

## WHITESTONE PARISH PLAN 2017– KEY FACTS



### What is a Parish Plan and why do we need one?

Our Parish Plan has been produced to show what we as a community want and perhaps, just as importantly, what we do not want. The Plan provides a snapshot of our community as it was in 2015. The fact that every household in the parish has been consulted gives weight to the findings which will be useful, for example, when applying for funding from outside bodies. This summary contains a selection of statistics and findings from the full Parish Plan. The Action Plan of key issues that parishioners considered important is shown separately.

### Background and Process

In November 2011 Whitestone Parish Council held an open meeting in the parish hall attended by 29 parishioners. There was a presentation from the Community Council of Devon and supportive comments from representatives of Tedburn St. Mary Parish Council and Whitestone Parish Council. 27 of the 29 attendees supported the idea of producing a Parish Plan and seven volunteered to form a steering committee group to take the idea forward.

Early on in the process, steering committee group members were keen to try to ensure that they were adequately representative of the parish 'age-profile'. They also wanted to get a feel for any issues within the parish, so decided to deliver a questionnaire to every household in the parish to obtain a demographic profile of the parish and to include 'scoping' questions to help compile a list of the sort of questions that might be asked in a full scale survey.

Findings were displayed at an open afternoon in the parish hall in September 2012 and comments from parishioners noted. As less than 10% of parish households responded to the questionnaire or attended on the day, it was felt that this gave an insufficient mandate to move forward. Parish groups were approached to enlist their support. After much developmental work, a coffee morning was held in April 2013 at which parishioners were invited to give any comments and suggestions within the broad topic areas which had emerged from people's concerns and opinions. The topic areas were 'Parish Life', 'Local Environment', 'Roads and Transport', 'Planning' and 'General'.

These comments, concerns and suggestions then formed the core of the Parish Plan Questionnaire, along with 'Demographics'. The design focused on ensuring that the format was unambiguous, unbiased, in plain English and designed to cater for all household members. To demonstrate that we had approached every resident and sought their views, parishioners were to be asked to complete an anonymous 'opt out' if they did not wish to be involved in filling in the questionnaire and contributing to the Parish Plan and its outcomes. The questionnaire was then trialled with a few representative members of the parish to get independent feedback and their comments were taken on board. A web-enabled version, fully compatible with the paper version, was also produced as an alternative in the hope of improving response levels.

The printed paper questionnaire was then hand-delivered to every household in the parish during May 2015, with envelopes to ensure anonymous responses. Separate volunteer sheets were delivered for use by those who wished to take particular activities forward. Hand collections often involved more than one revisit to improve the overall response and to answer any queries raised. All questionnaire responses, both paper and web enabled, were then processed and analysed by Teignbridge District Council. Following scrutiny by the Steering Committee and after some further analysis, the responses were compiled into a display, along with a proposed Draft Action Plan. This display was presented to the parish at a coffee morning in the parish hall in July 2016 which was attended by 40 people. The presentation materials were made available afterwards for those unable to attend on the day and a further 20 people took the opportunity to view these. All those who viewed the results were invited to give their anonymous comments on the Draft Action Plan. The Action Plan was finalised by the steering committee after receiving the feedback on the coffee morning presentation materials.

### Summary of Findings

#### **COMMUNICATION MAKES A COMMUNITY!**

A consistent thread throughout all the questionnaire responses, either stated directly, or implied, was that good clear communication lies at the heart of supporting our community and enabling it to thrive. This should be the focus in all that we try to do.

### Demographics

Statistics – Just fewer than 300 households were surveyed; approximately 60% responded to the questionnaire whilst a further 10% opted out. The approximate parish population at the time of the survey was 700. [The word approximate is used above as an allowance must be made for discrepancies in completed responses]. Results from the completed questionnaires showed a balance between females and males living in the parish and revealed that 66% of households were small, with 1 to 3 residents. The highest percentage of respondents [21%] fell in the 65 to 74 years age group. The most common residence period was 6 to 10 years [21%] with residence of more than 30 years a close second at 19%. 31% of respondents were retired, 36% of respondents in employment worked outside the parish whilst 11% worked within the parish. 31% of respondents cited 'environment' as the prime reason for choosing to live in Whitestone.

### **Parish Life**

The most used sources of communication in the parish were the parish magazine [40%] and word of mouth [33%] whilst parish notice boards were used by 12% of respondents. Electronic methods [email/parish website] were each used by under 10%. Those who have recently moved to the parish indicated a good uptake of the parish magazine in the first year [63%]. 40% of this group used word of mouth and 20% looked at notice boards. There is a noticeable dip in finding out what is going on in the parish via any means amongst those who have been in the parish for 1 to 2 years. Respondents aged under 35 and those over 85 years old did not use the

Whitestone website or email to find out what was going on in the parish but relied on the parish magazine or word of mouth. Across all the age ranges, there were more people who did not take part in regular activities in the parish [71%] than did. Of those respondents who did participate in regular activities, just over three fifths quoted the parish hall as their main venue followed by just under a quarter that used the church as their meeting place.



Those respondents who have lived in the parish for 30 years or more were the most active participants in regular activities within the parish. Respondents aged between 12 and 44 were less likely to take part in regular activities within the parish. The Action Plan does not include a paid bar facility in the parish hall, as only a quarter of respondents supported this proposal.

### Local Environment

**Rural Skip facility** - Just over two thirds of respondents indicated that they did not take advantage of this service. 46% of those who did not use the facility stated that they were unaware of its existence. In the year following the questionnaire, the service was advertised more widely and the uptake increased. **Footpaths and bridleways** - Nearly 80% of respondents were not aware of all the footpaths and bridleways within the parish. Two fifths of respondents never used the footpaths or bridleways, with a further two fifths only using them occasionally. Just under a fifth used them frequently. The highest percentages of those who never used the footpaths and bridleways were those aged 85 and above and those aged between 12 and 17. **Dog bin provision** - Extra provision attracted 21% support. **Extra parish gardening space** - This idea only received 4% support. Neither of these last two items warranted inclusion within the Action Plan. **Plastics recycling provision** - has probably been overtaken by improved doorstep recycling.

### Roads and Transport

**Speed Limits** - Most respondents [98%] either wanted speed limits kept the same or reduced to 20 mph within the current 30 mph zone. There was no real consensus regarding an appropriate speed limit for the Old Tedburn Road [C50] but 85% of respondents wished to see a reduction. **Buses** - 69% of respondents never used the 173 bus through Whitestone village. 81% never used the bus service on the C50. The highest percentage of those using both bus routes was the 12 to 17 age group, followed by the 5 to 11 year olds. Both routes were used mostly on weekday mornings and afternoons. Irrespective of the route taken respondents indicated that 40% usage was for social/ leisure with 34% use for shopping. 72% of comments received indicated that bus services would be used more often if the service was more frequent, reliable and included late evening/night services. **Roads** - Two fifths of respondents supported the idea of extra roadside footpaths and the spending of public money on them. Three fifths of respondents felt that there should be a 'Winter Highways Co-ordinator'. Over half of the respondents felt that better enforcement of hedge cutting was needed. Seven tenths of respondents were dissatisfied with

parish road maintenance; the main items of concern were potholes, surface condition and drain/gully clearance. Under a fifth of respondents supported making Hill Lane one way.

### Planning

A high percentage [84%] of respondents liked Whitestone parish as it is i.e. mostly rural with very limited development. Over 83% agreed that 'it is important that Whitestone is designated by Teignbridge as an Area of Great Landscape Value' and that this designation is used in determining planning applications. 26% of respondents supported some form of development. Only 6% of respondents indicated a definite local housing need within five years - with a preference for self build or small private sector purchase property. 52% of all respondents required more detail before deciding whether to support the conversion of agricultural buildings to domestic use; 25% opposed such developments outright. Two fifths of respondents objected to wind turbine developments and solar array sites and a similar proportion said their views depended on the individual detail. Just over a tenth of respondents supported such schemes. A locally derived benefit from such green energy proposals did not alter respondent opinion. Respondents opposed developments which would increase traffic, noise or light pollution, change the rural character, alter the balance of housing stock or the balance of existing parish development.

### General

If money were to be available, the 'top choices' for spending were on road maintenance, leisure related, actions to prevent speeding on our roads and a shop/post office. Other ideas were put forward that could enhance the parish and would be relatively quick and of little cost to implement; the fourth item in the Action Plan under Parish Life takes these forward. Just fewer than 80% of respondents were supportive of a parish precept increase. A 25% increase in the parish precept charge was the most supported cost category. The need to improve communications arose from the questionnaire responses, suggestions and comments received. As a result this topic is widely reflected in the Action Plan.

### What next?

The resulting finalised Action Plan presents ideas and actions that parishioners wanted to be taken forward. Some of these actions can be addressed within the parish; however, others will require the involvement of outside bodies or organisations.

This précis of the Parish Plan and a separate copy of the Action Plan tables have been distributed to every household in the parish. The full Parish Plan with appendix is available from the Whitestone website at: [www.whitestone-devon.org.uk](http://www.whitestone-devon.org.uk) or as a paper copy via the Whitestone Parish Council [subject to a charge for printing/postage costs].

The Whitestone Parish Plan Steering Group committee sincerely hope that people within the parish will take the Whitestone Action Plan forward by developing and implementing those actions listed for the benefit of our community. Please refer to the enclosed Action Plan tables for the next steps.