



**Community Council
of Devon**

**Community
Consultation
Techniques for
Parish Planning**



Community Council of Devon

**Your chance for your community to have
its say, the way it wants to say it!**

About this Toolkit

With the ending of the current round of Defra funding for parish plan grants, it is important to show that parish planning is still feasible without quite the level of funding that we have been accustomed to.

A major cost in most parish plans has been the preparation and analysis of a questionnaire. Devon County Council and Teignbridge District Councils have both offered an excellent service which cost around £1,200 to £15,000, depending on the size of the parish. For many parishes, especially smaller ones, this may no longer be affordable.

The community consultation techniques explained in this toolkit will enable your Steering Group to gather the information you need for your Parish Plan without the cost of a professionally prepared questionnaire.

Further cost savings can be made in the printing of the final document. It is always nice to be able to produce a glossy, professionally printed document but, in the end, it is the information that is important. There is no reason that a word-processed, photocopied document cannot be attractive and well-produced.

Devon County Council has recently developed their 'Communities in Action' website (soon to go live) where you will be able to display and update your Parish Plan. If you have a community website, your Parish Plan can also be displayed there.

Rather than producing a large number of full copies of the Parish Plan, a few full copies of your Plan can be lodged in the local post office, the shop and the pub where parishioners can access them if they want to. A few more can be produced to distribute to the people that you want to influence to work with you on the implementation of your Plan. Photocopies of the Action Plan, only, can then be circulated to every household.

For a parish of 500 households, if you produce 20 full, 30 page copies for parish reference and to distribute to influential partners, plus 500 copies of a six-page Action Plan to distribute to households, the total cost, at 12p per double-sided page, would be around £220 instead of about £800 for professional printing.

The above suggestions can save around £1800 from the current average cost for doing a Parish Plan of about £2800. A typical Parish Council contributes an average of about £250 towards the cost of a Parish Plan. Your local County Councillor has a 'doing pot' of approximately £10,000 with which to fund activities in their wards. Your district council may also be able to make a contribution. So there is still money available that can fund your Parish Plan. See the appendix of this toolkit for other sources of funding.

If you would still prefer to do a community questionnaire you can find a downloadable template on the Parish Plans webpage on the CCD website at www.devonrcc.org.uk

Our message is that Parish Planning can still thrive as an activity despite the current absence of dedicated grant funding.

About Parish Planning

Parish planning is a community-led activity. It is carried out by a steering group which is a volunteer community group made up of representatives of all the formal and informal organisations operating in your community. The idea is to create as broad a community representation as possible on the committee.

The impetus to do a Parish Plan often (but not always) comes from the Parish Council who should have no more than one or two members on the steering group.

What is a Parish Plan?

A Parish Plan is a statement of how the community sees itself and how it sees itself developing over the next few years.

- It reflects the views of all sections of the community
- It identifies which features and local characteristics people value
- It identifies local problems and opportunities
- It spells out how residents want the community to develop in the future
- It prepares an **Action Plan** to achieve this vision
- It provides a structured document complete with statistics with which to influence potential funders and partners

What can a Parish Plan Do?

Parish Plans can provide you with a blueprint for the future survival of your community by addressing, in a strategic and coherent way, the issues facing your community

Parish Plans are able to influence the Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and the preparation of the Local Development Framework (LDF) that, by statute, has to be prepared by every District Council.

What if you don't do a Parish Plan?

If you don't tell your district council and other organisations your opinions about your community through a Parish Plan, they will have to guess them. If a community does not do its own Parish Plan then the District Council will, in effect, have to write one for your community under its responsibilities to develop a Local Development Framework.

What Does a Parish Plan Look Like?

There is no standard format for a Parish Plan and no prescriptive list of the subjects it should address. It is up to the community to set out its vision decide which issues it would like to tackle, agree priorities for action and present the information in a way that is interesting and attractive to everyone.

A practical way to present the plan is in three parts:

1. **A description** of your community and its environs
2. **A detailed report** that explains how the consultation has been carried out, the issues raised and conclusions drawn. It could include photographs, documents, sketches or even a video
3. **A succinct Action Plan** that clearly sets out what needs doing, when, why and by whom.

Examples of Parish Plans can be found on the CCD website.

Using this Toolkit

The aim of this toolkit is to provide a simple, straightforward approach, using community consultation techniques, which will enable you to produce a sound Parish Plan.

The three core steps for carrying out a Parish Plan. are:

1. Hold a first community meeting to consult parishioners on;
 - What they like about their community and want to keep and defend
 - What they don't like about their community and want to change

This is not just about 'bricks and mortar' issues. It is also about the non-tangible things about life in your village that make life for the people in your community either better or worse.

2. Hold a second community meeting to ask more detailed questions that will enable you to put numbers and percentages against the issues flagged up from the first meeting. Analyse the answers.
3. Write and distribute your Parish Plan. CCD can provide good examples of Parish Plans for you to follow.

There is Help

CCD's Parish Planning Team can help you plan and carry out your events and provide advice. Contact Paul Edwards on 01392 382535 or email paul@devonrcc.org.uk .

Information on Funding

There are various sources of funding that you can draw on to create a 'doing pot' for you're your parish plan. See the list at the end of this toolkit. We can also provide an excellent step-by-step community planning toolkit and examples of good already-completed parish plans as examples.

Doing Your Parish Plan

The tasks of the Steering Group are to:

1. Hold two parish consultation events
2. Produce a draft of the Parish Plan
3. Invite feedback from the community
4. Draft the final Parish Plan
5. Print the Plan
6. Distribute the Plan
7. Celebrate!

A Word of Warning!

Remember, at all times, that it is the role of the members of the Steering Group to enable all the people within your community to have their say and express their views. It is always tempting to engage people in argument and discussion about interesting and/or important concerns. Resist the urge! Your role is to clarify issues for people but not to change minds.

A Blueprint for a Parish Plan

1. Decide that You Want to Do a Parish Plan

This is usually a decision of the Parish Council but can also be done by a group of interested community members. Deputise one or two people to start an initial Steering Group for Step 2.

2. Start a Steering Group

- Invite representatives from **ALL** the formal and informal groups operating in your community and interested and useful individuals to a meeting (e.g., Parent and Toddlers, Women's Institute, sports clubs, the darts team, faith groups, the skateboard kids, the Village Hall Committee).
- Make a real effort to include representatives of hard-to reach groups like older residents and teenagers.
- Provide plentiful refreshments (Tea, coffee, biscuits...even cake!).
- Explain to them what a Parish Plan is and the role of the Steering Group.
- Invite volunteers to form the Steering Group. Six to eight people is a reasonable number, one of whom should be a Parish Councillor.

3. Sources of Funding

There are various sources of funding for your Parish Plan. Plan see the list at the end of this toolkit.

4. Do Your Research

Contact your district planners and talk to them about the structure of your plan. Ask them what planning issues you might take into account. Contact you district and county councillor s and community development officers and tell them you are doing a Plan. Write to other agencies such as SWEB and SWW to find out what plans they have that may affect your parish

Look through any previous parish appraisals, strategies and consultations to pick out issues that were considered of importance at that time. They will help you gather broad categories of issues that can form a basis for your first consultation event.

5. Hold Your First Consultation Event

The first event is aimed at gathering the broad issues that are of concern to your community so the questions are very general and along the lines of; "What are your concerns about traffic issues in our community?" See below for more details.

Collect the numbers of people attending your consultation events with a breakdown by age and gender as you will need this as part of your statistics. If particular groups are missing, e.g., young people, consider doing special events to ensure that you cover their points of view.

6. Hold Your Second Consultation Event

This event is to get more structured, formal feedback from your community on the issues discovered in your first event. Your are looking for information that will enable you to put percentages of responses against particular issues, e.g., "62% of respondents thought there should be suitable affordable housing for local people".

7. Draft your Parish Plan Report and Action Plan

Your Parish Plan should give:

- Background information about your community
- The process you used to do your Parish Plan
- The background to the issues highlighted and the responses that came forward
- An Action Plan in an easy-to-read table that records the issues and how you intend to address them

8. Feedback

Provide opportunities for your community to comment on your draft document. Amend if necessary. Lodge copies in your shop, pub or post office, if you have one. Put a copy in the local phone box! Let people know that they are there and invite comments. Remember to provide a way for them to reply anonymously such as box in the village shop or the church porch.

9. Re-draft Your Plan

If necessary, re-draft your plan to incorporate the comments received in the feed-back

10. Print, Distribute and Celebrate!

Print your full Parish Plans and summaries distribute them to:

- Every household in your community
- Your Parish Council
- Your district and county councils
- The people you need to work with or influence under your Action Plan

Hold a Community Party to launch your plan and celebrate your achievement. Invite your local district and county councillors, district and county community support officers (and your local Planning Officer!) and other people that you would like to influence with your Plan.

11. Implement Your Plan

Your Parish Plan should become a standing item on your Parish Council agenda to be worked through, in a structured way, to assess which issues can be moved forward.

The Steering Committee and its individual members can become advocates for particular issues in terms of lobbying other agencies for action and looking for funding for the implementation of specific projects that the community can tackle for itself.

12. Plan to Review Your Plan

Your Parish Plan should be a living document. As such it is bound to age over time set a timeframe for a total review of your plan, say in five year's time. At that point you should consider if the plan is still fit for purpose or if so much has changed that a full or partial community review is needed to replace or refresh it.

The Consultation Events

The Community Consultation Process

This community consultation process consists of holding two community events to gather the information that you need to write up your Parish Plan.

The first event is aimed at gathering the broad issues that are of concern to your community so the questions are very general and along the lines of; “What are your concerns about traffic in our community?”

The second event is to gather detailed statistics on the issues gathered at the first event. The questions are much more detailed and along the lines of:

In terms of traffic are you in favour/not in favour of;

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| A 20 mph zone in the village? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| An off-street car-park? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Restrictions on parking in the square? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

Organising a Consultation Event

The Venue

Choose a venue that everyone is happy to enter and be in. For instance, some people may be uncomfortable about entering a pub. Your village hall is ideal.

Timing

Choose a time that is going to be the most convenient to the greatest number of people. Week-days prevent working people from participating. Evenings are not convenient for older people or people with young children. An ideal time would be a Saturday, say, from 11 am to 3 pm. You can decide to run more than one event at differing times.

Attracting People...Provide Food!

Offering and advertising food and other refreshments (sandwiches, pasties, tea, coffee, juice or a cream tea, for instance) is a good way to get people in and to maximise attendance. Consultation events can be also held as part of another village event which has a good turn-out such as the annual jumble sale or fete.

Too Far to Come? (Making Sure Everyone is Involved)

Think about how you will get disabled or older people involved. Offer Steering Group members to pick them up and take them home and a phone number to make arrangements. Who else may not get involved? How are you going to make sure they are included? Contact Paul Edwards at CCD (contact details at end).

Children

Delegate someone (A teacher? A Playgroup leader?) to run some sessions to occupy children while parents are involved in the consultation. There are fun activities that enable children to also express opinions about how they view their community and what they would like to see happen. See our suggestion later in this toolkit.

Advertise!

Advertise the event well in advance. Lots of advertising! Put two or more rounds of flyers through everyone's letterbox. Put the flyer up in public places; on lamp-posts, in your shop, pub or post office and in your bus-shelter. A well laid out, photocopied leaflet is sufficient. Remember to explain what parish planning is about. Emphasise that;

- the event is also fun
- there will be food and other refreshments
- there will be things to do for the children
- you are prepared to provide transport for people unable to make their own way

As They Come through The Door...

Have a display at the door (say, a flipchart) that tells people about Parish Plans and emphasises the community nature of the project. Some people become wary if they feel that questioning come from "Government" at any level. CCD has display material.

Ask People to Sign In.

This is so that you can certify the numbers attending. Make it **VERY CLEAR** that;

- This is **ONLY** so you can justify claims of numbers of attendees at the events.
- **ALL** responses to the consultation are **TOTALLY ANONYMOUS**.
- **NO** individual names will appear in the final document.

Make the direction of travel around the consultation obvious. Big arrows or cut-out footprints on the floor are useful.

The first consultation questions that people come to should gather basic statistics about the people attending. This is easy with a series of posters that people can stick coloured dots on, Thus:

How Old Are You?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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10-18 19-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 61-70 70+

Are You Male or Female?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Male	Female

How long have you lived in the village?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Less than 1 year 1 year 2 years 3 years 5 years 10years 20yrs

This should be done for both consultation events so that you have 'hard' data to report in the Parish Plan about the number of people who attended and what their characteristics were.

Physical Lay-out of the Questions

The questions should be on big sheets of paper (flipchart size or larger). This is to give plenty of space for people's responses. The sheets can be either stuck up on the walls with blue-tack or laid out on trestle tables. On the wall makes a better display. Hand-drawn charts are fine and even preferable as they help emphasise the community nature of the event.

How People Respond to the Questions

Depending on the type of question, people are either given a handful of post-it notes on which to write their comments or a strip of coloured dots to stick against their preferred answers.

Try to give each person only sufficient post-its or dots to respond to all the questions. This is to avoid ballot-stuffing! Ideally each age-group should be given a different colour so that you can gauge and report their differing responses.

How to Ask the Questions...

The following sections lay out techniques that will enable you to collect, in an informal and enjoyable way, the opinions and ideas of your fellow parishioners.

These techniques have been copied (literally) from *The Rapid Consultation and Action Planning Toolkit*, produced by Oxfordshire Rural Community Council. They have very generously made it freely available to all who want to use it (see back page).

The First Consultation Event...

Is about asking people about their issues and concerns in relation to their community. It is not just about 'bricks and mortar' issues it is also about the intangible issues that make their lives in your community either better or worse.

You are looking for issues rather than statistics at this stage. The second event is designed to collect the statistics. The techniques outlined above enable people, in a simple, enjoyable way, to express their opinions on a range of topics.

The techniques outlined below are aimed at gathering broad information about what people like and don't like about their community and what they would like to see happen.

Map and Flags

WHY

This enables you to identify where participants live. It identifies areas of the community that have not taken part in the consultation - further consultations may be necessary. It allows people to put their home into the context of the community and encourages social interaction



WHEN

At an indoor consultation or action planning event

MATERIALS

Map of the village/parish/community

Printed on A1 size paper and mounted on polystyrene base

Flags made from paper/stickers and cocktail sticks

A4 sign: Where do you live? Please place a flag on the map!

HOW

Site the map & flags at the entrance to the event.

Ask participants to identify where they live by placing a flag on the map. Different coloured flags could be used to denote different age ranges/genders. Analyse which areas of the village have not been represented and devise further consultations as necessary



Set up a series of big coloured sheets around the wall with general headings like Transport, Housing, Local Services, JUST as examples.

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Post It Notes

WHY

This is an informal way to find out what participants think about a variety of issues, such as the village and its services. It allows several participants to give their views at the same time without interruption or debate! It also allows participants to consider the views of others and encourages social interaction



WHEN

Useful to engage the community at a Drop in event eg Parish Plan launch or for quick consultation at a village fete.

MATERIALS

Post it notes, pens, large pieces of paper or boards to display post it notes.

HOW

Decide which topics will form the basis of the consultation. These could be general likes and dislikes of the village, or specific aspects of village life eg traffic & transport, local amenities, the village hall etc. Displays of local photographs illustrating certain aspects of village life may encourage participation. Ask participants to write down their opinions, one idea per post it note, and stick them under the appropriate headings on the display boards.



Particularly good for consulting with children and teenagers...have a sheet for each group!

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Graffiti Wall

WHY This is an informal way to engage community members, and young people in particular. It encourages people to write (or draw!) their views in a non confrontational way



WHEN Suitable for most consultations, and particularly appropriate at consultations with young people

MATERIALS Large sheets of paper with either grid lines drawn on or different coloured pieces of paper stuck on to look like 'bricks'. Felt tip pens. Boards/wall
(Make sure that the paper is thick enough to prevent the ink marking the support behind it!)

HOW This is a variation of the Suggestion Wall. Fix the 'paper wall' to boards or to the wall. If appropriate, write out specific questions and stick them on to a section of the wall. Ask participants to write up their views.



At the end of the trail...

Your final poster should be a sheet which asks for feedback (via post-it notes) on what people liked and didn't like in the event so that you can improve the second consultation event.

Between the Events...

Look at the question styles suggested for the second event (see below). Look at the main topic headings from the first event and the individual issues that people have placed under them. You need to put them into a format that enables you to ask a series of questions that enables people to express their preferences, e.g.,

Housing

Would you like to see;

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • A large development of private housing? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • A small development of private housing? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • A large development of social housing | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • A small development of social housing? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Affordable housing for local people? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • No new housing at all? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

The techniques below enable people to respond in an easy way that gives you the information that you need. They simply stick coloured dots on their preferred response. You can, then, count the dots on each section. This gives you the total of number responses for each section and a simple addition of all the responses gives you the overall total of responses. Then you have all the figures you need to work out the percentages. If you give different age-groups different colours of post-its and/or dots, you can also gather responses by age-group.

The Second Consultation Event...

The second consultation event contains more structured questions (but in the same style to the questions above) that enable you to put hard numbers and percentages to the issues and concerns raised in the first event. District and county councils, other statutory agencies, possible funders of projects and other organisations will want to see what percentages of the local number of participants thought what about the issues flagged up, if they are to take your Parish Plan seriously.

Below are a series of easy information-gathering techniques that you can use.

Spectrum Lines

WHY

This is an easy way to find out people's views in either a subjective way (eg what do you feel about this? How much do you like this?) or an objective way (eg How long have you lived here? What is your age?)

WHEN

At any consultation or action planning event, particularly useful for people with limited literacy skills

MATERIALS

Large sheet of paper
Felt tip marker. Supply of pens

HOW

Draw a line across the paper and mark grid lines to define the range of answers. Ask participants to mark their answer on the line. Eg

How safe do you feel living in the village?



How long have you lived in the village?



Boxes and Stickers

WHY

An easy, visual and non confrontational way to find out people's views and priorities. It gives clear (and colourful!) results.

It can also be used to provide a profile of participants.

WHEN

At any consultation or action planning event

MATERIALS

Supply of sticky dots.

Large sheet of paper & felt tip marker or prepared sheets of A4

HOW

Write out the question(s) on the paper.

Draw boxes to indicate range of answers.

Ask participants to place a sticker in the appropriate box or boxes.

Different coloured or shaped stickers can be used to denote different genders or ages

eg. How old are you? Please place a sticker in the box!

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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10-18

19-30

31-40

41-50

51-60

61-70

70+



Finally, give people the opportunity to express an opinion on the next steps. Provide a response sheet similar to this...

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What Next?

Do you want to do something more?



Please indicate what you think should happen next

- Attend a follow up event**
(Saturday 4 March at 2.30pm in the Village Hall)
- Form an Action Group**
- Publish the results of the consultation in the newsletter**
- Other suggestions**

Please give your name & address below so that we can tell you about it!



POSSIBLE SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR PARISH PLANS 2008-9

	Priorities	Amount	deadlines	Guidelines and application form	Address	Phone
Awards for All	Better community understanding of different people, places and cultures.	£300-£10,000	Applications may be submitted at any time.	www.awardsforall.org.uk	Apex House, 3 Embassy Drive, Edgbaston Birmingham, B15 1TR	(0121) 345770 0
Devon Community Foundation (Small grants and fast track)	Small-budget community-based organisations.	Small grants of up to £500.	Applications may be submitted at any time.	www.devoncf.com	The Factory, Leat Street, Tiverton, EX16 4LA	(01884) 235887
Devon Community Foundation (Devon Rural Fund)	Small grants to groups in the seven rural districts of the county.	£50-£500	Applications may be submitted at any time.	www.devoncf.com	The Factory, Leat Street, Tiverton, EX16 4LA	(01884) 235887
UKVillages Community Kitty	Support to fund projects that are of benefit to communities.	£50-£300	Bi-annual scheme. First 2008 deadline for receipt of applications: 10 April 2008.	www.communitykitty.co.uk	The Barn, 48 Mill Way, Grantchester, Cambridgeshire, CB3 9NB	

Community Councillor Grants	Grants to support organisations and projects that benefit the community	Up to a maximum of £5,000	Applications may be submitted at any time.	Contact your District Councillor through your local District Council		
Devon County Council County Committee Budget.	County Councillors can give one-off grants to local projects	Up to £1,500?	Applications may be submitted at any time.	www.devon.gov.uk	County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter, Devon, EX2 4QB	(01392) 382000
Parish Council	Your Parish Council may give a grant towards a community activity or be prepared to give “in kind” assistance.			Contact your Parish Council clerk.		
Dartmoor National Park	Will give a small grant to assist parish planning within Dartmoor.	£250	Applications may be submitted at any time.	www.dartmoor-npa.gov.uk	Dartmoor National Park Authority, Parke, Bovey Tracey, Newton Abbot, Devon TQ13 9JQ	(01626) 832093

Blackdown Hills Sustainable Development Fund	Aimed at supporting projects that bring social, environmental and economic benefits to the Blackdown Hills AONB	£1,000 to £10,000	Applications may be submitted at any time. No funding confirmed for after March 2008.	www.blackdown-hills.net		(01823) 680 681.
East Devon Sustainable Development Fund (East Devon AONB)	Aimed at supporting projects that bring social, environmental and economic benefits to the East Devon AONB	£1,000 to £10,000	Applications may be submitted at any time. Applications closed for remainder of financial year. No funding confirmed for after March 2008.	www.eastdevonaonb.org.uk		(01404) 46663



Community Council of Devon

For further information and Advice on Parish Planning Contact

Paul Edwards on 01392 382535 or
email paul@devonrcc.org.uk

And Finally...

Many thanks to Oxfordshire Rural Community Council for making their excellent *Rapid Community Consultation and Action Planning Toolkit* freely available to all non commercial users.

If you would like to look at the full ORCC toolkit for further inspiration, and have Broadband, the following link will take you to the document:

www.oxonrcc.org.uk//media/Toolkit%20Completdf%20for%20web1.pdf

If you need to download Adobe Acrobat Reader to read the above document, this is available free at: http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2_allversions.html .

Contact details for CCD



Community Council of Devon
County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter, EX2 4QB
Tel 01392 383443 Fax 01392 382062
Email info@devonrcc.org.uk