



What is a Parish and Community-Led plan?

A Parish & Community-Led Plan is a document which sets out a vision for a community's future based on sound local research, looking at social, environmental and economic life.

It celebrates positive features and activities, highlights community needs and contains a detailed action plan to help the community meet those needs. A Parish & Community-Led Plan is produced by and for the community, based on a detailed survey and consultation process which involves the whole community. It prompts action and influences others.

A robust Parish & Community-Led Plans is inclusive and can demonstrate a robust process that ensures its quality. It is steered by a group of people from within the community, including representation from the parish or town council and follows good practice and advice from a neutral independent body. In Gloucestershire, GRCC is the lead provider of advice and support for parish and community led planning.



Introduction

Rodborough is located in the Stroud district of Gloucestershire. Until 1974 a large part of the parish was part of the Stroud Urban District Council and today forms part of the Stroud Urban area with Stroud, Cainscross and Rodborough.



Rodborough Fort

Rodborough is a parish of contrasts, from the industry of Dudbridge to the natural beauty of Rodborough Common. The bulk of the common was donated to the National Trust in 1937 by the entomologist Thomas Bainbrigg Fletcher (1878-1950). The common contains Rodborough fort, a tourist attraction for locals and walkers.

The parish has around 2,600 households, two primary schools, four public houses, a large hotel, several community meeting venues including the Parish Community Hall, and is home to the historic Winstones Ice Cream Factory and two churches. It has some 30+ clubs and societies including a football club, a scout group and activities for all ages.

The Process

In Autumn 2005, it was decided at a Parish Council meeting to pursue the government initiative to create a parish plan. The idea was introduced to the community through a launch day to gauge response and to form a steering group. Subsequently, the parish plan initiative was supported and volunteers and community members signed up to form a steering group. A variety of public, working and parish group meetings took place, led by the steering group, to gather information to formulate the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was incorporated with the parish quarterly magazine and was delivered by hand to every household. 17% of questionnaires were returned which the steering group recognised was a low percentage, so the steering group kept the process alive by "piggy backing" onto parish events, talking to groups, schools and churches and using a community information map board to gather more information while the questionnaire data was analysed.

The results were fed back through the parish magazine which was also distributed to other agencies and organisations. (This is an ongoing process, gathering more information as the working group receives feedback.)

Robdborough's achievements

Community benefits

“We feel that more people are now aware of how big the parish is, the breadth of the parish and the activities that take place here. It's great to see more people wanting to become involved with volunteering and parish work.

There has also been an increasing uptake of enquiries and responses from individuals to the parish office, with the community itself benefiting by more funding being attracted to the parish.

We aim to keep the plan alive through reporting all progress to the Parish Council and the appropriate committees, keeping our community up to date through the quarterly magazine, the website and at parish events.

The planning process adds another strand to the Parish Council's work and helps give clear guidance as to what the community wants the Parish Council to do.”

Planning and Housing

- Housing Needs Survey with GRCC completed in January 2008 and distributed to agencies
- Discussions with the NHS about the possibility of a baby clinic

Technology, Publicity, Activities and Venues

- Highlighting the areas where there is little or no telecommunication signal (dead areas) and informing residents about digital changeover
- Improved website – invitations sent out to all the community groups inviting them to submit articles and events information
- Informed groups of access to free websites via SDC
- Improved interest and participation with 'The Commoner' (parish quarterly newsletter) which is now often over-subscribed with articles.
- The Parish Plan work has often dictated themes for The Commoner
- Increased uptake of the parish newsletter by local businesses wanting to advertise
- The parish has increased publicity about activities by local groups and organisations and venues for meetings
- Increased publicity about activities and venues
- Improved community display boards
- Improved relationships with the local schools and churches
- Hall improvement and Working Group in place

Traffic and Transport

- Meeting with County Council Highways to look at the road maintenance & improvements especially the danger spots
- Signed up to Lorrywatch scheme to monitor illegal use of roads across the common by HGVs
- Increased information to promote Ring & Ride and the Volunteer Driver Scheme

Environment

- More litter and poop scoop bins in place after bin audit and discussions with Local Authority
- Rodborough “Make a Difference” day held every October prior to the plan has been extended to include a Spring Clean each April
- Planted area has been extended to both sides of Butterrow West

Community

- An older persons day has taken place to provide information on services available for older people and to discuss what activities this age group would like to see in the area

Partnership

- Increased working relationship with some sections of the local authority



“Improved interest and participation with 'The Commoner' (parish quarterly newsletter) which is now often over-subscribed with articles”

Key advice for others

“Ensure that you have all the resources in place before starting the process – time, finance and capacity and the realisation that this is an ongoing process”

Rodborough considers that this is an ongoing plan. Even though the initial was completed in 2007, it is a constantly renewed and evolving document

With thanks to Rodborough Parish Council for their contributions to this case study

Working with partners

Rodborough Parish Plan has given the Parish Council the factual evidence from the community enabling them to work more positively for the future of the parish. However, having completed the plan, it is frustrating to receive little or no response from some authorities and agencies; the wheels turn very slowly and it can be months before getting a reply or even a meeting.

Rodborough Parish Church



“The wheels turn very slowly and it can be months before getting a reply from some authorities and agencies”

Lessons learnt and future projects

We have learnt that, although the process is very time consuming and you have to encourage volunteers to give up their time, there are a great deal of benefits to the parish planning process.

It can be difficult trying to get all the community groups to meetings, the workload for the Parish Clerk has needed to increase to keep the process alive and the steering group needs to have enthusiasm, drive and community involvement experience to carry the process forward. It is also frustrating trying to move actions forward, often receiving little or no response from some local authority departments and other organisations.

We plan to improve the Community Hall, continue to lobby Gloucestershire County Council, Stroud District Council and the Police to act on the results of the survey, progress works from the onsite meeting with Highways, lobby for the community's wishes against the proposed housing development on the rugby club land, lobby Gloucestershire County Council, Stroud District Council and Health Services about the lack of sheltered housing, nursing homes, affordable housing and provisions for people with disabilities, and lobby Gloucestershire County Council, Stroud District Council and the government about the poor TV reception and access to Freeview and DAB.

GRCC is the lead provider of support for **parish and community-led plans** in Gloucestershire and can offer support to communities dependent on the location of the parish. For further information please contact
GRCC



Community House
15 College Green
Gloucester
GL1 2LZ
Tel: 01452 528491
Fax: 01452 528493
glosrcc@grcc.org.uk

