

PROGRESS OF PARISH AND COMMUNITY LED PLAN ACTIONS IN THE BOROUGH OF TEWKESBURY

Report produced by GRCC, December 2009



This is one of a suite of reports produced by GRCC for the county of Gloucestershire to provide information on the status of actions arising from parish and community led plans. It will be of interest to statutory authorities with a duty to engage and involve, to organisations who deliver services in rural communities and to the communities themselves. Actions from the parish and community led plans completed in Tewkesbury Borough since 2003 are explored in this report.

WHAT IS A PARISH AND COMMUNITY LED PLAN?

A parish and community led plan is a working document produced by communities. It sets out a community's vision for the future and creates an action plan covering issues or aspects it wishes to develop, retain or strengthen. These issues are identified and prioritised through wide and varied consultation and relate to social, economic and environmental aspects of life within that community. For further information on the process of developing a plan, see the GRCC website http://www.grcc.org.uk/our_work/community_led_planning or contact GRCC on 01452 528491.

DUTY TO ENGAGE AND INVOLVE

The July 2008 government white paper, *Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities* <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/strongsafeandprosperous> placed a duty on statutory authorities to engage and involve the community in decision making about local services. Parish and community led plans contain a wealth of information about community needs and priorities which can be useful to those who bear this duty and many local authorities nationwide have adopted parish and community led plans within their engagement strategy in order to increase opportunities to respond positively to local challenges and to deliver better services.

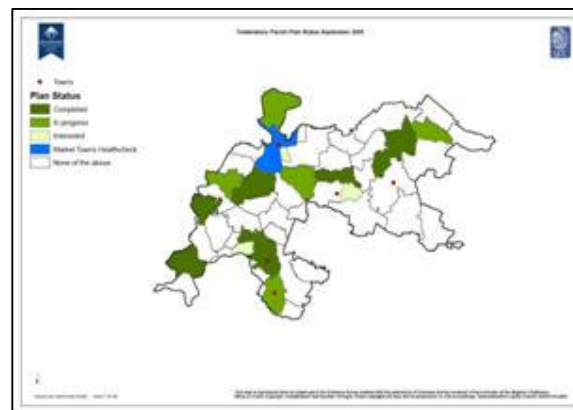
GRCC DATABASE OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE PARISH AND COMMUNITY LED PLAN ACTIONS

Following a pilot in the Forest of Dean District, GRCC has drawn together actions from parish and community led plans in Gloucestershire into one document so that they are accessible to communities and potential partners. The database is in the form of a searchable excel spreadsheet where each action is categorised under a topic heading and is linked to both Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and Local Area Agreement (LAA) themes. 'Traffic light' codes are used to give information on the status of actions, and communities regularly provide these updates to GRCC. The Parish Plan database can be viewed on the GRCC website http://www.grcc.org.uk/our_work/parish_plan_database Parish Plan information is also linked to MAIDeN's parish profiles.

The image shows a screenshot of an Excel spreadsheet. The spreadsheet has several columns: 'Parish', 'Topic', 'Action', 'Status', and 'Date'. The rows contain various entries, with some cells highlighted in yellow, orange, and red, representing different status levels. The text is small and difficult to read, but the structure is clear as a data table.

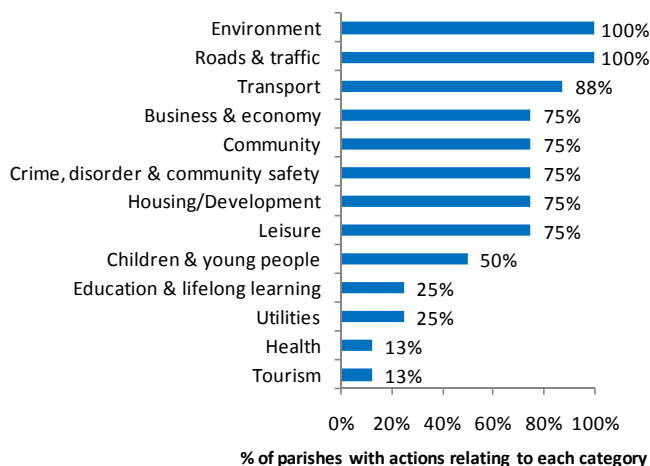
SUPPORT FOR TEWKESBURY COMMUNITIES IN DEVELOPING AND MOVING FORWARD PARISH AND COMMUNITY LED PLANS

Actions from 8 parish and community led plans in Tewkesbury Borough have been added to the GRCC database. The first plan was developed in [Deerhurst](#) in 2003. A further 5 plans are listed as 'in progress' and 5 other communities have contacted GRCC over the past 6 months regarding support for new parish and community led plans. Since 2005, GRCC has not been funded by Tewkesbury Borough Council to provide support to communities to develop and move forward actions from parish and community led plans and unfortunately no additional funding has been available to support this work.



ISSUES AND ACTIONS RAISED BY TEWKESBURY COMMUNITIES

The process of developing a parish and community led plan enables issues to be raised and an action plan formulated to address those issues. Although each community's action plan is unique, there are common areas raised by communities in Tewkesbury Borough.



All 8 Tewkesbury plans on the database have actions relating to the **environment**. **Parish cleanliness and maintenance** is featured in many of these environmental actions, e.g. [Down Hatherley's](#) action to 'hold 6-monthly community litter picks'. 5 of the 8 communities on the database have actions to resolve the issue of dog fouling, 5 have actions relating to tree planting for aesthetic or environmental reasons and 5 have actions relating to recycling, e.g. [Churchdown's](#) action to 'include recycling information in the parish information guide' and [Winchcombe's](#) aim to 'create a community compost scheme'.

Common topics within the theme of **community** include building or improving **village halls/ community buildings** (4 parishes) and setting up or improving a **village website** (3 parishes).

Actions relating to **roads and traffic** appear in all 8 plans. The most common topic in this category is **road safety and speeding**, with 7 of the 8 parishes having actions on this issue, e.g. [Churchdown's](#) action to "investigate feasibility of installing mobile speed flashing signs". Other topics on the theme of roads and traffic include parking (4 parishes) and the condition of roads and/or pavements (4 parishes). Within the theme of **transport**, 5 parishes have actions on community/voluntary transport and 3 on public transport.

6 communities have actions under the theme of **leisure** and 4 of these relate to **developing leisure facilities** e.g. [Gotherington's](#) action to 'improve facilities in the children's playground, particularly for younger children'. Other 'leisure' actions relate to setting up **activities** such as [Down Hatherley's](#) action to set up fun days and a history event.

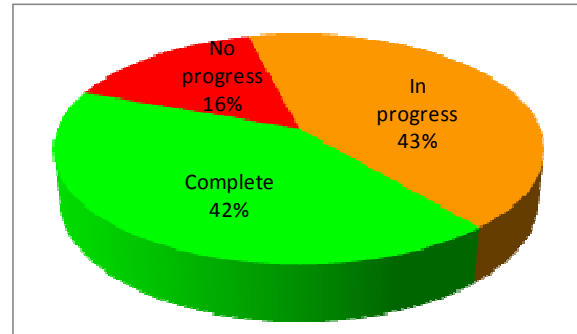
Some actions relate to **older people** in communities but these are often included within wider actions, e.g. "Give special consideration to the provision of housing for first time buyers and older people" ([Gotherington](#)) and "Hold personal safety and awareness raising events for older and vulnerable people" ([Churchdown](#)).

4 of the 6 parishes with actions relating to **crime, disorder and community safety** wish to set up or promote local **neighbourhood watch schemes** e.g. [Toddington's](#) action: 'A neighbourhood watch scheme to be established by volunteers who expressed an interest.'

Of the 6 parishes with actions relating to **housing/development**, all refer to the provision of **affordable housing**, including actions such as undertaking a housing needs survey in conjunction with GRCC, ascertaining the demand for shared ownership within the parish and discussing the feasibility of affordable homes with Tewkesbury Borough Council. Another example of an action relating to **planning and development control** is [Ashleworth's](#) action to 'Investigate feasibility of developing existing redundant sites ... for business development'.

STATUS OF PARISH AND COMMUNITY LED PLAN ACTIONS IN TEWKESBURY BOROUGH

There are almost 300 actions from Tewkesbury parish and community led plans in the GRCC database and the number of actions within each individual plan ranges from 17 to 73. The status of nearly 90% of the actions is known, and recent analysis by GRCC shows that 84% of these have either been completed or are in progress. This is a testament to the energy, enthusiasm and determination of community members and the support received from partners.



Status of actions from parish and community led plans in Tewkesbury Borough. N.B. Figures total 101% due to rounding

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COMMUNITIES DRIVING FORWARD ACTIONS

Some actions from parish and community led plans can be completed relatively quickly (e.g. the production of a newsletter or installing street furniture), while others need greater investment of time and/or resources and therefore take longer to come to fruition. [Toddington's](#) action to build a new village hall required considerable project management expertise: it involved over £700,000 of investment and took 5 years to come to fruition. This new hall is now a demonstration project in the South West on new build and energy options for halls.



Toddington Village Hall

It is a feature of parish and community led plans in the Tewkesbury Borough that actions are broken down into smaller projects to make them more achievable. In some cases, partnership working is crucial to a project's success – e.g. [Deerhurst's](#) resilience group (which was set up in response to the parish plan) worked with the Environment Agency and other partners to secure a flood defence scheme, while [Churchdown](#) worked with Gloucestershire County Council to improve access for cyclists and disabled users of [Churchdown](#) Park. Other actions have been completed independently e.g. [Gretton](#) and [Winchcombe](#) set up community composting schemes as a result of their parish plans and [Churchdown](#) has driven forward a number of actions, including forming a walking group and publishing a parish information guide. The [Highnam](#) website, set up as a result of their parish plan, won an award in 2008. This community has also set up a volunteer committee which maintains footpaths in the parish. Communities such as [Gotherington](#) have installed dog mess bins and [Toddington](#) reports great interest in the newly formed Neighbourhood Watch Scheme. As a result of its parish plan, [Ashleworth](#) instigated a community led feasibility study regarding options available for a village hall and sports club and was awarded Lottery funding to develop a solution.

A study conducted by GRCC in 2008 of the impact of [Down Hatherley's](http://www.grcc.org.uk/assets/0000/5978/Down_Hatherley_Case_study.pdf) parish plan http://www.grcc.org.uk/assets/0000/5978/Down_Hatherley_Case_study.pdf

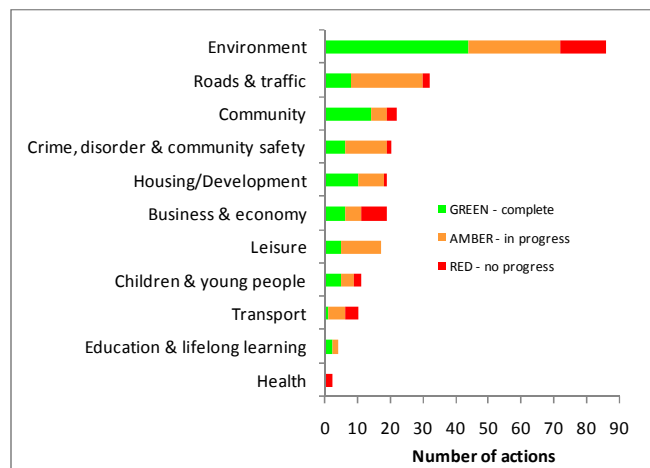
showed its impact in terms of improved road signage and traffic calming measures, plus rerouting of local bus services. There have been improvements in the way in which the parish council runs meetings and increased representation within and outside the community e.g. on the village hall committee and airport consultative committee. A new website has been developed and the number of noticeboards increased. A village fun day has been established and various activities have been set up such as a walking group, litter picking group and history group. All areas in the parish are now covered by the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme.



In Down Hatherley, there has been an increase in the number of people from outside the parish wanting to use the church since it has been put on the village website.

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS OF ACTIONS IN TEWKESBURY

Reasons for non-progress have been provided by communities to GRCC for around a third of the 'red' (no progress) actions in Tewkesbury Borough parish and community led plans. It is generally the case that actions that can be independently completed by the community are more likely to have been achieved. There are proportionately more incomplete actions in the categories of transport and business/economy. In some cases, volunteering fatigue has set in and enthusiasm for an action has waned but in other cases, lack of support from authorities or lack of available funding has caused a barrier which dampens community enthusiasm. In some cases the action is found to be outside the parish's remit, such as [Gretton's](#) action to improve the collection of large household items.



CONCLUSIONS

The new Comprehensive Area Assessment for local authorities assesses how well local authorities are seeking to understand and meet local needs, set priorities, improve the area and people's lives and it supports the engagement and empowerment of citizens. This report illustrates the impact of parish and community led plans and their ability to successfully identify and drive forward actions. Use of this structured approach, which involves the whole community, can provide clear evidence of need which is essential for local prioritisation and for funding applications. This 'bottom up', community driven and managed process empowers and galvanises communities, increasing people's feeling that they can affect decisions in their locality and increasing the community's resilience. Parish and community led planning can also raise awareness of citizenship and increase capacity and volunteering within communities. The process used by parishes, supported by GRCC, has become increasingly robust and inclusive, resulting in plans of good quality.

The GRCC countywide database of parish plans can give partners an overview of actions relating to their service area and GRCC staff will be happy to come and talk to organisations/networks about how the database can be interrogated and used. Contact details are provided below.

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