



VILLAGE VOICE

Buriton's Parish Plan

June 2008

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# Introduction

## **What's all this about?**

### **What is a Parish Plan?**

Let's face it, life is never perfect. There are things that we'd like to change, and others we'd like to stay just as they are.

It's exactly the same in a place like the parish of Buriton: there are things that people would like to change, and others they would like to see left alone.

This Parish Plan is about both. It's a summary of all the main issues that people are concerned about in the parish – chosen by the people of the parish.

## **What is it for?**

### **Why produce a Parish Plan for Buriton?**

There are bound to be changes in the parish over the next 10–20 years. A Parish Plan can try to make sure that changes are in accordance with the wishes of residents and local businesses.

Successful Parish Plans have the potential to influence a wide range of organisations and processes which affect our lives. They can identify actions for us, the local community, to undertake – as well as for others to do. They can influence the policies and decisions of other bodies (such as planning policies, housing strategies, transport plans, social services and education arrangements) and they can help obtain funding for projects in the parish.

Many parishes around us were already producing their plans and getting support for projects and services that their residents wanted. It was important that Buriton didn't get left out or left behind.



A Parish Plan is a statement of how the local community sees itself developing over the next few years. The Buriton Parish Plan has been developed *'by the community, for the community'*:

- 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 plans of actions to achieve this vision





## Who is it for?

Much of the Plan is for us – the local community. There are many things that we can do for ourselves, and together, to improve life in the parish.

But there are messages and actions in here for a wide range of other organisations too:

- for our local Councillors and our Member of Parliament
- for the Parish Council, District Council and County Council
- for the Queen Elizabeth Country Park and the South Downs AONB Joint Committee
- for local businesses and landowners
- for the local Police, Education and Health authorities
- for the Train Companies, Bus Companies and the Highways Agency
- for electricity suppliers, internet providers and other utility companies
- and for others

But please don't just wait for someone else to take action. The point of this Plan is to identify some practical steps that anyone can take to begin to make a difference – including volunteering to help take forward some of the larger projects.

All the issues included in the Plan are things that concern a majority of the people in the parish. It goes without saying that the Parish Council will do everything in its powers to work in these areas – but it doesn't have the time or the resources to do everything. Can you help?

## What happens next?

This plan doesn't necessarily have all the right answers, but it's a step in the right direction. It's a chance for anyone who wants to get involved in local issues to start making a difference.

This document contains a series of 'action plans', each of which identifies a number of activities, people who will need to be involved and target dates for completion.

Some of the projects will require sustained commitment and may not be completed for a number of years. It will be important that all the projects are monitored and regularly reviewed.

It's important to stress, therefore, that this document is a 'living document' – regular reviews will be necessary to ensure that the proposed actions and projects take account of changing circumstances and continue to meet the needs of all sections of the community.

As the 'Village Voice' exercise moves into another stage, the steering group also expects to change and is currently considering its future development. Its remit will be to act to facilitate and promote all of the projects in the plan and to keep all stakeholders informed of progress against objectives.

Effective communication is seen as critical to success and efforts will be made to provide regular updates to all stakeholders.

A high level of community involvement has already been demonstrated throughout the whole "Village Voice" process and in particular through the exceptionally high response rate to the questionnaire survey and through attendance at workshops and meetings. The interest and participation of parishioners must also be maintained in the exciting phase of implementing proposals.

## “Village Voice – the Buriton Conversation”

### A Parish Plan produced through comprehensive community involvement – and fun!

From the well-attended public meeting in September 2005 through to the publication of this document in the spring of 2008, the Buriton “Village Voice” exercise was founded upon active community engagement and thorough public participation.

The exercise involved all sections of the community: young and old; different socio-economic groups; all the different streets, lanes and parts of the parish; residents, visitors and local businesses.

Rather than rush into the exercise and conduct a questionnaire survey straight away, a number of other, ‘more exciting’ ideas were developed to engage the community and to identify the full range of issues of interest and concern.



The first stage of engagement and consultation involved holding a series of small gatherings (of about 6–8 residents) in people’s homes all across the parish over a number of months: the renowned ‘House Parties’. Light refreshments were provided by the Village Voice team to ensure there

was always an informal but productive atmosphere and the ‘House Parties’ soon became a very valuable way of spreading interest in the Parish Plan project as well as enhancing community development in the parish.

Participants used sticky Post-it labels, coloured pens and flip-charts to note down things that they like about living in the parish as well as things that they don’t like. They also got the opportunity to suggest things that they would like to see in the future. Everyone attending was able to ‘have their say’ and an ever expanding range of issues gradually emerged. All of the comments were transcribed and retained although anonymity was ensured. In due course the views and comments collected

formed the basis for the design of the more ‘quantified’ stage of the project: the household questionnaire survey.

Regular meetings of the steering group ensured that the House Parties involved all age groups and that they were held in all parts of the parish, supplemented by similar events in the village pubs. In total, about 30 House Party events were held over a period of twelve months.

The early stages of the “Village Voice” initiative also included events and exercises to involve wider groups of people including:

- a special exercise for children at Buriton School
- other initiatives to involve youths and youngsters in the parish
- special sessions for some of the more elderly residents
- inviting views from a wide range of village organisations, clubs and societies
- inviting views from local businesses in the parish.

There was a special presence at the Village Show in the summer of 2006:

- the Show Programme, delivered to every household in the parish, included a £25 Lucky Draw page to attract residents (and visitors) to submit issues to the steering group
- special Lucky Draw cards were also available at the Show which, if completed, could be submitted for the same prizes
- there was a separate £25 Lucky Draw exercise for the Under-18s
- there was also a Post-it exercise to identify other ‘likes’, ‘dislikes’ and/or ‘bright ideas’ for the future.





Further 'Lucky Draw' exercises (for youngsters and for adults) were conducted later in the year and a pair of workshops / 'pop in' events were held in autumn 2006 and spring 2007 to engage yet more people and to help shape the next stages of the work.

Over 100 people attended the workshop events (including a very healthy proportion of youngsters thanks, in particular, to the support and efforts of the Tennis Club Coach and Buriton School) and participants began to suggest possible solutions to the range of issues that had been raised thus far.

This range of initiatives and exercises enabled around 250 - 300 people to have direct involvement in the Parish Plan exercise and to make early contributions – a very healthy proportion of the population of the parish.

But the steering group was aware that, if the final Parish Plan was going to 'carry any clout', it would be necessary to follow up the initial, qualitative, 'issues' stage of the project with a more quantitative phase.

Here again, the group was keen to design something 'more interesting' than the usual questionnaire survey – so as to attract a good response rate from across the entire community and ensure that some good ideas for 'interesting' projects emerged.

*The Great Village Voice Questionnaire Survey*, with its wonderful Parish Picture Poster, was delivered to every household in the parish in June 2007. Within 3-4 weeks there had been an amazing response with over half the households completing and

returning their questionnaires, claiming a free glossy poster in return and being entered for the £100 Prize Draw. The steering group used the electoral role to check that there was a representative response from all parts of the parish although respondents could return their forms anonymously if they so wished.

All the quantified results from the Great Village Voice Survey were displayed at the 2007 Village Show, were made available to the Parish Council and published in the Parish Magazine. Following a special steering group meeting with a Fellow of the Market Research Society, the results have been used to help draw up each of the action plans. All the results are published as an appendix to this document.



In addition to this comprehensive series of consultative opportunities, the steering group provided regular update reports in every edition of the Parish Magazine and to every meeting of the Parish Council as well as having a special page on the village website.

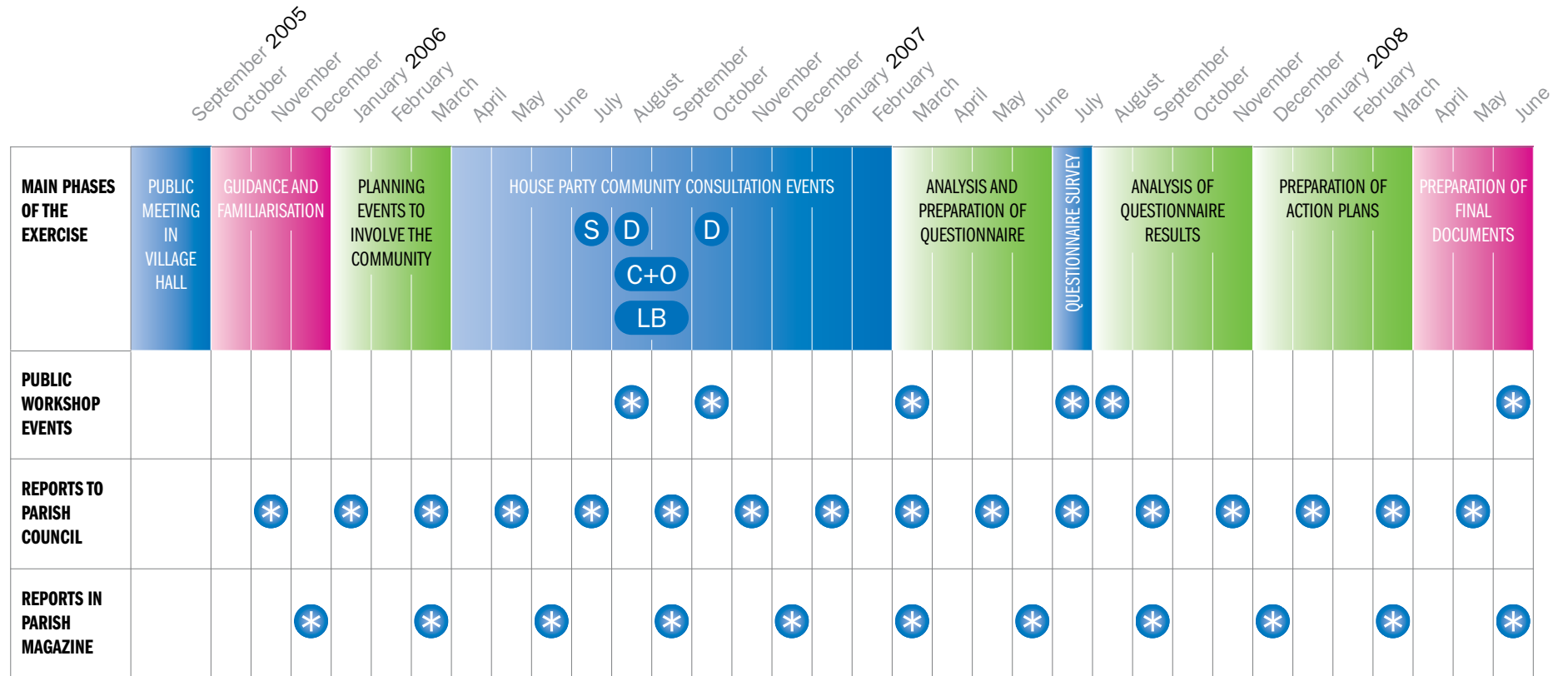
The steering group endeavoured to liaise closely with the School's Travel Plan exercise to try to identify opportunities to coordinate activities and/or avoid duplication – and to ensure that any potential 'solutions' address the needs of the whole community.

And the steering group also kept the District and County Councils apprised of progress throughout the conduct of the "Village Voice" exercise so as to ensure that the contents of the final Parish Plan will be well regarded. In particular, close liaison was maintained around those parts of the Parish Plan exercise designed to produce a Local Landscape Character Statement and to update the Village Design Statement as part of the new, Local Development Framework, planning system.

The Buriton "Village Voice" exercise has been praised at district, county and national level for the range of innovative ways in which the community has been involved in a Parish Plan. There can be a high degree of confidence about any of the proposed actions emerging from this work.

# Village Voice 'TimeLine'

(embracing a Local Landscape Character Assessment and updating the Village Design Statement)



- Planning & analysis
- Community consultation
- Other
- S Exercise for schoolchildren
- C+O Local clubs & organisations
- D Lucky Draw exercises
- LB Local businesses



# The parish of Buriton

The parish of Buriton lies south of Petersfield in eastern Hampshire and covers about eight square miles of attractive countryside within the the East Hampshire Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and at the heart of the prospective South Downs National Park.

Much of Buriton village is a Conservation Area, nestling at the foot of the steep, wooded South Downs and sitting on a bench of upper greensand above the farmland to the north. The hamlets at Weston and Nursted have also been established on this bench, although closer to its northern edge, overlooking Petersfield in the valley below. Farmsteads like Old Ditcham and Sunwood have provided further settlement locations.

The parish has a rich local heritage, some fascinating local history and contains a wide range of natural habitats, wildlife and wild flowers.

The parish has had a steady population (of about 750) for over a century – most living in Buriton village. This population supports a parish church, two pubs, a nursery school, primary school, village hall and a wide range of active clubs and societies.

There has always been a vibrant and caring community feeling and the village still retains the spirit and character of a real village.

Information from the 2001 Census shows:

Households in the parish	311	
Population of the parish	736	
People aged 0-4	37	(5%)
People aged 5-15	97	(13%)
People aged 16-24	52	(7%)
People aged 25-44	174	(24%)
People aged 45-64	234	(32%)
People aged 65-74	79	(11%)
People aged 75 and over	63	(8%)

Almost a quarter of the households in the parish comprise just one person – meaning that about 180 people live alone.

Just under 90% of households in the parish own at least one car – but 80% of those households without a car are lone pensioners or all-pensioner households.

At present about 20% of the population of the parish is 65 or over – but Council estimates suggest that this is likely to grow to over 25% in the next twenty years, with the largest growth being in the ‘older old’ age groups (those over 85 years of age).

One consequence of an aging population is that we are likely to see a larger proportion of people unable to drive and it is possible that a feeling of rural isolation could increase.

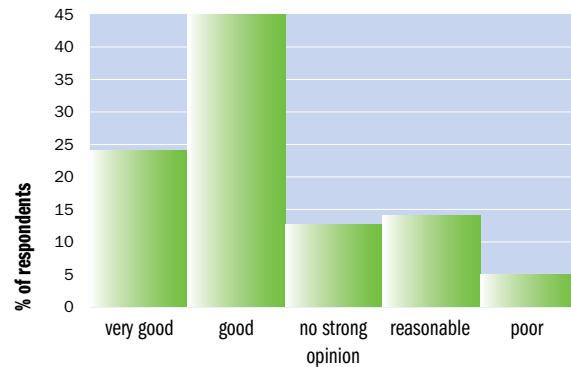
# Community



## Introduction and overview

There is generally a good feeling of community spirit in the parish and a strong sense of neighbourliness. Almost 70% of respondents to the Great Village Voice Survey said that the feeling of community spirit was either very good or good:

*‘How does your household rate the feeling of community spirit in the parish generally?’*



In the House Parties, workshops and questionnaires, lots of people said things like:

*“It’s a really caring community with a neighbourly spirit”*

*“It’s small enough to know people and feel at home”*

*“There are so many friendly and warm people”*

*“There are lots of well supported clubs, activities and events for all ages”*

*“It’s a lively, ‘can do’ community”*

There is great appreciation of and gratitude for the wide range of local facilities – particularly the School and Nursery School, the Village Hall, Recreation Ground, Tennis Courts, both the village pubs and, at the time of the survey, for the village shop and Post Office.

There is, however, a feeling that the activities and events for some age groups could be improved.

## Social and leisure opportunities

The Village Voice exercise has demonstrated the strength of appreciation that there is for the wide range of social and leisure opportunities that exist in the parish.

We have a modern and well-equipped village hall, a spacious and attractive recreation ground with well-used tennis courts and children's playground. There are two popular village pubs, regular local events, a mobile library and a host of active clubs, organisations and societies.

The house parties, workshops and survey have produced ideas for more amenities, activities and events and these are summarised in appendices to this plan. One of the most popular ideas was for occasional film shows in the village hall – supported by 57% of respondents to the Great Village Voice Survey. An Action Plan suggesting a way of taking forward this idea is included later in this document.

Many people asked for the fence around the children's playground (which, at the time of the survey, had been absent for about a year) to be replaced.

## Local information

Whilst only a very small percentage of residents (3%) feel that they “never seem to know what is going on in the parish”, 48% feel that they only know “sometimes”. Action Plans are included later in this plan to help improve communications and awareness so that more people can take advantage of the wide range of activities and events that take place.

In addition, the idea of a local ‘directory’ of who does what (talents and skills) was supported by 50% of respondents to the Great Village Voice Survey. An Action Plan for this idea is included later in this document.

## Local businesses

At the time of the survey there was strong support for the village shop and Post Office: 85% of respondents said that the Post Office was an important amenity for the community with only 5% saying that it was not (10% had no opinion). But many people asked for the shop (and post office) to have more reliable opening hours and to be better stocked with basics and essentials.

Throughout the Village Voice exercise people have recognised that farming is vital to the future of our local countryside and have said that they are keen to support local farming. An Action Plan for a series of initiatives is included later in this document.

Other ideas have been developed to help other local businesses in the parish (including people who work from home) and an Action Plan addresses this issue later in the document.

## Internet access

Almost three-quarters (73%) of households in the parish reported that they have access to the internet at home – with about 80% of them being on broadband. However, some 30% of these broadband users were not satisfied with the quality of service available.

In order to assist people who do not have access to the internet from home, 10% of respondents to the Great Village Voice Survey asked for a village internet access point – perhaps using facilities in the village school (out of school hours) or in one of the pubs.

## Education facilities

Throughout the Village Voice exercise people have stressed the value and importance of retaining excellent education facilities in the parish. Both the village school and the nursery school are widely appreciated as being necessary for the overall community.

There are some requests for more playgroups, after school clubs, holiday play schemes and for registered child minders. No Action Plans have yet been developed to take forward any of these ideas but the survey data is included in appendices to this document so that anyone can do so.

People in about 17% of households in the parish would like to see the idea of making greater community use of the school's facilities explored – as has been successfully done in many other rural communities. In particular, people have suggested that the school premises could be used for adult education activities such as small language classes or 'silver surfers'.

A number of people felt that there should be more opportunities for adults to learn by providing more opportunities in the community – perhaps using the school in the evenings, the village hall in the daytime or the Seward Room at the church.

The only negative comments about the school relate to the traffic and parking of parents dropping and collecting children each day. People feel that many parents (probably from outside the village) show little consideration for others, including for the bus service.

## Health facilities

Relatively small, but significant, numbers of people (often around 10% of households) reported that they have difficulty in getting to hospitals, doctors, dentists and other medical facilities.

These people said that the main thing that makes getting to these facilities difficult is a lack of transport and the inadequacy or costs of public transport and taxi alternatives.

People felt that it may be possible to publicise the existing medical transport services better – as well as exploring providing lifts or volunteers to collect prescriptions etc. The idea of having an occasional, perhaps weekly, health clinic in the village hall was also put forward as an idea for further consideration.

## Crime and safety issues

Although Buriton is in one of the safest districts in the whole country, the fear of crime can still be very real – particularly for younger and older people. It can restrict the way that people lead their lives.

The work of the local Neighbourhood Watch coordinators is greatly appreciated but the Great Village Voice Survey shows that some people are still very worried about crime, vandalism and other anti-social behaviour. An Action Plan is included later in this document to address these concerns and to try to increase the feeling of public safety in the parish.



## Our Councils and Councillors

At the time of the survey, July 2007, over a third of households (37%) felt that the Parish Council publicised its activities and decisions badly, with only 5% of respondents feeling that it did this well.

Residents did, however, feel that the Parish Council was more aware of local concerns and feelings than either the local District Councillor or County Councillor.

## Young people

Any largely rural setting can sometimes be a bit dull for some young people and Buriton parish is no exception. That's not to say that there isn't a wide range of activities available. It's just that there aren't the facilities for youths that somewhere bigger would have.

And young people can't easily access local services, partly because they are becoming more remote (eg. the nearest local cinema) and because it is becoming more difficult to get around – with no bus services in the evenings and very few at weekends. Increasingly hazardous roads also contribute to this trend.

The Great Village Voice Survey shows that whilst activities, events and clubs for children up to 11 are quite good (4% saying 'excellent' and 24% saying 'good'), facilities for those between 12 - 16 are felt to be much poorer (11% saying 'bad' and 36% saying 'needs improvement'). Activities for the fifty people in the 17-25 year age group in the parish are also felt to be poor.

Quite a lot of ideas for new activities or facilities have been suggested, as well as promoting what's already here better. An Action Plan elsewhere in this document

makes some recommendations. There is probably scope here to make a real difference, to benefit not just the young people but the whole parish. It would be great if a few people could spare some time to help.

## Older people

Older people want to continue to live independently in their own homes, for as long as possible, whilst maintaining a positive quality of life.

At present about 20% of the population of the parish is 65 or over – but Council estimates suggest that this is likely to grow to over 25% in the next twenty years. The largest growth will be in the 'older old' age groups: those over 85 years of age.

One consequence of an aging population is that we are likely to see a larger proportion of people unable to drive and becoming increasingly dependant on public transport. With bus services in decline and other local facilities, such as shops and post offices, being withdrawn it is possible that a feeling of rural isolation could increase.

The Great Village Voice Survey suggests that some older people already feel that activities and facilities need to be improved. The demise of the Over 60s Club is felt to have left a gap although the importance of access to activities that are not just age-based is also stressed: things that make it easier for all age groups to mix. The daily lunches at the Master Robert Inn and the indoor bowls sessions in the village hall are quoted as good examples.

A number of ideas for additional activities and facilities have been suggested during the Village Voice exercise – as well as promoting what's already here better. More opportunities are likely to arise for some older people through an increasing demand to get involved in volunteering – perhaps to help implement some of the Village Voice Action Plans.

A number of Action Plans elsewhere in this document address issues of concern to older people including ideas to help with independence and well-being (a directory of local handy-men, gardeners, cleaners etc and information about entitlements), new activities to make it easier for all age groups to mix (such as regular film shows in the village hall), ideas to help reduce the fear of crime, ideas to improve bus and community transport services, improvements to public footpaths to make more short walks available and proposals to improve road safety at important pedestrian crossing points such as the Master Robert crossroads.

**Action Plan C2**  
Improving knowledge of 'what's on'

**Background**

The results from the Great Village Voice Questionnaire Survey show that only about half the respondents (50%) said that they normally know what is going on in the parish. While only 2% of respondents said that they 'never' come to know about what is going on, some 48% answered 'only sometimes'. A range of suggestions for how information about what is going on could be improved was provided to the survey and in the House Parties and workshops.

Activities	Target for Completion	Who	Notes	Status / Progress
Provide one new noticeboard outside the entrance to the Village Hall	June 2008	Village Hall Committee	VAC could be asked to fund the provision and installation of a new noticeboard as a community project	
Improve the location of the Noticeboard in the village High Street	June 2008	Parish Council		
Introduce a regularly updated Diary of forthcoming events on the Parish Council website and print out notices each month for noticeboards to help those without internet access	June 2008	Parish Council		
Offer regular priority to email 'News' from the Parish Website to all those who are interested in this service and who provide their email addresses	June 2008	Parish Council		
Revise / improve the Diary of forthcoming events part of the Parish Magazine	June 2008	Parish Magazine Editor		✓

Issue 11, June 2008

**Action Plan C3**  
Film Shows in the Village Hall

**Background**

The most popular new facility or activity which respondents to the Great Village Voice Questionnaire Survey said that they would like to see 'started' film shows. This activity was provided by 73% of respondents and the suggestion received, unopposed, elsewhere in the survey as well as in House Parties and workshops.

Activities	Target for Completion	Who	Notes	Status / Progress
Average one regular film shown in the Village Hall (one separate screening / programme that provide the service)	September 2008	Parish Village Noticeboard	Aim to bring each week a year - one month in each year chosen	

Issue 11, June 2008

**Action Plan C4**  
Directory of 'Who does what' (talents, skills and services)

**Background**

One of the most popular new facilities or activities which respondents to the Great Village Voice Questionnaire Survey said that they would like to see 'started' was a directory of 'who does what' (talents and skills). This activity was provided by 50% of respondents and it received unopposed elsewhere in the survey as well as in House Parties and workshops. It was suggested that such a 'Directory' could draw upon the Creative

Community Trusting Standards 'Be with confidence' directory and could also include details of services and addresses which are available to assist in improving the quality of life of residents.

Activities	Target for Completion	Who	Notes	Status / Progress
Produce and update twice per year a Directory of 'who does what' (talents, skills and services) and issue with Parish Magazine and on Parish Website	March 2008 (2008 Parish Edition)	Parish Magazine Editor		
Produce and maintain a directory of services, goods and entitlements which the residents in order to improve the quality of life of residents particularly older residents and issue with Parish Magazine and on Parish Website	July 2008	Village Voice Group Parish Magazine Editor		

Issue 11, June 2008

**Action Plan C6**  
Reducing the fear of criminal and anti-social behaviour

**Background**

The results from the Great Village Voice Questionnaire Survey reveal that there are worries about a number of crime and safety issues in the parish area through usual crime levels and instances of other anti-social behaviour as indicated here. One half the respondents to the survey said that they were either very worried or slightly worried about vandalism (45%), about other anti-social behaviour (32%) about

crime in general (35%), about the safety of children (33%) and about the safety of the elderly (31%).

Activities	Target for Completion	Who	Action	Status / Progress
Finalise all the relevant requests from the Village Voice Questionnaire, House Parties and Workshops to the Neighbourhood Watch Committee and to the Parish Council for consideration and action	June 2008	Village Voice Group		✓
Neighbourhood Watch Committee to hold a Public Meeting for all those worried about crime in the parish area with the Parish Council, the Police and other relevant agencies to discuss the issue and other measures that should be taken to help the work of the Neighbourhood Watch Committee and to the Parish Council for consideration and action	September 2008	Neighbourhood Watch Committee, Local Police		

Issue 11, June 2008

## Environment and Countryside



### Introduction and overview

It is clear from all the inputs to the Village Voice exercise that there is a deep appreciation of our countryside and that our tranquil, rural environment, with abundant public footpaths and quiet country lanes, is of enormous importance to local people.

The parish is part of the East Hampshire Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and at the heart of the prospective South Downs National Park. The parish has a very wide range of natural habitats for wildlife and wild flowers and contains a number of National and Local Nature Reserves, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and many Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs).

In the House Parties, workshops and questionnaires, lots of people said things like:

*“The scenery and countryside in the parish is a delight”*

*“We have so many wonderful views - different hues every day”*

*“We have lots of lovely walks in great countryside”*

*“A traditional village in picturesque surroundings”*

*“The sunken and attractive country lanes are like green tunnels”*

*“Farming is vital to the landscape but some diversification will be necessary”*

*“Off road vehicles damage local tracks and motorcyclists in the woods spoil the environment”*

*“Noise can ruin the peace and tranquillity”*

*“We must preserve our trees and countryside”*

Because of the levels of interest and strength of feeling on this issue, a Community Landscape Character Statement for the parish has been produced as part of the Village Voice exercise. It aims to record what makes our landscapes distinctive and special to local people, and to help local decision-makers whenever they are considering changes in the landscape.



There is widespread recognition that farming is vital to the future of our local countryside. The vast majority of landowners attempt to keep paths for which they are responsible in good order and stiles are generally well maintained.

Some very useful ideas for environmental improvements have been suggested and scores of people have volunteered to help maintain public footpaths, to help protect local wildlife habitats, to tidy the village pond, to pick up litter and to cut the grass in the cemetery.

There are, however, concerns about a number of things that spoil some aspects of the parish and a number of potential opportunities and threats from the prospective South Downs National Park have been identified. Over 90% of respondents to the Great Village Voice Survey said that they support plans of action to address issues of concern.

## Landscape and countryside

Over 70% of respondents to the Great Village Voice Survey cited the ‘beautiful countryside’, ‘attractive views’, ‘nearby woods and forests’, ‘the landscape of the downs’, ‘the ease of access to the countryside’ and the ‘peace, quiet and tranquillity’ as things that they valued in the parish.

Other attributes such as ‘well tended farmland’, ‘attractive rural lanes’ (including ‘sunken parts of local lanes’), ‘the diversity of bird and plant life’, ‘hedgerows and field trees’ and ‘public footpaths’ were also all highly valued – by over 60% of respondents.

Amongst the worries of local residents are changes or new developments that spoil views from public paths and the visual impact of overhead power cables. Suggestions to address these concerns are included in Action Plans later in this document.

## Peace, quiet and tranquillity

Over 75% of respondents to the Great Village Voice Survey are worried about a gradual loss of tranquillity – with 20% of households being ‘very worried’.

Concerns include bright lights at night (which spoil views of the stars) as well as noise from the A3 Trunk Road, from low-flying military helicopters and from train horns.

Noise from late night events in the parish is also a concern for a minority of residents but in general, over the first period of the relaxed licensing laws, problems would appear to be confined to a few occasional incidents.

Action Plans to address worries about the loss of tranquillity are included later in this document.



## Litter, fly-tipping and dog muck

The increasing amounts of litter, fly-tipping and dog muck around the parish are all amongst the biggest worries that people have about our countryside and environment: about 80% of respondents to the Great Village Voice Survey are worried about each of these issues.





People feel that the amount of litter in the hedgerows along each of our rural lanes gives a very poor impression of the community as people arrive.

Although fly-tipping has, apparently, fallen in East Hampshire over the last few years there is a perception that it is increasing in parts of Buriton parish – with volumes of commercial litter often being found along some of our country lanes and with vehicle wheels and tyres often being found within a small radius of the End of Life Vehicle centre on Greenway Lane.

Most dog owners do clean up after their dogs these days, but it is disappointing that a minority of people in Buriton are irresponsible and fail to do so. As well as being unpleasant to tread in, dog faeces can spread disease and so it is particularly upsetting for parents that the Recreation Ground and the footpaths along the High Street to the village school seem to suffer too regularly from dog fouling.

The District Council is willing to fine and prosecute people who flout the laws on any of these issues – but they will usually need help from local people. Action Plans to help reduce offending are included later in this document.

### **Our public footpaths, bridleways and country lanes**

The top three worries that people have about our countryside and environment are: damage by off-road vehicles to public rights of way, safety of off-road vehicles on rights of way and damage to rural lanes by traffic. About 85% of respondents to the Great Village Voice Survey are worried about each of these issues.



In addition, many people are worried about the condition of some footpaths, stiles or bridleways and about the lack of safe crossing points across the A3 on any of the public footpaths that cross this busy road.

Suggestions to address these concerns are included in Action Plans later in this document.

### **The railway crossing from the recreation ground to the woods**

In the months prior to the Great Village Voice Questionnaire Survey there had been much discussion and debate about whether or not to close (or divert) the footpath that goes over the railway line from the Recreation Ground to the woods. The debate had focused on the safety of the crossing and the noise of the warning horns which are sounded as trains approach it.

The Great Village Voice Questionnaire Survey therefore sought information and views about the footpath: 62% of respondents said that they use the footpath whilst 38% do not; 55% of respondents would not like to see the crossing over the railway line closed whilst 24% of respondents would like to see it closed (21% of respondents had 'no opinion' on this matter).

Action Plans later in this document make suggestions to address both the safety and train horn noise issues. In hindsight, there was insufficient linkage to noise or safety in the questions for a conclusive analysis of the responses to be made. It is therefore recommended that should ongoing initiatives to substantially reduce / eliminate noise fail, further consultation takes place and that the closure / diversion issue be reviewed by the Parish Council.

## Some potential new amenities



The house parties, workshops and survey have produced ideas for a number of new amenities for the parish which appear to be worthy of further exploration.

Amongst the most popular ideas are making better use of the 'green' across the road from Buriton pond, restoring the old sheepwash by the pond, creating a community orchard, establishing some allotments, introducing community composting and extending recycling facilities.

An Action Plan to help explore and develop these (and, potentially, other ideas) is included later in this document. Volunteers will be needed to help take forward any of these ideas for new amenities for the parish. It would be great if a few people could spare some time to help.



# Development

## Introduction and overview

At the very end of the Great Village Voice Survey questionnaire, people were asked to list their three most important issues for the community. Development issues were felt to be the most important, just ahead of environment / countryside issues and transport.

Throughout the Village Voice house parties, workshops and surveys people have emphasised how they feel that the parish is a very attractive place.

But they have also stressed that these qualities can easily be eroded and lost for ever.

People have explained how other villages are gradually losing their attractive appearances and local character because many small changes are made without adequate attention to detail – as well as the building of inappropriate new developments.

Lots of people said things like:

*“The village is the right sort of size, creating a friendly community”*

*“Buriton would lose its character if new houses were built on fields”*

*“There is a lack of affordable housing”*

*“The village nestles beneath the downs, hiding from view”*

*“Fingers of countryside come right into the heart of the village”*

*“Buriton skies are very special – it can be pitch dark at night and we should keep it like that”*

*“Lots of little changes can gradually make a big difference to the character”*

*“It is vital to keep the green gap between Buriton and Petersfield”*

There is a general feeling that, if there is to be more development in the parish, then certain sorts of houses should be provided. And people have identified important open spaces that need to be safeguarded.

Much of Buriton village is a Conservation Area with many listed buildings. A Village Design Statement was published in 2000 to help ensure that any new developments are designed and located to respect local characteristics and the qualities that residents value.

The Parish Plan project has been designed to help update Buriton’s Village Design Statement. People feel that most of the Village Design Statement is still valid and important – but there could be a few additions.

## New housing and development

Only a minority of people feel that the parish can support more development: 32% of respondents to the Great Village Voice Survey think that the parish can support more housing and 16% feel that it can support more industry or commercial uses.

At the Village Voice house parties people suggested that, if there is to be any more development in the parish, then there might be a need for certain types of housing rather than others.

The Great Village Voice Survey confirmed the strength of feeling about the most appropriate types of new housing. People were asked “If there is to be more development in the parish, what sort of houses do you think should be provided?” They were asked to rank alternative answers in order of importance. Collating the results provides the following overall ranking:

In joint first place (ie. considered to be the most important): “affordable housing (by Housing Associations)” and “small family homes (up to 2 bedrooms)”. In joint third place: “specialist housing (eg. sheltered housing for the elderly)” and “starter homes / flats”. In fifth place (ie. least important): “large family homes (3–4 bedrooms and above)”.

In the 1999 survey for the Village Design Statement, over 80% of respondents said that they felt that the gap between the parish and Petersfield was important (to preserve the special identity of the local communities etc). The Great Village Voice Questionnaire Survey asked how people feel about this issue in 2007 and 92% now feel that it is important that the gap is preserved (6% had no opinion on the matter). This shows how concern about the importance of this gap is growing.

### Design issues and the Village Design Statement

The vast majority of people in the parish are concerned about the impacts that new developments, and changes to existing buildings, can have on the character of the community. This has led to the production of a Village Design Statement which sets out the features and styles that local people feel are important.

In response to the Great Village Voice Questionnaire Survey, 93% of respondents said that 'it is important for everyone to pay attention to small details and to retain the character of our villages' whilst only 2% said that 'there is no need to encourage people to keep things in character, let them do whatever they want' (5% had no opinion on this matter).



People provided examples of 'small changes that can gradually make a big difference' such as inappropriate roadside kerbing, extra bits of concrete or tarmac for car-parking, stark garden walls and other things that remove the 'soft edges' of villages.



Other important issues identified in the Village Voice exercise include:

- the entrances to the settlements are generally very attractive and any new development should not detract from this situation
- Buriton village is generally hidden from view as you approach it
- if there is to be any traffic calming in the parish, it should look more in keeping with the character of the villages than the current examples in Buriton High Street
- there are worries about the visual effects of small wind-turbines being fitted to individual houses
- people feel that there are too many signs, too much clutter and that signs should be rationalised and reduced
- there are worries about the sub-division of fields with extra fencing, sheds and shelters for pony paddocks.



Over a third of respondents to the Great Village Voice Survey Questionnaire feel that there are some open spaces in the parish which are at risk and in need of safeguarding, with the Links and adjacent fields behind Bones Lane being the most commonly cited along with fields along Greenway Lane.

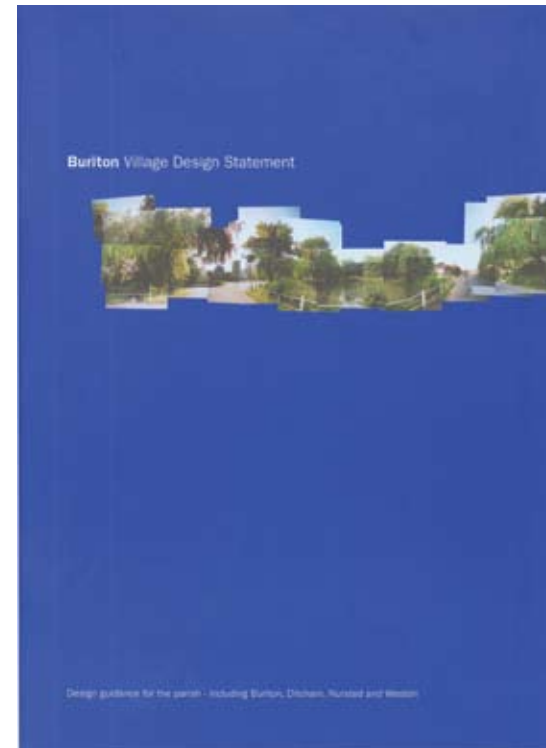
There were also answers and comments from other parts of the survey that are relevant to the Village Design Statement including changes that spoil views from public paths, visual intrusion of overhead cables in the countryside and in villages, bright lights at night spoiling views of stars and retaining the rural character of all our local roads and lanes.

The Village Design Statement will be updated to take account of all these issues as described in an Action Plan later in this document.



There are some doubts as to whether the planning authority pays sufficient attention to Buriton's Village Design Statement: 57% of respondents to the Great Village Voice Survey said that they did not know, 11% of respondents said 'yes' (that sufficient attention was paid) but 32% said 'no' (ie. they did not feel that the planning authority pays sufficient attention to the VDS).

It is hoped that, in future, everyone will pay adequate attention to the Village Design Statement. Effective consultation with the Parish Council is advisable at the pre-planning stage and should be encouraged for alterations and extensions not requiring planning permission.



# Traffic, Transport and Access

## Introduction and overview

It is clear from all the inputs to the Village Voice exercise that there is widespread alarm about road safety issues and traffic speeds. The need to shift the balance in favour of pedestrians and cyclists has become a critical issue.

People have suggested a number of ideas to create safer conditions for pedestrians and cyclists – and people have also volunteered to help with community transport if necessary.

Compared with many other villages, Buriton is fortunate in still having a regular bus service which provides important access to shops, employment, schools, health facilities and entertainment. 10% of people in employment travel to work by public transport from the village. But it is felt that improvements to aspects of the current bus service can be made.

The aging population means that the number of older people who are dependent on others for transport will increase. With more people unable to drive, there will be more who are reliant on public and community transport to access important services such as shops and health facilities.

In the House Parties, workshops and questionnaires, lots of people said things like:

*“Not enough buses connect to Portsmouth and Chichester”*

*“Change the bus times to help youngsters”*

*“Traffic travels too fast - there should be a lower speed limits or suitable traffic calming”*

*“School run time can be particularly dangerous, latecomers drive too fast”*

*“If chicanes are needed, they must look nicer”*

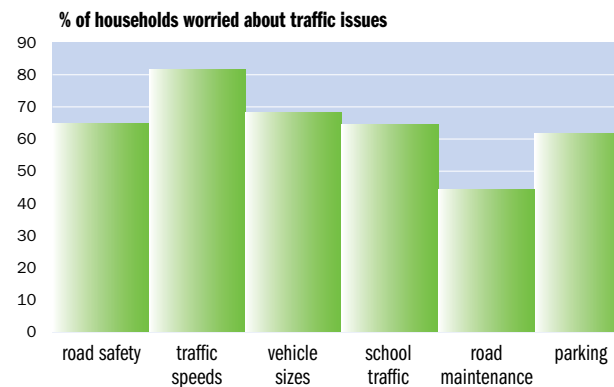
*“There are too many signs and road markings – the village looks untidy and cluttered”*

*“Make the Master Robert junction safer for children and older people - crossing from Petersfield Road to get to the school or to the bus stop is dangerous”*

*“Some villages elsewhere are much worse – make sure we don’t go the same way”*

Whilst people feel that having a school in the parish is very valuable for the overall community, there are some strong feelings about the traffic and parking caused by parents dropping and collecting children each day. People feel that many parents (probably from outside the village) show little consideration for others, including for the bus service.

The rural nature of the parish is characterised by its roads and lanes, bounded by hedges and green verges and with generally gentle bends. People want these features to be retained.



## Public and community transport



The results from the Great Village Voice Questionnaire Survey show that members of about 20% of households in the parish can often or occasionally experience difficulties in getting to work, school/college or other places. Although not large in number, these can be very important difficulties.

Users of the existing bus services have provided a range of ideas about improvements that they would like to see. And many others also feel that, for people at both ends of the age spectrum, there needs to be better public transport – especially to hospitals, schools and entertainment. An Action Plan later in this document is designed to help take these ideas forward.

But everybody can help to retain (and improve) our public transport services – use the bus once or twice a week, even if just for a short trip. It will make the bus companies think.

People generally feel that if the bus service was to be withdrawn then the community should try to run a community minibus. Over forty people have volunteered to offer lifts and/or to help with a community transport scheme and there was also a call for the idea of a 'halt' for Buriton passengers on the railway line to be explored.

## Road safety, traffic speeds and parking

Over 80% of respondents to the Great Village Voice Survey feel that the speed of traffic in the parish is a problem with the High Street, Greenway Lane, North Lane, Petersfield Road and Kiln Lane being amongst the worst problem areas. Speeds on Weston Lane were of particular concern to residents of Weston.

Throughout the Village Voice exercise people have stressed that road safety is a problem with significant danger spots being identified for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists.

People also feel that there are a number of problem areas for parking, that the size of vehicles using parish roads is a problem and that the number of cars bringing children to the village school is a problem.

The school has already produced a School Travel Plan which seeks to enhance the safety of children as well as addressing the sustainability of journeys to and from school.



A number of potential speed control and road safety measures have been suggested during the Village Voice exercise and over 90% of respondents to the Great Village Voice Survey feel that the traffic and parking situation along the full length of



the High Street (from the village pond to the Master Robert crossroads) should be re-examined as a whole to take account of traffic speeds, parking needs and the safety of pedestrians, schoolchildren and all road users.

Action Plans later in this document address a number of local traffic issues, trying to make Buriton a safer and more pleasant place for everyone.

## Walking and cycling

Throughout the Village Voice exercise people have drawn attention to the difficulties and dangers of trying to walk or cycle safely along many of our local lanes.

Crossing the roads safely can also be a problem in some places such as the Master Robert crossroads – particularly for children walking to or from the village school or for older people walking to the bus stop in the High Street.

A number of significant ‘danger spots’ have been identified and these can discourage people from making journeys – or encourage them to use less sustainable forms of transport.

The Great Village Voice Survey shows that 88% of respondents support the idea of creating some safer routes for pedestrians and cyclists – particularly for journeys to and from Petersfield and between Buriton and Weston.

The two ideas that have been suggested most frequently, for further exploration, are a footpath / cycleway alongside Greenway Lane into Buriton (or across the fields to Kiln Lane) and making Bolinge Hill Lane for pedestrians, cyclists, horses and access only (eg. by putting a gate on it).

Action Plans to address these concerns and take forward ideas are included in the Action Plans later in this document.





## Some swift progress

It is very pleasing to note that, even before this document was published, the 'Village Voice' work has been able to help the Parish Council and others seeking to secure benefits for the community:

- evidence was submitted to the AONB authorities to try to get some low voltage (11kv) power lines put underground as part of a bid to electricity companies
- evidence was provided for the Parish Council's objection to the revised boundaries for the South Downs National Park
- evidence has persuaded the Ordnance Survey to change its SatNav data so that vehicles will be discouraged from using lanes through the village as through routes
- data has been provided to the Village Shop Association so that it could lobby the national Post Office authorities in advance of their review of rural branch closures and try to retain a Post Office in the village
- survey results were passed to the Parish Council to help it decide whether or not to close (or divert) the public footpath across the railway line or whether to pursue other ways of addressing safety and noise concerns
- survey results were provided to the Parish Council to help it try to restrict motorised off-road vehicles using local Rights of Way such as the Milky Way and BOAT 45 in Weston
- information was provided for the Parish Council's High Street study and was influential in obtaining the grant funding from East Hampshire District Council for the study
- District Council Environmental Protection Officers have written an article for the Parish Magazine about dog-fouling explaining how individuals and local councils can take action



- a programme of community events "Down on Buriton's Farms" has been produced for 2008 to improve awareness of farming and to help to look after the local countryside – launched at a 'Buriton Banquet' using produce from the parish
- findings have been fed into the District Council's Community Strategy and its Local Development Framework and into work on local transport targets so that the views of parishioners are taken into account
- evidence has been used by the Parish Council to obtain grants to make local Rights of Way more suitable for older people and for those with mobility problems

These are exactly the sort of things that we hope that this work, based on the views of the community, will be used for – and we hope that this plan will lead to many more positive outcomes.

# Conclusion

## **This plan is the starting point**

Everything that you have read in this Plan has come from people in the parish. It's a reflection of the things that are felt to be important, and it sets out some ideas about how we would all like the parish of Buriton to be in the future.

But this plan, including the series of Action Plans, isn't going to change anything by itself. It's not going to make life in the parish any better simply because it is there. It definitely won't make any difference at all if it gets put away on a shelf or packed in a drawer once you have read it. At the end of the day, this plan is only the starting point.

Not everyone is going to agree on every single detail. That's why it is important to use this plan to help develop ideas. The more people are thinking and getting involved with these issues, the easier it will be to find the right solutions.

## **Things to do and people to influence**

Successful Parish Plans have the potential to influence a wide range of organisations and processes which affect our lives. They identify actions for us (the local community) and for others to do. They can influence the policies and decisions of other bodies (such as planning policies, housing strategies, transport plans, social services and education arrangements) and they can help obtain funding for projects in the parish.

Much of this plan is for us – the local community. There are many things that we can do for ourselves, and together, to improve life in the parish.

But there are messages and actions in here for a wide range of other organisations too:

- for our local Councillors and our Member of Parliament
- for the Parish Council, District Council and County Council
- for the Queen Elizabeth Country Park and South Downs AONB Joint Committee
- for local businesses and landowners
- for the local Police, Education and Health authorities
- for the Train Companies, Bus Companies and the Highways Agency
- for electricity suppliers, internet providers and other utility companies
- and for others

The East Hampshire Sustainable Community Strategy for 2008-2026 (being produced by the East Hampshire Community Partnership) will be a particular target for some of the findings. Issues relating to development and design will be valuable to the District Council as it develops its Local Development Frameworks.

## **How you can help**

All the issues included in the plan are things that concern a majority of the people in the parish. The Parish Council will do everything in its powers to work in these areas – but it doesn't have the time or the resources to do everything. Can you help?

Unless people are prepared to get involved, none of the suggestions in this plan will actually happen. Things would probably simply stay as they are – or get worse.

But if everyone in the parish decided to get involved in just one or two of the things suggested, think what a difference it could make.

## **The future**

This document contains a series of 'action plans', each of which identifies a number of activities, people who will need to be involved and target dates for completion.

This is, however, a 'living document' – regular reviews will be necessary to ensure that the proposed actions and projects take account of changing circumstances and continue to meet the needs of all sections of the community.

Some of the projects will require sustained commitment and may not be completed for a number of years. The Village Voice steering group will, therefore, continue to promote projects in the plan, try to keep an eye on progress and will aim to keep all stakeholders, particularly the Parish Council, informed of developments.

High levels of community involvement have already been demonstrated throughout the whole "Village Voice" process. The interest and participation of parishioners must be maintained into the exciting phase of implementing proposals.