



### What is a Parish and Community-Led plan?

A Parish & Community-Led Plan is a document which sets out a vision for a community's future based on sound local research, looking at social, environmental and economic life.

It celebrates positive features and activities, highlights community needs and contains a detailed action plan to help the community meet those needs. A Parish & Community-Led Plan is produced by and for the community, based on a detailed survey and consultation process which involves the whole community. It prompts action and influences others.

A robust Parish & Community-Led Plans is inclusive and can demonstrate a robust process that ensures its quality. It is steered by a group of people from within the community, including representation from the parish or town council and follows good practice and advice from a neutral independent body. In Gloucestershire, GRCC is the lead provider of advice and support for parish and community led planning.



Down Ampney Community Shop, which is currently based in a portacabin, has benefited from the parish plan as the evidence gathered for the plan has been used in funding applications

### Introduction

Down Ampney is a small parish in the south of the Cotswold district of Gloucestershire and has a population of approximately 650 (*Gloucestershire County Council mid-2007 population estimate*).



Down Ampney, Gloucestershire

The parish has two points of interest from its history which attract tourists to this small Gloucestershire settlement. The village is birthplace to the composer Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872) and is the commemorative home for the service personnel who fought at the Battle of Arnhem. The whole village is also owned by the Co-operative group who have been supportive in many of Down Ampney's community projects.

The 2008 parish plan is considered by residents of the parish as their second plan following the publication of a highly successful village appraisal in 1991. Down Ampney was actually the first parish in England to undertake a village appraisal and as such became an educational study for students of town and country planning.

In 2006 it was appreciated that the vast majority of projects included in the village appraisal were complete, including the retention of the village school, the establishment of better recycling facilities and the creation of a quality sports facility in the parish. The appraisal had also helped in the securing of funding for the installation of a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) and play area for younger residents of the community.

This small parish has a history of delivering many projects, so when the community set about creating the new parish plan, they fully understood what was expected and from the outset wanted to ensure that this truly was a document for the residents of the parish created by the residents of the parish.

### The Process

Down Ampney village held an open meeting in November 2006 to discuss parish planning. The meeting, which attracted more than 90 residents, also provided the first opportunity to gather information and opinions through a 'storming' session. The evening was such a success that 24 people signed up as volunteers to drive the plan forward.

From December 2006 and throughout 2007 the steering group regularly met to progress the plan and kept the parish informed of activity through the parish magazine 'Down Ampney News'. Late in 2007 a comprehensive household questionnaire was distributed, which produced a staggering 91% response rate. The information gathered and analysed (by GRCC) from the questionnaire formed the basis for Down Ampney's parish plan.

The steering group, in creating the plan, were able to create actions specific to different age groups as the household questionnaire had been designed with this in mind. The final plan document including an action plan was finalised and then published in spring 2008.

## Types of actions

Down Ampney Parish Plan has a wide variety of actions included in its final document. The plan aims to:

- address issues relating to the **parish environment** including new footpaths, a new allotment and improved recycling facilities
- maintain and support the local **economy**, through creating a village hub at the village hall
- continue to improve local **services** like public transport, roads and energy supplies through partnership working with other agencies
- **maintain a low level of crime** through a number of different measures

## Lessons learnt

1. You can't do it on your own! Once you have established a core group of people, ensure that they see the plan through to its completion.
2. Persevere with the parish plan once you have started
3. Remember the odd glass of wine or two helps bring in the punters!

## Keeping in touch

You can keep up to date with Down Ampney's parish plan progress via the parish website:

[www.downampney.org.uk](http://www.downampney.org.uk)

## Down Ampney's achievements

### ➤ Community interest

The community collaboration and the diverse range of people involved in the parish plan is generally regarded by Down Ampney residents as the biggest achievement of creating the plan.

### ➤ Securing the shop's future

A large amount of funding, with evidence from the parish plan being used in applications, has been sourced and a loan (part of a fund applied to) has been secured in order to fund the construction of a new annexe on the village hall which will provide a permanent home to the village's community owned shop. The shop currently resides in a portacabin that has limited life left and so it was vital that a permanent home was built in order to secure the shop's future.

The added benefit of the shop being housed in a permanent structure is the reintroduction of the post office to the village hall site. The post office has been operating from a Co-operative group owned cottage in the village, following an arson attack on the village hall which destroyed the hall in 2007, in which the post office had previously been based.

### ➤ Residents satisfaction

Through the consultations carried out for the parish plan it was noticed by the steering group that on the whole the residents of Down Ampney are generally satisfied with life in the parish. This was considered by the steering group and the parish council to be an achievement following the delivery of many other successful projects before the parish plan.

### ➤ Backing up the profile of Down Ampney

The creation of the parish plan is seen as reconfirmation by residents and other interest parties that the community of Down Ampney are 'doers' and get things done. The plan has a large action plan which already has a number of completed actions, and the majority of other actions are in progress (see the county parish plan database on the [GRCC website](#)).

### ➤ Establishing a Youth Club

A Youth Club has been established with a view to reducing the number of young people associated with crime because of 'hanging about' on the streets and having nowhere to go. The Youth Bus from Bourton, funded by County Council helped to establish the group, however it is now moving to become less grant dependent through running its own fundraising events like the hugely successful Christmas Bingo. The Parish Council currently contributes to the hire of the hall in response to the established need for a Youth Club in the parish plan.

### ➤ The plans serves its purpose

The reason for undertaking a parish plan was to improve the facilities for the parish. The parish council realised that this could not be done without gathering evidence of what the community want, and this is achieved through a parish plan.



*A potential site for new allotments – for which a need was established in the parish plan – could be on the land between the recycling facilities and the children's play area on the village hall site*

Julia Job, Chair of Down Ampney Parish Council:

“Good organisation can lead to outstanding results”

## Key advice for others

1. Get as many people from across your community involved in the plan at the earliest possible stage
2. Think of 'the end game/product' at the beginning of your parish plan – look at other completed plans
3. Appreciate and factor in all expected costs at the earliest possible point – GRCC can help you with this

## Working with partners

Both the District and County Councillor for Down Ampney are proactive in attending parish events. The parish plan document is now used by both when making representations on behalf of Down Ampney community at district and county level. Previously, the District Council has reacted to evidence of need for better recycling facilities by installing recycling bins at the village hall.

The parish plan has also helped to develop the relationship between the village and the Co-operative Group, the major landowner in the parish. The Co-operative actually provided a glowing letter of support for the community shop's application for funding for new premises.



*Down Ampney Village Hall, will have an annexe built on the side (left hand of this picture) where the Community Shop will be housed in the future. The Hall is also used for the local Youth Club which was set up as a result of the parish plan.*

Ann Frost, Chair of the Down Ampney parish plan steering group:

**“To give the plan more ‘weight’ it is important to be completely separate from the parish council”**

## Future projects

Reacting to the evidence of need provided in the parish plan, there are plans to establish a site for new allotments in the parish, with a possible location being in the grounds of the village hall.

The parish plan is regularly reviewed at Parish Council meetings, however it is not currently a standing agenda item. In future it will be discussed at every meeting to ensure a sustained rate of progress and that its entry on the GRCC [county database of actions](#) is updated.

*With thanks to  
Julia Job, Chair of  
the Parish  
Council and Ann  
Frost, Chair of the  
Steering Group  
for their  
contributions to  
this case study*

GRCC is the lead provider of support for **parish and community-led plans** in Gloucestershire and can offer support to communities dependent on the location of the parish. For further information please contact  
GRCC



Community House  
15 College Green  
Gloucester  
GL1 2LZ  
Tel: 01452 528491  
Fax: 01452 528493  
[glosrcc@grcc.org.uk](mailto:glosrcc@grcc.org.uk)

