

Stoke Bliss, Kyre and Bockleton Parish Plan December 2013



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Introduction

In November 2000, the Government's Rural White Paper 'Our Countryside – The Future' launched the concept of Parish and Town Plans. It said that the purpose of a parish plan is '*...to set out a vision of what is important, how new development can best be fitted in, how to preserve valued local features and to map out facilities which the community needs to safeguard for the future...*'. It further stated that parish plans should 'identify key facilities and services, set out the problems that need to be tackled and demonstrate how distinctive character and features can be preserved'.

How can a Parish Plan be used?

Parish Plans can be used for a number of benefits. Key ways are:

- To take action to improve the quality of life in an area through practical projects, such as running a community transport scheme or setting up a youth club
- To manage change and address local needs through the planning process, such as supporting the protection of community facilities or building affordable housing
- To bid for funding for local initiatives and to encourage effective partnership working
- To help influence and inform plans, policies and services of a range of organisations and service providers
- To enhance a Parish Council's community leadership role, in line with quality Parish ethos

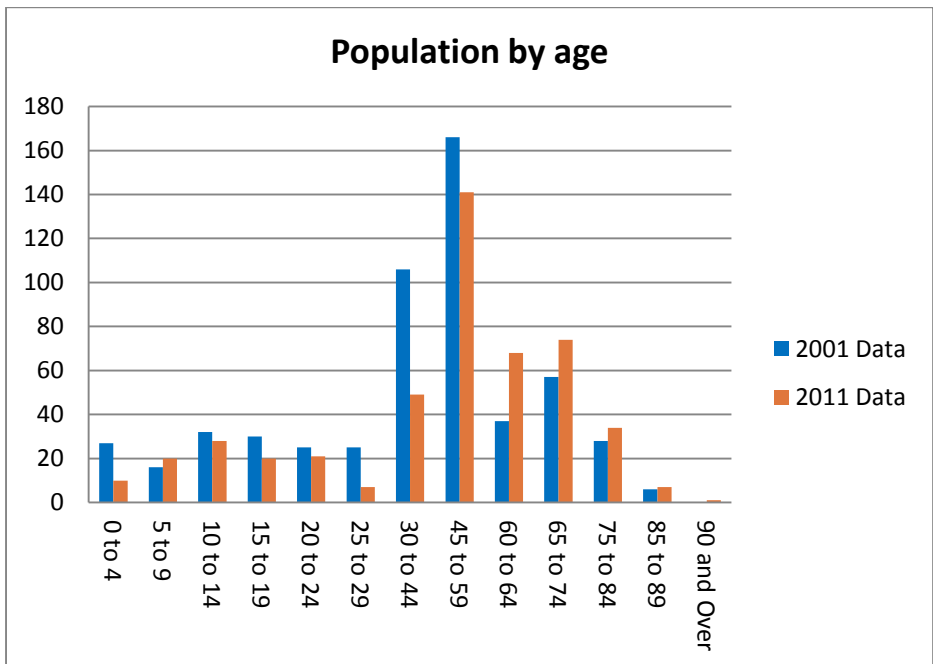
Stoke Bliss, Kyre and Bockleton Parish Council held an Open Meeting in October 2011 and asked for volunteers to set up a working party in order to create a Parish Plan. Once this was done, it was decided that the opinion of all people in the three parishes would be sought and that this would be obtained through the distribution of a questionnaire. About 230 questionnaires were distributed in May 2012 and a 58% return was achieved. In order to encourage the best return of responses, the questionnaires were distributed and collected door-to-door. The findings of the questionnaire were collated and presented at a second Open Meeting in June 2012 and

then the compilation of the Parish Plan began. It is the results of the questionnaires and of comments made at the second Open Meeting that have informed the Parish Plan that follows.

Our villages form a group of 3 civil parishes within the District Council of Malvern Hills and are situated a few miles to the south of Tenbury Wells in Worcestershire. The following table shows the population distribution.

	2001 Census		2011 Census		% change	
	Pop	HH	Pop	HH	Pop	HH
Stoke Bliss	228	94	202	97	-11.4	+3.2
Kyre	147	59	108	56	-26.5	-5.1
Bockleton	190	72	170	84	-10.5	+16.7
Totals	565	225	480	237	-15.0	+5.3

Pop=Population HH=Number of households

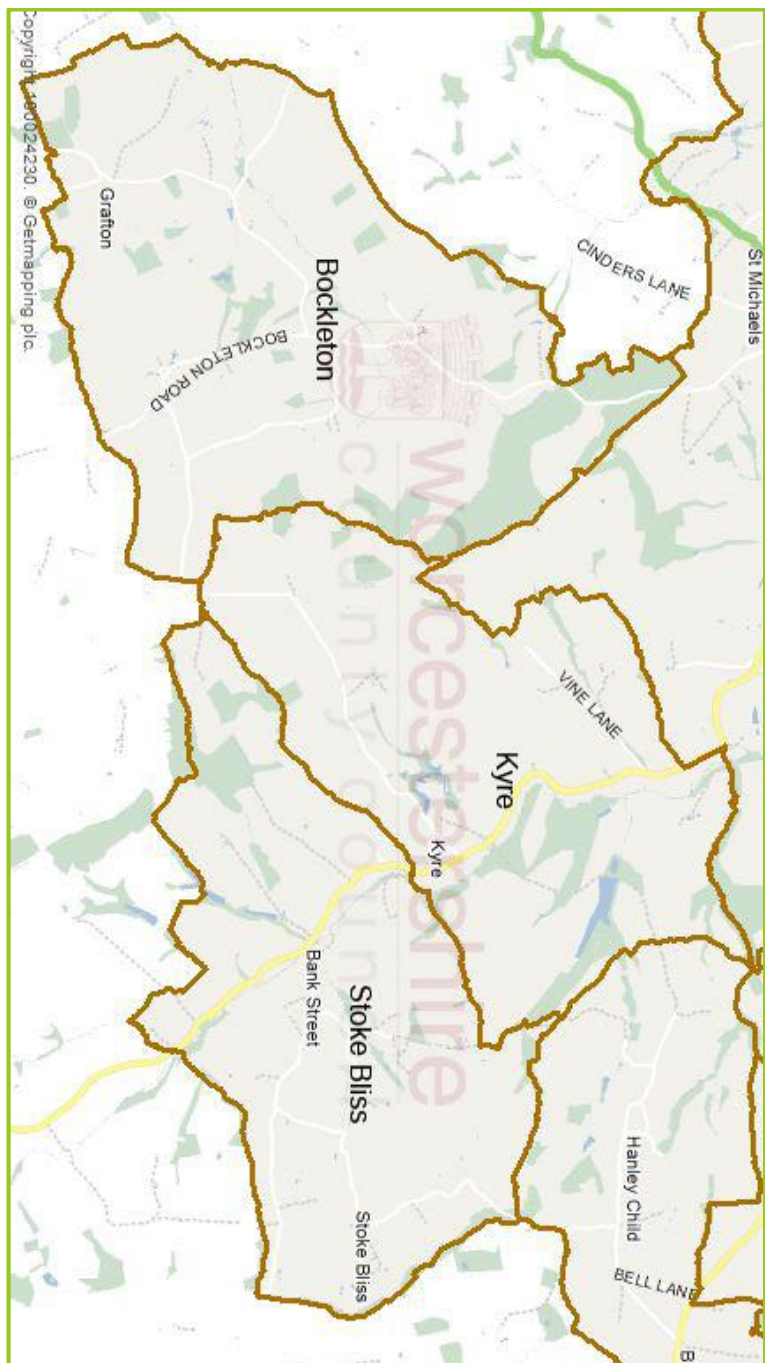


Employment – Distance to work

Unfortunately at the time of going to press, the 2011 census data on employment was not available, but the following table gives the 2001 figures. It refers to people between the ages of 16 and 74 who are in employment.

Total Employed People (2001 Census)	300	
Works mainly at or from home	88	29.3%
Less than 2km	21	7.0%
2km to less than 5km	11	3.7%
5km to less than 10km	43	14.3%
10km to less than 20km	28	9.3%
20km to less than 30km	49	16.3%
30km to less than 40km	9	3.0%
40km to less than 60km	14	4.7%
60km and over	7	2.3%
No fixed place of work	30	10.0%

More than half the population work within 10km (6 miles) of home.



History

Stoke Bliss and Kyre

Today the two parishes are joined with Bockleton into one civil administrative unit. In times past they were separate, Stoke Bliss being in Herefordshire until 1897 and consisting of two sections, one surrounding Stoke Bliss church, and the other across the valley and up the hill to include



Garmsley with the 'township' of the Hyde and the Perry. Kyre Parva, also known as Kettles Kyre or Little Kyre, lay between the two areas of Stoke Bliss. Kyre Parva comprised Bank Street and Bannals Lane area. Great Kyre, (Kyre Magna or Kyre Wyard) occupies the area around Kyre Park and up the hill towards Bockleton. Vine Lane was, until the end of the C20, in Sutton as part of Tenbury foreign.

All of the parishes are named in Domesday and were in existence in Saxon times.

The Wyard part of Kyre's name came from John Wyard in the C13 who had permission from King Edward I in 1275 to create a Deer Park at Kyre- it is across the B4214 from Kyre House and is still managed as woodland- the last deer went pre WWII but muntjac are occasionally seen in the area.

St Peter's Church Stoke Bliss is on an oval site nearly surrounded by streams, this suggests that it may be on a pre-Christian site. The church was in danger of collapse in the mid 1800's and although it had raised money for the pews to be replaced a few years earlier, it now had to have a major re-build with the west end of the church and tower being taken down and rebuilt.

St Mary's Kyre has Saxon foundations and is next to Kyre Park house which has Norman castle stones still visible in the building. The lady chapel to the side was added in the C14 when the walls were decorated with female saints – one painting-just the outlines, survives in the window splay.

The area has been settled since the Iron Age or earlier, (between 600 and 200 BC) as the hill forts of Garmsley, Clee and Wall Hills testify. The bridleways and footpaths follow old routes across the land, linking these forts and also with the small Roman fort on Upper Sapey. The local footpaths often linked the outlying farmworkers cottages with the farmhouse. The old coach road went from Tenbury via St Michaels Common and across the bridleways to Haws Hill and up to Kyre Green which was a posting house where changes of horses could be obtained. It was the local inn in Elizabethan times and a bowling green was laid out in the field opposite with a summer house where the gentlemen of the parish could take refreshments during the play. The straight section of road that runs past Kyre Green farm is the common enclosure road of 1812. The Tenbury to Bromyard road was created as a turnpike road in the mid C18 along the Kyre Valley and was often muddy and difficult to travel along. A turnpike house was at the corner of Bank Street and then served as a shop but was demolished in the 1950s to enable the corner of the road to be widened.

The parish does not have a centre, the houses being scattered in twos and threes, apart from The Oaks which was built as modern development in the



mid C20 and has 14 dwellings. There were several small manors each with about 120 acres, Parsonage Farm (now Parsons Hall Farm) in Kyre has cruck beams in its construction. Other manor houses were Bannals Farm which was originally on a moated site and is now next to the moat, this has records back to the 1300s when Margaret de Banwall held it. Church House Farm opposite St Peters, included in the rental one red rose yearly- potentially a controversial rent as the Mortimers, overlords of the area in earlier times were Yorkists! (the white rose). Hall Farm was a manor house for Little Kyre and had a tithe barn.

Garmsley, up at the top of Kyre bank, is next to an Iron Age fort which was linked with Clee Hill and Wall Hills along old pathways. The fields next to it were owned by Marjorie Pannings in the late C14 and the 1842 tithe continued with the name of Pannings for those fields. The bridleway leading down the hill goes via the Pool (a cottage and small holding that went by the end of the C19) to the Perry and down to the B4214 near the Village Hall.

The Hyde and the Perry farms were granted to the Nuns at Lymebrook Priory at Lingen in the beginning of the C14. Originally the lands were given by Hugh de Bliss to Lady Catherine de Lacy of Lymbrook Priory in 1262. Just a few years earlier in 1253 Hugh had been pardoned for the death of William Corbin – so perhaps the gift of the property to the nuns was in part a penance offering. Between the two farms was the site of St Fletcher's Chapel, as he is the patron saint of archers it again suggests that perhaps Hugh was indeed feeling a touch of guilt over the pardon! At the dissolution the chapel and land was sold to London business men and then resold to the local family and disputes continued over the possession between the Barnaby's of Bockleton and the Pytts at Kyre. Finally resolved so that the Barnaby's were acknowledged as the owner and Pytts paid them a rent which was then remitted- so honour saved all round!

The Baldwin Childe family of Kyre Park were the last of the manorial families to own Stoke Bliss, after Mrs Baldwin Childe's death in 1930 the estate was sold. Kyre Park then going through various owners, varying in being used as a

mink farm, Convalescent Hospital in WWII, Children's TB Hospital for East Birmingham, Home for Adults with Cerebral Palsy and then sold and again became a family home, when the gardens were opened to the public, with various associated businesses . In the past few years after a further sale the gardens and house have had further major restoration done.

The number of residents in the parish is not far different from what it was before World War 2, but more people commute to work and the farm work is now done by contractors rather than the local labour force. Stoke Bliss and Kyre School was opened in 1874 and closed some 90 years later. It is now used as the Village Hall. Until the end of the C20 there were two pubs on the B4214 which had been open from the mid C19, the Post Office also closed in the late C20. So from a self-sufficient community with most needs supplied from within, it has now changed to one where we need to go outside the parish for schools, pubs, shops etc. The sole remaining constant are the churches.

Bockleton

Bockleton parish lies on the western border of Worcestershire, and forms part of the largest and most westerly of those portions of the county that project like promontories into Herefordshire. Bockleton



parish has an area of 2,755 acres. The soil is clay with a substratum of Old Red Sandstone. The parish of Bockleton has been a farming community since Saxon times. The population is still largely employed in agriculture and in rearing Herefordshire cattle. The principal crops are corn and fruit; hops were largely grown at one time, but very little today. A stone quarry in which human bones have been found from time to time lies south of Bockleton Court, and there are other quarries south of Birchley Farm.



The parish church of Saint Michaels stands at a cross roads 5 miles south of Tenbury Wells and was built on the foundations of the previous Saxon church. Built of rubble, plastered internally, and roofed with stone slabs, the nave dates from about 1160, and probably had at that time a small chancel, which was replaced by the present one about the middle of the 13th century. The north chapel probably dates from about 1560, though all the original details have disappeared; the tower was added during the latter part of the 16th century or early in the succeeding century. The fabric has been very thoroughly restored and has lost much of its mediaeval character internally.

Bockleton Court Farm adjacent to the church and formerly occupied by the Baldwyns, is an early 17th-century two-storied house of stone and half-timbers. A little further west is Bockleton Grove, which, though it has been much reduced in size, is still a landmark for miles round.



In 1864 after the death of her husband, Mrs. Arabella Prescott came from London and bought the Bockleton & Hampton Charles Estate. During her 22yrs in Bockleton she built 22 houses, all of the same brick pattern. Bockleton Court was completed before her death in 1886 and became the home of the Prescott family. In 1982, when the Lord of the Manor died, the manorial lands and farms were sold, mostly to sitting tenants. Whilst remaining almost entirely a farming community, the nature of the hamlet is gradually changing. The once Bockleton Court has now become a Field Study Centre owned and run by Birmingham City Council.



Bockleton Village Hall, built in 1958, has become the focal point of the local community. There used to be a playgroup two mornings a week, but since 1962 there has been no school in the village. The old school is now a private residence.

Environment

The majority of respondents from our survey indicated they do not wish any action to be taken under this heading. Those that have indicated action is needed to improve the environment, have been both positive and constructive. In the belief that improvements are beneficial to all the community, the headings receiving the majority of responses have been listed below.

Waste – eg litter/fly tipping: Whilst it was recognised that litter is not a major problem within our area, it was generally felt that attention is still required if the area is to be kept unspoilt so as not to distract from its beauty. Concerns noted include rubbish left by workmen such as BT and the Highways Department on completion of their tasks.

Recycling: Whilst it was pointed out that we may have one of the best recycling schemes in the country with weekly collections and no ugly bins, more could be done locally to improve this service. It has been suggested that the return of the skips at the Village hall site for the collection of tin foil, plastic bags and glass bottles would be of great benefit to all.

Rights of Way, Footpaths and Bridleways: These public rights of way are regularly enjoyed by the majority of the community either on foot or horseback. It therefore follows that we should attempt to maintain them to as high a standard as possible. It has been noted in the survey that there is an abundance of barbed wire positioned at stiles and gates which hinder the passage of people and animals using them. Here it was felt that a reminder to landowners to maintain these to a better



standard, would go a long way to improving the situation as would the provision of dog gates by stiles. Signage indicating the position of bridleways and footpaths should be monitored regularly to ensure they remain pointing in the right direction, and are cleared of overgrown vegetation. The majority of respondents supported the suggestions that landowners could ask for footpaths to go round the edge of a field rather than straight across it and that landowners should offer alternative routes when livestock are in a field.

Common Land: The majority of responses under this heading all point to continuous parking of agricultural trailers on Common land, denying Commoners access for grazing sheep under their Commoners' Rights. This practice also prevents Lengthsmen from carrying out their duties to maintain the verges and hedges for the benefit of the local populace. It was generally felt this practice lowers the tone of what is a beautiful part of Worcestershire. Other comments under this section include the drainage issues and the clearing out of culverts at Romers Common which are in need of some serious repair.

Actions

The Parish Council will:

- 1. Ask the lengthsmen to monitor litter and report it back to the PC.**
- 2. Ask local people to report litter to their Parish Councillor and in future report it through the new parish website.**
- 3. Give advice on recycling on the new website. Investigate the possibility of a village 'ebay' where people can offer to give away or sell items they no longer need.**
- 4. Remind people to report awkward stiles to their local Councillor.**
- 5. To investigate the appointment of a 'Footpath Officer' and investigate an 'Adopt a footpath' scheme.**
- 6. Look into varying routes around fields where possible.**
- 7. Look into the legal issues surrounding commoners rights and then proceed as appropriate.**

Community Buildings

Each of the three parishes detailed within this Parish Plan has its own church, namely St. Michael's at Bockleton, St. Mary's at Kyre and St. Peter's at Stoke Bliss. Whilst Bockleton has its own Parish Hall, the one for Stoke Bliss and Kyre has to be shared. Funding has



been obtained to rebuild the Stoke Bliss and Kyre parish hall

Churches & Parish Halls: All three of our churches are not as well supported by the community as one would hope for, and fund raising for the maintenance of them is a constant struggle. However, comments raised by the questionnaire would suggest that each church is the subject of much interest and attention by tourists.



Churches and parish halls support the parishes in a number of ways including entertainment, community meetings, barbeques, fetes, jubilee parties, and other such activities. They provide important venues for services for the community. As with other

such facilities, the running of the programme of events relies mainly on a few dedicated volunteers. The envisaged new-build of Kyre/Stoke Bliss village hall has a few residents not in favour of such an expensive project, and

considers refurbishment as a more realistic approach. Other comments include the combining of the more popular parish halls with the less favoured churches so that they occupy the same building, which it was considered might go some way to improving attendance and support. Funding for both remains a struggle.

Actions

The Parish Council will:

- 1. Consider ways to draw down funding to support our local buildings.**

Community Based Transport

It is a known fact that Worcester County Council and the Department of Transport have funds available to support Community based transport. Our survey gave a bit of a mixed response as follows:

	In Favour
Minibus supplying either demand response or timetabled service.	65
Car Volunteer car scheme	32
Taxi or bus service supplying demand response or timetabled service	40

Supporting comments to the above schemes have suggested

- Service along the Bromyard road to Tenbury.
- Service Tenbury to Leominster for shoppers.
- Volunteer car scheme for the elderly.
- A Tesco support scheme once the new store is built.

Evidence from other areas would suggest that minibus services and volunteer car schemes are working and have been successful in both Shropshire and Worcestershire. Similar schemes could be utilised here, depending on the support from volunteer drivers on a rota system. It was considered that a further survey would need to be carried out to gauge the demand, and also the availability of support drivers.

Actions

The Parish Council will:

- 1. Find out if the Tesco bus will come out to our parishes.**
- 2. Promote a 'Share a lift scheme' on the new website.**
- 3. Investigate integrating with the Bewdley and Tenbury minibus schemes.**
- 4. Investigate if bus passes can be used on this schemes.**

Business and the Economy

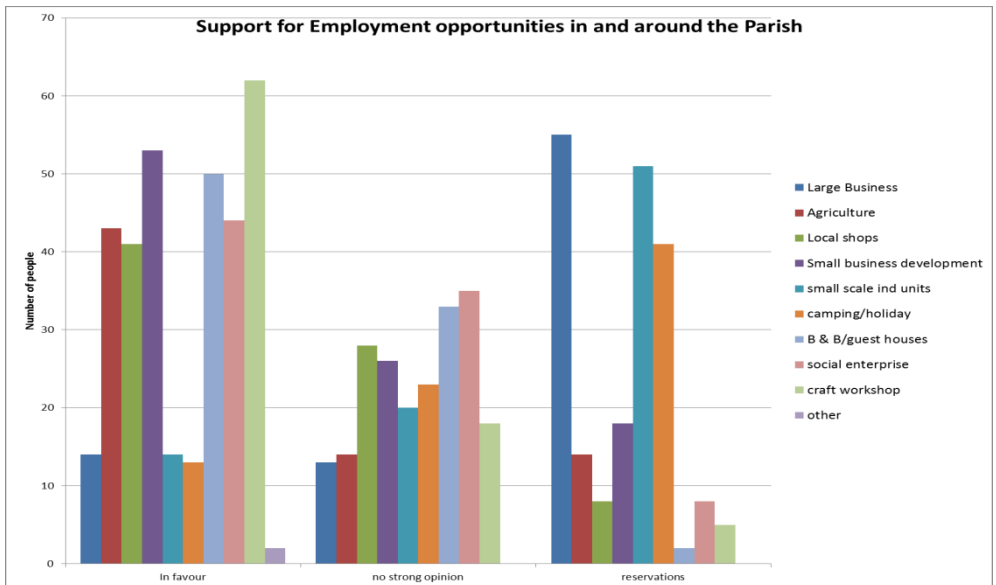
The survey revealed that 55% of the respondents are in work and 34% retired. Of those in work 29% of respondents are self-employed and 26% employed. The majority of people are working in agriculture.

The majority of people work from / at home (41%).

21% travel between 5 – 10 miles to work and 34% travel 10 miles or more.

Employment opportunities that would be supported in the locality are: craft workshops, small business development, B&B /guest houses, social enterprise and agriculture.

There are reservations over development of large business, small scale industrial units and camping/ caravan holiday sites.



Problems identified for existing and potential businesses are:

- Internet access/speed
- Planning issues
- Support from local council
- Lack of workforce

Businesses were asked what they would need to develop over the next 5 years; answers included local support and a cohesive bovine TB strategy.

In 8% of households who responded a member of the household has had to leave the area in the last 5 years to find employment.

Actions

The Parish Council will:

- 1. Continue to monitor employment opportunities in the area and will support enterprise appropriate for the area.**

Tourism

The survey demonstrated an overwhelming feeling that we live in a very attractive and quiet part of the countryside and residents wished this to be maintained. People cited the fine views and opportunities for walking as the main features of the area together with our churches and old buildings as places to visit. However, people felt that better signage for footpaths and attractions were needed together with more information available at churches and farm shops.



Whilst a small majority of the respondents said there was generally no need for the area to publicise itself better, those that did think more publicity was needed suggested the use of the internet, brown tourist signage, information boards and leaflets in local tourist

information centres.

Although there are many small businesses in the area, only 5 reported that they have a visitor focus and these were holiday lets, farm shops and a wheelwright.

There was also some concern that too much tourism could damage the area.

Actions

The Parish Council will:

- 1. Put tourism information on the new website but keep tourism development in line with what we already do.**

Transport and Roads

From the survey, the overall feeling on the general condition of local roads was almost 50/50 split, with some saying that they were ok and others saying that they were not ok. However it was agreed that no improvements to existing safety measures were needed nor were any new ones required.

The main concerns highlighted were the repair of the potholes and the clearing of culverts.

Although probably an obvious result, almost all respondents said that they travelled around the area by car.

Actions

The Parish Council will:

- 1. Report problems to the local County Councillor for onward progression.**
- 2. Instruct the Lengthsman to monitor culverts and clear them when needed.**

Education

Results from the questionnaire showed healthy levels of interest in the possibilities which life-long learning would provide. Strong interest was expressed in setting up courses for:

- Computing
- Local history
- Arts and crafts
- Foreign languages
- Cookery
- First-aid

Other suggestions included:

- Digital photography
- Traditional landscaping techniques
- Fly tying



Overall the strongest interest was for sports activities, although it was recognised that this would require some detailed planning as far as accessing and sharing facilities was concerned. Improved links with local sports clubs would need to be investigated to achieve this. Included in these activities were Keep-fit , Yoga and Pilates classes, Table-Tennis, Badminton and dance, as well as the more traditional sports, both individual and team.

Interest in courses was matched with offers from individuals who might run programmes such as:

- Local history and folk-lore
- Animal husbandry
- Solid fuel engineering/installation
- Specialised horticulture
- Tailoring/design
- Plumbing and heating
- Wheelwrighting
- Dance
- DIY

Actions

The Parish Council will:

- 1. Encourage the possibility of the village hall committees arranging some of these courses.**
- 2. Investigate links with other organisations for mutual benefit.**

Crime

From the data collected it looks as though we live in an area almost free of crime, as only one incident was reported in our survey.

There was support for both a Neighbourhood Watch scheme and an increased Police presence although most were not interested in attending a seminar on crime awareness.

Most respondents said that they were happy to keep an eye on vulnerable neighbours.

Actions

The Parish Council will:

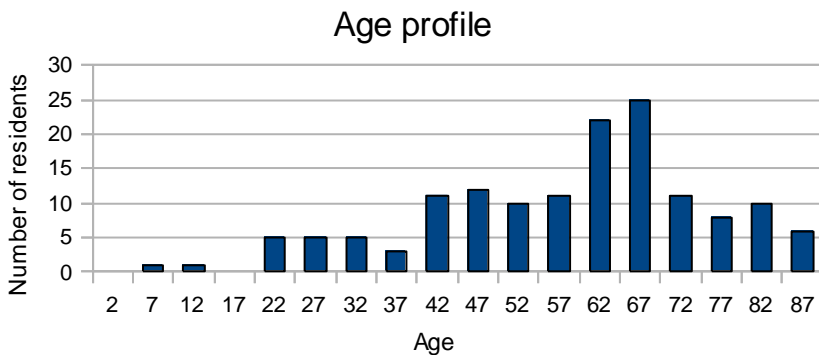
- 1. Support the Police in promoting a Farm/Neighbourhood Watch scheme.**
- 2. Ask people to be more vigilant in the face of reduced police patrols.**
- 3. Encourage people to subscribe to a local crimewatch email list.**

<http://www.westmercia.police.uk/register-to-receive-watch-messages.html>

Housing

The parishes are fortunate enough to contain a large number of period properties and properties of unique architectural merit. This naturally influences the price of properties in the area for which the 'average home' is worth £372,000¹. The average cost of renting a property in the area is £740 /month² with a low number of properties available³.

The survey disclosed the following data in terms of the age of residents:



Points of note are that:

- the age of the population of the parishes peaks at 67;
- there are a low number of residents under the age of 40 - 14% in parishes compared to national average of 53%.
- the age of residents in the parishes peaks at the age of 67 and there are a reduced number of people aged over 70.

-
- 1 Based on Land Registry data for a total of 35 sales taking place in the seven years prior to the survey.
 - 2 Based on data from www.home.co.uk for WR15 area.
 - 3 At the time of writing in the WR15 postcode 14 properties were available to rent, 144 properties to buy. In the three parishes themselves no properties were currently available to rent in the open market and five were available to buy.

We asked residents how their housing needs were likely to change over the next 10 years. The majority of those who indicated that they would have a change in their housing need were looking to downsize.

Query – is there sufficient provision of housing for the over 70s in the parishes? Is the data collected on age indicating that as people reach the age of 70 they move away from the area due to a lack of smaller homes suitable for those 70 years+.

Residents also commented that they believe there is an urgent need for affordable homes in the parishes. 36% of residents were aware of people leaving the area due to the unavailability of suitable housing. Residents favoured:

- any new homes being located in next to or in-between existing homes;
- a mix of homes being available to buy, rent or part buy/part rent;
- being managed through a charity or locally run scheme to prevent over development; and
- being designed in an ecological/sustainable way, in-keeping with the character of the local area.

Query – should action be taken to increase the number of affordable homes in the area?

As a linked issue is the provision of affordable homes enough in itself to address these issues. Is the number of employment opportunities in the area linked to the low proportion of the population under the age of 40? Would initiatives such as small scale workshops being available help keep people in the area?

Action

The Parish Council will:

- 1. monitor the requirement for affordable housing and advise MHDC as appropriate.**

Communications

We asked which would be the best way in which to communicate news and information within the community. Overwhelmingly, parish magazines were favoured. As our parishes are already served by two excellent publications, they are obviously well supported. Word of mouth was the second most supported method – one comment was that a local pub should be reopened (local jungle drums must have been beating over a pint!) Next were notice boards and websites. We currently have several notice boards which are rather dilapidated and although the Parish Council looked into replacing them in 2011, they were deemed too expensive, given that the Parish Council's precept (income from the District Council) is so small. The idea of a community website was well supported and the Parish Council have already been investigating the viability of it.

Making communications easier - it was thought that broadband speed and mobile phone signal were the main inhibitors. In the survey of broadband speeds, it appears that Bockleton suffers the lowest speeds of the three parishes, with many households receiving only 0.5Mbps (megabits per second) with service dropping off completely during the evenings. There was plenty of support for a County Council bid for Superfast Broadband which at the time of writing was being progressed. The interest was from businesses and residential properties and many home-workers are inhibited by the slow speeds.

Action

The Parish Council will:

- 1. Investigate county funding for noticeboards.**
- 2. Investigate mobile phone signals with a view to improving them.**
- 3. Continue to support the faster broadband initiatives in the area.**
- 4. Set up a website for the 3 parishes.**
- 5. Investigate the use of Facebook as a means of communication.**

Youth Issues

Our parishes have no schools or leisure facilities such as sports fields or playgrounds.

The young people who completed the questionnaire travel to school and college by bus or car. A few use their bikes. There are no public bus services from Bockleton, and only one a week from Stoke Bliss.

For sporting and leisure activities they travel by car. Most go to Tenbury, but a few go further afield to Ludlow and Bromyard. There are few organised activities to keep them in our villages and it seems that there might be some interest in Youth Clubs, were they to be set up at our two village halls. There are no traditional village centres where children and young people could gather.

Action

The Parish Council will:

- 1. Investigate the possibility of combining with other villages to attract funding for a youth leader.**
- 2. Investigate connecting with the Bockleton Study Centre and Café 27 in Tenbury.**
- 3. Assess demand for a 'Youth Programme'.**

Conclusion

The main conclusion drawn from the comments made when collecting information to form the Parish Plan is that many people are content with the three parishes in the way there are now. There may, of course, be a difference of opinion amongst the 42% people who didn't complete the questionnaire! On a few topics, we are confident that maintaining the status quo would meet with the approval of the majority. However, some changes are necessary, as the way we live progresses.

Copies of the Plan will be sent to Malvern Hills District Council, Worcestershire County Council, and Harriett Baldwin MP.

Acknowledgements:

The Parish Plan committee:

Andrew Yarnold (Chair), Helen Maskew, Miriam Isaac, Jan Kelly, Rev. Robert Barlow, George Jarvis, Dave Round, Paul Robinson, John Adams, Ann Basford, Chris Rodgers, John Harris, Louise Gibbs

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Appendix 1

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