contact the local planning authority at the very start of the Parish Plan process:

- To define and agree the relevant land use planning content of the Parish Plan and other formal procedures.
- To make sure the Parish Plan fits in with the local plan.
- To ensure a better chance of the Parish Plan influencing planning decisions.
- To enable the local planning authority to use the Parish Plan most effectively.
- To make sure that parish expectations are realistic.
- To help focus on the sort of detail the planning authority and the parish might need.

Consult other parishes in the district that are preparing Parish Plans, or thinking about it, so you are consistent with each other and can share good practice. Your local Rural Community Council may be able to provide contact details.

It is very important that parish councils and the local planning authority agree the scope and planning content of the Parish Plan in order for local authority to be able to formally adopt it as part of planning frameworks. This will give it more weight when local planning decisions are made.

Further guidance

More detailed advice entitled '**Parish Plans and the planning system**' (CA123) has been prepared by the Countryside Agency for local planning authorities to help encourage a clear working partnership with parish councils on planning components of Parish Plans. The guidance can also help you and your local planning authority to agree the planning role and content of your Parish Plan, the level of support you may receive, as well as agreeing formal planning procedures.

Parish Plans in a reformed planning system

The current statutory planning system is undergoing some major changes. From April 2004 **local development frameworks** (the new development plan) will be prepared by local planning authorities. There will be further scope for Parish Plans to influence or become an important part of local development frameworks. It is anticipated that there are two ways in which Parish Plans could become integrated with or supplement local development frameworks:

- adoption of the spatial planning components of a Parish Plan as supplementary planning guidance;
- integration of the spatial planning aspects of a Parish Plan into the relevant development plan document, typically an area action plan.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is currently developing the details of how the new system will work and the legislation to put the new planning system in place is expected to come into effect in Summer 2003. Further details will be available on the Planning Portal and on the RTPI websites.

Incorporating planning components in Parish Plans: some good practice advice

- 1 Contact your local planning authority immediately you consider preparing a Parish Plan. This will allow them to advise you on the planning components of your plan from the start.
- 2 Agree with the local planning authority early in the process those matters that are eligible and most suitable for adoption and use as supplementary planning guidance.
- 3 Make every attempt to involve all members of the community in the process. The whole community should feel that it owns the Parish Plan. Full consultation is a requirement for adopting the planning components of the Parish Plan as supplementary planning guidance
- 4 Consult with other parishes in the district that are preparing Parish Plans, or thinking about doing so, to try to secure consistency between the different plans and to learn about good practice elsewhere.
- 5 Ensure that your planning proposals are consistent with the policies of the development plan / local development framework.
- 6 Distinguish those parts of the Parish Plan that should be adopted as supplementary planning guidance by using devices such as separate pages, colour coding or the use of a different typeface.
- 7 Try to make the process of preparing the Parish Plan as rigorous as possible. The higher the quality of the Parish Plan, the greater is the likelihood of its planning proposals being implemented.
- 8 Recognise that most local planning authorities are understaffed. Be realistic about the level of assistance that you can reasonably expect.
- 9 Remember that Parish Plans are meant to be constructive vehicles for managing change and helping to deliver local needs and development.
- 10 Establish a monitoring team to report to the parish council every 6 months on progress towards implementation.

Introduction to landscape character

Why landscape character matters

Landscape provides the setting for our lives – whether that means a patch of local green space or a mountain range. There will be things about the landscape of your village that are special, features that give it a unique local character or identity. Landscape ‘characterisation’ is the process of understanding and explaining what makes the local landscape distinctive and different from neighbouring areas. It is about identifying the particular features of the landscape create that special character.

The English landscape is extraordinarily diverse. That diversity has been diluted over time. Agricultural intensification, insensitive home improvements, the standardisation of building practices the of loss of local building materials and skilled craftspeople have all contributed to this. The Parish Plan process provides an opportunity for local people to say what matters to them about their local landscape, to identify what have changed and what could be improved.

Local opinions will have greater impact, if they are based on an objective description of the local landscape, together with a summary of the way residents (and others) feel about it. Individuals will have special associations with ‘their’ landscape, because it triggers memories and emotions. But landscape also has a social and community value – it is part of the village’s shared environment, contributing to our sense of shared identity and well-being.

Landscape can provide a historical record of land use and change in the village. It may also have strong cultural connotations and have inspired art, literature or music. Landscape has environmental value and a well-managed, diverse landscape will support a number of wildlife habitats. It also has an economic value, often becoming a central factor in attracting business and tourism, and sometimes reflected in local house prices.

How does landscape come into the Parish Plan process?

When you are consulting the community about what they want to see in the plan, you will almost certainly receive comments that relate to the local landscape. You may wish to set up a landscape working group to carry out at least a brief assessment of local landscape character. As a starting point, you could consider three different aspects of the local landscape:

- internal landscapes within the village;
- the view of the wider surrounding landscape from the village;
- the view of the village as you approach from outside.

Landscape character assessment is not a highly technical process, and does not have to be carried out by a trained landscape architect or designer. In practice a landscape characterisation carried out by local people will in many ways be more locally informed than one carried out by an external professional, who might not have access to local cultural and historical connections.

Detailed guidance on the process of landscape character assessment has been prepared by the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage: *Landscape Character Assessment - Guidance for England and Scotland (2002)*. You can download this publication from the publications section of the Agency’s website, or it is available (free) as a publication from the Countryside Agency’s postal sales department (phone 0870 120 6466, quoting reference CAX 84). The Countryside Agency has produced descriptions of all 159-character areas across England. You can also look up ‘your’ character area on the Agency’s website:

www.countryside.gov.uk/cci/guidance/index.htm. This site provides more information on countryside character in general, and provides links to descriptions of all the countryside character areas.

The **Council for the Protection of Rural England** (CPRE)'s network of local groups and volunteers may also be able to help or provide advice. In particular, CPRE's countryside character resource pack contains useful tips and examples of local countryside character projects. Contact details for your local group and copies of the resource pack are available from CPRE's national office at 128 Southwark Street, London SE1 0SW. Telephone 020 7981-2800. Website www.cpre.org.

You might still want to get outside help. You could seek advice from the local authority – which might have a planner or landscape architect who could help. Alternatively, use some of the Parish Plan grant to hire in a landscape professional for a day or two – not perhaps to carry out the landscape character assessment for you, but rather to train your group so they can do it themselves.

Have a look at the way others see your landscape

Before you start thinking about recording the character of your own local landscape it is a good idea to find out if others have already done relevant preparatory work. People from your own community or from neighbouring parishes may have recently produced a village design statement for the parish that is likely to deal with landscape issues in some detail.

Landscape will also be an important issue within your local authority's planning documents. Many local authorities have produced (or are in the process of producing) a landscape character assessment for their area. Landscape character assessments have also been produced for defined or designated areas, such as National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Environmentally Sensitive Areas. This will be an excellent starting point for your own local character assessment. Referring to these documents will ensure your own character assessment fits into broader character areas defined by the local authority or other organisation. Where a larger scale assessment has not been carried out, your own local assessment can help by providing local knowledge and perspectives.

Landscape as a topic within the finished plan

You may decide to select landscape as a subject area within the plan. Or landscape might be a cross cutting theme which comes into a number of other subject areas. If this is the case, information on local landscape character may be best incorporated into the introductory section of your plan, as it helps provide the context. Alternatively, you may use the landscape character assessment to form an introduction to any design guidance or other actions which may involve decisions about landscapes or landscape change.

Village appraisals and village design statements

Introduction

Over the past twenty years there has been an increasing acceptance of the value of helping communities to identify their own needs, set their own agendas for action and take responsibility for “getting things done”. This has been driven by an increased change of pace in rural areas; the continuing loss of village services and facilities and the loss of local character and distinctiveness that creates a “sense of place”. The movement of articulate and energetic newcomers into villages, increased support from enabling organisations, such as the rural community councils, has added momentum to community led action. This has further been encouraged by policies and funding programmes initiated by government, government agencies and other public sector organisations. Village appraisals and village design statements are two examples of community led initiatives that have had an impact on the quality of life in rural areas, and have helped to shape the development of the Parish Plans.

Village appraisals

A village appraisal is a survey carried out by and for the local community. It aims to identify local characteristics, problems, needs, threats, strengths and opportunities. It is a means of taking stock of the community and of creating a sound foundation of awareness and understanding on which to base future community action.

It is estimated that around 2,000 village appraisals have been carried out in England, although it is difficult to identify an exact figure, since there is no one central organisation promoting or coordinating their production, and no single funding source available to communities to help produce them.

Most rural community councils have promoted village appraisals and many have developed their own guidance for communities in the form of action packs. Most follow a comprehensive questionnaire approach. Some village appraisals have been used to inform planning policy by providing information on community needs for the local development plan.

However the reasons for producing a village appraisal have not always been clear. They have been considered to be a good way to take stock, a valuable contribution to village archives and a mechanism for developing a sense of community. But, overall, many village appraisals are weak when it comes to action and do not set out clear, prioritised and costed action plans, or give any indication how action will be implemented.

Village appraisals and Parish Plans

A recently produced village appraisal is a very good starting point from which to develop a Parish Plan. If the appraisal has been produced in the last two or three years, its findings may well still be valid. But it is wise to review the document and check that it does have the right scope, ensure that the issues it identifies are still relevant and that the whole community were involved in its preparation. Try to learn from your previous experiences and clarify what consultation techniques were used. What worked and what didn't work and why?

The village appraisal can then be used to form the basis of a clearly prioritised Parish Plan. But don't just recall the previous village appraisal group and expect them to do the work. You should use this as an opportunity to set up a new Parish Plan steering committee and ensure that you bring some new blood and fresh ideas into the process.

Village design statements

What is a village design statement?

A village design statement (VDS) is a document describing the qualities and characteristics local people value in their village and its surroundings. It sets out clear and simple guidance for the design of all development in the village.

A VDS cannot be used to stop new development, but it can be used to influence developers and local planning authorities, and to ensure new buildings respect and reflect local character.

Village design statements have also been useful tools for community development; helping communities understand the history of a village and gain a greater appreciation of landscape and architectural aesthetics. They encourage better communication, sharing of skills and interests and an awakening of community spirit.

The Countryside Commission, the predecessor to the Countryside Agency, developed village design statements. They were intended to reverse the widespread erosion of distinctive character in villages, especially with regard to the siting and design of new buildings, and as a means of involving local people in assessing the distinctive character of the community. Four pilot projects were set up in 1994, in Stratford on Avon, Cartmel (Cumbria), Cottenham in Cambridgeshire and Down Ampney in Gloucestershire. These were evaluated and promoted as “exemplars”, together with written guidance, and direct training and advice for communities wishing to take up the initiative.

Village design statements and planning procedures

In 1997, village design statements were given a further endorsement through being recognised in policy planning guidance (PPG) issued by the government. PPG 7 (The countryside and the rural economy) encouraged local planning authorities to adopt VDS's as supplementary planning guidance, thus formalising their role in the town and country planning system. By 1998 at least 167 VDS's had been started, and by 2001 this had increased to 368, of which 101 had been completed and 87 adopted as supplementary planning guidance.

VDS's are now coming into their own as a planning tool. They are used by many parish councils when considering planning applications and to some extent are being used to influence the design and layout of new development.

The principles for successful village design statements also apply to Parish Plans:

- they need to have involvement from key individuals in the community with the relevant skills, experience and confidence;
- full community consultation and involvement is important. The VDS shouldn't be produced by a small and closed group;
- there must be support and interest from a local authority officer, or other project officer working on the ground;
- the support of the local planning authority is essential and is instrumental in VDS becoming adopted as SPG.

Village design statements and Parish Plans

The Countryside Agency recognises that many rural communities do have concerns about design and development issues. Some communities will have already produced a VDS and, during discussions and consultations, identified a range of other issues that need to be addressed. In this situation it is logical to start work on a Parish Plan. Other communities may start with the more holistic approach of producing a Parish Plan, then as part of this process identify the need to produce a VDS.

Town design statements

The Countryside Agency is currently developing the concept of town design statements by applying the village design approach and philosophy to larger settlements with populations of ten to twenty thousand. Pilots are being run in Maldon (Essex), Stratford on Avon (Warwickshire) and Selby (North Yorkshire), all testing different ways of engaging the community and producing a statement. Further advice will be available in Summer 2003 and written guidance available from Countryside Agency publications and via the website.

Further information

Countryside Agency guidance on how to produce a village design statement is currently being revised to cover new topics such as energy efficient buildings and good contemporary design. The revised guidance should be available in Summer 2005. The original guidance (CCP 501 parts 1&2) is now out of print but can be downloaded from the publications section of the Countryside Agency website. A section of the website is devoted to village design statements and it is anticipated that this will be updated during 2005.

Glossary of terms and abbreviations

ACRE – Action with Communities in Rural England, the umbrella organisation for the English Rural Community Councils.

Agri-environment schemes – schemes under the England Rural Development Programme (ERDP) through which farmers and landowners receive payment in return for carrying out environmental conservation measures. Agri-environment schemes include Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) and Countryside Stewardship, which operate outside ESAs.

AONB – Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

CALC – County Association of Local Councils: County associations assist the work of town and parish councils by providing legal and procedural advice on day-to-day issues. They also liaise with district and county councils to maintain a flow of information and effective joined up government.

CDF – Community Development Foundation – a registered charity that is an expert in the field of community development. CDF operates an extensive programme of projects, conferences, seminars, research, publications, information and consultancy on all aspects of community development.

CLA – Country Land and Business Association – a member organisation representing the interests of owners of agricultural and other countryside landowners.

CSV – Community Service Volunteers – an organisation that recruits and organises volunteers to work in the community.

Countryside Agency – is the statutory body working to make life better for people in the countryside and improve the quality of the countryside for everyone.

CPRE – Council for the Protection of Rural England – national campaign group concerned with the protection of the English countryside. They have a well-supported network of county and local branches.

CS – Community Strategy. Local authorities have a duty to prepare a “Community Strategy” to promote or improve the economic, social and environmental well being of their area.

The main aims are:

- to identify what sort of services, activities and support are needed;
- to make links between services and organise them better to avoid overlaps;
- to promote local people’s involvement in planning and improving services in the areas where they live.

DEFRA – Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Government department concerned with most rural issues.

DTLR – former government department for transport, local government and the regions. These responsibilities are now dispersed between DEFRA, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), and the Department of Transport.

Development Plan – The generic term for a plan that provides a detailed policy framework for town and country planning issues at county, district, unitary authority or national park level. This term encompasses structure plans and district plans.

GOR – Government Office for the Regions. All strategic national government functions are represented at the regional level through the Government Offices. There are nine of these, North East, East Midlands, North West, Yorkshire and Humber, West Midlands, East of England, South West, South East, London.

LDF – Local development framework – As part of the reform of the town and country planning system local development frameworks will replace the current system of development plans. This change will be phased in from April 2004. It is envisaged that Parish Plans will influence or become an important part of the LDF.

Local Plan – a district, borough, unitary or national park level development plan.

LGA – Local Government Association – The LGA represents nearly 500 district, county and unitary authorities in England and Wales, as well as police authorities, through the Association of Police Authorities, fire authorities and passenger transport authorities. Its aim is to promote better local government.

LPSA – Local Public Service Agreement – most county and unitary authorities have signed up to negotiate a Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) with Central Government, comprising a dozen or so specific targets to improve local services such as health and police. LPSA authorities are encouraged to involve local partners, particularly through the Local Strategic Partnership and the Community Strategy, in drawing up and delivering these targets.

LSP – Local Strategic Partnership, brings together at a local level the different parts of the public sector as well as the private, business, community and voluntary sectors so that different initiatives and services support each other and work together.

NALC – National Association of Local Councils – the national body for parish and town councils. Can give expert advice on a wide range of legal and policy issues affecting local councils.

ODPM – Office of the Deputy Prime Minister – responsible for planning, housing, urban renewal, local government and the regions.

Open Spaces Society – A national lobbying and campaigning group which offers advice on protecting open spaces, commons, greens etc.

Planning Aid – The charitable arm of the Royal Town Planning Institute. It gives advice to communities on planning and development control issues.

RCC – Rural Community Council, sometimes called Community Action, or Voluntary Action. These are countywide organisations that support sustainable rural community development and improve the quality of life for rural communities.

RTPI – Royal Town Planning Institute – exists to advance the science and art of town planning for the benefit of the public.

RWP – Rural White Paper, published in 2000 as a blueprint representing the Government's plans for the future of the countryside.

Statutory planning document – any document for which there is a requirement in law to produce it, eg. AONB management plan, or local plan. At present a Parish Plan is a non-statutory document.

SPG – Supplementary Planning Guidance – (SPG) is prepared to support and amplify policies in the local plan. Such guidance must be consistent with national planning policy guidance and the local plan.

Unitary Authority – a single-tier local authority which takes on many of the roles covered by both district and county councils elsewhere.

Voluntary sector – organisations that are run on a 'not-for-profit' basis. It does not necessarily mean staff are unpaid, but they are governed by a voluntary committee.

Volunteer Bureau – help individuals find out about interesting, rewarding and worthwhile volunteer opportunities. They also help voluntary and statutory organisations recruit volunteers and involve their volunteers effectively.