

# Parish & Community Led Plans in Gloucestershire

## Rural Gloucestershire 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 provides a countywide summary and will be of interest to statutory authorities and service providers with a duty to engage and involve. The district based reports contain more examples of community activity. 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](http://www.grcc.org.uk) for more information or contact GRCC on **01452 528491**.



*Kingswood consulted with residents through a stand at a local event.*



*Siddington used the Spring off the Streets event for their youth consultation.*

**'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

## Support for Parish & Community Led Plans in Gloucestershire

The first parish plan in England was developed in 2003 in Dymock, Gloucestershire, the first of a national rollout programme sponsored by Defra and The Countryside Agency. The network of 38 rural community councils continue to support their development nationwide and GRCC is the lead provider of assistance to Gloucestershire's communities developing and moving forward actions from plans.

Stroud and Forest of Dean District Councils have distinct grant schemes for communities to develop parish and community led plans and to fund 'quick wins' actions. Cotswold District has two grant schemes to which communities can apply to move forward actions – particularly those involving play facilities and capital build. These district councils also support GRCC to work with communities.



# Issues and actions raised by Gloucestershire's communities

The process of composing 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.

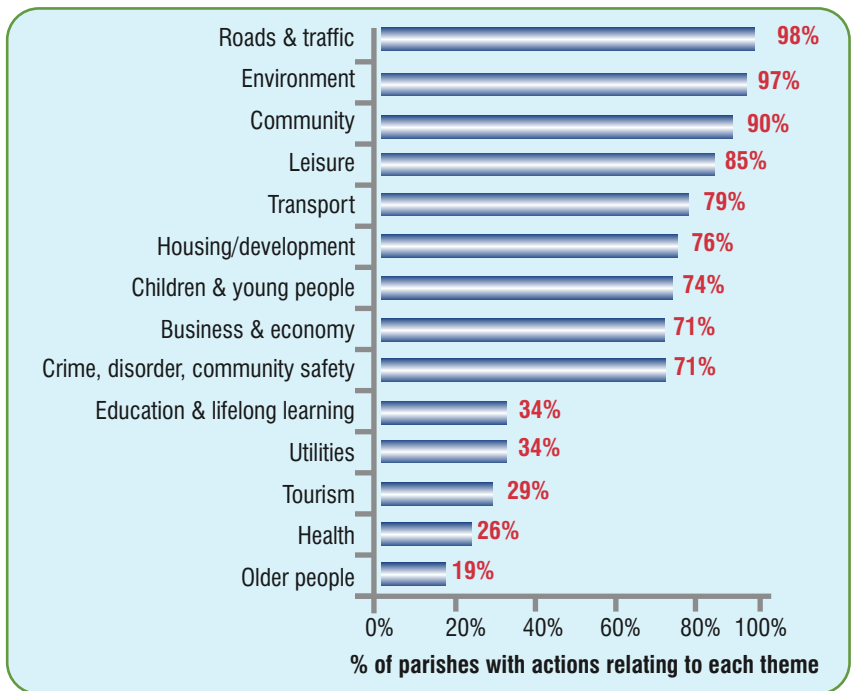
The following data applies to the 62 plans on the GRCC countywide database of parish and community led plans.

Both countywide and in each of the four districts, over 90% of parishes on the database have actions relating to **roads & traffic** and the **environment**. The theme of **community** also features strongly, especially in the Cotswold and Stroud Districts.

Two additional themes feature in the top 3 for the Cotswold and Tewkesbury districts, namely **children & young people** and **transport**. Although there are a number of actions in plans which relate to **older people**, these are often included within wider areas such as housing or leisure rather than being addressed in isolation.

Looking in more detail at the theme of **roads & traffic** the most common topic countywide is **road safety & speeding**, with 87% of parishes having actions on this issue. Other topics within this theme include the **condition of roads, pavements and verges** (48% of parishes) and **parking** (47% of parishes). Under the theme of **transport**, 55% of

	COUNTY	Cots	Forest	Stroud	Tewks
Roads & traffic	98%	100%	94%	100%	100%
Environment	97%	91%	100%	96%	100%
Community	90%	91%	89%	96%	75%
Leisure	85%	91%	83%	88%	75%
Transport	79%	73%	78%	80%	88%
Housing/Development	76%	45%	78%	88%	75%
Children & young people	74%	100%	56%	84%	50%
Crime, disorder, community safety	71%	73%	67%	72%	75%
Business & economy	71%	55%	72%	76%	75%
Utilities	34%	18%	50%	32%	25%
Education & lifelong learning	34%	9%	39%	44%	25%
Tourism	29%	18%	39%	36%	13%
Health	26%	9%	44%	24%	13%
Older people	19%	27%	28%	16%	0%
<b>% of parishes with actions relating to each theme</b>					



all parishes on the countywide database have actions on **public transport** and 44% on **community/voluntary transport**.

Within the theme of **environment**, 76% of parishes on the database have actions relating to **parish cleanliness/maintenance**. 68% of parishes have actions on **public footpaths/bridleways** and 50% of parishes have actions on **conservation/heritage**. Plans from the Stroud District are more likely to feature **renewable energy** actions.

Looking at the theme of **community**, 55% of Gloucestershire's parishes have actions to develop **village newsletters**, produce **welcome packs** or provide other written information to residents, while 45% of parishes have actions relating to **improving or developing village halls/community buildings**.

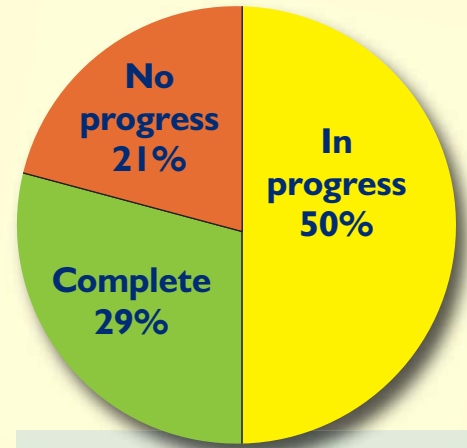
Within the theme of **crime, disorder & community safety**, neighbourhood watch groups feature strongly, with 48% of all parishes wishing to set up or promote **local watch groups**. 37% of parishes have actions on **policing** e.g. **improving response times** and **increasing police presence**.

The majority of **housing/development** actions relate to either **affordable housing** or **planning** issues. 52% of parishes on the database have actions on **affordable housing** and 29% of parishes have actions relating to **planning control**.

# Status of Parish & Community Led Plan actions in rural Gloucestershire

2345 actions from 62 of Gloucestershire's 67 completed parish and community led plans (excluding Market Town Health Checks) appear on the GRCC database, with actions from a further 5 plans due to be added in Spring 2010. The number of actions within plans ranges from 9 in Blaisdon to 134 in Upton St Leonards. The status of the majority of actions on the countywide parish plan database is known as communities provide 'traffic light' updates to GRCC. 79% of actions have either

been completed or are in progress and this is testament to the energy, enthusiasm and determination of community members and the support received from partners. The proportion of actions that are either completed or in progress is broadly similar across the four districts. In the Stroud and Forest of Dean districts, 79% of actions are completed or in progress, while the figure is slightly higher for Tewkesbury (84%) which has more older plans and lower for Cotswold (70%) which has more recently developed plans.



Status of actions in Gloucestershire.

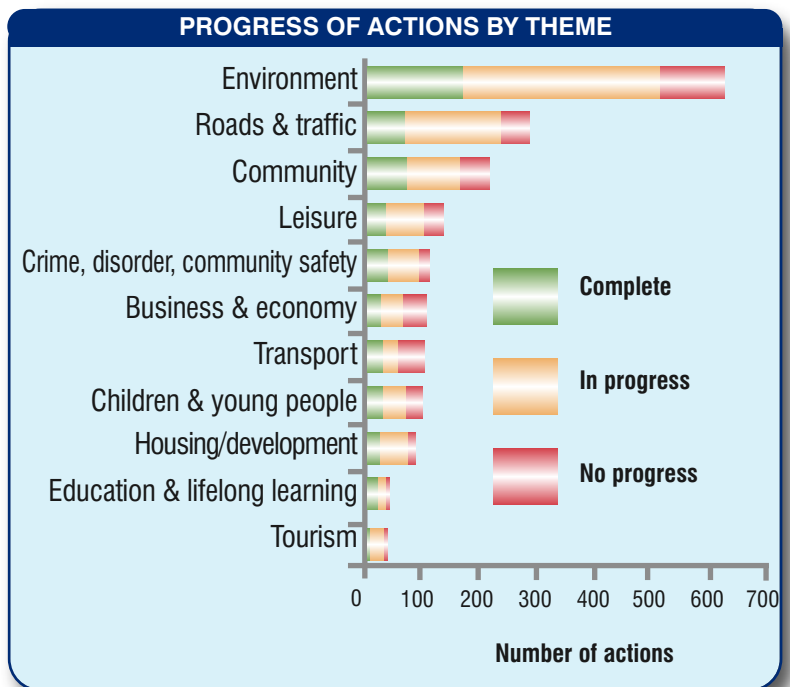
It should be borne in mind that a number of actions are continually ongoing and therefore remain 'in progress' and never 'complete' e.g. Driffield has environmental maintenance actions which need annual attention.

## Barriers to progress of actions for Gloucestershire communities

The information provided by communities to GRCC gives an insight into reasons for lack of progress of actions.

The themes with the highest proportion of completed actions relate to **older people** (50% complete), **community** (37% complete) and **crime, disorder & community safety** (35% complete). There are proportionately more unprogressed actions in the categories of **transport** (43% no progress) and **health** (38% no progress). Some actions have not been progressed because circumstances have changed or because further research reveals that the cost outweighs the benefit e.g. Westbury on Severn wanted to build a Health Centre but further investigation and community consultation led to the conclusion that the cost did not match the benefit. Some actions can be completed relatively quickly and independently by communities and these are more likely to have been achieved, e.g. provision of newsletters and notice boards.

In other cases the parish is dependent on a response or action from another party before proceeding or there is a lack of support or permission from authorities for a variety of reasons. Other barriers to progress include shortage of available funding and a lack of volunteers to drive the action forward.



MOST COMMON REASONS FOR LACK OF PROGRESS	NO. OF ACTIONS
Change of circumstances/change of plan	14
Awaiting response/action from other parties	12
Cost/lack of funding	12
Dependent on completion of other actions	12
Turned down by agency	10
Research/evidence needed	10
Impractical/Unrealistic/Not possible	9
Not needed/Not needed at the moment	8
Lack of support from agencies	7
Lack of volunteers to drive forward	6

# Gloucestershire's rural communities driving actions forward

Parish and community led plans enable communities to identify issues that affect their vitality and sustainability. We are pleased that more communities in the Cotswold District are using this tried and tested method to produce realistic action plans to shape their future.

Rosemary Lynn, Head of Sustainable Communities and Housing, Cotswold District Council

## Actions can be achieved independently by communities as the following examples demonstrate:

- Community facilities have been improved e.g. new/refurbished play areas have been introduced in communities such as Chalford and a mountain bike track in South Cerney.
- New activities have been introduced such as exercise classes, toddler groups and luncheon clubs.
- Actions to improve community safety and address fear of crime include setting up Neighbourhood Watch schemes and encouraging reporting of incidents.
- Welcome packs, websites and notice boards have been developed in a number of communities such as Bisley and Newland.
- Maps and guides on topics ranging from village walks, town trails and directories of local businesses have been developed in communities such as Berkeley and King's Stanley.
- Parishes have been maintained through improvements to roads and verges in communities such as Awre, increasing rates of volunteering for village 'clean ups' as in Avening and providing street furniture e.g. in Staunton and Alkington.

- Allotments have been set up in a number of communities, including Kemble and Highnam.
- The firm evidence of need provided through consultation gives strength to funding applications and substantial funds can be levered in to support actions e.g. Awre has levered in £180k, which equates to £150 per head.

Communities have sought to work with partners to drive forward actions and GRCC helps them to forge these link. Examples include:

- Cotswold Wireless Broadband was installed in Longney as a result of their parish plan action to 'establish a village network'.
- Community resilience has been addressed in parishes such as Chedworth, which raised issues relating to localised flooding and led to action by the county council to bore out holes.



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

- Gorsley & Kilcot parish which worked with county, voluntary and private transport providers to address transport issues to provide solutions such as repositioning the bus stops, distributing timetables and raising awareness of all transport services. This resulted in increased transport facilities to meet needs and increased use of public transport within the community.
- Several communities have worked with Gloucestershire Highways to introduce speed restrictions and alter access/weight restrictions.



*Highnam allotments were developed in response to their plan*

# Benefits of Parish and Community Led Planning – local democracy in action

The government White Paper, *Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power* (July 2008) encourages passing power into the hands of local communities and giving real control over local decisions and services. The new Comprehensive Area Assessment for local authorities also assesses how well local authorities are seeking to understand and meet local needs, set priorities, improve the area and people's lives and supports the engagement and empowerment of citizens. Many local authorities adopt parish and community led planning within their engagement strategy for the following reasons:

- **High rates of participation (CRC 2008).** Consultation response levels of over 90% have been achieved in some Gloucestershire plans.
- **Putting communities in the driving seat of local change.** Siddington parish plan steering group has discussed the aspirations in their plan with council members and officers. The FOD parish plan forum also plays a vital part of the development of LSP strategies and actions.
- **Increasing volunteering and local community action.** Parish and community led plans are driven by volunteers and there are a number of Gloucestershire examples of community action throughout this suite of reports.

**Parish and community led plans could play an important role in helping to prioritise actions in future countywide neighbourhood management structures.**

Hester Hunt, Community Engagement Manager, GCC



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



*English Bicknor Parish used their 2003 Parish Plan as evidence for successfully applying for £125,000 Big Lottery funding for their village hall refurbishment, completed in 2009 and providing access to health, leisure and education services.*

Other reports in this series include: Progress of parish and community led plans in the Cotswold District Forest of Dean District Stroud District Tewkesbury Borough

- **A bottom up approach.** "Parish Plans provide evidence of need which enable our communities to develop innovative solutions to community issues and aspirations – a springboard for projects which lever in funding and contribute to the delivery of grass roots priorities and those of the Forest of Dean Sustainable Community Strategy."

Lena Maller, LSP co-ordinator, Forest of Dean.

District Council officers in Stroud and Cotswold have also used parish and community led plans to help develop their core strategies.

- **A reinvigorated local democracy.** Corse and Staunton steering group members stood as Parish and District Councillors once their plan was completed, increasing the number of newly elected members.
- **Down Hatherley: "Village members are more aware of the concerns of others and generally more involved with village life."**
- **A wealth of evidence that allowed local service delivery to be rationalised according to community needs in a cost effective manner (CRC 2008).**

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.

**Gloucestershire Rural Community Council  
Community House, 15 College Green, Gloucester, GL1 2LZ**

**Tel: 01452 528491 ● Fax: 01452 528493 ● Email: glosrcc@grcc.org.uk ● Web: www.grcc.org.uk**