

Bathford Parish Plan Steering Committee

Report to Parish Annual Meeting - May 8th 2006

I am writing as Chair of the Parish Plan Steering Committee to give you a final report on the preparation of the Parish Plan and Village Design Statement for Bathford.

It seems a long time since we started this process but we have now completed our task and the final documents have been published. This report gives a brief outline of the process.

The Parish Plan

Financing the Plan Preparation

Finance for the plan came in several ways. We achieved a grant for £5000 from Community Action, which had to be met by match funding, made up of:

1	Parish Council and Fundraising	£1740
2	In kind contribution	£5400

The total budget was forecast at some £12000.

At the end of the project we actually finished with no cost to the Parish and a surplus of £900+ in a separate bank account, which is 'ring-fenced' to be used purely for Parish Plan Projects. The key to this success was fundraising and volunteers. We asked local companies for donations and ran quiz nights with other groups and shared the proceeds. We helped raise £1344 in total, made up of:

Bathford Parish Plan	£543
Friends of the Gambia	£258
Friends of Bathford School	£258
Bathford Twinning	£285

However, the finance key lay with the volunteers! We asked for volunteers to distribute and collect the questionnaires. We had 40 volunteers for this and, when we asked them to do it again for Q2, only one declined - because she was 80 and had not been very well! The time logged for this task alone was to the value of some £2100.

One of our Steering Committee thought that we could collate the data received ourselves providing we set out the questions properly and shared the counting work among the steering committee. It should then be possible to feed the numbers onto a spreadsheet and get the answers required. We did this twice and saved about £3000 from our total budget. Also, the volunteer time logged was at a higher rate therefore contributed massively to the in-kind contribution.

The VDS team of 26 volunteers who reported on all the different areas of the parish on a given day also give their time, reports and pictures freely and made a major contribution to final document.

During the preparation work we kept people informed of what was going on using flyers inserted into the Bathford Bulletin, which I learned to produce via desktop publishing. When the time came to prepare our documents I thought I would have a go at designing the books and the result is what you see tonight - and another cost saving on the budget.

What did we achieve?

Q1 achieved an 84% response rate when empty houses and those away were taken into consideration. Only 18 households said they would not complete the questionnaire.

Q2 achieved a 68% response rate using the same criteria.

These responses are considered remarkably high by any sort of market research method and the results are a credit to the volunteers who carried out the task. They had to visit each property at least three times for Q1 - once to ensure that the house was there and introduce themselves, secondly to deliver the paperwork and finally to collect the completed sheets. This sometimes involved several visits, often helping elderly residents with the questionnaire. In the end there was a bit of competition creeping in to see if anyone could get 100%!

What are the outcomes?

Firstly, the Parish Council adopted the Parish Plan in full. Their role in the implementation of the plan is to 'encourage and facilitate'. Of course, we do not have the money to grant everyone's 'wish list'. What we are trying to do is to get things moving and leave others to run with the ideas in many areas.

Some projects already under way (or even completed) are:

- 1 Refurbishment and upgrading of the playing field play area (completed)
- 2 Taking steps to discourage dog fouling on the playing field (ongoing)
- 3 Installation of new benches on the playing field (completed)
- 4 Improvement to the Neighbourhood Watch area (under way)
- 5 Improving the way we communicate within the parish (under way)
- 6 Setting up a Parish Council website (completed)
- 7 Setting up a mobility focus group to survey the village for problem areas (due to report back to the Parish council next month)
- 8 Setting up a mental health support group (two meetings held already)
- 9 Save the Shop - one of the very early offshoots - village co-operative has already re-opened the shop on May 5th.
- 10 Road Safety - speed limits on Box Rd, Bradford Rd and Bathford Hill changed last month
- 11 Supporting your council with park & ride problems (ongoing)
- 12 Environment - Planning committee met last month to set up an environment group
- 13 Reduce the no. of street signs through the village (four removed already)
- 14 Sports car park - Council currently working on this project
- 15 Bench project - donors have donated £1300 plus four complete benches - all we have to do is put the benches in.
- 16 Village green footpath - work under way and installation will be completed before the summer.

The Village Design Statement (Team led by Vivienne Summerill).

Vivienne spent a considerable amount of time and effort producing our VDS. The team of volunteer residents who took part in the survey of the parish and submitted their reports to Viv on what they observed and felt about Bathford and how they perceived its future helped her considerably.

Viv drew all of this together, added the technical expertise section and produced the document, which is on display tonight.

The VDS was finally accepted into the B&NES Local Plan as Supplementary Planning Guidance in December last year. Anyone now wishing to develop in the area - or simply extend their property - must consult the document as part of their architectural work. The planners will also refer to the document when making decisions on planning applications. Already, we believe that the document has been used on up to three planning decisions by the B&NES Planning Dept.

The VDS will stand for five years and then will require review. This could be a fairly simple process if we do not require significant changes.

As a Parish Councillor I must pay tribute to Viv Summerill for her work on our Village Design Statement and, in particular, the large donation she has made personally to the Bathford Parish Plan bank account.

The VDS document is 64 pages long and full of colour photos and maps. It is designed for issue to anyone who wishes to build (or change buildings) within the Bathford Parish. Because of this we only published a limited number of copies as part of the plan. Since it has been available interest has been expressed with regard to purchase from a number of people in the Parish.

The Parish Council has agreed to make the document available for purchase at the cost of £15 for a colour copy and £5 for black and white. This charge represents the cost of printing new copies only and the Parish will make no profit from the sale.

We can also offer copies of the Parish Plan document for £2.

And, finally, some thank-you's

Firstly I must thank the volunteers who have helped with the Parish Plan and the Village Design Statement. Their names are all published in the finished documents.

Secondly, I must thank the other steering committee members. We came together just over two years ago, many never having met before even though we all lived in Bathford! Throughout this time we have worked together and, although we have not always agreed, we have always reached a compromise - even if it was in the British Legion after our meeting.

Finally, a special thank you for Robin Harragin, the manager of Whitehaven. Whitehaven were unable, under their constitution, to give a cash donation to the Parish Plan effort. What they did was provide the copying facilities for all of the documentation, which has gone out over the two surveys and provided a meeting room 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. In addition, they invoiced us for use of the meeting room and duly returned the cheque once our accounts had been finalized with SWAN.

It has taken some time to undertake what we originally thought would be a one-year task. However, I think we can all be proud of the results of our work - and now all we have to do is put it all into action!

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 later.

Thank you

Stan Cherry.