



### 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.



**The Environment Agency installed a flood monitoring station on the River Churn as a result the parish plan**

### Introduction

South Cerney is a village and civil parish in the Cotswold district of Gloucestershire, a few miles south of Cirencester. It celebrated its 1000 year anniversary in 1999, and has a population of 3,074 (2001 census).



The village of South Cerney lies within the Cotswold Water Park, an area made up of over 130 lakes, mostly formed by gravel extraction. Thousands of years ago an ice sheet that covered the Midlands began to melt, turning into rivers. These rivers and streams took with them sand and gravel, depositing them up to 20 feet thick in places. These sand and gravel deposits lay relatively undisturbed until people began to excavate these resources in the early 1920s. As a result the area was left scarred with huge hollows and pits. Water began to naturally fill the pits, turning them into freshwater lakes, and the area now known as the Cotswold Water Park was born. Over recent years these lakes have become increasingly popular places for fishing, water skiing, jet skiing, sailing and walking. Holiday homes and housing developments such as those found at the Watermark Club and the Lower Mill Estate have sprung up around some of the lakes, offering a range of accommodation in the area.

As a result of this explosion of activity over recent years, the local villages have become more popular and South Cerney especially has thrived.

The South Cerney church contains a beautiful carved wooden head and foot of Christ, taken from a crucifix in Compostela, dating from the 12th Century. At the end of Silver Street in South Cerney is St Edwards College, founded by Anne Edwards in 1834 (the primary school in South Cerney is called Anne Edwards School) to house the widows of clergymen. In nearby Station Road, an attractive row of gabled cottages dates from the 16th and 17th Centuries. The remains of the some of the old railway line can also be found in this area of the village.

South Cerney residents and visitors have seen its popularity and nearby facilities increase greatly over recent years but South Cerney itself still has the charm of a Cotswold village. Industrial areas have sprung up on its outskirts, bringing even more requirements for housing, and a large estate was built on the land sold by Aggregate Industries some years ago. With the ever increasing interest and demand for 'leisure pursuits', it is likely that the area will continue to grow in popularity for many years to come.

## The Process

### How is the Parish Plan process kept alive?

In the committee room at the village hall there is an 'action tracker' displayed on the wall which details all the actions from the plan. This is updated regularly as actions are completed or have progressed.

At Parish Council meetings, because the Parish Plan forms the main plan of activity for the council, there is often a 'Parish Plan update' agenda item. Additionally, on South Cerney website ([www.southcerney.com](http://www.southcerney.com)) there are electronic copies of both the 1999 Village Appraisal and the 2005 Parish Plan, with an updated action plan. The Cerney News also contains an update on actions, delivered monthly to the householders in the parish.



Between 1997 and 1999, a comprehensive 100 page Village Appraisal was compiled by South Cerney Parish Council and the South Cerney Trust. It was completed and published in 1999 which coincided with the celebration of the millennium of the granting of the Royal Charter in 999AD.

In 2005 the Parish Council, working in partnership with GRCC, decided the village should produce a new Parish Plan because most of the projects listed in the Village Appraisal of 1999 had been achieved. The decision was taken at an early stage that the new document would not focus on changing physical aspects of the village but would be focused on progression. The lead group was the Parish Council, but great care was taken to involve as many people and organisations as possible to ensure that a truly representative result was achieved.

An open day was held at the village hall and all residents were invited. There was an emphasis on getting the younger members of the community to attend because 20% of the village population was under the age of 20. The format of the open day was that all who attended were given the opportunity to write down on large pieces of paper their observations about the village and its services. Around 15 pieces of A1 sized paper were filled with concerns, issues and observations. These were all broken down under different general headings, e.g. transport, youth services and village cleanliness.

The draft action plan was completed and distributed with the Cerney News, and residents were given the opportunity to make comments and suggest amendments. There was a good response from residents and using all the feedback, the final document including an action plan was completed and printed in 2006. The completed plan was delivered free to every household and copies were made available at the local post office. The local press also advertised the Parish Plan. It was the intention that the Plan should be flexible with the ability to add extra items after the launch if this was considered necessary.

**A large, picturesque pond has been created (above), which is much appreciated by wildlife and people of all ages.**

**The soil from this pond was used to build a mountain bike track in another part of the park (right).**



## South Cerney's achievements

### Community benefits

Through 'joined up' thinking and partnership working, the South Cerney Parish Plan has created a great deal of community spirit in the parish. There is a sense of completeness, and the number of projects that promote social inclusion means that all residents are given the opportunity to engage with and participate in completing the actions.

When the plan was being put together in 2005, it was agreed to review and refresh it every five years. The next review will take place in 2010. It will be interesting to see if new people come forward to be a part of the new Parish Plan. There is interest from many organisations within the Parish, including the churches. With all this, and village sports clubs expanding their youth work, the future would appear very bright for South Cerney.

### Flooding & sewerage

- The Environment Agency has installed a flood monitoring station on the River Churn.
- Gloucestershire County Council has completed a survey of main storm water drainage pipes and cleared major obstructions found in them.
- Following pressure, Thames Water has almost completed installing a new pumping sewer pipe to the treatment works at a cost of in excess of £5m.
- During the rain deluge in January 2008, members of the Parish Council installed drainage pipes to alleviate the risk of flooding.
- There is ongoing partnership work with GRCC in respect of a Flood Emergency Action Plan.

### Dog mess

- The Parish Council has paid for the installation of an additional three dog mess bins

### Promote healthier routes to school

- Following requests to install a pedestrian crossing, surveys were carried out which resulted in a Lollipop person being employed to help the children cross the road safely.
- Investigating the possibility of creating a walking bus
- New Play Ranger schemes

### Support and provide sporting activities for young and older people

- The Parish Council is supporting the local football club in their attempts to rebuild the pavilion and to develop their youth teams.
- The Parish Council is supporting the local cricket club in the development of their youth teams.
- There are plans to install a multi-use games area (MUGA) with adjacent Youth Shelter at the playing fields.

### Roads & pavements

- Speed limits on Cirencester Road reduced, and the area covered by the limits extended
- Vehicle Activated Signs installed at three stations in the village
- Continual monitoring of problems (including condition of roads and pavements)

### Cycle paths

- Ongoing negotiations with owners of land and Gloucestershire County Council regarding a cycle path to Cirencester.
- Plan/design of bridge at end of Upper Up to BSC7 submitted to Gloucestershire County Council Dept of Public Rights of Way, and Environment Agency.
- On completion of sewer works, Thames Water is to provide extension of existing cycle path to the western boundary.

### Roadside footpaths

- Booklet of village walks in research stage. CWP/South Cerney Trust booklet first edition printed.

### Street lighting

- Additional lighting installed in Broadway Lane.
- Parish Council has worked with Gloucestershire County Council Street Lighting department on a scheme to save energy.

### Play/sport opportunities for children

- A grassed area in Jubilee Gardens has been purchased and is now in the ownership of the community.

### Monitoring and improving environment – Upper Up Park

- A new hedge was planted as part of a biodiversity scheme via Cotswold District Council.

### Funding secured

- £5,000 has been secured from the Big Lottery via Cotswold District Council Play Partnership
- £500 was secured from Cotswold District Council's Section 106 money, used for planting a new hedgerow at the playing fields.
- £12,000 has been secured from the Landfill Trust and this will be used to build to Multi Use Games Area (MUGA).
- Funding was secured from Gloucestershire County Council to pay for the appointment of a Lollipop person.



## Key advice for others

***“Undertake and complete a Parish & Community-Led Plan, and stick to the actions of the plan. However, it is important to leave room for additional projects and allow time for review.”***

## Working with partners

Through partnership working, with agencies such as Cotswold District Council (CDC), Gloucestershire County Council, Highways Agency, Environment Agency and the Police, South Cerney Parish Council now know who to contact to address specific issues in the parish. These ‘hotlines’ to specific organisations or councils allow for more efficient working.

Through the Parish Plan, South Cerney has been introduced to Claire Dowan, a CDC Youth Development Officer, who has helped to drive forward many of the actions aimed at providing services for younger people in the community, including the setting up of the Youth Parish Council

South Cerney Parish Plan has formed the evidence of need when they have applied for any support from agencies to complete any actions.



*The future site allocated for the installation of a multi-use games area. The plans incorporate an adjacent Youth Shelter at the playing fields using £12,000 secured from the landfill trust and £5,000 from BLF.*

**“It is important to remember that villages are not buildings, they are people.”**

**- Mike Stuart,  
South Cerney  
Parish Council**

## Lessons learnt and future projects

Do not be discouraged if only a small number of people get involved directly in creating the plan. Those who do get involved will be enthusiastic, and as the plan progresses, more people will have the opportunity to get involved at a later stage.

Be realistic when creating your action plan. If other residents are able to see actions being delivered and completed it will be a motivating factor in getting people involved.

***With thanks to Mike Stuart and South Cerney Parish Council members 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  
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