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How to use this document

The most important part of this document is section II. This summarises actions that reflect the issues that local people say are most important to them. The first part of the plan document sets the scene for the rest of the report and describes how the work has been done. Those who are interested will find a summary of the results of the questionnaire produced in 2010 in Annex 2.

Acknowledgements

We are very grateful for the support we have received from Chris Gooding and the local team from Herefordshire Partnership who support the production of parish plans.

Foreword

The work of producing this plan highlighted some of the issues that affect life in a rural community.

Protecting the environment is one issue. The beauty of the area, its wildlife and the opportunities it offers are greatly – and equally – valued by people who were born in the parishes and those who have chosen to live here.

Having a sustainable community is another issue. People attach value to the idea of a balanced community of younger and older people, including families with children who go to local schools. This is reflected in a wish to make it easier for younger people with families to live in the area and find employment. It is also reflected in a wish to retain local schools.

Discussion at public meetings convinced us that few of the issues identified can be seen in isolation. For example, the environment is the product of natural processes and of human action over many years. To a very considerable extent the landscape today - its field structures, hedges, trees and woodlands and its commons - reflects the way in which the land is used.

Any changes in the way the land is used – for example, through changes in farming practices or the introduction of more buildings and roads – will alter how the landscape looks and have an impact on wildlife. Supporting farming is important in maintaining the environment. Take away farming, remove sheep from the uplands and the land would change - for better or worse.

At the same time people recognise that changes are inevitable. More people who live in the area want to work and run businesses from home. This makes better communications essential, principally through the internet and mobile telephones. Farmers themselves are finding internet access indispensable for receiving information and completing the forms their businesses require. We are lucky that our area is part of a wider initiative to introduce faster broadband and this Plan supports this unreservedly.

Local people need to be able to respond positively to such changes and, with their representatives, be able to influence the impact it makes. Having a strong Parish Council and working together to agree priorities for tackling issues is essential. We hope this Parish Plan will make a contribution to this.

Section I

Setting the scene

What is a parish plan?

A parish plan identifies the most important questions - social, economic and environmental - facing rural communities. Parish plans identify actions for the Parish Council, individuals and groups within the community and other service providers and statutory bodies.

The process of producing a parish plan is laid out in national and local guidance. Limited financial resources are available to support the work, in this case from Herefordshire Council and the Parish Council.

Our parish areas

The parishes of Michaelchurch, Newton, St Margaret's, Turnastone and Vowchurch lie in the Golden Valley and in the foothills of the Black Mountains on the eastern edge of the Brecon Beacons National Park, an area of great natural beauty. There are upland areas in the west and east, with low-lying flatlands between in the valley of the River Dore.

Historically this was predominantly a farming area, in which most people were employed on the land or in service. Changes in farming practice have, as everywhere, reduced the need to employ large numbers of people, so today fewer local people are involved in farming.

Agriculture remains the largest source of work, but today a significant proportion of people in the area either work in other

occupations or are retired. The proportion of younger people with families is smaller and the proportion of older people greater. Even so the area and adjoining areas have valued primary schools (in Longtown, Michaelchurch Escley and Peterchurch) and secondary schools (in Kingstone and Peterchurch).

In recent years the ability to make a living from farming in the upland areas has become more difficult. Younger farmers may now need to have a second job to produce enough to live on and many work off the farm or have adapted farm buildings to provide additional income. An increasing number of young people have the opportunity to go away to college or university and often do not return because job opportunities are greater in urban areas. Recent years have seen an inward movement of active retired people, as well as some young families.

None of the parishes has a significant village centre. Most houses and farms are dispersed, many stand alone, some are quite isolated. This lack of village centres and the dispersed nature of the houses means that none of the parishes can be at all self-sufficient. But there is a feeling of social cohesion and social and other activities bring people together. There are several excellent locals halls which provide venues for many of these activities.

A major feature of the area is that, apart from two small shops and a few garage workshops, people have to travel out of

the area for much of what they need. Doctors' surgeries are in Ewyas Harold, Kingstone and Peterchurch; local shops are in Ewyas Harold, Longtown and Peterchurch. As mentioned above most schools are outside the area. Hereford and Abergavenny provide a concentration of shops, including supermarkets and garages and Hay on Wye is the nearest market town. Many people also make use of the internet to buy some of what they need.

One characteristic that became clear in the course of this project is how much people value living in the five parishes. They wish to protect the environment and preserve and enhance their communities by enabling those young people who wish to do so to remain and bring up families. Retaining local schools is seen as particularly important.

Producing a Parish Plan for our area

A small group of local people has been working to identify some of the issues that are important to local people in the five parishes and suggest ways of tackling these.

Producing a parish plan involves the whole community, as well as the Parish Council. The work draws on information provided by people through surveys and at public meetings. It is wholly based on what local people – our neighbours – have told us. All of the issues and actions have been discussed with people who live in the five parishes. Everyone who lives in our parishes has had an opportunity to contribute.

We are very grateful to those people who have contributed to this work. This

includes those who took the time to complete the questionnaire we circulated and those who attended various public events between 2008 and 2011 to tell us what they think.

Producing a parish plan is an act of faith. It is based on an assumption that sufficient people will want to be involved in implementing the proposed action plan, rather than leaving it to the Parish Council, who are, after all, volunteers themselves. Our assumption is that some people want to play a part in improving their local communities.

How we produced this Parish Plan

The Parish Council considered the question of parish plans in 2008. The Council was aware that many other parishes in Herefordshire and elsewhere were producing such a plan or had already done so. It felt that local people should have the chance to benefit from a similar process here. The Council therefore decided to hold a public meeting to consult local people about whether to produce a parish plan.

A meeting in November 2008 was attended by about 50 people. In discussion people identified the issues they felt were important. At the end of the meeting there was very strong support for the idea of producing a plan for the five parishes.

A second event in January 2009 considered how to produce a plan and identified volunteers to lead the process through a steering group. A list of the core members of this group is shown in Annex 1.

The first phase of work for the group involved building up a picture of local issues. We began with the subjects raised at the first public meeting and used these to plan further events at which people were invited to identify what they believed might improve life in the area.

Producing a parish plan can involve a range of formal or informal processes at this early stage. Given the nature of our five parishes, with no village centres and scattered houses and farms, we decided to hold fairly informal events at which people could record what issues were important to them.

We prepared a range of material for these events and this was arranged around a number of "themes" based on the issues raised at the first public meeting. These were – the local environment, housing, transport and roads, business and employment, local facilities, communications, crime and community safety, leisure and health.

The events were held in September 2009, to avoid the summer holidays. We held afternoon events on Saturdays, at Michaelchurch and Vowchurch. These were both very well attended and people participated enthusiastically. As a result we gathered a good range of views. What people told us enabled us to add to the list of subjects with which we were working.

Questionnaire

We developed a questionnaire from late 2009 to reflect the issues that people had consistently identified. (See Annexes 4 and 5) A questionnaire gives everyone

an opportunity to express their views and makes it possible to identify how widespread interest and support is about particular issues. The key is to identify whether most people responding have a similar view.

We were helped to develop our questionnaire with guidance from the research team at Herefordshire Council.

The themes contained in the questionnaire for adults to complete were as follows – the rural environment, housing and the planning process, roads and road safety, getting about and using transport, local resources, supporting local communities, crime and policing, facilities for children and young people. We also produced a separate questionnaire for children and young people to complete.

The questionnaires were distributed at the beginning of May 2010. Most were delivered by hand by a member of the steering group or another volunteer; some were sent by post. Every person living in one of the five parishes should have had the opportunity to complete a questionnaire. If we found that anyone had been overlooked in this process copies of the document were provided so that they could participate.

The survey enabled us to refine further the list of issues of importance to local people. We felt that crime and community safety had been shown to be of relatively low concern locally and therefore did not need to form part of the final plan.

Similarly, public transport does not seem to be a major issue locally, though the survey of young people's views did suggest

a wish to see better and cheaper bus services. It seems likely that the lack of adult concern about public transport reflects the fact that most people need to have their own vehicles and feel unable to rely on public transport.

We discussed the outcome of the survey in the steering group and then took it to a

public meeting, delayed by bad weather until January 2011. The meeting was well attended and there was a good discussion of the survey results.

The meeting marked the final stage in gathering people's views about what matters to them about the future of the five parish areas.

Section II

Action Plans

The whole process of producing a parish plan took just over two years. Asking people to identify the issues they felt were most important to them produced a list of questions which we grouped into a number of themes. In the course of the work some of the issues were put to one side when it became clear they were not shared by a significant number of people. For this reason and to keep the questionnaire to a reasonable length we put aside questions about community safety, health and public transport.

The response rate to the questionnaire for children and young people was relatively low and the results were inconclusive. As a result no clear mandate for action regarding children and younger people was established. However, it will be important to ensure that the actions described below in relation to the various themes take account of the interests of young people.

The final group of themes are – housing and planning; the environment; roads and road safety; supporting the local community. The section below describes the main issues and the actions we have identified in relation to these. Actions are summarised in Annex 3.

Housing and Planning

We deal with housing first, not because this is necessarily the most important issue (though it is important), but because it is one of the most difficult. The broad question is whether there is a need for

additional homes in the area.

The survey showed broadly even support for or against having any additional homes in the area. This in itself is not a basis for decision; some people would prefer to maintain the existing number of homes, others would perhaps be prepared to see at least some new homes created.

Several issues emerged, including the difficulty for farming families in providing housing to keep farms viable and within the family for the next generation, the demographic imbalance caused by young people having to move away to find work and the shortage of affordable housing. Whether a majority of local people would think it appropriate for new homes to be built in these circumstances is not clear.

Bearing this in mind, there is broad agreement that, if there were to be any additional housing, this should be for local people and affordable and built in ways that are consistent with the traditional style and materials of existing houses.

Action – the Parish Council should adopt this principal in looking at planning applications.

The current position

A public meeting held to discuss the results of the survey was followed by a meeting about housing and planning, which was well attended. This meeting heard from officers of Herefordshire Council about the existing planning rules which

govern whether new homes might be permitted and about the housing policies which affect the provision of, for example, affordable housing for local people.

What is clear is that there are currently very few circumstances in which planning permission would be given for new homes in a rural area which is designated as open countryside. This reflects the policies set out in Herefordshire's Unitary Development Plan which does not provide for any housing development for the villages within our area.

There is unlikely to be a way to provide affordable homes due to these constraints and the limited funding available. However, a key starting point for any such development is a Housing Needs Survey and the area is now the first in the list for such a survey in this financial year. Issues about site availability, methods of funding and intended occupants are all secondary issues to this initial survey.

The future

The UK Government wishes to make major changes in local government. These include passing more responsibility to local areas thereby creating a bigger role for town and parish councils. Under these proposals a parish council would be able to develop its own policies in relation to planning applications, which could, for example, be designed to meet local housing needs. Such plans would need to have very significant support from local people if these policies represented a departure from Herefordshire Council's own development policies.

In a few years it might be possible for local people to engage in a discussion about housing needs and agree whether there are any circumstance in which there could be new homes. For example, some landowners being able to build on their own land for members of their own families and stopping the drift of young people away from their home communities.

Such discussions would be informed by a number of considerations. Foremost amongst these is the protection of the environment. There is unlikely to be the need for - certainly there is not the support for - major new housing developments in our area. But it might be necessary to consider some limited housing development to try to create and maintain a vibrant community. Factors which affect possible future developments include the continued existence of high quality local schools, the development of better public transport and changes in the housing market brought about by national government policy and market conditions. It would be essential to devise policies which are limited in their impact and can be administered fairly, while recognising the need for protection against speculative developments which would have a major impact on the character of the area.

Much therefore depends on factors which are currently beyond the control of the Parish Council. This position may change significantly within the lifetime of the current Government as a result of the Localism Bill, In the future it might be possible to produce a community led Neighbourhood Development Plan within the context of the Unitary Development Plan. This might be something that the Parish Council and the community may

want to consider seriously once the results of the Housing Needs Survey are known.

The Local Environment

The survey makes it clear that the great majority of people recognise that we live in an area of great natural beauty which should be given every protection. The results reveal support for some modest steps to look after the environment and its wildlife. These would supplement the work already being done by some farmers and landowners through stewardship schemes and local projects.

The survey and subsequent discussions made it clear that people realise that changes in the future will affect the environment. There is some agreement that the community as a whole could play a role in minimising the impact of such changes on the environment, though it is not yet clear how this might be done.

Whilst the survey showed that some people are interested in seeking protected status (for example, "area of outstanding natural beauty") for the wider area, this is not yet shared by everyone. Some people have understandable concerns about the implications. In any case, other parish areas would need to support the change and the process would probably take some years to achieve. This plan does not therefore propose that we seek such a change for the time being.

The people who live in the five parishes are not alone in considering their area to be important. The whole area from the Black Mountains to the river valleys of the Monnow and Dore and the eastern slopes of the Golden Valley are seen as

significant by national and local organisations, including Natural England.

Steps are already being taken to protect and improve the local environment. There are individual projects, for example, the Monnow Project, which has been under way for several years (see below). Natural England works with local farmers and other landowners through environmental stewardship schemes. These are intended to look after the countryside and fund farmers and landowners to manage their land in ways which protect and improve the environment - the wildlife, landscapes, historic features and natural soil and water resources.

There are several levels of stewardship scheme. The significance of the wider region within which our area lies, means that Natural England has made it a priority for encouraging farmers and landowners to join its Higher Level Stewardship Scheme. This scheme's objectives are to achieve higher standards in relation to protecting biodiversity, the historic environment, landscape and resources.

What actions can we take to protect the environment?

This Plan suggests that, as a community, we might work in parallel to these stewardship schemes to look after the countryside. We can begin by doing some work to look after the more public areas, such as the roadside verges and possibly commons.

One way of supporting these existing schemes might be by sharing information about what is being done to increase local

understanding. Indeed encouraging public access to and understanding of the countryside is a feature of the stewardship schemes. There are organisations who will work with willing farmers to organise visits to local farms to explain and demonstrate the work that is being done.

As a starting point we have identified some practical steps that might be taken as a first step to achieving this aim.

Action: We propose that the Parish Council sets up an environmental stewardship group of interested local people and parish councillors. This would oversee the work described below. It might also facilitate the creation of a local nature group in response to the interest shown during the work on this plan. The group could carry out surveys of wildlife in specific areas to set a benchmark for conservation work. Advice and support is available for such work.

Specific actions

Litter - We believe Herefordshire Council has contracted for an occasional collection of litter on the B roads in the area. We need to establish when this takes place and check that it is being done satisfactorily. In relation to the minor roads we propose that a survey is done locally in which local people are asked to identify any places where litter is a problem. If there are any problems we suggest that volunteers be invited to clear the areas as part of an organised programme of work. Equipment, including safety clothing are available to borrow.

Verges - There are one or more roadside verges in the parishes which contain flora

of special value. This should mean that they are maintained in a way which protects the species they host. We believe there is a case for surveying more of the verges to identify other places where valuable flora and fauna can be found in order to take steps to protect them. This is something on which advice is potentially available from Herefordshire Nature Trust. It is also work that could be done by volunteers, possibly those people who have mentioned an interest in joining some kind of nature group. There may also be some people in the area with expertise, including biologists and botanists.

Monnow Project - this project has been going on for several years and aims to improve conditions on the river, to encourage the rejuvenation of the trout population. This is being done with the participation of local farmers through improvements to the river banks by coppicing and fencing which prevents access by livestock and encourages fish and other wildlife. Other aspects of the scheme include the re-introduction of voles and eradicating the mink population which have severely depleted the vole population. Local people have been employed by the project and others have volunteered for work. A report should be sought from the Project as a basis for identifying whether support might be provided from the Parish Council.

Light pollution - the objective of maintaining low levels of artificial light was supported by a majority of people. There appears to be little scope for controlling domestic lighting in the current planning process, but some possibility of influencing external lighting in commercial developments. In the

future there is the possibility of the Parish Council exercising more influence on planning decisions if there is strong local support. We propose therefore that when these changes take place, particular attention should be paid to proposed external lighting levels in commercial planning applications. Looking ahead it might also be possible to encourage low levels of external lighting in domestic buildings.

Field run-off and flooding – action can be taken by the Environment Agency if problems with field run-off or flooding occur, but they do need to be notified promptly. We propose that the Parish Council should monitor these potential problems and encourage local people to report them should they occur so that the Environment Agency can be informed.

Mud on roads – we propose that details of the programme of road cleaning commissioned by Herefordshire Council is obtained so that the Parish Council can decide whether this is satisfactory. If there is no regular programme we propose that the Parish Council asks for one to be introduced.

Footpaths and bridleways – the key to tackling any problems with footpaths and bridleways is to know when they occur. The Parish Council has three volunteers who between them have the job of monitoring local footpaths. At the moment these do not report to the Parish Council. They notify the Public Rights of Way Warden who can then commission any work necessary to sort out problems. We propose that in future the Parish Council should receive a report from the “footpath officers” twice a year at their meetings. We also propose that the

Council should ensure that all local people are aware of who their footpath officer is and how to contact them to report any problems.

Roads and road safety

Whilst recognising that the condition of local roads sometimes gives cause for concern, the survey and public meetings suggest that the major concern is about the safety of the junctions in Vowchurch with the B4348 and, to a lesser extent, the junction of the road from Madley and the same B road at Bacho Hill.

These concerns have been discussed with Herefordshire Council over the years with, as yet, no agreement to what might be done. It is, perhaps, significant that there have been no major accidents and so neither junction is seen by the Council as an accident “black spot”.

Action – We recommend that the Parish Council initiates discussion with the Council to discuss limited steps to improve safety. Additional steps could be taken to make the junctions safer without major road works being carried out. For example, double lines in the centre of the road to stop any overtaking; and signs in both directions to encourage drivers to slow down and take care.

Supporting the local community

This section is concerned with what could be done to support people and improve life within the local community.

Renewable energy

There is clear support for action to meet local energy needs by steps such as community oil fuel purchasing, switching energy supply to a green tariff and free residential energy checks.

The installation of commercial wind turbines which would disfigure the landscape were opposed. This is not to say that small domestic wind turbines might not be appropriate for some homes where they could be installed without making an adverse impact on the environment.

Actions - We recommend that the Parish Council sets up a small renewable energy group to develop some ideas about renewable energy, including establishing links with organisations which might provide advice. This group could cooperate with the environmental stewardship group mentioned above, for example, to explore the generation of local timber for local people to buy.

Photovoltaic panels have been installed on several nearby village halls. They are expensive but have the potential to generate income from the sale of electricity to the National Grid. However, national schemes to support such developments are currently uncertain. This is an area to keep under review and for the Parish Council to support locally.

Community fuel purchasing

There is support for a scheme to support communal fuel purchasing which should reduce the cost of fuel oil. A scheme is now being set up on the initiative of a local resident. People who wish to participate are being asked to put their names forward and the details of how the scheme will work have been worked out. Such a scheme will be of potentially great benefit for the local community.

Information sharing to support local activities

In addition to local businesses, there is already an impressive diversity of local activities from a gardening club, to a study group, to folk singing, keep fit, whist, local quizzes and so on. The survey showed that people would welcome the chance to be involved in more local activities, for example, a nature group. It is also clear that people are unaware of some existing activities.

This plan does not propose any central action to set up clubs or groups as such; this is more appropriate for enthusiastic individuals. But what could make it easier to run or set up groups would be better ways of sharing information to supplement existing parish newsletters, which provide a very wide range of information and are valued.

Actions

Setting up a Website

The Internet offers an additional means of communication. There is no question that people value the ability to obtain

information using the internet. The survey showed significant support for setting up a website for the five parishes.

Having a website for the Parish Council area – with links to other websites such as those of the churches, neighbouring parishes and Herefordshire Council – would increase the sources of information available to people.

We recommend that the Parish Council establishes a group to oversee the creation of a website. This should identify what is involved in setting up a website, including the costs. It should then commission someone to create the website and establish a mechanism for placing information on the site, keeping it up to date and ensuring that people know about the site and how to make use of it.

The website should offer facilities to all local people and organisations. This includes local businesses, including farms, bed and breakfast providers and the Parish Council itself. It also includes local voluntary groups and services, such as Dore Community Transport, and clubs such as the gardening, keep fit and study groups.

Broadband

The ability to use a good broadband connection to the internet varies greatly in the area. It seems to be better in the east than in the west, but nowhere are speeds very fast. The survey showed strong support for faster broadband for local homes and businesses.

Until quite recently it seemed likely that rural areas would lag behind urban areas in the move to introduce faster

broadband simply because of the greater costs of providing the service to scattered populations as opposed to concentrations of people in cities.

However, there now seems to be both a national and European move to introduce broadband to rural areas.

South Herefordshire (with adjoining parts of Gloucestershire) was chosen to be one of four national pilot sites for the introduction of fast broadband. At the same time Herefordshire Council has produced its own strategy for introducing faster broadband across the county. The two initiatives will work in tandem.

There is also a separate scheme which would see the provision of wireless broadband access from transmitters on local churches and other buildings.

The initiative is being managed by a team from Herefordshire Council working with a national government agency. A private sector provider will be identified through a formal bidding process that is now underway.

A key feature of the pilot work is that it seeks local community involvement principally through Parish Councils. There is also a need for the local communities concerned to demonstrate their commitment and support to the introduction of faster broadband. Parish Councils will begin to be involved from summer 2011.

If this work succeeds the result would be much better broadband connections for everyone.

Action – This Parish Plan therefore strongly supports the work that is

underway and wishes to see the Parish Council take whatever action is necessary to ensure that the objectives are achieved.

Mobile telephones

Mobile telephone reception is generally poor in the area. Most networks do not provide a signal. The survey identified support for better mobile reception.

The most likely solution to this problem appears to be through the introduction of faster broadband. The intention is to enable mobile telephone providers to be able to extend their services by making it more economical for them to do so.

Action - We suggest that the Parish Council offers support for this work when invited to participate by Herefordshire Council.

Car sharing scheme

There is some support for a scheme which would enable people to share cars for journeys to work or for shopping. A number of people have given their names as being interested in sharing journeys.

Action - This is for those who are interested in such a scheme to take the lead. However, the proposed website could provide information about a scheme once this is established.

Information for people moving into the area

Action - We propose that the Parish Council develops a welcome pack for people moving into the area. The core of this pack should be what is contained in this parish plan. This would identify the issues that are of local concern and the work that is being done to address them. The pack would also contain information about the website, parish newsletters and the work of the Parish Council.

Members of the Parish Plan Steering Group
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The Results of the Survey

The estimated population of the five parish areas is in the region of about 600. We circulated 576 adult and 155 young people questionnaires. The total number of adult questionnaires returned was 234 and of young people questionnaires was 36.

Although there were few responses from 18 to 24 year olds, this reflects the small number of people in this age group living in the Parishes. In fact, we were encouraged by the number of 18 to 24 year old males who responded as they were slightly over-represented in the survey results. There was under-representation of 25 to 44 year olds of both genders, but particularly of males. Female respondents aged between 45 and 74 were over-represented in the responses, as were males aged 75 and over.

The returns by parish were - Newton - 24 adult and 3 young people; Michaelchurch - 43 adult and 9 young people; St Margaret's - 64 adult and 14 young people; Turnastone - 28 adult and 3 young people; Vowchurch - 72 adult and 7 young people.

Views we received

A copy of the analysis of the survey results produced by Herefordshire Council is available on request (and will be available on the website when this is set up.) The following is a brief summary of the results for each section of the questionnaire. It should be born in mind that here we are talking about the views of the people who completed a

questionnaire. Given the proportion of the population completing a questionnaire we believe these views are consistent with those of the rest of the community.

In relation to the *rural environment* 98% of people replying thought that life in a small rural community and the peace and beauty of the local environment were important. The same percentage again thought it was important to protect and enhance the local environment.

More than 80% of people thought it was important to improve the local environment, for example, by seeking protected status for all or part of the area, preserving woodland, preserving commons, creating more wildlife-friendly habitats, protecting rivers and streams, adopting a policy of "wildlife-friendly" management of hedges, verges and commons.

Over half of those replying thought that field run-off and mud on roads were problems: around 40% thought litter, flooding and poorly maintained footpaths, hedges and bridleways were problems.

In relation to *housing and the planning process* roughly equal proportions of people would be happy (43%) and unhappy (45%) if any additional housing was built in the area. This does not suggest there is very strong support for any major housing developments in what is essentially a rural area. But it does suggest that a fair proportion of people recognise that some very limited development might be necessary in order to sustain a vibrant

local community.

In the event of any new housing being built, support was greater than opposition for affordable homes for local people, realistically priced starter homes and small or medium sized family homes. There was strong opposition to developments of executive homes.

The majority would like any new houses to be keeping with existing local, mainly stone built houses. Half of the respondents would like any new houses to be carbon neutral. Support was strongest for converting redundant buildings for local families to live in. Opposition was highest with regard to converting buildings for open sale, holiday lets or tourism. A majority would be happy to see the establishment of small businesses and workshops.

In relation to *roads and road safety* a majority of people thought that the maintenance of the road surface on B roads and minor roads was poor. Just under half of people % thought that the maintenance of road verges, ditches and drains on B roads were average, while half % thought it was poor or very poor on the minor roads. Over half of people were satisfied with the arrangements for gritting the roads and that salt bins were in the best places; but only a third of people said salt bins were regularly filled.

More than two thirds of people thought there were adequate road signs. And three quarters of people had concerns about using the junction of the road from Michaelchurch, Turnastone and Vowchurch with the B4348 from Peterchurch and Kingstone.

The most commonly supported road safety improvement was to introduce blind spot mirrors and the next common was to introduce lower speed limits.

In relation to *getting about and using public transport* a majority use local footpaths regularly. About 40% of people supported dog flaps in stiles, better signs, better route information and better footpath maintenance. The same proportion opposed gates replacing stiles.

It is clear that only a minority, 15%, cycle even occasionally, most people do not use a bicycle.

Over half of people would use the bus service if there was a more frequent service, whilst just under half would use if it was cheaper or if it went to more places.

22% of respondents would use rail services at least monthly if Pontrilas was re-opened as a station.

The most common method of transport that respondents were willing to use at least occasionally was a community bus service.

There was a group of questions about *local resources and services*, including sustainable energy.

The following suggestions to meet local *energy* needs were supported by more than half of people - water turbines on the local river, community oil fuel purchasing, switching your energy supply to a green tariff, free residential energy checks. The installation of (commercial as opposed to residential) wind turbines were opposed by 51% and supported by 34%.

A majority of people were likely to support a plan to reduce the carbon footprint, though they were less likely to want to be actively involved.

In relation to *existing services* 60% of respondents thought TV reception was good; over half thought radio reception was good; 80% thought mobile phone reception was poor. Broadband speed is also poor and over two thirds of people would support bringing high-speed broadband to the parish if there was no extra cost, but only 25% if there was an additional charge.

In relation to *supporting local communities* 21% of people said they would be interested in helping to run one of the local halls. People also expressed an interest in extra local activities the most popular that they were likely to attend was a local history club (58% would attend this at least occasionally). The next most popular events were IT classes and keep fit/aerobics classes (46% and 39% would attend at least occasionally).

In relation to the work of the *Parish Council*, a third of respondents thought that the Parish Council successfully represented their interests compared with 58% who didn't know. Less than a third of people thought the Parish Council did a good job publicising its work, compared with over two thirds who either

did not or did not know.

A large majority of people use a local newsletter at least occasionally to obtain information. There was also a high potential use of a community website to find out about local services, events, advertise goods or services, etc.

We asked adults and young people about issues facing the latter. The responses do not appear to suggest major concerns. For adults the most popular proposed facilities for young people were youth club and after school club. Of the respondents whose children used school/college bus services, 91% said that the service was good or very good.

Young people themselves identified their most popular leisure activities as watching TV, playing computer games and using the internet, and riding bikes. More than two thirds who used the school/college bus service thought the service was very good or good.

Less than a third of young people thought the non-school bus services were good or very good, compared to 50% who thought they were poor.

At least half would like to use a Youth Club, a recreational area for teenagers, an after school club or a disco at least occasionally, if provided.

Detailed Action Plan

Issue	Action	Objective	Responsibility	Time-scale
Housing and planning				
	adopt new criteria for commenting on planning applications (use style and materials of traditional buildings)	ensure developments are in keeping with the area	Parish Council	6 months
Environment				
	set up environmental stewardship group	to oversee and lead work to improve the local environment and report regularly to the Parish Council	Parish Council	3 months
Litter	identify what litter collection is made on B roads		stewardship group and Parish Council	6 months
	carry out survey of local people about condition of minor roads	identify any problem areas	stewardship group	12 months
	clear any problem areas		volunteers led by stewardship group	18 months
Verges	seek advice from Herefordshire Nature Trust on carrying out surveys of wildlife of verges		stewardship group	3 months
	carry out surveys	identify any areas of special importance	volunteers and stewardship group	12 months
Monnow Project	invite the Project to submit a report to the Parish Council		Parish Council	6 months
	identify anything that can be done to support the Project		Parish Council and stewardship	12 months

Issue	Action	Objective	Responsibility	Time-scale
Light pollution	action depend on changes in how planning decisions are made.			
Field run off and flooding	make regular reports to the Parish Council alongside current reports on road conditions	identify any problems quickly	Parish councillors	ongoing
	provide information via website to enable local people to report problems direct to the Environment Agency		Parish Council	6 months
Mud on roads	identify programme of road cleaning carried out for Herefordshire Council		Parish Council	3 months
	if there is no regular programme ask for one to be introduced		Parish Council	12 months
Roads and road safety				
	set up discussion with Herefordshire Council on local concerns about road safety	improve road safety at junction with B4348 in Vowchurch	Parish Council	3 months
Supporting the local community				
Renewable energy	set up a renewable energy group	identify and develop ideas about renewable energy	Parish Council	3 months
	keep under review schemes for supporting installation of photovoltaic cells on community halls		Parish Council	
Community fuel purchasing scheme	scheme has been set up			
Information sharing to support local activities	set up a local group of volunteers to oversee the creation of a website	to provide more sources of information about the work	Parish Council	3 months

Issue	Action	Objective	Responsibility	Time-scale
		of the Parish Council and make it easier to share information about local groups and local businesses		
	set up a website for the 5 parishes		website group and Parish Council	6 months
Broadband	support the national pilot in the area to achieve better quality internet connection for local people and businesses	support life in the area	Parish Council	ongoing
Mobile telephones	support initiatives to increase the coverage of mobile telephone networks	support life in the area	Parish Council	ongoing
Car sharing	provide facilities on the proposed website to share information about a car sharing scheme		website group	6 months
Information pack	provide an information pack for people moving into the area		Parish Council	12 months