

THE CUCKLINGTON VILLAGE PLAN



Introduction

Under new Government initiatives aimed at 'localisation' Cucklington should have a Village Plan.

The Village Plan supports Cucklington's right to local determination, to approve or contest property developments or influence how local government money might be spent on improving village life.

It **was** therefore important **to** produce a Village Plan which as far as possible represents the views of the village and records how we feel about the issues that matter. This Village Plan has evolved as a consequence of **residents** views, thoughts and opinions from the survey undertaken in September 2012 **and a further consultation in February 2013.**

A Brief History of Cucklington

The ancient parish of Cucklington lies on the south-eastern edge of the Norton Ferris hundred and in the county of Somerset. The name Cucklington comes from Old English meaning *the settlement of Cucola's people*.

The village of Cucklington was a Domesday settlement. The parish, which is roughly pear-shaped, measures 4 km from north to south and 3 km from east to west at its widest point.

The village of Cucklington lies on the west-facing scarp which divides the parish.

By the later 18th century most of the houses in the parish lay along an irregular street with the parish church at its northern end. Towards the southern end of the main street was the pound, a small pond whose source is now known as Babwell, and a tree named Bab Tree, a name thought to be derived from St. Barbara, who is depicted in 15th-century glass in **St Lawrence, Cucklington's** parish church.

Clinger was known as Cleyhanger in 1319 because of its position on the clay scarp in the south of the parish. Several of the houses in the parish date from the 16th or the 17th century, the oldest probably Homers Farmhouse.

A beerhouse, later called the Rising Sun, was open in 1866 and survived until the 1950s.

There was a cricket club in the 1870s, a reading room was opened at the post office in 1885, and fives was played against the church tower in the later 19th century. The first village hall was opened in 1949.



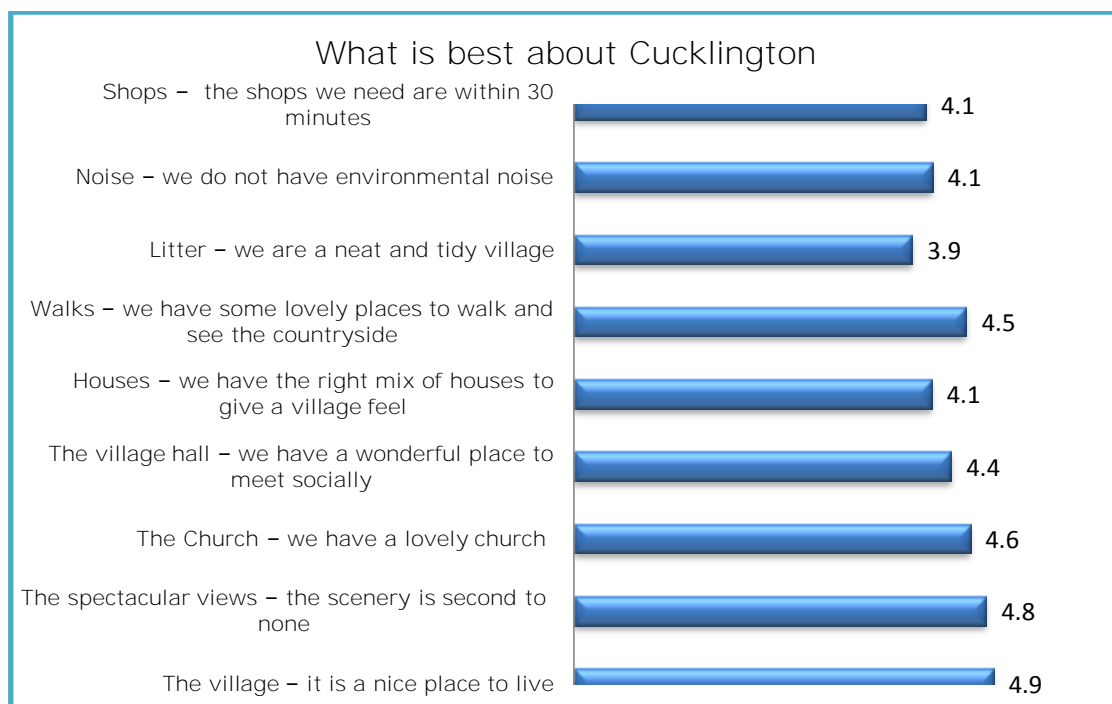
There was a church at Cucklington in 1264. The church of ST. LAWRENCE, so dedicated by 1468, is built of rubble with ashlar dressings. In the bell tower there are six bells, the three heaviest, by William Cockey, probably all of 1726.

There was a school by 1722 when Thomas Knight gave an endowment to teach two poor children. The school closed in 1948.

Cucklington Today

Cucklington today is a lovely, **peaceful** village nestled in the beautiful South Somerset countryside.

The overwhelming majority [a score of 4 or more represents 80+%] of those surveyed for this village plan said that Cucklington is a wonderful place to live in.



It should be considered no accident that this is the case. Many people over many years have worked extremely hard to make Cucklington what it is today. That legacy has to be preserved.

Mandate

Of the 161 survey forms that were issued we have had 96 returned; this is a 60% rate of return.

To set this figure in context the average turn out for General Elections is circa 65%, for Local Elections circa 39% and for the last referendum on Parliamentary Reform circa 42%. In terms of Village Plans the lowest return figures are circa 40%, the highest figures are circa 72%, with the strongest cluster 55-65%.

Cucklington's return comfortably falls within this last group we believe therefore that this Village Plan has the necessary mandate for eventual adoption.

Village Profile

From what the survey tells us the largest age group category in the village is between 51-70 years of age. Half those who responded live as a couple. Furthermore some 37% of the village have lived here for more than 10 years.

The survey would also indicate that a third of those in the village are retired while just under half are in some form of employment.

Some 32 young people are declared as in education.

A significant majority [80%] own their homes and 95% declare they own a car. It is calculated that there are 1.5 cars per adult. Some 15% of households have a work related vehicle.

Village Services

Energy. The village uses both oil and wood burners in the main for heating, electricity for cooking and both oil and electricity for hot water. Of those households who responded 50% said they would be interested in a community fuel scheme and were currently not part of one.

Waste. Some 95% of households have some form of micro sewerage system serving their needs. In response to a question on re-cycling some 85% of households said they were content.

Mobile Phones. The village appears to favour Vodafone, O₂ and Orange equally as the mobile provider of choice with O₂ and Orange reported as having the best reception.

Access. The strong feeling within those surveyed suggests that Cucklington is well served by access to supermarkets, rail links, taxi services and school buses but not at all so with access to the Police or public buses.

Medical and Veterinary. In respect of facilities and amenities Cucklington is thought to be extremely well served by doctor surgeries, dentists, vets, pharmacists and opticians and well served by hospitals, accident and emergency departments and outpatient departments

Businesses and Commercial Activities

Of those surveyed only 10% said they mainly ran their business from the village.

Work Styles

Of those who live in the village and who are in work, almost all travel across the South West Region as well as to London to meet their business obligations.

Some 60% use cars for work and travel between 10-200 miles.

Trains are also a popular means of transport to London and elsewhere. Of those surveyed, almost all catch a train at Gillingham; other stations included Castle Cary, Templecombe, Bruton, Basingstoke and Bristol Parkway.

Only a third of those who park at the stations thought station car parking was adequate.

Village Communication

Some 90% of those surveyed said they were reasonably well informed or better as to what was happening in Cucklington. The greater majority relied on word-of-mouth [70%] and the Parish magazine [90%]. Notices and flyers were seen as an additional useful resource [60%].

Our Village Views and Opinions

A majority of the village thought our views and opinions as a village counted but in the case of wind turbines there was a feeling our democratic position had been marginalised in the rush to erect wind turbines.

St Lawrence's Church

A significant number [95%] regarded the church as being important or vital as a part of Cucklington. The reasons given were equally divided between St Lawrence being a place of worship, a community focus and a place for solemn ceremonies.

The need for a church group for children was endorsed by 65% of those surveyed.

The Parish Magazine was rated valuable or better by 95% of those surveyed.

Roads and Village Access

Some 65% of the village regarded the state of the roads in Cucklington as no better than fair.

The majority [45%] did not see any need to invest in traffic management schemes within the village but 30% felt Cucklington could be better signposted locally.

There was no discernible opinion expressed for a bus service.

Of those surveyed the overwhelming majority were ambivalent on the need to encourage more cycling or walking.

The Cucklington Countryside

The general consensus was that the public footpaths and bridleways were used by those who wanted to exercise relatively frequently. They were on the whole safe [86%], well maintained and accessible [69%].

There is a well-supported **horse**-riding community [17%] within the village.

Cyclists generally felt well served by the routes around the village.

Renewable Technologies

Of those who expressed a view geo thermal [95%], micro-energy generation systems [74%] and solar panels on houses [74%] were the renewable technologies attracting most support.

The survey figures showed the village to be strongly opposed to wind turbines [94%]. Also there was a significant anti-lobby for **large-scale** solar [63%].

Adults

Of those surveyed 11% said they had the necessary skills or qualifications to volunteer their services in the interests of the village and village life.

Actions

The results of the survey have shown there are activities or endeavours that the village should undertake in order to preserve what we have, to move on or to improve our circumstances.

There are 29 activities or endeavours which the village would like to see undertaken, addressed or resolved. Of those 13 are highlighted as being actions which involve the Council or other outside parties; the remainder are for the village as a community to do on a self-help basis.

A Cucklington 'Yellow Pages'

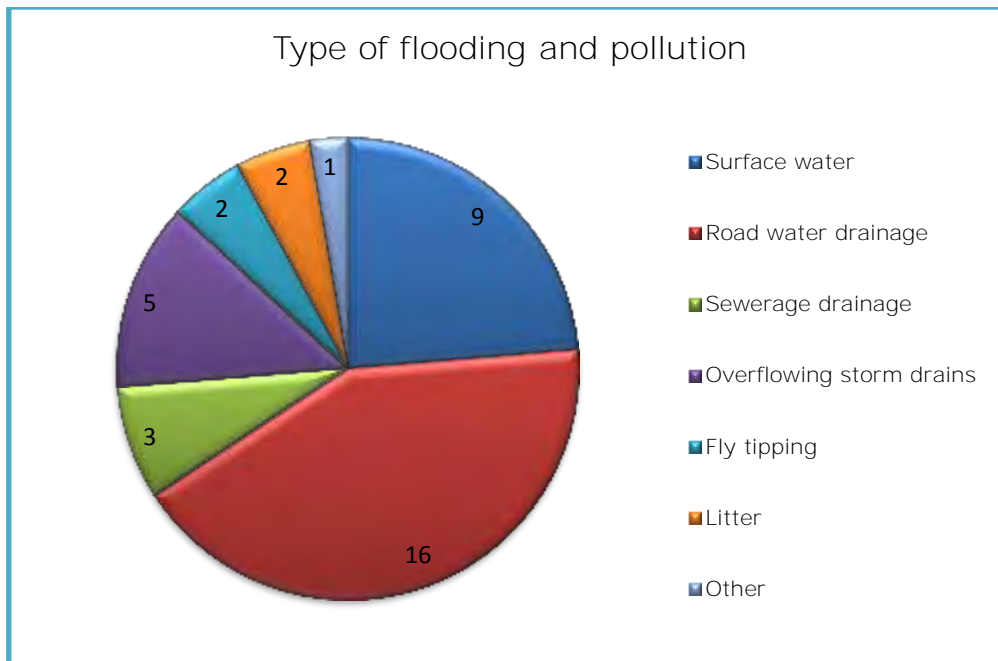
It was clear from the responses that there are people in the village who need to feel more included. Equally there are people who have much knowledge about the village and where to go to get local services. Lastly there are people in the village – particularly the elderly – who need to know where they can go to get village help at times of distress. Located as Cucklington is on the boundary of Somerset, Dorset and Wiltshire there is no single local phone book or registry of services.

A Cucklington Yellow Pages **should** be produced locally and issued to all houses. It would provide a one stop reference for local services, amenities, names, contact addresses and telephone numbers.

[Editor's Note: though such a comprehensive 'Yellow Pages' was not created as such, the general principles behind it have been achieved. There are now much wider, more reliable and responsive village communications & interaction established - e.g. a Trusted Tradesman list, the Neighbourhood Watch email & general notices service, the use of a variety of social-medial platforms - all these are commonly utilised and have effectively achieved the same outcome, proving themselves most efficiently during the 2020/21 Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns.]

Flooding, Pollution and Fly-tipping

When asked about flooding and pollution 40% of those responding said they were affected:



This is a significant issue. It is proposed that the Parish Meeting work with the Council and the village establishes a self-help volunteer work force to tackle the flooding and pollution agenda.

Broadband

Some 90% of households have broadband and as a rural community living in the 21st Century broadband is an essential requirement of everyday life.

Significantly and somewhat disappointingly 66% of those households are not satisfied with our broadband speed. For Cucklington a recent test on the 01747 exchange has shown our download speed is c2.4Mbs⁻¹ and our upload speed is 0.4Mbs⁻¹ and for the 01963 exchange comparable figures of 1.2Mbs⁻¹ and 0.1Mbs⁻¹.

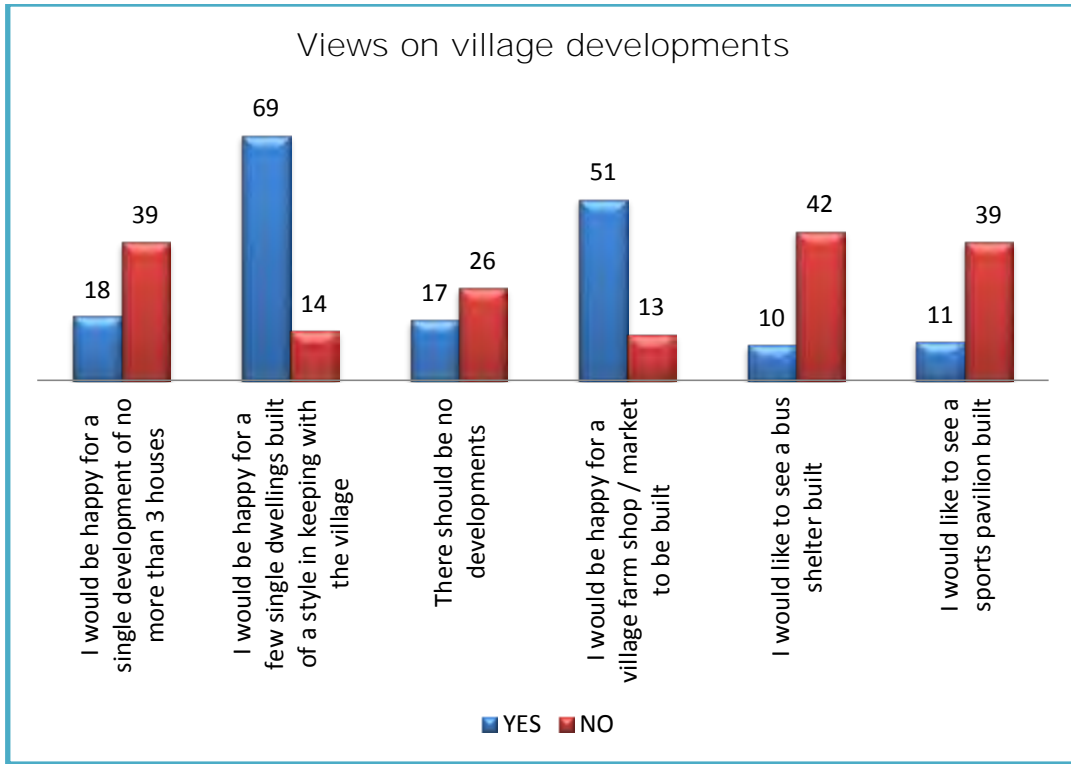
This is an issue which needs to be addressed as matter of importance. It should be worked through a collaboration with other 01747 and 01963 subscribers. This will involve lobbying the internet service providers and MPs. **[Editors Note: this situation was successfully addressed in the intervening decade and now in 2021 Cucklington benefits from an extensive superfast fibre broadband internet service throughout the area.]**

Village Development and Planning Control

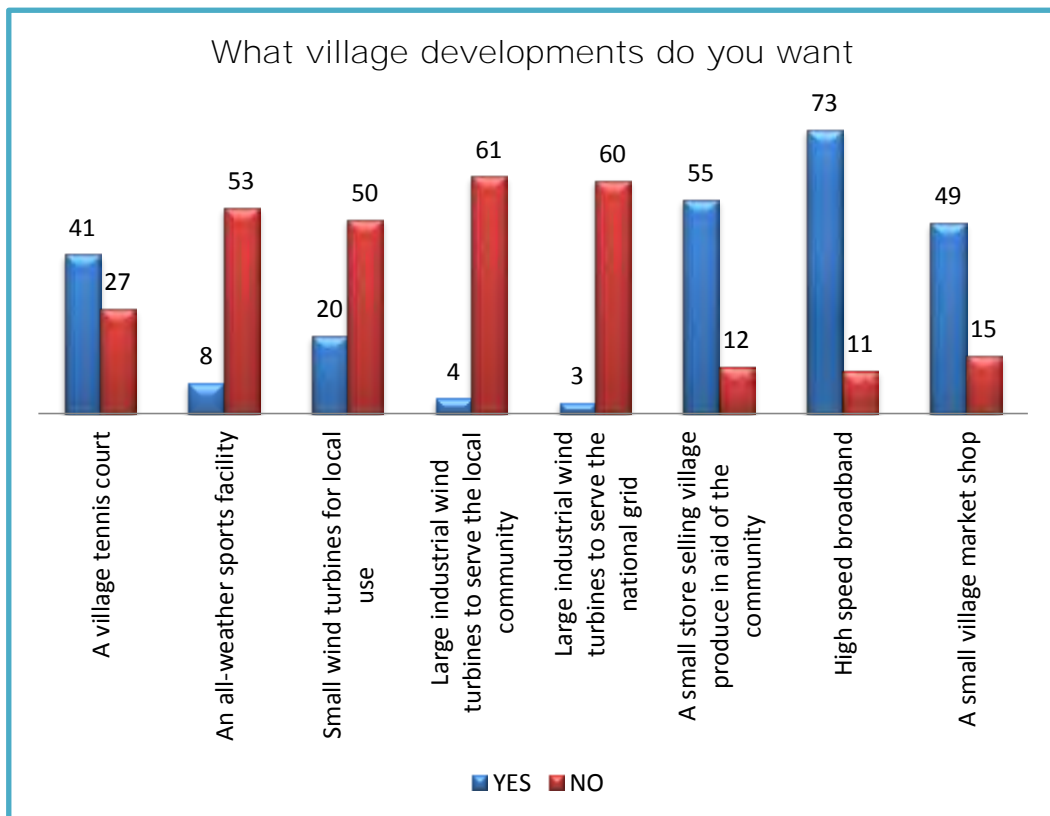
Housing Development. The village expressed strong opinions in terms of what housing development should be allowed in the village. The consensus [60%] said they would be prepared to see up to 2 homes [including low cost or affordable homes] built in the village.

Moreover there was a strong 'ask' that the said housing if approved should conform to the character of the village. The specification, nature and construction that goes with this would be written into a 'Village Design Statement'.

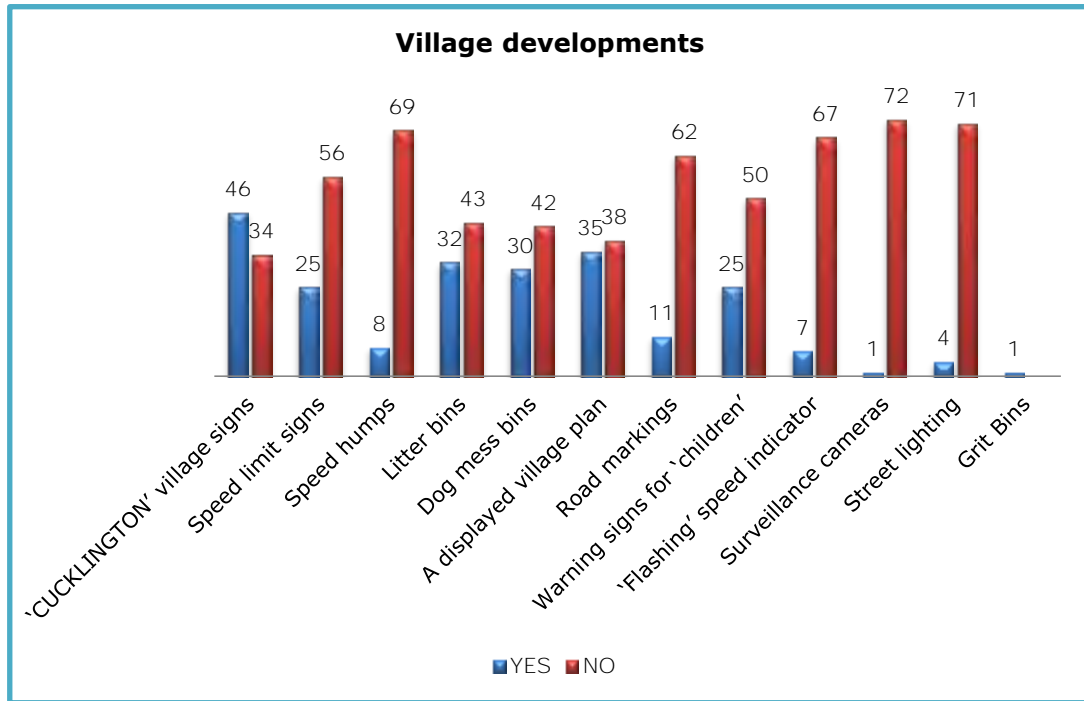
There was also strong support for a small village market shop. It was accepted that this would be on a self-help basis. All other development options were voted down:



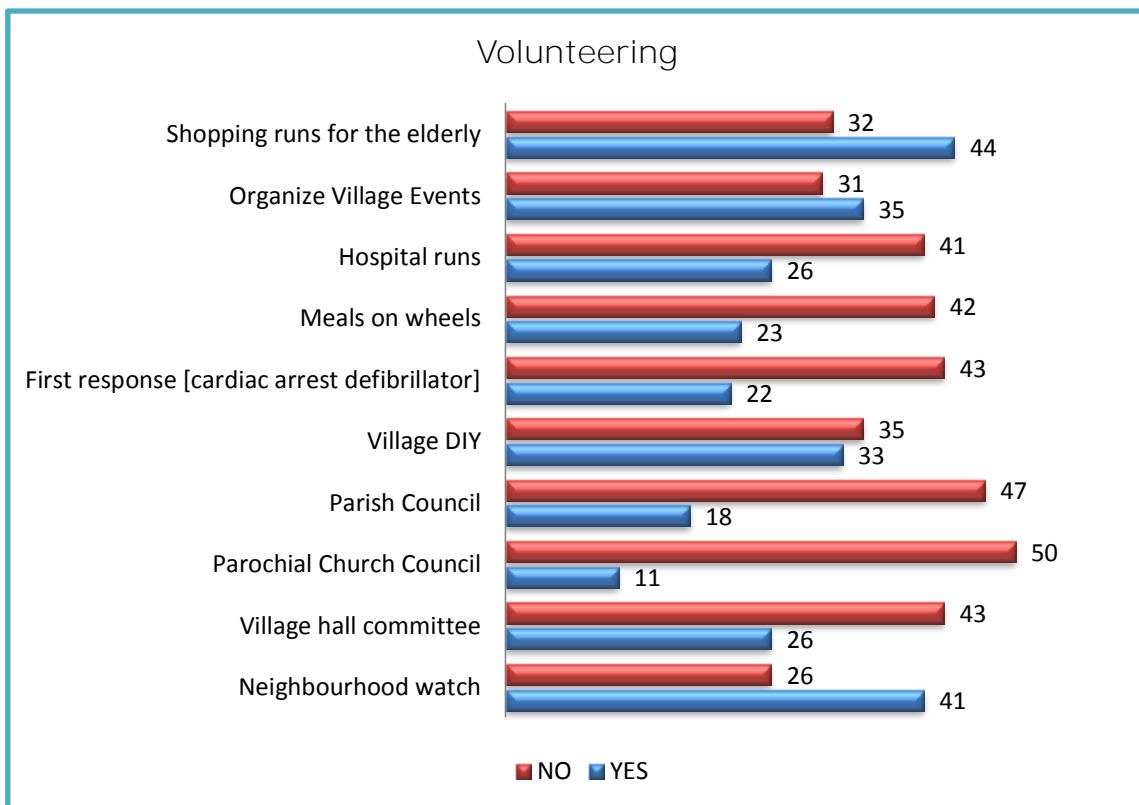
Village Development. The village were very specific about what village development they might be prepared to see. There was an overwhelming rejection of wind energy devices and machines:



'Village Surroundings' Infrastructure. There was no support for an all-out effort at 'urbanising' Cucklington. There was support for getting routes into the village signposted from the arterial roads:



Volunteering. A number of the village have said they would volunteer for a range of duties. This willingness to help the community needs coordination:



Services, Facilities and Amenities

Police: The village have asked that there be more engagement with the Police.

Buses: There seemed to be little awareness of the Community Access Transport.

Litter: A significant number of people thought that litter was a problem and made the village **untidy**. **Equally there was a view that the village should not commit to 'no litter signs'**. These would bring an urban feel to the village and they would invite a sanction which is hard to apply.

The answer lies in being more pro-active and community focused with clean-up days [along the lines of the Jubilee].

Parked Cars

A significant number of people regarded parked cars as both a hazard and a danger. The survey highlighted the fact there were a number of vehicles that were parked on street along access routes. As a community with some 1.5 cars per adult head of population there is no quick, least cost, fix.

Where parked cars act as a hazard [obscure the driver view of children or animals rushing out] or as a danger [restrict the access of blue light vehicles on a call out] there should be an effort to resolve the issue.

Damage to Verges

A significant number of people saw the damage to verges and kerbs as something that should be addressed. Equally other people pointed out that damage is bound to occur with large agricultural vehicles and verges which are in the main soft. The position is not helped by the extremes of weather.

Winter Driving

A significant number of people thought the village roads were unsafe and dangerous in adverse winter conditions. Movement is restricted and Council provision for self-help thin.

As a village there is only so much that can be done to combat the effect of adverse winter weathers. The answer lies in a coordinated effort with the Emergency Committee and the Council.

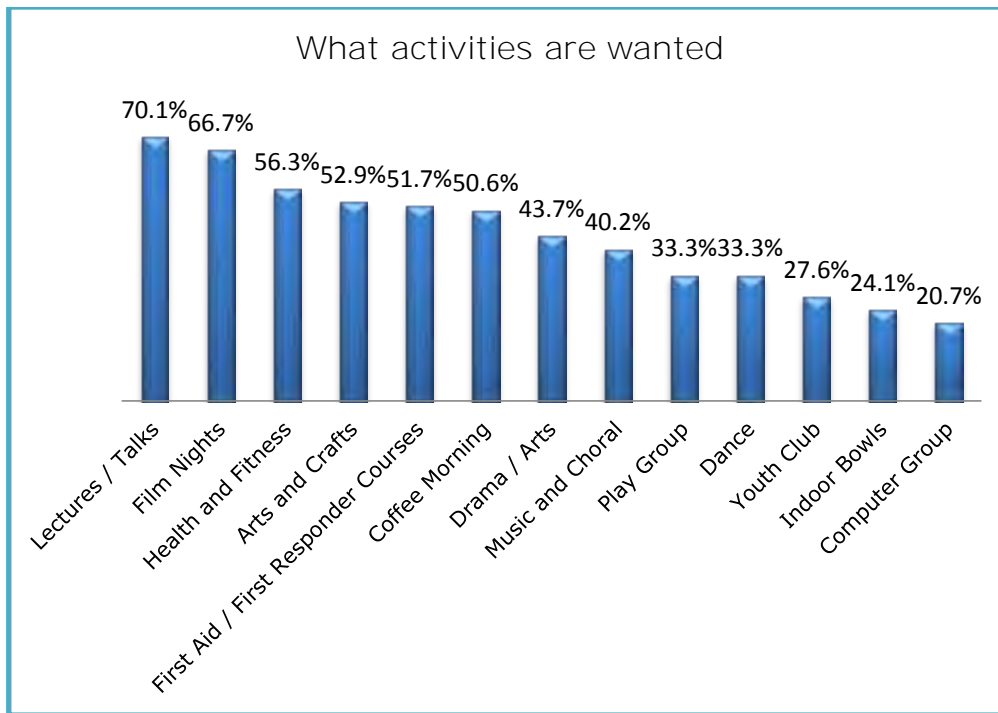
Health and Wellbeing

The survey showed that there are a number of people in the village who have declared a longterm disability or health condition. Within this group some have said they do not have all the support they need.

As a community we should care for all who live in Cucklington

The Village Hall

There is a strong **contingent** who would like to see the village hall being used for more activities and being more of a social focus for the village. The answer lies in some form of village social committee.



Crime and Safety

It is good to report that 73% of those surveyed thought Cucklington a safe place to live.

The figures returned would suggest some 14% have been the victims of a crime or crimes within the last year or three years.

Some 75% of those polled were in favour of maintaining a neighbourhood watch scheme.

Traffic and Transport

As a village in a rural environment Cucklington can expect traffic to pass through. Much of that vehicle movement involves those who live in and farm around the village.

There are also building projects underway.

Traffic will always be a feature of village life. That should not worry us providing the roads are safe.

Given what those surveyed have said the incidence of accidents or near misses is very low [$<1\%$].

A number of people [but not the majority] wanted to see some form of speed limit around the village and other traffic calming measures deployed.

The strongest vote was for the imposition of a 20 mph speed limit. In practical terms this speed would not be enforceable. Anyway there is no appetite for community speed check teams, signs or other traffic calming.

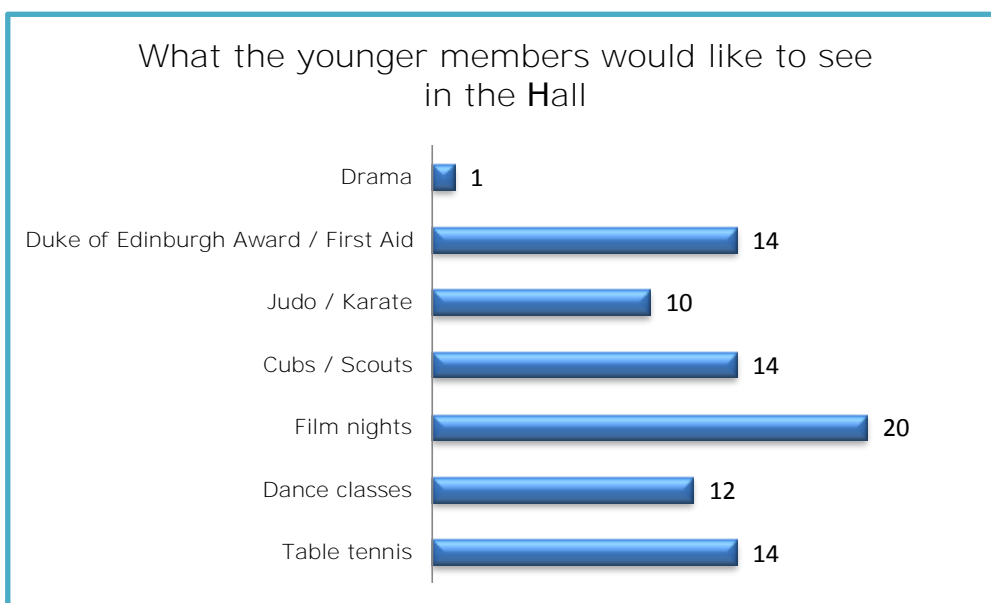
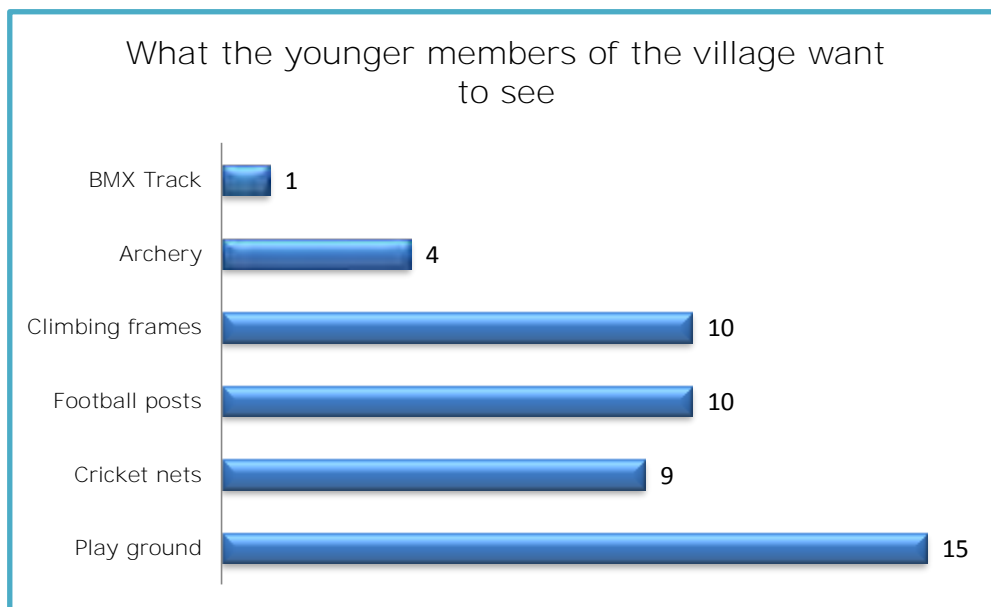
Environment and Village Appearance

The overwhelming view is that Cucklington is at the heart of some of the most beautiful Somerset countryside. To preserve what we have we need to have a community interest in the environment and in maintaining the village appearance.

A healthy 63% of those asked said they would like to be involved. This enthusiasm acts as a real force to combat those who seek to spoil our village with fly tipping and random litter.

Children and Young People

When asked what they would like to see the younger members of the village voted for the following:



It is now up to the village to work out how some of what has been asked for can be made to happen; the young represent some of the future of the village.

What is it about Cucklington

To repeat what has already been said by 80+% of the village ...'***Cucklington is a community, it has a vibrant community spirit, it is in a wonderful setting and it is accessible***'.

Cucklington needs volunteers and a community spirit to retain the integrity of what we enjoy as a village.

It also needs leadership and coordination. There are a number of village bodies which currently exist in some form - The Emergency Committee, The Parish Meeting, The Village Hall Committee.

The village plan has to be owned and the actions within taken forward. Who should be the owner of the village plan and be responsible for its execution is a matter which needs early resolution. It makes sense that the existing bodies are part of that governance and those other people who volunteer to coordinate effort assume a leadership role.

Summary

This village plan has been written by the village through their response to the survey undertaken in September 2012 and a consultation in February 2013. This document captures what the community wants for the future of Cucklington.

All agree **thet Cucklington** is a wonderful and lovely village which has over the passage of time grown to be an idyllic place to live. This plan aims to keep it so.

Acknowledgements

This plan could not have been written without the cooperation of all who live in Cucklington. So thank you.

One special mention should go to Tim Cook of South Somerset District Council without whom this whole project would have stalled.