

Stroud 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. Actions from parish and community led plans developed in the Stroud District from 2002 are explored in this report. Thank you to all communities who have 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 information or contact GRCC on **01452 528491**.

In the Stroud District, typically 65% of the community will have an input to the plan's development. 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.



Local people were encouraged to get involved in their plan at the Kingswood fete.

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.

North Nibley residents take the opportunity to consider options for the future.



Issues and actions raised by Stroud 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.

25 out of 46 parishes (excluding market towns) in the Stroud District have completed a parish plan and the actions from all of these are featured in the GRCC database. The following data applies to those 25 communities.

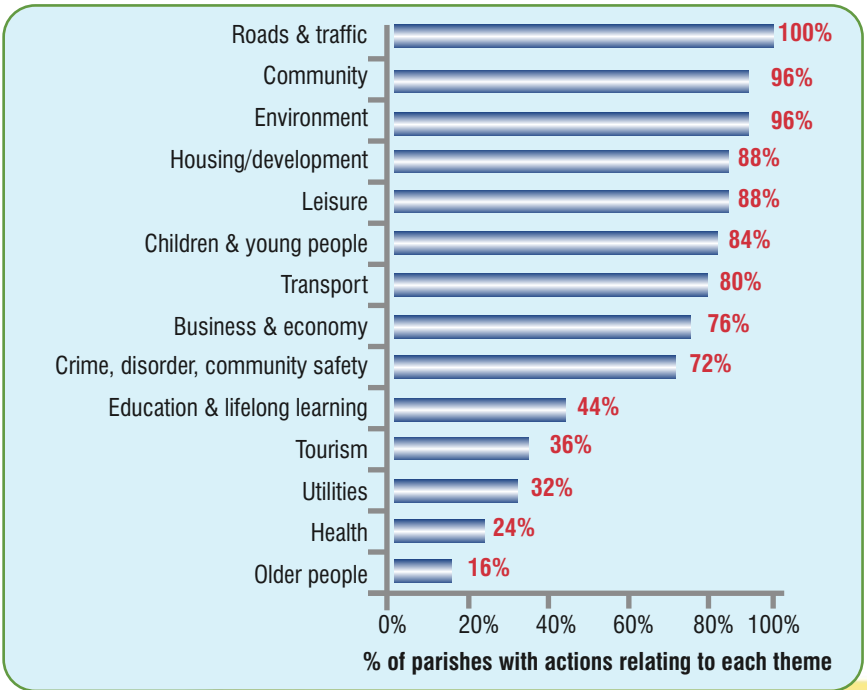
Roads and traffic actions have been developed by all 25 communities and 24 of these have actions specifically relating to **road safety and speeding** e.g. Minchinhampton's action to 'reduce speeding through Box'.

88% of the communities have actions on the subject of **housing and development** and 60% of parishes have actions specifically relating to provision of affordable housing in rural areas, e.g. the Cainscross action 'To seek that all new developments address the issues of quality affordable houses'.

80% of the 25 parishes have actions relating to **transport** and many of these recognise the need to work in partnership with other organisations to address the identified problems, e.g. in Miserden 'Investigate possibilities for a public transport network and routes which offer a viable alternative to car usage and address the transport needs of all residents.'

Actions to address **crime, disorder & community safety** can be found in 72% of parishes and over half of these have actions relating to more visible police patrolling or making **police presence** more effective.

48% of the 25 parishes have actions relating to **village halls and community buildings** and these largely revolve around maintenance of the building and providing activities e.g. Uley's action to 'Source funding for the extension and updating of the village hall'.



96% of Stroud District parishes have actions relating to the **environment**.

- 72% of parishes have actions related to planning, in particular to communities' desire to retain their local distinctive character and have more opportunity to influence planning decisions e.g. Randwick's action: 'sympathetic new build to be investigated and included in the parish design statement and supplementary planning guidance'.
- **Parish cleanliness and maintenance** is addressed in 64% of plans e.g. Woodchester's action to 'organise a village clean up/litter pick'.
- **Renewable energy** production is explored in 8 of the plans e.g. in King's Stanley: 'Investigate the feasibility of a community-based wind turbine scheme within the parish'.
- 9 communities address issues relating to **flooding** e.g. Painswick's action to devise a 'programme of water drainage'.

84% of Stroud parishes have actions relating to **children and young people** e.g. Chalford's aim to provide more play facilities for young people.

88% of parishes have actions relating to **leisure**, many of which refer to the need for more **sports and leisure activities** and promoting what is already on offer e.g. King's Stanley aspires to 'work with the sports clubs to explore whether the range of sports and training activities currently available for young males could be offered to young females'.

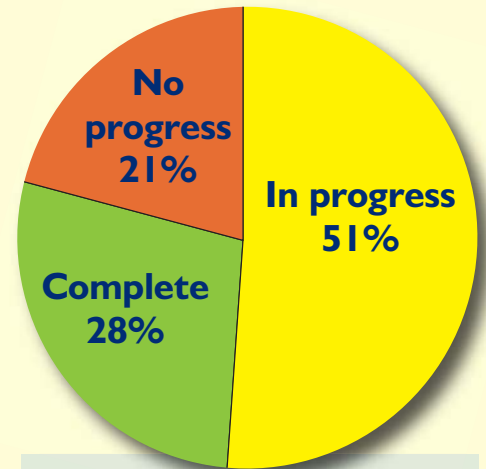
Status of Parish & Community Led Plan actions in the Stroud District

There are more than 1,000 actions on the database from parish and community led plans in the Stroud District, with the number of actions in each plan ranging from 11 to 134.

The status of almost 90% of the actions is known and recent analysis by GRCC shows that 79% of these actions 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.

Some actions can be completed quickly and have attracted 'quick wins' funding from Stroud District Council and other funders, whereas other actions need greater investment of time and/or resources – e.g. a **market town regeneration project** as in Berkeley's parish plan is more complex than producing a **website or newsletter**.

In some cases, complex actions are broken down into smaller projects to make them more achievable, which may require input from a number of



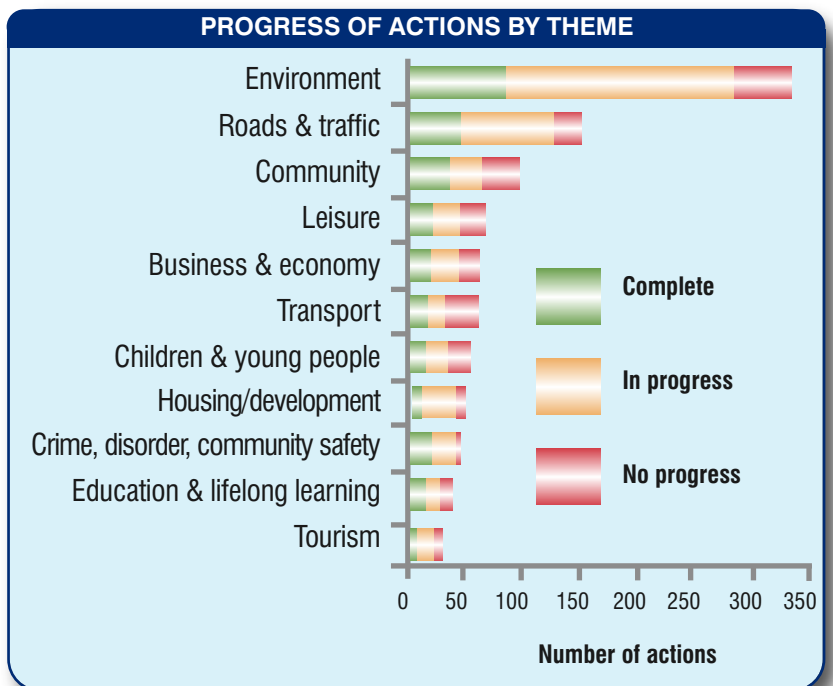
Stroud District status of actions.

different partners in order to progress.

Barriers to progress of actions for Stroud District communities

The information provided by communities to GRCC gives an insight into the reasons for lack of progress of actions. The three most common reasons given in the Stroud District relate to the order in which communities are tackling actions—they prefer to complete some before moving on to the next and may look at alternative ways of addressing some actions. Another notable issue is the lack of sufficient volunteers to drive projects forward. Lack of support or being turned down by agencies does not appear to be a significant problem in the Stroud District.

Often circumstances have changed since the plan was written e.g. it was not possible to move forward Alkington's action to use the chapel as a community facility following the chapel's closure. In other cases, enthusiasm wanes or volunteer fatigue sets in following the process of developing the plan. GRCC encourages communities to complete parish and community led plans within one year (as opposed to up to 3 years for some early plans) as it helps to maintain momentum and all actions remain relevant.



TOP 10 REASONS FOR LACK OF PROGRESS	NO. OF ACTIONS
Not actioned/addressed yet	23
Looking at possibilities	18
Lack of volunteers to move forward	16
Change of circumstances/change of plan	9
Further research needed	6
Withdrawn	6
Awaiting response/action from other parties	5
Lack of interest/demand from community	5
Impractical/Unrealistic/Not possible	4
Lack of time	3

Stroud District communities driving actions forward

Some actions contained in parish and community led plans can be independently completed by the community and creative solutions have been found to address issues raised. Examples of grassroots activity following the production of a plan are:

- Bisley with Lypiatt set up a **village composting** project – the first in the Stroud District and the second in the county – which has provided local employment as well as making the community feel very positive towards recycling. In fact, in the 2008 Zero Waste campaign, Bisley was named as **Gloucestershire’s flagship village**.
- Coaley Community Action Group has installed facilities on the Recreation Field for young people incorporating a **Multi Activity Wall and Seating Pod**.

- Stinchcombe has set up a variety of **environment and climate change** projects. They sourced small grants to purchase Smart meters to loan to households, enabling them to make changes to **reduce energy consumption** and CO2 emissions. Its ‘Adopt a Verge’ scheme has encouraged residents to plant verges and participate in the annual village clean-up.
- Early consultation during the parish plan process at North Nibley identified the need to extend the village hall and evidence gained during this consultation has enabled them to **lever in over £100,000 of funding**.

Partnership working is often crucial to the completion of actions and there are several successful examples of partnerships driving forward actions from plans developed in the



Town Centre information points in Berkeley were produced following their parish plan.

Stroud District. GRCC helps to forge these partnership links.

- Berkeley approached partners such as Stroud District Council, Gloucestershire County Council, Gloucestershire Highways, GRCC and local businesses to help promote the town and surrounding area and to increase **tourism** with the introduction of information points in the town centre.
- Longney and Epney approached partners such as GRCC’s *In Touch* Project and the local pub to set up a monthly ‘**Pub Club**’ for older people.
- Upton St Leonards identified through their consultation a need for a reliable local service to undertake minor repairs around the house for the **older people** in the community. Working in partnership with ‘Care and Repair’ they were able to signpost the scheme to individuals.
- Several communities are organising **village clean up days** and are working with the SDC Chip and Pin initiative to maintain parish cleanliness.

The Village of the Year overall runner up prize in 2009 is presented to Painswick.



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 and stronger



Young litter pickers in Amberley.



A number of communities in the Stroud District have set up Neighbourhood Watch schemes as a result of their plans.



Wireless broadband was installed in Longney as a result of their plan.

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

communities and hence feed into Neighbourhood Management clusters.

“The planning process adds another strand to the Parish Council’s work and helps give clear guidance as to what the community wants the Parish Council to do.”

Rodborough parish plan case study comment

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 Stroud District review progress of their plan’s actions during parish council meetings and as 7 communities’ plans are now over 5 years old, several are contemplating refreshing their plans’ actions. It is essential that parishes have support to tackle this refresh 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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