

Cotswold District Report

Report produced by GRCC through analysis of the GRCC countywide database of parish and community led plan actions: December 2009



This is one of a suite of reports produced by GRCC to provide information on the status of actions arising from parish and community led plans in Gloucestershire. 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. This report explores actions from parish and community led plans developed in the Cotswold District. Thank you to all communities who contributed.

What is a Parish & 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. See the 'our work' section of the GRCC website www.grcc.org.uk for more



A packed village hall at North Cerney's Parish Plan consultation event

information or contact GRCC on 01452 528491.

In the Cotswold district, typically 75% of the community will have an input to a plan's development. Down Ampney and Poole Keynes currently hold the records in the county for community involvement in the plan as both attracted response rates of over 90% to their surveys. The rigorous consultation process, reaching a high percentage of the community provides a mandate to identify and drive forward actions. Parish councils adopt the plans with this in mind, thereby endorsing the services they provide.



A sign in the centre of Poole Keynes ensured that people didn't miss their chance to contribute to their parish plan



'Washing line of desire' – A consultation technique used in Northleach

Involving communities

Parish and community led plans contain a wealth of information about community needs and priorities which can be useful to those who have a statutory duty to engage and involve people in defining local services and priorities (as set out in the July 2008 statutory guidance, *Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities*). Many local authorities nationwide, including those in Gloucestershire, 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 & Community Led Plan actions

Parish	Topic	Priority	Description	Lead	Topic	Area	Status of plan/progress	Notes
Forest of Dean	Health	High	Improve older affordable housing sites in Gloucestershire...	Health/Over 65s	Health & Social Care	Forest of Dean	Completed	Final plan
Forest of Dean	Health	High	Improve older affordable housing sites in Gloucestershire...	Health/Over 65s	Health & Social Care	Forest of Dean	In progress	Final plan
Forest of Dean	Health	High	Improve older affordable housing sites in Gloucestershire...	Health/Over 65s	Health & Social Care	Forest of Dean	Interested	Final plan
Forest of Dean	Health	High	Improve older affordable housing sites in Gloucestershire...	Health/Over 65s	Health & Social Care	Forest of Dean	Market Towns Healthcheck	Final plan
Forest of Dean	Health	High	Improve older affordable housing sites in Gloucestershire...	Health/Over 65s	Health & Social Care	Forest of Dean	None of the above	Final plan

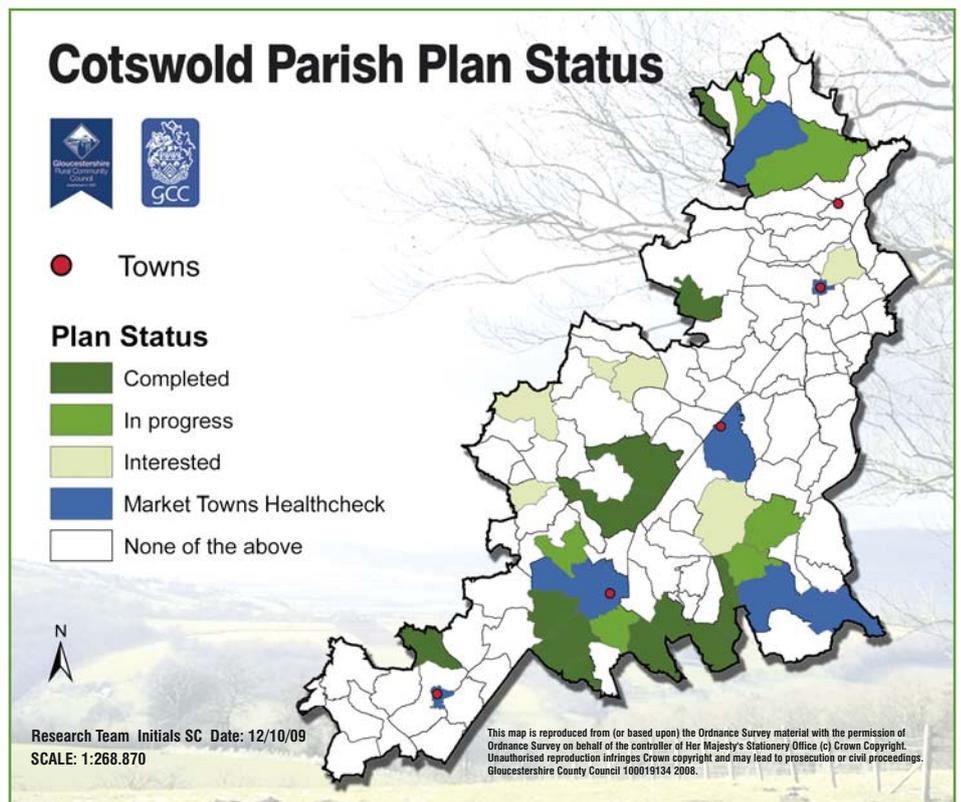
Following a pilot in the Forest of Dean District funded by Gloucestershire County Council, GRCC has drawn together actions from parish and community led plans in Gloucestershire into one document so that they are accessible to communities and potential partners. The database is in the form of a searchable 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 www.grcc.org.uk – follow the link from 'Our Work' and the information is also linked to MAIDeN's parish profiles.

Supporting Cotswold communities

12 parish and community led plans have been completed in the Cotswold district and 11 of these have actions in the GRCC database. Although coverage is not as wide as in other Gloucestershire districts, the rate of interest in undertaking a plan in the Cotswold district is rising. 3 plans are expected to be completed in early 2010 and a further 3 parishes are ready to embark on the process. GRCC is supported by Cotswold District Council to provide advice to parishes throughout the process and this enables parishes to develop their plans in a robust and inclusive way.

Although Cotswold District Council does not provide direct funding to communities to develop parish and community led plans, their significance and usefulness is recognised. Parishes with play or capital build projects can use evidence from their plan to support applications to Cotswold District grant



schemes. Plan steering groups are encouraged to engage with the local authority at an early stage so that they can help move forward actions later. The results of any consultations and the final plan documents are used to assist CDC in the creation of local strategies such as the Sustainable Community Strategy and also to feed into the Local Development Framework.

The Cotswold Parish Plan Forum, organised by GRCC, has brought together communities, CDC and County Council officers, members and other interested organisations such as the police and Gloucestershire Highways, to raise awareness of the process of parish and community led planning and how to progress actions.

Issues and actions raised by Cotswold District 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, common areas are raised.

The following data applies to the 11 Cotswold District plans on the GRCC countywide database of parish and community led plans.

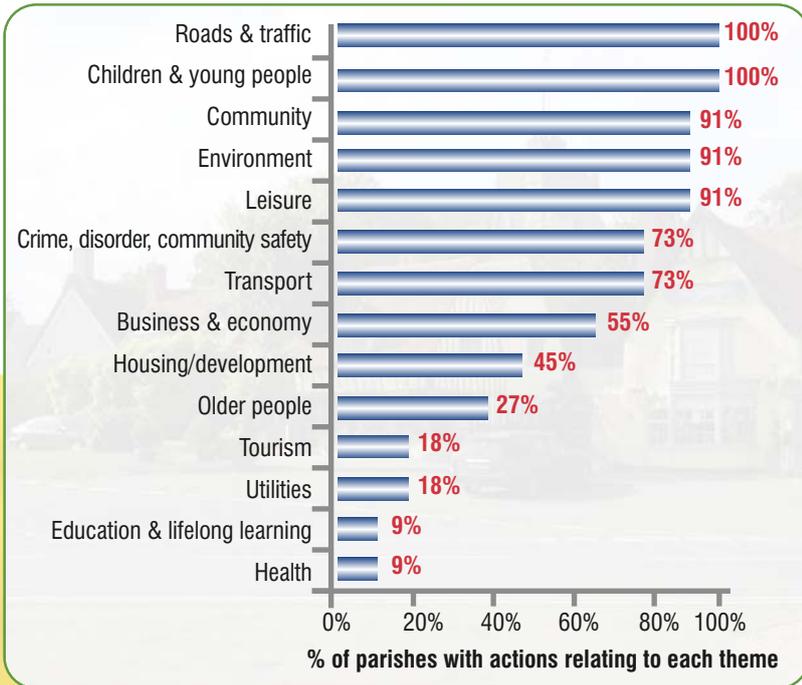
All 11 Cotswold communities have actions relating to **roads and traffic** and the types of actions include:

- **Road safety and speed reduction** in 82% of the plans, such as Avening's action to 'Investigate 20mph speed limit by village hall and school'.
- **Roads, pavements and verges** e.g. 'Extend parts of the pavement along the main road' in North Cerney. 55% of plans have actions in this category.
- **Parking:** 55% of plans have actions relating to parking such as Kemble's action to '...consider residents-only parking scheme'.

Actions relating to **community** feature in 91% of Cotswold District plans. Almost half of these actions relate specifically to village and community halls. A common theme across the district is communities looking to make facilities more viable e.g. in the Coates parish plan one of the actions reads 'Explore possibilities for more community wide activities using the village hall'.

91% of plans include specific actions relating to **leisure**, and 70% of these parishes have actions which relate to the provision of Sports and Leisure facilities or activities e.g. the action from South Cerney's plan to 'Create more play/sporting opportunities'.

All plans have specific actions about **children and young people** and they usually relate to providing leisure facilities/activities or village clubs/groups for these children and young people – from skateparks, youth shelters and play areas to setting up a youth club, e.g. in Driffield 'consider land options for playground', or Meysey Hampton's action to 'start up toddler group in the village hall'. Some actions refer to setting up youth councils or consulting further with young people to fully establish their needs as in Avening's action to 'discuss with young people the recreation facilities needed in the village'.



Fewer actions relate specifically to **older people** as they are often included in general requirements under the themes of leisure, health or community.

Environment actions are included in 90% of plans and 9 plans focus on 'Parish cleanliness/maintenance'. Actions can vary from arranging litter picks, maintaining village scenic routes and an action that appears in a number of parish and community led plans, best illustrated by Driffield's action to 'Reduce dog fouling in the parish by PC reminding owners of obligations'. 60% of those communities that have included environmental actions have actions specifically relating to conservation and heritage. These can range from dry stone wall maintenance to appointing an archivist to record local history or, as in Down Ampney's final plan, 'Set up a conservation programme in the village'.

72% of plans include **crime, disorder & community safety** actions and 88% of these relate to either the promotion or reintroduction of neighbourhood watch schemes. Examples of other actions relating to 'crime and disorder' include:

- 'Investigate increasing the level of local policing' taken from Down Ampney's plan.
- 'Reduce graffiti and vandalism at station and play area. Encourage regular police patrols and continue building on relationships with PCSOs. Consider appointing a warden' in Kemble.
- 'Continue to work with police on crime/antisocial behaviour' in Willersey.

Status of Parish & Community Led Plan actions in the Cotswold District

There are 281 actions from Cotswold District parish and community led plans in the database and the number of actions within each plan ranges from 13 in Poole Keynes to 57 in Chedworth. Recent analysis by GRCC of the status of these actions shows that over 70% of the actions whose status is known have either been ‘completed’ or are ‘in progress’. This is testament to the energy, enthusiasm and determination of community members and the support received from partners. Of the 157 actions which are complete or in progress the greatest amount of activity has been around environment based

actions with 72% of parish actions on this theme already achieved or showing some activity.

Some actions can be completed quickly and can be achieved using relatively small amounts of funding or resource e.g. many parishes such as Kemble and Avening have increased the number of dog litter bins while Chedworth’s traffic and transport group amalgamated and displayed bus timetables. Other actions need greater investment of time and/or resources and therefore take longer to come to fruition e.g. in Poole Keynes’ final plan there was an action to



Cotswold District status of actions (numbers total 101% due to rounding)

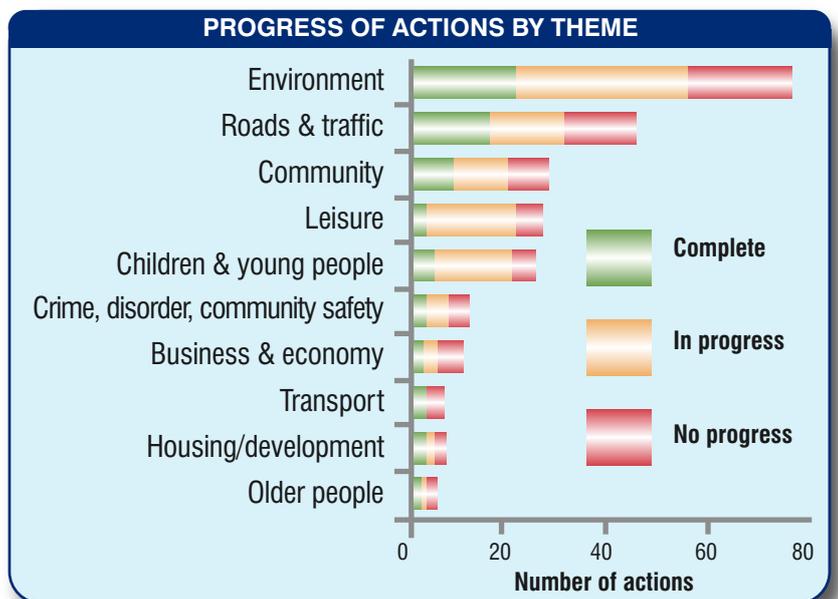
“Develop, revamp and redecorate the Village Hall” which required £60k of funding.

Barriers to progress of actions in the Cotswold District

The information provided by communities to GRCC gives an insight into reasons for lack of progress of actions. In the Cotswold District, 30% of all actions included on the database, whose status is known are recorded as having made ‘no progress’. The most common reasons given for this are “lack of capacity” and “support turned down”. At times low priority actions do not progress because community energy is concentrated on higher priority actions.

In some instances no further action is required because circumstances have changed e.g. the broadening of household recycling facilities by Cotswold District Council resolved issues raised in several plans.

Some actions require substantial resources and lack of funding is raised as a barrier e.g. funding has been difficult to source for Kemble’s action to create a footpath in the locality which will cost over £25k. In other cases, stalemate is reached as in South Cerney’s action to create a skatepark. Sometimes suggestions are not supported by statutory organisations for a variety of reasons e.g. Meysey Hampton’s action to “Install a traffic island at the entrance to Greenacres” was turned down.



TOP 10 REASONS FOR LACK OF PROGRESS	NO. OF ACTIONS
Lack of capacity	6
Turned down	6
Dependent on completion of other actions	5
Cost/lack of funding	4
Lack of interest/demand from community	4
Long term/lower priority	4
Not needed/Not needed at the moment	4
Guidance needed	3
Impractical/Unrealistic/Not possible	3
Withdrawn	3

Cotswold communities driving actions forward

Communities of varying sizes usually have the ability and capacity to independently complete a number of actions set out in their plan documents. Local level activity is demonstrated in Kemble where the community wished to re-install allotment facilities as set out in their 2006 plan. Their 2009 update to GRCC stated that “Kemble Community Garden allotments now running for one year, using land at Station Road, and including a wilderness area”. Other examples of grassroots activity following the production of a plan document are:

- £17k was raised in South Cerney for a new **Youth Shelter** and **Multi Use Games Area** and the parish council uses the precept it raises to support actions arising from the plan.
- **Safe walking routes** have been set up in Kemble and footpaths signs and stiles fixed in Meysey Hampton.

- Avening has encouraged enough volunteers to come forward to increase the number of **litter picks** each year and to increase the village hall committee. A twice yearly stream clearance has also been established.
- Chedworth’s **business club**, set up to promote mutual support and networking opportunities for the 100 small businesses in the parish.
- **New activities** have been set up in Poole Keynes, Willersey and several other parishes as a result of their parish and community led plan.

Communities cannot always complete every action independently and it is important to form partnerships to progress actions.

GRCC facilitates links between the community and appropriate partners and examples of partnership working include:



In South Cerney, a mountain bike track was created by digging a pond and using the land to make small hills. This has proved popular with older and younger residents.



“Through ‘joined up’ thinking and partnership working, the South Cerney Parish Plan has created a great deal of community spirit in the parish.”

South Cerney parish councillor

- Establishment of a **youth club** in Down Ampney through a partnership that included the parish council, the village hall, and Gloucestershire County Council (who funded the Youth Bus that travelled from Bourton on the Water in the early stages of establishing the club).
- **Car parking** was improved at the Kemble railway station, with the community forming a partnership with Great Western Railways.
- Willersey worked with Royal Mail to change **local postcodes** to GL instead of WR.
- Several communities have worked with Gloucestershire Highways to instigate **traffic calming measures** such as weight limit changes in Driffield and speed signs in Meysey Hampton.

Down Ampney receiving their prize at Village of the Year 2009 for their work with the youth in the parish.



Benefits of Parish and Community Led Planning

'Parish & Community Led Planning enables local people to create stronger, more vibrant and more resilient communities, better able to respond to local challenges and opportunities. It represents genuine value for money, as communities across the country take on responsibility for making things happen, rather than waiting for others to do it for them.'

Commission for Rural Communities 2008

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. People relate strongly to the village or parish in which they live and are more likely to be engaged and involved at a very local level. The information from parish and community led plans in Gloucestershire can be used to help identify local priorities for safer, stronger communities and hence feed into Neighbourhood Management clusters.

'The reason for undertaking a plan was to improve the facilities for the parish. The parish council realised that this could not be done without gathering evidence



An artist map of Kemble Parish produced as part of the parish plan.



The response to Poole Keynes' skills & interests survey allowed them to set up a number of new groups in the village.



Down Ampney used parish plan evidence to source extra funding to re-equip and relocate the village shop.

Other areas covered in this suite of reports about parish and community led planning include:
Gloucestershire County
Forest of Dean District
Stroud District
Tewkesbury Borough

of what the community want, and this is achieved through the parish plan'

Down Ampney Parish Council

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 parish council can play a key role in the development of the plan and carrying through actions. The process used by parishes, supported by GRCC, has become increasingly robust and inclusive, resulting in plans of good quality. The firm evidence of need also gives strength to funding applications.

Many communities in the Cotswold district review progress of their plan's actions during parish council meetings and in the case of South Cerney, a large copy of the action plan is on permanent display in the village hall to enable the local community to keep up to date with developments. The next step will be for communities to decide whether to refresh their plans and this refresh process will provide the opportunity to celebrate what has been achieved and to update the action plan for the future. 2 communities in the Cotswold District are about to embark upon this refresh process and it is essential that parishes have support to tackle this process and to move forward further actions.

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

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