



V O L U N T A R Y
A C T I O N
C U M B R I A

Parish Plans Gazette

A note from the Editor

Hello! This newsletter has been produced in response to requests from Parishes involved in Parish Plans for more sharing of ideas and examples of good practice. As this is **your** newsletter, please send me any thoughts, articles or ideas that you think would be useful. Thank you. Carl Glynn - Editor

The Vital Villages Programme

Even though the Vital Villages programme has finished, there is no reason why the work involved can't and shouldn't carry on. The Rural Development Team here at Voluntary Action Cumbria are available to help your parish at whatever stage you're at, whether you're starting a Parish Plan from scratch or wanting to implement the Action Plan drawn up from your completed Parish Plan.

The Vital Villages programme focused on addressing the following issues:

- 42% of rural parishes had no shop
- 43% had no Post Office
- 50% had no school for 6 year olds
- 61% had no recreational clubs for older people
- 61% had no parent and toddler group
- 68% had no youth club or other young person's club
- 75% had no daily bus service
- 83% had no GP based in the parish
- 91% had no day care for older people
- 92% had no provision for out of school care
- 96% had no day care for people with disabilities

To remedy this situation, The Vital Villages programme provided three main grants

- **Parish Plans Grant** – to support planning and consultation to decide what villages need most.
- **Community Services Grant** – to tackle the problem of dwindling services by enabling local people to set up their own enterprises to maintain existing services and introduce new ones.
- **Parish Transport Grant** – to help people in rural communities meet their own transport needs.

The processes used in the Vital Villages programme have proved to be invaluable, and Voluntary Action Cumbria is currently looking at alternative sources of funding parishes can use to carry this work on. So read on for information on what's next for Parish Plans!

The Parish Plan process

Whilst the Parish Plan process has been taken up by over 70 parishes in Cumbria, there are still parishes out there that haven't been involved in the process. This could be down to any number of reasons, one of which might be as simple as not knowing what a Parish Plan is and the benefits gained from completing one.

So what is a Parish Plan? A Parish Plan is a statement of how a community sees itself now, and how it will develop 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.

Sound familiar?

Many Parish Councils have had experience of producing village appraisals, a housing needs survey or a village design statement. Whilst these are similar in some ways, they are not the same as a Parish Plan, and cannot be viewed as a substitute. Parish Plans bring all those elements together and create a basis for action in the future. Also village communities change, sometimes rapidly, and if any of the processes mentioned earlier were completed more than 5 years ago they will be out of date.

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.

Organisations and funding bodies that work with rural communities often ask 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.

Local authorities are also required to draw up "community strategies" to promote or improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area.

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.

A Parish Plan can help feed into this process and give your village a real voice and influence in the wider community.

Funding a Parish Plan

As mentioned earlier, the Countryside Agency Vital Villages programme has now ended, and with it the grant funds that were available for starting a Parish Plan and for the implementation of the Action Plan.

Voluntary Action Cumbria is currently looking at identifying alternative sources of funding that parishes can use to carry the process on. Parish Councils often find themselves in a unique position, as some funding bodies will not give grants to Parish Councils as they are a tier of local government.

It is also worth remembering that community groups, such as playground committees or Village Hall committees can apply to funding bodies themselves for grants to implement projects identified in the Action Plan.

This isn't cheating, it's called community ownership and is the essence of the Vital Villages programme – communities joining together, finding out what's really important to them and working together to find a community owned solution.

The Funding Advice Service at Voluntary Action Cumbria can help Parish Councils and community groups find appropriate funders.

An essential ingredient for Parish Plans, is planning the use of the Parish precept. The Parish Council can view the use of the precept as a small investment in the community that will bring about the changes everyone wants. The precept can then be used as the communities match against other sources of funding. The Parish Plans grant of £5,000 was found to be over generous, with the average cost of producing a plan being around £1,300.

The Who's Who of Parish Plans

Here is the list of Parishes that are currently undertaking or have completed a Parish Plan under the Vital Villages programme.

Parishes currently undertaking Parish Plans

Arlecdon & Frizington	Beetham	Blennerhasset & Torpenhow	Borrowdale
Bowness-on-Solway	Brampton	Burneside	Burtholme
Caldbeck	Castle Carrock	Cleator Moor	Culgaith
Cumwhitton	Dalston	Distington	Ennerdale &
Kinniside	Farlam	Greysouthern	Haile & Wilton
Hayton	Holme St Cuthbert	Hugill	Irthington
Nether Staveley & Over Staveley		Kirkbride	Lakes
Lazonby	Little Clifton	Lowick	Natland
Nether Denton	Orton	Shap & Shap Rural	St Bees
Stanwix Rural	Staveley & Ings	Tebay	Threlkeld
Upper Denton	Urswick	Wabberthwaite	Wasdale
Weddicar	Wetheral.		

Parishes that have completed Parish Plans

Allhallows	Alston Moor	Arnside	Askam & Ireleth	Bampton	Bothel & Threpland
Bridekirk	Brigham	Broughton	Burgh-by-Sands	Burton-in-Kendal	Casterton
Colton	Coniston	Dearham	Duddon	Gilcrux	Holme
Kirkby Stephen		Lamplugh	Lowca, Moresby & Parton		Maryport
Plumbland	Segwick	Stainton	Thursby	Witherslack	Meathorp & Ulpha

Sharing skills and knowledge is important, and is something that Voluntary Action Cumbria 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.

Useful contacts at
Voluntary Action Cumbria

Rural Development Officers

(Direct line with voicemail when unavailable)

Anna Scamans 01768-869529 (Carlisle & Eden)
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Rural Support Officer

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Funding Advice Service

Caroline Addison 01768-869526
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Angela Walton 01768-869526
Available Monday - Thursday 9am - 1pm

What is Voluntary Action Cumbria?

Voluntary Action Cumbria is the Rural Community Council for the County of Cumbria. It is a registered charity (No 1080875) responsible for the delivery of a wide range of advice, information and support services to rural communities. It was established 54 years ago and is part of a national network of Rural Community Councils across rural England.

Voluntary Action Cumbria's statement of purpose is:

- To promote, in co-operation with statutory authorities, voluntary organisations and where appropriate, private enterprise a complete range of services, particularly in rural areas.
- To enable local communities to develop new initiatives in response to social and economic change.
- To develop policies which favour disadvantaged groups in rural areas.
- To promote voluntary service for any charitable purposes for the benefit of the community
- To organise VAC efficiently and cost effectively.