

The civil parish of Sockbridge and Tirril consists of two small conjoined villages in the Eden valley, between Penrith and Pooley Bridge. The community decided to embark on a Community Led Plan, 'to help make Sockbridge and Tirril a better place to live, work and visit'.

Background

Following a presentation from ACT about Community Led Planning at a Parish Council meeting in 2016, Councillor Sindy Phillips organised two open meetings for others in the community to hear about the process and invited volunteers to get involved.

Around 50 people attended the events and it was decided that a Community Plan would be a good idea for the parish. A steering group of 8 people formed and efforts were made to ensure it was representative of the community, including residents from both villages. As well as having an open invitation for anyone to get involved, they also approached individuals who they felt had particular skills or experience which could be useful.

The Project

The group decided to launch their community consultation at the Summer Fair as a great way to meet lots of people and let them know what it was all about.

A big cart wheel donated from the Community Planning group in nearby Barton parish, with headings based on the 'Egan Wheel' for a sustainable community, helped to get people thinking: 'Social and Cultural; Governance; Transport and Connectivity; Services; Housing and the Built Environment; Equity; Economy'.

The group applied to ACT for a Community Plan grant and fundraised locally, including running popular foreign language group classes.

Members of the steering group visited 20 other local groups (church, bowls club, Women's Guild, Parish Council etc.) and contacted local businesses. They also spoke with Barton parish about their Community Plan experience.



Community Led Plan and Parish Heritage Trail

Suggestion boxes were put in the village hall and pub, and a couple of drop-in sessions held. Whilst not many people attended the sessions, they felt it was important to give everyone the opportunity to find out what was happening and give their views. A handout designed for young people was given to children coming off the school bus and the local school was invited to be involved.

However silly or sensible an idea, they were all recorded and then categorised using the headings on the wheel. The household survey then grew out of these initial ideas, with over 90% of ideas represented in the questionnaire.

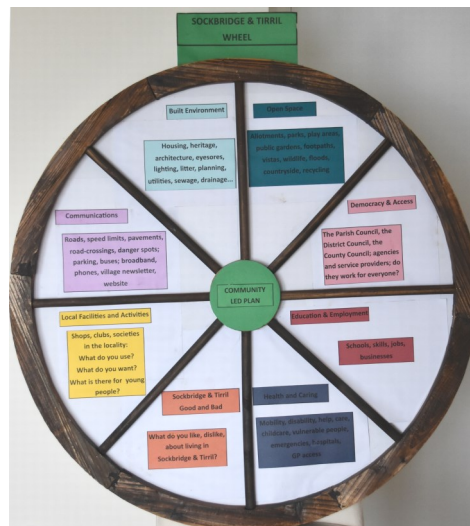
ACT's questionnaire design guide helped the group to consider the way questions were asked e.g. to avoid 'leading' questions, and also advised a test-run before distribution. Further changes were then made so it was as easy as possible for people to respond.

People were encouraged to complete the questionnaire online to minimise the task of data inputting and the hand written responses were shared between the group to enter onto the online system. They had a successful 55.4% response rate (210 responses), with the majority from older residents.



▲ 58 people attended the Plan's launch, enjoying a delicious buffet and fascinating virtual heritage tour of significant buildings in the parish.

► Community Planning wheel was a useful visual aid for events



The Learning

It's important the Plan represents the views of the community - even if this means actions which individual members of the steering group don't personally agree with.

It helped to speak with other Community Planning groups about their experience and to have examples of success when starting out. We also used a basic 'script' when talking with groups, which could be adapted as needed, to help keep a clear and consistent message.

There have been some difficult moments, particularly when some members of the group felt they couldn't carry on. Those that remained felt rather lonely in those latter stages, and had an increased workload, but were keen to move forward. However, we never felt 'alone' - ACT has been very supportive and we always knew there was somewhere to go to ask questions or discuss something.

Aim to make your public events comfortable and enjoyable - people still comment on the 'brilliant' talk and refreshments at the launch.

Contact Details

For more information please contact Sindy Phillips by Email: mail@sindyphillips.net

What has been achieved?

The completed Plan was launched in early 2019 with various actions already underway, including a litter pick group, village website, and heritage trail map. It's created lots of local enthusiasm and volunteers; there are only a few actions which don't yet have enough people to take them forward. The steering group has also chosen to continue as a delivery group for the Plan.

Comments have been really positive and the group has been widely thanked for their work in the community. One resident in her 80's said "you've kick started this community into action with refreshing ideas and a pro-active approach".

ACT champions community and rural issues

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