



The Gazette: Community & Parish Plans

Issue 4: Spring 2007



A note from the Editor

Welcome to Issue 4 of the Community & Parish Plans newsletter brought to you by **VAC**. It is produced in response to requests from Parishes involved in Community & Parish Plans at all stages, from the initial discussions about starting one, to implementing their action plans.

As this is **your** newsletter, please send me any thoughts, articles or ideas that you think would be useful to include. All the contact details for everyone involved in working with you on Community & Parish Plans here at **VAC** are on the back page.

It is hoped that the distribution of this newsletter is as far reaching as possible. It is distributed by email, and is available to download on the **VAC** website. As well as being sent to all Parish Clerks, it is sent to the Planning Department of each District Council, and interested community groups.

Please display this newsletter where it can be read by as many people as possible. If you need any more copies, or would like to be included on the distribution list, please email me at carlglynn@ruralcumbria.org.uk.

Also, please visit the **VAC** website for updates on Community & Parish Planning.

Thank you. *Carl Glynn* Editor

What's inside this issue

- ❖ **The Future for Community & Parish Planning** ~ outlining what's currently happening in terms of policy and funding
- ❖ **Carnegie UK Trust's Rural Action Research Programme** ~ how this national and regional research could assist your C & PP's influence.
- ❖ **Consulting your community** ~ useful tips on consultation during the C & PP process
- ❖ **Sustainable Rural Services** ~ the second most important issue from the 75 C & PPs currently analysed
- ❖ **Community Solutions** ~ A **VAC**/ViRSA project supporting rural services





The future for Community & Parish Planning

“Community and Parish Plans are local, action based plans which address a wide range of problems and opportunities facing rural communities. They can include social, economic and environmental issues and give everyone in the community the chance to be involved.” That’s the message **VAC** delivers to policy makers and strategists throughout the County and Regionally. So after 5 years of local community planning initiatives supported by government, what effects are we seeing on strategy and policy?

Well, its not a straightforward situation. Nationwide, the government is still encouraging community planning initiatives and suggested in the recent Local Government White Paper that local community plans are good building blocks for Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Community Strategies. In Cumbria, the Cumbria and Local LSPs are integrating actions from Community and Parish Plans (C & PPs) into their strategies and into the Local Area Agreement delivery framework (a new Government initiative to streamline funding) as far as practicable.

Protocols

VAC is working with all local authorities to develop and achieve adoption of Local Protocols which detail how County and District Councils, Lake District National Park Authority, Cumbria Association of Local Councils and **VAC** will work with groups developing and implementing plans. South Lakeland has been working with a Protocol for over a year now. Copeland is close to adopting one and Carlisle and Eden are in the development phase. Protocols create clear communication channels for C & PP groups and raise the profile for C & PPs. Increasingly we are seeing groups who are working on their Action Plans having some success.

Frustrations

However we have also seen a lot of evidence that Local Authorities and LSPs struggle to

include some of the very localised actions in their strategic plans. **VAC** constantly suggests that C & PPs detail where their activities meet strategic County and District aims as well as local need. As reported on Page Three, some North West Region research showed that while C & PPs groups on the whole were pleased with their progress with their Action Plans, there was a clear frustration with affecting the strategic frameworks that the plans want to inform. The Carnegie Research (pg3) should help identify ‘Pathways to Influence’. We also now have some plans in the County reaching their fourth and fifth year so the accuracy of the data starts to become an issue.

Opportunities

At present, in Cumbria, **VAC** has funding to support new groups engaging in Community and Parish Plans. These funds from the Rural Social and Community Programme can also be used to work on Village Design Statements, where this has been detailed as an Action in the C & PP Action Plan, (more details on page 3). We are also working with the North West Development Agency and the Plunkett Foundation on a funding programme to support actions from C & PPs in targeted communities. We will be writing to all the targeted communities in the next month with details of this funding opportunity. **VAC** is also applying for funds to assist C & PP groups with re-refresh/update activity.

So what does this all mean for you?

- ❖ LSPs and the CSP want to see your Action Plans.
- ❖ C & PPs are starting to be considered as building blocks for District and County Community Strategies.
- ❖ Updating and refreshing your C & PP is a worthwhile exercise
- ❖ Some funds are available for implementation
- ❖ New C & PPs need to have a strategic as well as local focus
- ❖ The Local Area Agreement currently has a focus on delivering four new C & PPs .
- ❖ Your efforts are starting to be appreciated!

If you want to discuss any of the issues or initiatives above please get in touch.





The 'Community Planning' theme of the Carnegie UK Trust's Rural Action Research Programme is directed at exploring the means by which communities can achieve greater influence over the strategic decisions that affect them.

The aspiration within government (at all levels) is that communities will have a greater influence on policy as it is developed and in planning for the delivery of publicly funded services. The recent government White Paper, *Strong and Prosperous Communities*, published by Ruth Kelly, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, sets out the government's vision for increased engagement between local government and the communities that they serve.

Research carried out for the Government Office for the North West (by Rural Innovation) has shown that despite government's best intentions, and material investment in community planning, the ability for communities to effectively engage in, and influence, policy debate and service planning is extremely limited.

The research undertaken explored the relationship between community aspirations, as expressed in a selection of C & PPs, and the emerging priorities of the Regional Rural Delivery Framework for the North West.

Critically, however, the project also mapped the 'pathways of influence' through which community views and aspirations might influence community strategies and spatial strategies (e.g. Local Area Agreements, Local Development Frameworks). The challenging conclusion of this research has been that most if not all C & PPs fail to exercise the influence that Government suggests is possible and which is in many cases the driver for local level community planning being undertaken.

The objective of this is to deliver effective Parish and Community Planning approaches across the North West region. There are three action learning sets, one in each shire county of the region. Each set is made up of between 10 to 12 members, and addresses local and regional issues.

The Cumbria Action Learning set will focus on the development of a new 'Sustainable Community Strategy' in the west of the county.

The group, made up from officers from Allerdale, Copeland and County councils, and community representatives/advocates with knowledge of over ten C & PPs in West Cumbria, will meet four times over a 9 month period.

VAC will keep you updated on results which should include an agreed process for including C & PPs in LSP and District policy.

New money to develop Village Design Statements!

From March 2007, **VAC** have designated some of the funds from the Defra Rural, Social and Community Programme that we hold to support Community & Parish Planning to assist with the production of Village Design Statements (VDS).

To be eligible for this grant of up to £1,000 the following conditions must be met:

- ❖ A VDS must be one of the actions in your Action Plan
- ❖ You must be able to show active delivery of the Action Plan on a number of other issues
- ❖ You must provide a letter from your Planning Authority showing their support for/engagement with the production of a VDS.

For further details and to apply contact lorrainnesmyth@ruralcumbria.org.uk or on 01768 - 869522



Consulting Your Community



Whether you are starting a new plan or refreshing an existing one, the core of a good Community/Parish Plan process is community consultation that allows everyone to have their say.

Knowing your community is half the battle when planning your consultation; ensure your community is fully represented. Draw up a list of the various groups and societies in the area and all the various sections of the community including those groups who are harder to reach e.g. young people or older people. Don't forget to ensure all the settlements which make up your community are represented, including outlying hamlets or farmsteads. This will help in deciding which consultation types are best for your community.

Different types of consultation will appeal to different people. Some may be quite happy to complete a questionnaire; however, others may have difficulties with reading or writing, or may simply prefer to speak to someone about their views. We recommend using at least three different consultation methods in order to encourage everyone to respond.

Remember to involve local groups, societies, businesses and schools in your consultation. WI, Young Farmers, Over 60's Group etc can also help in reaching larger groups of people in the community.

Really effective consultation includes letting everyone know what's happening. People are more likely to contribute if they feel informed and involved in the process. Public Meetings, Newsletters, Flyers, Notices etc. are a good way of doing this.

The examples listed here are by no means exhaustive but give an indication of the variety of options to choose from when it comes to consulting your community.

- ❖ Local Primary School competition where children draw what they like and dislike about where they live and what they would like to change.
- ❖ Suggestion Boxes and Information Posters placed in local shops, pubs, the village hall, doctor's surgery etc.
- ❖ Coffee Mornings, Pie & Pea Suppers etc provide an informal setting where people can talk about their concerns and what they like about the area.
- ❖ Quiz Night with additional round asking what people would do in the community if they had £100, £1000 and £10,000.
- ❖ Tourists and visitors to the area can be consulted through existing events such as a Summer Festival or via local hotels, caravan parks etc.

Don't forget to make the most of existing events within your community too; Summer Fete, Christmas Pantomime etc

If you do decide to do a questionnaire as part of your consultation, you might consider drawing up a separate one for young people, or even better, get them to draw up their own. Arranging to collect the completed questionnaires or completing a Door to Door Survey may also increase the number of those who respond.

Questionnaire - Compass software

Compass enables you to produce a questionnaire, either by using the predefined questions that come with the software, or by creating your own questions. The major benefit of the software is that once the questionnaires have been completed, the results can be inputted and then analysed in the same programme. Full help and support in installing and using the software can be provided by **VAC**, which is of course, free.





A Loss for Everyone

Studying the consequences of rural service decline

VAC is working on a project that aims to find out the real impact of the loss of rural services. The recent consultation on the future of the Post Office has brought rural services into the headlines again. Whether post office, village shop, GP surgery, garage or cottage hospital, the loss of a service – or even a change in the way a service is delivered – has a big impact on rural communities.

VAC want to find out more about this impact, and work towards some useful tools for managing rural service change or loss. The Sustainable Rural Services (SRS) Project¹ was the result. The SRS Project aims to

- ❖ Identify local and national best practice in managing service withdrawal.
- ❖ Evidence the experience of communities after a loss or reduction in service.
- ❖ Assemble a Guidance Pack of use to communities, and an Advice Sheet of use to local authorities and service providers.
- ❖ Raise awareness of service loss, rural equity and social exclusion

Part of the first year's work involved conducting interviews with people from communities affected by a change or loss of service. A new report, "A Loss for Everyone – *The Consequences of Service Withdrawal in Cumbrian Rural Communities*" contains The results of this study, and an interim update on the whole SRS Project.

¹funded by Defra's Rural Social and Community Programme



We have found that:

- ❖ Where services are reduced, for most people involved, **a loss generates strong, negative feelings.**
- ❖ Where the community has worked together to replace a service, such **social enterprises generate strong, positive feelings.**
- ❖ **Communities feel that no-one cares** and no-one is helping them.
- ❖ Local **people make changes** when services are withdrawn. Those able to travel do so. Others move house or rely on helpful friends. Small, local businesses can close.
- ❖ Closures of a service mean that **older people lose choice and independence**, and have to rely on lifts from family and friends.
- ❖ There is often a gap in time between one service closing and another opening. Such **a time lag causes problems** for local people and for the new service.
- ❖ When a service closes, **owners are often in the firing line**, and bear the brunt of local ill-feeling.
- ❖ In affected communities, **past changes can make people fear for the future.** Even if a service is saved, this anxiety can remain.
- ❖ People value shops and post offices as a meeting place, and this **social contact is what people miss** the most.
- ❖ It should be recognised that **not all closures are because of outside intervention.**
- ❖ In most cases, **Post Office Limited were the only agency** involved in the process of change. In five out of six communities affected by post office service reduction, Post Office Limited's input was not valued.
- ❖ In most cases, closures mean **people have to travel more**, and are travelling to use a service that, to them, is second-rate.

If you would like to know more about the Sustainable Rural Services Project, please contact Lorraine Smyth
lorrainnesmyth@ruralcumbria.org.uk or 01768 869522 or Anna Scamans
annascamans@ruralcumbria.org.uk or 01768 869529 at **VAC**.



Major new initiative to support vital rural services

VAC has launched a major new initiative aimed at helping village shops to survive and thrive.

The 'Community Solutions' project seeks to assist existing community owned shops in rural areas and provide support for potential new enterprises.

Village shops are considered to be the hub of local communities, and **VAC** is committed to securing the future of this vital rural service.

To help achieve this objective, **VAC** has teamed up with the Village Retail Services Association (ViRSA), an activity of the Plunkett Foundation, dedicated to helping rural communities to set up and run community owned shops, which can often include the village post office.

ViRSA was keen to expand its support service in Cumbria, and so it made sense for the two organisations to work in partnership. There are two people based in the county who can offer advice, support and understanding to rural communities and their retailers.

ViRSA offers a wide range of help, including handbooks, case studies and, crucially, a funding package. If local residents can raise one-third of start-up costs, Co-operative UK will provide a loan to match the amount raised, and ViRSA – backed by the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation – will provide a grant to cover the remaining third.

Full details of the funding package 'The Village CORE Programme' can be found at www.virsa.org/villagecore programme.

Project leader Rebecca Roberts said: "We are happy to help either shopkeepers themselves, or parish councils, local residents or community groups."

Already 8 separate groups throughout Cumbria have expressed an interest in setting up or developing community retail enterprises under the scheme.

Examples include:

- ❖ **Nenthead**, where a new enterprise is poised to start trading;
- ❖ **Hesket Newmarket**, where the community already owns the pub and brewery and is looking to secure the future of the shop by bringing it into community ownership.
- ❖ **Witherslack**, where the community is offering 'share options' to local residents, in an attempt to raise enough money to help start a new enterprise.

VAC Community Solutions project officer Lorraine Rockminster has advised the Witherslack venture and they have been awarded a grant to help pay for the cost of setting up as an 'Industrial and Provident Society'.

Mike Clark, vice chairman of the group behind the scheme, said: "The support we received was vital in order to help get our new enterprise off the ground. We found that it took a lot longer to go through the process, and I would advise anyone planning a similar venture to be realistic about what they want to achieve."

For more details, contact **VAC**,
Tel 01768-869517 or email:
lorrainerockminster@ruralcumbria.org.uk





The Who's Who of Community & Parish Plans

Here is the list of Parishes that are currently undertaking (marked with *) or have completed a Community & Parish Plan. Sharing skills and knowledge is important, and is something that VAC encourages all Parishes involved in the process to do. If you see a nearby Parish, or one that is similar to yours on this list, do get in touch, but remember that all communities are unique and that a process that worked in one community might not always work in another. If your Parish is involved in the Community & Parish Plan process and isn't listed here, please contact me.

Allerdale 21/60	Barrow 1/3	Carlisle 23/35	Copeland 15/29	Eden 25/71	South Lakeland 28/71
Allhallows	Askam & Ireleth	Arthuret*	Arlecdon & Frizington	Ainstable	Aldingham*
Allonby*		Beaumont*	Cleator Moor	Alston Moor	Arnside
Blennerhasset & Torpenhow		Brampton	Distington	Appleby-in-Westmorland*	Barbon
Borrowdale		Burgh-by-Sands	Drigg & Carleton*	Brough*	Beetham*
Bothel & Threapland		Burtholme	Ennerdale & Kinniside	Brough Sowerby*	Burneside
Bowness-on-Solway		Carlatten & Cumrew*	Haile & Wilton	Crosby Garrett*	Burton-in-Kendal
Bridekirk		Castle Carrock & Geltsdale	Laplugh	Culgaith	Casterton
Brigham		Cummersdale	Lowca	Great Salkeld*	Colton
Broughton		Cumwhitton	Moresby	Hartley*	Coniston
Caldbeck		Dalston	Muncaster*	Helbeck*	Crosthwaite & Lyth*
Camerton		Farlam	Parton	Hutton*	Duddon
Dearham		Hayton	St Bees	Kaber*	Dent*
Gilcruix		Hethersgill	Waberthwaite & Corney	Kirkby Stephen*	Egton with Newland, Mansriggs & Osmotherly
Kirkbride		Irthington	Wasdale	Lazonby	Grange-over-Sands*
Little Clifton		Kingmoor	Weddicar	Mallerstang*	Hawkshead
Maryport		Kirkandrews*		Musgrave*	Holme
Plumbland		Nether Denton		Nateby*	Kirby Ireleth
St John's, Castlerigg & Wythburn		Orton (Carlisle)		Shap	Lakes
Thursby		Stanwix Rural*		Soulby*	Levens*
Underskiddaw*		Upper Denton		Stainmore*	Lowick
Westward		Walton*		Threlkeld	Natland
		Waterhead		Waitby*	Sedgwick
		Wetheral		Warcop*	Stainton
				Winton*	Staveley with Ings
					Upper Allithwaite*
					Urswick
					Windermere
					Witherslack

Useful contacts at **VAC**



The Community Team



If you have any queries on Community & Parish Plans, please contact the Officer for your district.

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Visit our website to find out what's happening around Community & Parish Plans, and also to download previous copies of the Gazette.

www.ruralcumbria.org.uk

Glossary of terms

C & PPs

Community & Parish Plans

Community Strategies

Allows local communities to articulate their aspirations, needs and priorities.

Local Development Frameworks

The new Planning process, replacing local plans. Designed to be more inclusive and built from community consultation.

Local Area Agreements

A Government initiative to streamline funding and prioritise spending against locally defined issues from a centrally set listing.

Village Design Statements

Produced by communities to identify local character and set out design guidance to help guide new development.

Spatial Strategies

A broad development strategy for a given region for a fifteen to twenty year period.

Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)

Non statutory, multi agency partnerships allowing different initiatives and services to support one another so they can work more effectively.

