

ARNSIDE PARISH PLAN REVIEW 2008

A significant number of the recommendations in the Action Plan contained in Arnside's first-ever Parish Plan (2003) have been carried out. It included a commitment to a review of the plan in 5 years. Accordingly, Arnside Parish Council (**APC**) and Arnside Parish Plan Trust (**APPT**) agreed, in 2007, to co-operate in undertaking such a review.

Early in 2008, a questionnaire was circulated to all households in Arnside (c. 1230). Copies were completed and **returned by 277 households, i.e. around 22%**. (The corresponding figure for the survey that formed the basis of the 2003 Parish Plan was 48%.)

The following report summarises the results of the survey. It also offers some analysis of those results and makes recommendations. Copies of an appendix to this report – summarising the replies to open-ended questions ('Other (please specify)'; 'Further Ideas and Comments'; etc) – is available from Bullough's Newsagents, the Library, the Pharmacy, Avery's and the Cemetery Chapel

Q.1 The results show that the responding households contain **534 people (here called 'respondents')**, i.e. **around 23% of the residents of Arnside**. (The corresponding figure for the survey that formed the basis of the 2003 Parish Plan was 53%.)

A 23% response for a questionnaire of this kind is disappointing but not exceptionally low, especially bearing in mind that there was none of the preparation – public meetings etc – that preceded the 2003 survey. A fifth of the residents certainly constitutes a statistically significant sample.

Q.2 Residents of the responding households fall into the following age-categories:-

0-4 years	7
5-10	9
11-15	9
16-17	5
18-24	11
25-44	36
45-59	108
60-64	109
65-74	125
75+	115

In relation to 2001 census figures, Arnside residents over 75 are represented in the appropriate proportion in returns to this questionnaire. But residents between 45 and 74 are heavily over-represented, and those up to age 44 are heavily under-represented (these last two categories constitute nearly a half and around one third of the population respectively). Speculation about the reasons for these discrepancies are not helpful here, and each household had exactly the same opportunity to participate. Nevertheless, in drawing significant inferences from this survey and making decisions that affect many residents, all concerned should take account of this particular pattern in the source of responses.

Q.3 The **gender breakdown** of respondents is 53.4% female and 46.6% male, which is almost exactly the same as the village as a whole in the 2001 census.

Q.4 Only 10 of the households from which responses came are based in **holiday homes**. This is a lower proportion than in Arnside as a whole (where, in 2006 there were c. 8% of second or holiday homes)..

Q.5 Rounded percentage figures for the length of time for which respondents have lived in Arnside are as follows:-

over 50 years:	5%
30-49 years:	10%
11-29 years:	39%
5-10 years:	25%
under 5 years:	21%

If these figures are representative, it is worth noting that the top-heavy age-structure of the Arnside population does not mean that very large numbers of residents have been here for a very long time. Perhaps nearly half have lived in the village for no more than 10 years.

HOUSING

Q.6 Asked which types of application for **additional building in Arnside** should be approved,

83	respondents supported	'detached houses/bungalows'
342		'smaller starter homes'
241		'conversion of larger properties into smaller units'
159		'"granny" flats onto existing houses'
180		'sheltered housing'
70		'care homes'
108		'commercial premises'
78		'business units'
132		'craft workshops'

50 respondents believed that there should be 'no more building of any kind in Arnside'.

SEE APPENDIX FOR 'OTHER' RESULTS (No significant pattern of replies.)

Q.7 Asked which groups of Arnsiders have housing needs that deserve **'exceptional' planning permission**,

349	respondents said	'young families with a strong local connection'
218		'people employed in or around the Parish'
178		'elderly people needing sheltered accommodation'

SEE APPENDIX FOR 'OTHER' RESULTS (No significant pattern of replies.)

Q.8 In Question 8 residents were asked which **open spaces** in the village there should be a special effort to preserve:

266	thought	the allotments
173		the field behind the proposed low-cost housing on Hollins Lane
142		Black Dyke Road
219		the Station Field
212		the old orchard
163		the land behind the low-cost housing on Briery Bank

SEE APPENDIX FOR 'OTHER' RESULTS (9 respondents mentioned Briery Bank Field and 8 the Common behind Redhills Road. There may have been some slight confusion over the naming of some of the open spaces concerned, but it seems highly likely that a large number of residents would have ticked these spaces if they had figured on the list on the questionnaire.)

Fewer than 10% of respondents believe that there should be a complete embargo on further building. Nearly 50% believe that the allotments should be preserved. There is also significant support for maintaining Station Field and the old orchard as open spaces. (It has not proved possible to draw up a comprehensive Open Spaces Strategy, as the 2003 Parish Plan envisaged.)

The strength of support for starter homes and young families indicates that most residents are as conscious as they were at the time of the Parish Plan of the need for 'affordable homes'; there is no reason to suppose that, as far as building applications are concerned, this should cease to be the top priority for the village for the foreseeable future.

Equally, the significant support for granny flats and sheltered housing in answers to question 6 suggests that, as in 2003, there is still considered to be room for improvement in the provision of accommodation in the village for older people (although fewer than 10% supported exceptional planning permission for sheltered accommodation in Question 7).

The need for fresh building for commercial and business purposes is also recognised, but on a definitely smaller scale.

The conversion of larger properties into smaller units may be a small part of the solution to the first of these three matters and could conceivably also help with the second, but such applications are not common.

There may be different ways of understanding 'craft workshops', but support for them – also apparent in 2003 – is probably an aspect of the awareness that, if the village is not to risk losing its proper proportion of younger people, provision needs to be made not only for their living accommodation, but also for spaces where they can ply a trade locally.

RECOMMENDATION: APC should take account of these priorities and concerns when commenting on applications for planning permission. Residents often overestimate the extent of the Council's influence on the decisions regarding such applications, but it should lose no opportunity of pointing out to South Lakeland District Council (SLDC) that its comments relating to affordable homes, further accommodation for older people, workspaces for younger people and open spaces in the village are buttressed by the support of many village residents.

EDUCATION AND LEARNING

Q.9 Concerning **children's facilities** in the village, respondents voted for new provision in the following numbers:

174 for a nursery class at the school
 62 for a nursery school
 43 for full-day care for children
 133 for a holiday play-scheme
 162 for Arnside National School to be available for an after-school club

And for the extension of existing facilities in the following numbers:

88 for the Baby and Toddler Group
 51 for the Playgroup
 49 registered childminders
 95 for after-school clubs

SEE APPENDIX FOR 'OTHER' RESULTS (3 respondents mentioned a youth club or youth centre, 2 suggested that there should be a survey of families with children.)

Bearing in mind that the proportion of village residents who are parents of school-age children is relatively small, the numbers of respondents supporting the ideas that there should be a nursery class at Arnside National School and that the School should be available for an after-school club are significant, as is the support for a holiday play-scheme. All three possibilities should be investigated and any initiatives taken should be strongly backed by villagers as a whole. The number of children attending the existing Baby and Toddler Group has varied over the past year and it may be that support of this Group is a higher priority than its extension.

RECOMMENDATION: Representatives of APC and APPT (both of which organisations are actively involved in raising funds for replacement of playground equipment on the Memorial Playing Field) should meet with headmaster and governors of Arnside National School to see how children's facilities in the village might be improved in the light of answers to question 9.

Q.10 With regard to the **Village Library**,

363 respondents believe it to be 'very important' to the village (79 'fairly important', 59 'unimportant')
 208 respondents see it as 'very important' to themselves (141 as 'fairly important', 94 as 'unimportant')
 163 respondents think it 'very important' to relocate the library (113 as 'fairly important', 108 as 'unimportant')

SEE APPENDIX FOR 'OTHER' RESULTS (31 residents suggested the former Spar shop, 15 the old telephone exchange, 13 the Memorial Playing Field, and 9 the E.I. or E.I. car park.)

The proportion of registered Library users in the village is high, so that it is no surprise that nearly three quarters of respondents regard its continued existence as very important. The fact that little more than a half of these see it as very important for themselves personally serves only to reinforce the significance of the Library as a social facility.

It is understood that it is only by a special arrangement that Arnside, with its fixed library, is also served as regularly as it is by a mobile library. Cumbria County Council (CCC) is to be congratulated for making such special provision. Equally, its willingness to do so should be seen as recognition of the strength of the village's needs with regard to library services.

This special provision also reflects the acknowledged fact that the present location of the Library makes it extremely difficult of access for certain residents with physical disabilities, and actually impossible for others. Alternative sites have been energetically sought, but none has so far proved both suitable and feasible.

RECOMMENDATION. Both APC and APPT should constantly bear in mind the great importance that the Library has for the village. Even the slightest hint that Arnside should make do with a mobile service only should be resisted with the greatest vigour. Because of difficulties of access, the search for an alternative site should continue.

RETAIL AND SERVICES

Q.11 *It is clear from the answers to this question – 51 residents thought a **mini 'Chamber of Trade'** should be set up in Arnside, 44 did not, and 171 did not know – that a much more specific proposal would need to be formulated on this matter, before residents' views could be properly assessed. The first step would be to ascertain whether traders themselves are in favour of some such body.*

SEE APPENDIX FOR 'WHAT TYPE OF GROUP' RESULTS (No significant pattern of replies.)

RECOMMENDATION. APPT should conduct a survey to discover whether enough traders support this initiative to make it worth pursuing.

TOURISM

Q.12 Concerning the different forms of **advertising to encourage visitors to come to Arnside**, very few respondents thought it to be 'excessive' in any of the forms mentioned (13 in the press; 12 on the internet; 9 in literature), while a large number of residents said they didn't know in connection with each of these forms (144, 155, 138).

155 thought it 'about right' in the press, 145 on the internet, and 177 in literature.
69 thought it 'insufficient' in the press, 54 on the internet, and 80 in literature.

It is interesting that the pattern of responses was very similar in each of the cases, suggesting that many residents are not especially aware of adverts for the village, and perhaps that the level of advertising the village is more important to them than the form that the advertising takes. Under 20% of respondents apparently want an increase in any of the forms of advertising, while around 40% consider the present level to be 'about right' in each of the forms (41% in the press, 38% on the internet, 44% in literature)..

RECOMMENDATION. In the light of this response, APPT and APC should only actively support, or be involved in, any increase in the volume of advertising to encourage visitors to come to Arnside when they have very particular and specific reasons for doing so.

ENVIRONMENT

Q.13 Responses to this question concerning which areas of the village residents believe need to be improved are best presented in tabulated form: -

	v.high priority	high priority	medium priority	low priority	not necessary
old boat yard	182	81	46	39	10
Station Gardens	17	55	96	94	47
approaches to village	29	65	78	60	76
village signage	15	26	81	89	97
footways & footpaths	68	106	104	41	32
litter bins	64	73	106	51	26
painting of Prom railings	57	80	126	66	19
road verges maintenance	57	77	105	69	19
pier maintenance	49	90	111	48	16
seat maintenance	63	101	116	44	14
recycling facilities	135	90	72	26	19

(Counting 'very high priority' as 4, 'high priority' as 3, 'medium priority' as 2, and 'low priority' as 1 produces the following weighted totals:

old boat yard: 1102; recycling facilities: 980; footways & footpaths: 839; seat maintenance: 831; painting Prom railings: 786; litter bins: 738; road verges: 738; pier maintenance: 736; village approaches: 527; Station Gardens: 519; village signage: 389.)

SEE APPENDIX FOR 'OTHER' RESULTS (8 respondents mentioned road surfaces and potholes, 7 the possibility of dog waste bins, 5 street lighting and 5 hedges and overhanging branches that need cutting back.)

It is encouraging that respondents were so discriminating in answering this question, not setting a high priority on everything and being prepared to assign a low priority or even a 'not necessary' where they considered it appropriate.

The results in relation to the old boat yard and recycling facilities stand out. More than 73% of those responding on this attached a very high or high priority to improving the old boat yard; and 66% to improving recycling facilities.

At the other end of the spectrum, there seems to be relatively little concern about the need to improve Station Gardens, approaches to the village, or village signage. (Although the figures do not show, of course, whether this reflects satisfaction or lack of interest in the features involved.)

RECOMMENDATIONS. Where APC has resources that can be used to effect improvements in these areas, and where it has the opportunity to state priorities in pressing other authorities – in particular, CCC and SLDC – to effect such improvements, it should bear in mind the table of responses set out above. Where APPT has the possibility of initiating projects or of assisting with projects initiated by others, it, too, should bear the table in mind.

APC should be especially vigilant with regard to developments concerning recycling facilities in the village and seek to have these extended. The present location is not necessarily fixed for ever and the precise nature and range of current facilities is experimental.

APPT should enter into dialogue with all appropriate parties with a view to investigating the possibility of improving and developing the old boat yard in some way (the parties should include the AONB Office, which recently received a report envisaging major development there).

LEISURE AND RECREATION

Q.14 and Q.15. 240 respondents approved of the idea that efforts should be made to raise money for a youth meeting-point 'shelter' in the village. 129 did not approve, and 101 did not know.

220 respondents approved of efforts being made to build such a facility on the Memorial Playing Field. 181 did not approve and 73 did not know.

APC is fully and exclusively responsible for the young children's playground on the Memorial Field; it is currently raising money for complete replacement of the outdated equipment in the playground. APPT is playing a part in the fund-raising.

For some six years APC has supported the project – initiated and driven by the Arnside Youth Project – of a multi-wheel park at a specific location on the Memorial Field, making a grant and agreeing to the free use of this location. There is now a charitable trust responsible for raising money for the multi-wheel park, and SLDC has recently agreed, in principle, to pay for maintenance and insurance of the facility.

At APC meetings, the view has often been expressed – although no resolution has been adopted – that the multi-wheel-park project might cater for more Arnside youths by somehow incorporating a more general facility in the form of a multi-use area or meeting-point. The 2003 Parish Plan favoured a 'Youth Centre' for the village, and there is known to be SLDC money available for multi-use areas. Although there is clearly a significant division of opinion among respondents on this matter, nearly twice as many approve of money being raised for a meeting-point/shelter as do not.

While 46% of those responding to this question approve of a shelter on the Memorial Field, around 38% do not. But planning permission has already been granted for the multi-wheel park and it is not certain that so many would disapprove if the meeting-point/shelter were somehow incorporated into this.

It is also uncertain to what extent those in favour of money-raising for a youth meeting-point/shelter are aware that major money-raising is already required for both the children's playground and the multi-wheel park. In this rather complicated situation, it is essential that all three Arnside organisations involved (APC, APPT, Multi-Wheel-Park Trust) – or their representatives – should meet very soon to discuss the way forward in the light of these responses. Depending on the decisions taken, the formal approval of particular bodies – APC, planning bodies – may be required. In any case, the outcome should be conveyed quickly to SLDC, since it has agreed, in principle, to fund maintenance and insurance of the multi-wheel park.

RECOMMENDATION. In the next few weeks APPT should arrange a meeting between APC, the Multi-Wheel-Park Trust, and APPT itself – or the representatives of these three bodies – to discuss, in the light of responses to the Parish-Plan-Review questionnaire, the current situation regarding the children’s playground, the multi-wheel-park project, and the possibility of a youth meeting-point or shelter on the Memorial Field. If any decisions made require ratification elsewhere, the appropriate steps should be taken as quickly as possible. And SLDC should be immediately informed of any substantive outcomes.

TRANSPORT, TRAVEL AND PARKING

Q.16 and Q.17 Answers to questions concerning what factors would result in residents using bus services and trains more frequently were as follows:-

Bus service: better information: 167
greater reliability in the services: 138
improvements to the routes and timetables: 234
lower prices: 110
re-location of bus stops: 27
none of these: 90

Train: better information: 80
greater reliability in the service: 114
improvements to the facilities at the station: 85
improvements to access at the station: 156
improvements to the timetables: 134
lower prices: 219
none of these: 64

SEE APPENDIX FOR ‘OTHER’ RESULTS (No significant pattern of replies.)

Assuming that it is in the general interests of the village as a whole to have residents using bus and train more and cars less, everyone should take account of responses to these questions. But it should be noted that when the questionnaire was circulated (i) the ‘NOW’ card and new bus concessions for pensioners were not fully operational; (ii) the screens at the station displaying updated information on train times was not in full use.

The following are some of the notable features of these results:-

- (a) Not-insignificant numbers claim they would be unaffected by improvements to any of these factors.*
- (b) Especially in the light of (ii) above, it seems that enough information about trains may be available, while 167 respondents would like better information about bus services.*
- (c) A high number of respondents (234) seek improvements to bus routes and timetables (fewer – 134 – to rail timetables).*
- (d) Twice as many are deterred by high rail prices as by high bus fares (219 to 110).*
- (e) There appears to be a fairly high level of concern about the reliability of both bus and train services.*
- (f) The response concerning access at the station does not show that fewer than might be expected are concerned about this, since most people are not directly affected by the problems of the disabled. In this context, the number of those who claim they would use the train more if access were improved is strikingly high.*

RECOMMENDATION. Where APC has any influence in these matters, it should bear in mind these answers in exercising it. It should certainly continue to press for better access to the station. Where APPT has any involvement in projects relating to these matters, it, too, should take account of these responses.

APC/APPT should jointly pass on these results to the relevant bus and rail authorities.

Parking

Q.18, Q.19, and Q.20

399 respondents believe there is a parking problem at the railway station; 55 do not; 29 don't know. 298 think there is a general parking problem for visitors to Arnside; 145 do not; 32 don't know. 204 respondents believe that more station and visitor parking should be provided in the Parish even if this means an increase in the Parish element of the Council Tax; 226 do not; 44 don't know.

SEE APPENDIX FOR A LIST OF 'ALTERNATIVES'/ 'LOCATIONS' SUGGESTED BY RESPONDENTS (Q.18: 55 saw Station Field as an alternative to current parking arrangements for the station, 49 Station Yard.

Q.19: 32 suggested Station Field as the location for a car park, 26 the foreshore next to the railway line, 21 Station Yard.)

There was scarcely any need for the overwhelming confirmation of residents' awareness of a parking problem at the station: Q.18 crucially gave them a chance to suggest solutions.

Far fewer respondents believe there is a general parking problem for visitors to Arnside, though the number is still high; and twice as many acknowledge a problem as do not. Again, the opportunity given to suggest solutions was at least as important as the question itself.

Respondents were pretty evenly divided on whether either problem should be solved at the cost of an increase in the Parish element of Council Tax. In any case, the ways in which APC could contribute to solutions are severely limited. Whether or not the money is available, it cannot, for instance, – and this matter is widely misunderstood – simply decide to surface the area of the foreshore where cars currently park, much less decide to have a new surface marked out to maximise available spaces. Nor can it decide that car parking in that area should be paid for. Over many years APC has made recommendations to South Lakeland District Council along these lines. It has offered to allow SLDC to take over that area for these purposes. Such recommendations and offers have consistently been rejected, some very recently.

Similarly, it is not within the hands of APC either to create parking spaces on Station Yard (which is privately owned), or to take a bite out of Station Field (which is also privately owned) for parking purposes. (The latter move would be very controversial in the village, in view of the desire to preserve open spaces – see the answers to Q.8.)

The present staggered parking along Station Road is the result of recommendations made in the 2003 Parish Plan. General opinion appears to be that it has alleviated the problem, but is far from satisfactory in itself.

There has been only one major development in the past couple of years with regard to car parking – the construction of disabled parking places on railway land directly behind the old Station Building. But this does not mean that nothing else is being done. Both CCC and SLDC have pursued – and are actively pursuing – the possibility of parking on Station Yard. A report on parking in South Lakeland is awaiting. It seems likely to stress the need for a major car park in Arnside.

RECOMMENDATION. APC – and APPT as far as it is involved – should continue to press with the relevant authorities (CCC, SLDC, Network Rail, etc) the need for better parking arrangements in Arnside, particularly around the station. It should give the strongest support to any initiative to create parking spaces on Station Yard. It should continue to monitor the situation of traffic flow on Station Road and make appropriate requests and recommendations with regard to the current arrangements there.

ROAD SAFETY

Q.21 Asked what further measures are needed to improve safety on the roads in the Parish, respondents gave answers as follows:-

64 were in favour of speed cameras, 86 in favour of speed bumps, and 242 thought no further measures were required.

SEE APPENDIX FOR LIST OF 'MORE PARKING RESTRICTIONS' / 'ONE-WAY' / 'ACCESS-ONLY' SUGGESTIONS FROM RESPONDENTS (No significant pattern of replies.)

Because, when the questionnaire was circulated, there was a distinct possibility that a 20mph limit throughout the village might be asked for, residents were not asked about this. But when District and County Councillor Ian Stewart conducted a systematic inquiry, residents were so evenly divided on the matter that he understandably felt he had no mandate to pursue it.

It is impossible to know how respondents' answers on 'no further measures' would have differed had they been aware of this at the time.

There is some support for speed cameras and speed bumps, but not enough to cause APC to press for these measures.

Respondents were given the chance to specify places in the village where one-way or access-only restrictions should be applied.

RECOMMENDATION. Now that there is no likelihood of a 20mph limit throughout the village in the foreseeable future, APC – and APPT as far as it is involved – should remain very vigilant about road safety issues in the village. At the public meeting recently called by APC, a list was drawn up of dangerous spots – with possible solutions. Over a period of time, APC should press for each of these dangers to be examined and addressed.

FAIRTRADE

Q.22 Fairtrade status is currently being considered for Arnside. Residents were asked whether they would like more information on this initiative. 199 said yes, 234 no.

The pattern of response here clearly does not mean that no further information on Fairtrade in the village should be disseminated. There may be no need to circulate such information to all households, but sheets should be available in public places.

RECOMMENDATION. APC and APPT should continue to support the initiative of making Arnside a Fairtrade village, by spreading information, holding events, and by any other appropriate means.

SEE APPENDIX FOR 'FURTHER IDEAS AND COMMENTS' REGISTERED ON THE BACK PAGE OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE (No significant pattern of replies: no particular idea or comment received support from more than a single-figure number of respondents.)

CONCLUSIONS

Where this survey has covered the same areas as the 2003 Parish-Plan survey and the Plan itself, there is no obvious conflict between the results from the two sources. In other words, there is no sign of a significant change of opinion on the part of residents concerning the 'Aims' specified in the Parish Plan. The 2003 Plan can therefore be considered as ongoing, to the extent that not all of the aims it set out have been achieved (even though most 'Actions' in the Plan towards those aims have been carried out).

In this sense, the current report should be seen as a kind of supplement to the 2003 Parish Plan. The scale of the survey and the level of response in 2008 is such that it has not been deemed appropriate to draw up a further Action Plan as such. Some of the recommendations that the report contains (fully endorsed by both APC and APPT) reinforce actions set out in the Plan, either by reiterating that certain directions need to be pursued or by refining in some way on precisely what the Plan wanted to see done. Others help to clarify the context in which future decisions – particularly by APC – should be made.

Others again relate either to matters that were not dealt with in the original Parish Plan or to issues that have actually arisen or changed significantly in some way since 2003 (Fairtrade, facilities for young children and youths on the Memorial Field, recycling, etc). These recommendations, to which particular attention may be paid, are considered to form an appropriate blend of reactive and proactive measures.

An additional RECOMMENDATION of this report is that in another five years' time, APC and APPT should consider whether another review or a new Parish Plan is needed and carry out the work required.

APPT has achieved a great deal in the five years or so of its existence – many of its achievements are indisputably of tangible benefit to Arnside Parish as a whole. It should continue in existence, since there is still a role for it to fulfil. As a registered charity it is able to draw on sources and resources not available to statutory bodies. It can, and should, continue to monitor progress towards the Aims set out in the Parish Plan; now it can, and should, also monitor the extent to which, and the manner in which, the recommendations of this report are followed. APPT always welcomes any offers from residents of more help in achieving its objectives.

APC will continue to carry out its statutory duties within the legal framework that binds it. It will also continue, wherever possible, to go beyond its duties in appropriate ways, when this is unmistakably in the interests of the Parish as a whole. It has been hampered since the last Parish election by a shortfall in the number of Councillors. At a number of points vacancies have been advertised; interest has sometimes been expressed by certain residents; and co-options have been made. But the Parish Council is currently four members (or more than 33%) short. Everyone in Arnside should be aware that, in addition to any material or financial shortage, this means that there are simply not enough councillor-hours available for the Council to do everything that it needs/would like to do. It is very much to be hoped that any extra interest in village affairs generated by this review and report will encourage residents to come forward to fill the Parish Council vacancies.

Arnside residents should recognise that members of both APC and APPT are unpaid volunteers (a few of them with full-time jobs). Only if people come forward to take on roles of this kind will the community continue to flourish.'