

Bathford Parish Plan Steering Committee

Report to Parish Annual General Meeting – April 18th 2005

I am speaking now as Chair of the Parish Plan Steering Committee to give you an update on progress with the preparation of a plan for Bathford. It seems a long time since we started this route but we have made good progress and the preparation of a plan should draw to a close later this year.

Last year I reported we were to receive a grant up to the full £5000 that we applied for, should we need it all. The procedure is that half the grant (£2500) is awarded immediately with the balance to be applied for on completion of the plan. Our good news is that so far, thanks mainly to the time donated and the generosity of the people of Bathford, so far we have spent virtually nothing of the original grant.

As has been widely reported, we are following two routes, these being preparation of a village design statement and the Parish Plan itself.

The Village Design Statement Team (headed by Vivienne Summerill). Vivienne has spent a considerable amount of time and effort producing our VDS. The team of volunteer residents who took part in a survey of the parish last summer and submitted reports to Viv on what they observed and what they felt about Bathford and how they perceived its future has helped her considerably.

Viv has now drawn all of this together and produced a draft VDS, which was shown to every Parish Councillor with very little adverse comment (except that it was a bit lengthy)! This was, of course, a document containing every word of every report and will be properly précised to produce the final paper.

The current status is that a shortened version of this document has been circulated with the second and final questionnaire of the Plan in order that every household will have a chance to view the work and comment back to the committee before it is submitted to B&NES for their local plan.

The Parish Plan Itself.

We started the process by trying to meet and talk to as many people and groups within the parish as we could. This took quite some time and we were not satisfied that we had done enough “contacting” at this stage to get a representative view of everyone’s ideas on the future of Bathford.

It was at this point we knew we would need to produce two questionnaires. Our aim was for the first one to produce more “ideas” which may be turned into future projects and for the second to develop this further and also pick up on anything we missed with the first document.

As you will be aware, the first questionnaire went out last summer, designed to be answered by “households”. We had a terrific response to this questionnaire (some 76%), which is considered to be a very high response rate to this type of exercise. For this I have to thank everyone in Bathford who took the time to fill in the questionnaire but, in particular, I must thank every one of the 40 volunteers who gave their time freely to the task of distribution and collection – without their efforts we could not have achieved such a high return. I know that they are aware that every minute of time they logged on the task went towards Bathford contribution to the final budget for the Plan.

The analysis of the first questionnaire took longer than we had anticipated – mainly due to the fact that we took the decision to do it ourselves! Peter McCowen took the lead on this thanks to his I.T. skills. With the counting undertaken by every member of the committee and the final number crunching by Peter, we were able to produce preliminary reports for the autumn of last year.

It was at this point that we realized that winter was fast approaching and, following consultation with the Countryside Agency; we extended our programme until November this year. The thinking behind this decision was that we did not want to send out the volunteers during winter months – for obvious safety reasons – and we would have more time to prepare the second questionnaire properly.

Where are we now?

As we speak, there is probably someone knocking on your front door right now trying to deliver the final questionnaire pack. This pack contains a number of documents.

ANNEX H

Firstly we decided that it was important to pass information back to the Parish. With this in mind the pack contains:

A "Newsletter" cover which gives information on things which have already started to happen from Q1.

A short copy of the Village Design Statement, allowing every household a chance to comment before submission.

A village directory containing useful contact numbers of organisations and businesses in Bathford.

Secondly, the questionnaires.

This time the format is slightly different in that we have made provision for two adults to answer separately on one sheet. Where we know that there are more than two over –18's in the household (from the electoral roll) we have included an extra adult questionnaire.

We have also included a young persons questionnaire (a blue sheet), which is also designed to allow two people to answer. There is a second copy of this where we know there are more than two young people. If we have missed anyone because we do not know the exact numbers then a committee member will deliver extra copies personally provided the household rings the contact numbers on the main questionnaire.

The final sheet is a yellow "Response" sheet. This is to allow anyone interested in becoming involved in projects or giving suggestions to give contact details separately from the questionnaire they return.

The final stages.

Our key target dates now are:

Questionnaires returned by end of April.

Complete analysis by end May.

Produce a report on our work for June Parish Council meeting.

Produce Parish Plan with Parish Council by July 2005.

Publish completed Parish Plan for all to see.

What has happened so far?

Not everything has to wait until we have completed the Parish Plan before action can begin. Some things have already begun to happen, for example:

- 1 The suggestions made for changes to the play area are already under way. Indeed, this work will be complete before we have completed the plan itself.
- 2 The movement to "Save the Shop" started by Peter McCowan and now involving a separate steering committee is a direct result of the work to produce a plan.
- 3 The bus stop at the Crown is to be relocated this year and have an easy access step as a result of comments made during the VDS work.
- 4 A volunteer has already been found to form a Bathford Tennis Club – see your Q2 for details.
- 5 Various organisations who requested comments in Q1 are making changes as a result of your comments, e.g. Don Turner is now organizing walks round the Browns Wildlife Reserve; The Crown have made more than half of the pub non-smoking.
- 6 The Parish council is seeking ways to further improve communication by setting up the Bathford Parish Web Site (bathford.net).

I think that is all I have to report at the moment but I cannot sit down without saying a few thank-yous.

Firstly I must thank the volunteers who have helped with distribution and with the village design statement. Apart from the work they have done, their time alone has been a very valuable part of our budget – I know that their time element for distributing Q1 amounted to over £1000 alone! Last week I asked Arnie Whitfield (our Treasurer) if he could give me a figure for time donated by volunteers so far. His figures show, depending how you look at them, as:

552 hours OR 79 days OR 16 weeks giving a cash value to the village contribution in kind of **£8500**.

Secondly I must thank all those who have donated cash to our efforts. Money has come in from fund raising events, companies and individuals and full credit will be given in the final document when the Parish plan is published. Special thanks must go to Viv Summerill and Peter McCowan who have given lots of hours of "professional" time to the plan, Viv via the VDS and Peter with the analysis of Q1. Their time has not yet been added to the equation!

ANNEX H

Thirdly, I must thank the steering committee members. We came together just over a year ago, many never having met before even though we all lived in Bathford! Throughout the year we have worked together without complaint and, although we have not always agreed, we have always reached a compromise – even if it is in the British Legion after our meeting.

Finally, I have a special thank you for Robin Harragin, the manager of Whitehaven and her Office Manager Sandra Ward. Whitehaven were unable, under their constitution, to give a cash donation to the Parish Plan.

What they have done is provide the copying facilities for all of the documentation, which has gone out over the two surveys and given Sandra's time freely as a contribution to the parish budget. They have also provided a meeting room free of charge whenever we have needed one. One of the most significant items on our budget had been the printing cost for the questionnaires and Whitehaven have met this in full.

I think that you have probably heard enough from me by now but, if you have any questions, I will be happy to take them now.

Thank you

Stan Cherry.