



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

Berkeley is a town between the south bank of the River Severn and the M5 motorway within the Stroud district of Gloucestershire, with a population of approximately 1,000. Berkeley is an ancient settlement, referred to in the Domesday Book as "Berchelai".



Berkeley Youth Club

It sits on the top of a hill, which until flood barriers were erected in the last century was surrounded by marshland which frequently flooded when the River Severn burst its banks.

The main focal point is Berkeley Castle, the building which commenced in 1153 and is still inhabited by the same family today, and where the imprisoned Edward II was murdered.

Berkeley was the birthplace of Edward Jenner, who in 1796 performed a pioneering experiment by inoculating his gardener's son with cowpox, thus preventing infection from smallpox. The Chantry, Jenner's home, is now The Edward Jenner Museum.

The Process

In 2002, following an unsuccessful attempt at developing a market town health check, members of Berkeley Town Council began the process of undertaking a parish plan. An original consultation questionnaire failed to get as many responses as had initially been hoped for. In October 2003, GRCC and Stroud District Council became involved, and working in partnership the parish plan began to progress.

Another questionnaire was drawn up, this time involving more members of the community, and it focused much more on statistics, aims, concerns and ambitions. The questionnaire was delivered to every household, with responses being collected at the town hall. There was approximately a 13% response rate. Further consultation was needed and through an open session at the town hall, members of the community were able to sign against suggested projects to show their support. This process also allowed participants to prioritise the work. Another opportunity for consultation was provided through a partnership meeting held at the Edward Jenner Centre Museum in the town. Local businesses, officials and residents were present and attendees worked in small groups to respond to issues which were then fed into the main steering group. The final action plan was published in 2005, and there was a launch of Berkeley Parish Plan at the Jenner Centre Museum. David Drew MP for Stroud, The Gazette Newspaper and Government Office of the South West (GOSW) attended the launch.

The working groups continued for only a few months after the completion of the plan as it was felt there was little cohesion in the progression of all projects. It was decided to bring all the groups together to form a single steering committee, and this group continues to work together today. Projects were now able to be addressed by the whole group, with individual areas of expertise being dedicated to specific projects.

Berkeley's achievements

Business and Tourism

- New signage has been installed in Berkeley which links to a new Historic Town Trail.
- Visitor points and leaflets are being produced for the Historic Town Trail. Rural Renaissance and the Town Council have funded this project.
- Seven businesses in the town signed up to be a part of a discount scheme, whereby tourists and locals are able to use tickets to gain discount from certain businesses.
- A Business/Tourism forum has been created.
- A Town Centre Manager has been appointed (possibly to be shared with Dursley).
- Stroud District Council is working in partnership with the council to review car parking in the town.
- Pedestrian access to the town is being reviewed in partnership with the Highways Agency
- A designated loading bay outside of the Co-operative shop will address the problem of two way traffic overtaking at a previously highlighted danger spot.
- The Public Transport Access forum struggled with uptake but has been highlighted as an area needing to progress because of the drop in tourism in the town.

Education

- A Computer Suite has been made available at the Town Hall, with free access to broadband internet for all during opening hours. Training will be provided to older people in the community in the future. The Computer suite is available for Job Seekers.
- The town website is up and running (www.berkeley-tc.gov.uk). People are able to sponsor pages to promote their business or any activities of interest for the community. The website also includes links to other organisations and businesses websites (joined up marketing).
- Possible sites for a library in the town are being investigated



Community

- Improved facilities at the Town Hall:
 1. Blackout curtains have been installed in the hall upstairs
 2. A safety door has been installed for use with the playgroup
 3. Covers have been put on all radiators.
 4. New seats and tables have been purchased.
 5. Broadband has been installed in the office, increasing speed of access to the internet, documents of interest and the ability to email Councillors thus cutting down on paper usage.
 6. All tea urns have been replaced with environmentally friendly kettles.
- Close liaison with the Police Community Support Officer, working together to address street drinking, antisocial behaviour and road safety.
- Stroud District Council is going to provide more dog mess bins.
- Rejuvenating the Playing Fields:
 1. Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) planning is at an advanced stage. It is hoped that this will increase usage of the pavilion.
 2. The Youth Club has its own dedicated space in the pavilion with a computer, pool table, television and X-Box.
 3. Good quality CCTV with sodium lighting to provide night vision has been installed at the pavilion.



“A wide demographic from the community were able to be involved through meetings and consultation events. People have been able to meet other residents that they might otherwise never have met”

Working with partners

The partnership working with Stroud District Council, the Highways Agency and GRCC has allowed the group to identify who it is specifically that can help them to address any situations that arise in the community. The fact that the steering committee is so dedicated to completing the actions has meant that a really strong networking hub has been created whereby local authority agencies are able to feed into the plan when applicable.



Improvements to the Town Hall

“It is absolutely essential to involve the whole community from the beginning and outline the structure and process in its entirety from the earliest stage possible.”
Val Watts, Berkeley Town Mayor.”

Lessons learnt and future projects

The main lesson that has been learnt is the importance of involving everyone in the whole parish plan process.

Berkeley began with several working groups, which led to certain projects progressing at a faster rate than others. The combination of all working groups in 2005, through the forming of the steering committee, allowed all projects to be addressed and linkages between them created.

Future projects include the rejuvenation of the Market Square, the creation of a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) at the playing fields, the creation of a patio area at the pavilion on the playing fields and the installation of an updated CCTV system at the Town Hall.

Key advice for others

“Involve everyone from the community, whether it is an individual or a representative of a group.

Outline the benefits of being a part of/involved in the parish plan.

Make the course of action very transparent from the outset.

Do not underestimate when applying for funding; add enough to any bid for contingency. ”

With thanks to Berkeley Town Council members and clerk for their contributions to this case study

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
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