

Our village - our future

Broomley and Stocksfield Parish Plan 2009



What is a Parish Plan?

A Parish Plan is a 'vision' for the future of our community. It should set out how we want it to change in the future. To be taken seriously, it has to be a **practical** plan, which the Parish Council, working with others, can help to bring to fruition....nobody benefits from a wish-list. But above all, it has to be a genuine **community** plan – one which most people in the village support. So a Parish Plan needs to be based on robust and inclusive community consultation. What goes into it must always reflect the views of local people.

Why do we need one?

Stocksfield is a lovely place to live, but it is changing. The traffic on our roads is getting heavier; some of our vital community facilities have been under threat; our ageing community is finding it more and more difficult to buy or rent the right type of housing in the village; many of our young people feel excluded from village life.

There are now real opportunities for change in the village – change that would tackle these issues head on, help bring everyone together and make Stocksfield genuinely sustainable for the foreseeable future.

It is now 10 years since we last had a plan for the village. It is time we had another one – a plan which responds positively to recent changes, reflects people's priorities and charts a course for the village through the uncertain years ahead.

A snapshot of Parish life

Around 3200 people live in Broomley and Stocksfield, in just over 1000 homes. The village has seen many changes since we last prepared a Parish Plan in 1997 – some positive, some more negative: nowhere stands still. Our Parish Plan gives everyone the opportunity to focus on what the



gazing across the Tyne valley from New Ridley Road

whole village needs for a sustainable future.

Our village has been described in the past as ‘A Pleasant Retreat’ – and so it is for many residents. But it is also a vibrant commuter village with plenty of young families and a range of social and leisure activities. There are 27 active clubs and societies in the village. We have recently won the 2009 Northumberland Calor Village of the Year award.

Broomley and Stocksfield also has a surprisingly large and thriving business community – at least 48 businesses, currently employing around 300 people, three quarters of whom commute in to work here.

We live in a pleasant rural environment, but it is not without its problems. Physically, Stocksfield is ‘two villages linked by a main road’. It has no obvious centre; the hill from the Cricket Club to Branch End is a physical and mental barrier for many.

We are not quite the ‘cohesive’ community we would like to be. We no longer have annual events (like the Stocksfield Show) to bring everyone together. Our community centre is well-used, but is tucked away at one end of the village.

The A695 is an increasingly busy and dangerous road. We have an ageing population, but not enough homes of the right type to meet their needs. Low cost housing is also in short supply, making it difficult for young families to set up home here.

For a village of more than 3000 people, we have a wonderful range of sports and leisure facilities, but our other community facilities are modest; we have lost many local shops over the years. Our two Post offices now seem safe for the time being, as does our GP surgery – both have been under review. There are few places for our young people to spend time.



A pleasant retreat...



...and a busy, dangerous road

Our last Parish Plan

Many of these issues were highlighted in our last Parish Plan, drawn up in 1997. The table below highlights what people wanted to see change then and what has happened since in the village. Much has been achieved, but there are still some outstanding priorities. The Parish Council

has been directly involved in providing a completely new play area at Branch End and a new Multi-Use Games Area on the sports field, both opened in 2008; the village is a greener place than it was ten years ago, with excellent recycling facilities, new doorstep collections and a new Community Garden. Pedestrian crossings, speed activated road signs and dog bins have also been provided. But some of the bigger issues have proved more difficult to deliver – new affordable homes, better footpaths, improved car parking, fewer lorries on our roads, a new sports hall and even a revival of the old Village Show remain outstanding.



The new play area at Branch End



The new all-weather multi-use games area



More activities at the SICA Community Centre



Women's' cricket at the Sports Field



It is perhaps worth remembering that Parish Councils can only do so much; on the bigger issues we can influence, but we don't always get our own way! Change is coming, however; the Parish Council could have much more influence over these issues in the next ten years than it has had in the past.

1997 Parish Plan issues	What people wanted to see change	What has happened since 1997
Housing and development	No large scale housing developments	There have been no significant housing developments
	More affordable homes, especially for older people	No new affordable homes have been built
	Tackle empty homes in Broomley Village	Major refurbishment work is now complete
	New office development at Stocksfield Hall	Completed, with a further extension planned
Local environment	Set up a local environment group	There is now a very active Environment Group
	Undertake a wildlife survey	A major wildlife survey has been completed
	Provide dog waste bins	5 dog litter bins have been provided
	Improve public footpaths across the Parish	No major change
	Improve recycling facilities	A new recycling facility has been completed at the Cricket Club + new doorstep collections introduced by Tynedale Council
Community life	Appoint a community worker for the village	No major change
	Revive the Village Show	No major change
	More activities at the Community Centre	A wider range of activities are now available
	Provide village notice boards	Notice boards have been installed. NE43 News is distributed to every household once a quarter
Sport and leisure	Consider new leisure activities for older and disabled people	The Methodist Church now runs an older person's leisure club, with transport
	Provide a sports hall and bowling green at the Sports Field	A new floodlit, all-weather, Multi Use Games Area was completed in 2008. The Sports Hall idea was superceded by the Waterworld extension and refurbishment of Prudhoe High School facilities
Young people	Provide more youth activities	The Baptist Church has run a youth club; Prudhoe East project has run youth sessions at the community centre
	Improve the Branch End and Kates Plain play areas	The Branch End play area has been completely refurbished; some improvements have been made at

		Kates Plain
Highways and transport	Lorry restrictions, especially on New Ridley Road	Negotiations have not found a permanent solution
	Introduce speed cameras and traffic calming	Speed-activated signs are now in place on the A695
	Better parking facilities for shops	No major change
	Introduce pedestrian crossings on A695	Two new pelican crossings are now in place
	Improve station car park site	Some limited improvements have been made – more are on the way
	Better bus and train services, especially in the evening	No major change
	Provide cycle facilities at the station	Cycle lockers have been provided at the station
	Improved bus shelters	New and refurbished shelters have been provided
Health and social care	Extended opening hours at Branch End surgery	Some improvements have been made; a Patients Forum has been established
	Keeping Hexham Hospital open	A new Hexham hospital has been built
	Setting up a Luncheon club for older people	There is a monthly lunch club at the Baptist Church
Lifelong learning	Keeping a first school in the village	The future of the Broomley First School remains under review as part of the County Council's proposals for education re-organisation
	Improved funding for early years child-care provision	All 3 and 4 year olds are now Government-funded

Changes in Northumberland

From April 2009, District Councils in Northumberland will disappear and Tynedale will be no more. We will have a single unitary authority for the whole county. There will still be some area or district governance, through Area Committees, Partnerships and Community Forums. However, the idea of Belonging Communities, based on groups of local villages and neighbourhoods such as Stocksfield, seems to have been scrapped. The new arrangements are likely to involve more consultation through community forums – new partnerships that will involve not just Parish Councils, but also other services such as police and health, community forums, and voluntary and community organisations. Consultation on how this will be organised had not been completed at the time we wrote this Parish Plan.

Before its demise, Tynedale developed a **Sustainable Community Plan**. It recommended that each parish, town and community partnership should have a five year plan. It is important that our Village Plan fits in with this bigger picture. We have therefore included the main actions from the Sustainable Community Plan under each relevant theme in the Parish Plan.

The changing role of Parish Councils

As part of the County's new structure, there will be a new Northumberland Charter for Local Councils. Its' aim is to improve communication and co-operation between Parish and Town councils and the new County Authority by developing new partnerships for the joint management of services. Parish Councils like ours could take on more responsibility for running or improving certain services, following a County assessment of our capacity and strength.

The new County Authority is "committed in principle to the transfer of property to local councils and other bodies, where this will lead to demonstrable benefit for the community". The Charter promises back-up guidance and support should any Parish Council wish to explore this option. Local councils and communities will also be encouraged to scrutinise services in their area provided by the County Council and other public agencies such as health and police. This may take place at parish level or across a wider area of neighbouring villages or towns.

This already happens in the Tynedale, with Councillors from Broomley and Stocksfield, Bywell and Newton, Prudhoe and other local villages coming together on a regular basis (as the Eastern Tynedale Parish Council Forum) to talk about common issues.

Central government is also trying to promote local democracy and empowerment. Various new initiatives offer Parish Councils like Broomley and Stocksfield the opportunity to provide direct services such as street cleaning, neighbourhood wardens and youth services, on behalf of the new Unitary Authority. In the Sustainable Communities Act of 2007, there is also a strong emphasis on wider community consultation through local "panels" and encouraging councils to use local suppliers for goods and services. Access to information on how public money is spent is also due to be improved, enabling local people and local councils to decide which services might be provided locally, rather than through the County.

The Government's "Communities in Control" White Paper of 2008 recognises that parish and town councils have a new and important role to play in delivering local services and empowering their communities. It proposes better information for residents at a neighbourhood level, engaging young people, and giving practical support to councillors. There is also more money proposed to help volunteering projects and to develop leadership skills for local community leaders. There is more scope for local petitions and lobbying of local councillors, including a Call for Action which must be responded to. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act of 2007 places a duty on local authorities to ensure local people are involved in commissioning, provision and scrutiny of local care services.

All this means that, over the next ten years, Parish Councils have an opportunity to play a much greater role in their communities than has been possible in the past. For Broomley and Stocksfield, it means we have a much better chance of delivering community priorities in our 2009 Parish Plan.

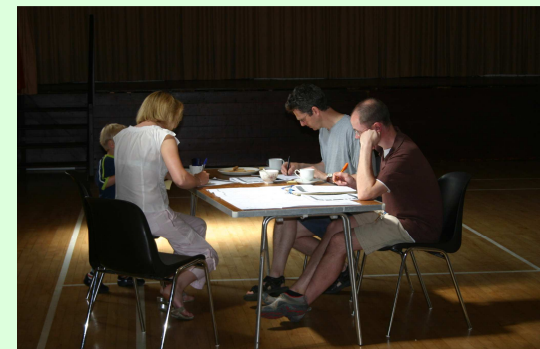
Our plan-making process

The Parish Council began work on the Parish Plan in January 2008. It has taken twelve months to produce it. That may seem a long time, so how did we put it together?

- We set up a core group of Parish Councillors, who brought together other interested residents to look at eight themes – housing and development; the local environment; community life; young people; sport and leisure; highways and transport; health and social care; lifelong learning
- Each theme group met regularly throughout the Parish Plan-making process
- We held two village 'walkabouts'
- We talked to 27 local groups providing a service in the village
- We carried out a photographic survey of the Parish
- We produced a major exhibition about the Parish Plan, raising issues for discussion and highlighting new opportunities
- We talked to 85 local residents at two Action Planning Events held in the village
- We interviewed 250 local residents on their doorstep
- We talked to 15 sixth formers from Stocksfield at Prudhoe Community High School
- We interviewed 26 local businesses
- We talked to a variety of local stakeholders, including Tynedale and Northumberland Councils
- We pulled everything together to produce this Parish Plan



The Action Planning events



The main issues in our village

The eight Parish Plan theme groups took a detailed look at the issues facing the village now. This is what they concluded...

Housing and development

Village development is almost always controversial. We have a shortage of appropriate housing for older people and it will get worse in the next ten years. We also have a shortage of affordable homes. We need a better mix of housing; without it, people will be forced to look elsewhere. The long term sustainability of Broomley and Stocksfield as a vibrant village may depend on some new development to meet our current and future needs, but this raises important issues, such as the potential loss of green space, extra traffic and more pressure on our local services.

The main areas for potential development are the Old Station Yard, the fields opposite Broomley School, the fields next to Old Ridley, the land next to the garage and Spar and Merryshields Farm. However, the larger sites are controversial, whilst one or two of the smaller ones have complicated land ownership issues. Where it has support from local residents, the Parish Council might consider purchasing land for community benefit.

One or two other areas are causing some difficulties. The development of the area behind the Old Blacksmiths Shop has come to a halt part way through, spoiling the appearance of an attractive area. The appearance of the tennis club and scout and guide hut at the end of Guessburn is spoilt by the land behind the Snooker Club. This could provide car parking for people using the various facilities located here.

The number of businesses in and around the village is remarkably high; there are at least 48 of them, not including those people who are self-employed and working from home. We have several prestige businesses at Stocksfield Hall, some with plans for significant expansion. They benefit our local economy, employ some local people and help maintain our fragile services; but they also generate extra traffic on to our narrow and already busy roads.



Land next to the Garage and Spar needs redevelopment

Our local environment

Tynedale Council has been encouraging recycling, and has recently added brown bins for garden waste to its services. This has helped reduce the percentage of household waste going to landfill. On the down side, much plastic material is no longer accepted for re-cycling, whilst fly tipping is still causing problems, particularly on the footpath that follows the Guessburn.

Traffic on our narrow rural lanes can inhibit walkers. Some of these minor roads form part of our local 'Health Walks'. Turning some of these routes into 'Quiet Lanes', improving their safety for walkers, horses and cyclists, remains a possibility.

Many children who walk to school have to use a narrow footpath alongside the A695 with its' heavy traffic and large lorries. The lack of hedge trimming alongside some of these footpaths can cause pedestrians to have to walk on the road to pass people coming the other way.

Creating a footpath along the south bank of the Tyne has been a long-standing priority. However, the cost of bridging the Stocksfield Burn has been a sticking point. With the County Council now supporting the proposal it may be possible to move forward discussions with the landowners – Allendale Estates.

There are several proposals for the area which would affect our environment as well as creating traffic issues for the village. Two wind turbine clusters are proposed at Hedley on the Hill and Currock Hill. They will generate clean energy but may spoil the general beauty of the area. Other proposals include the expansion of Stocksfield Hall, Hollings Hill landfill (which could bring domestic waste through the village) and the continuation of quarrying at Broadoak Quarry outside Ebchester.

The Merryshields Quarry area has been restored. The Parish Councils' Environment Group is not satisfied with the monitoring of the actual restoration agreement nor with the nature of that agreement. It is already visited by a number of species of water birds, but they are unable to breed due to lack of suitable nesting areas. There may be opportunities for it to become a nature reserve, although this is also an area that potentially could accommodate any new housing development. It may be possible to do both. The effectiveness of the drainage system



The River Tyne, with the potential south bank footpath on the right



Merryshields Farm and former quarry

has also been raised, particularly in the light of recent floods. While the response of Tynedale Council is that they are being maintained at normal levels, it would seem that the drains are unable to cope when it rains very heavily.

The village has five dog litter bins, currently maintained by Tynedale Council, and a larger bin has just been acquired by the Parish Council. Nevertheless, dog litter remains an issue for a significant number of residents.

Community life

Stocksfield is a friendly place - essentially two villages merged into one, with its services stretched out along its whole length. The village lacks a natural centre and this has certainly contributed to a general feeling that 'we could be more together than we are'.

We have a well-run and popular Community Centre, but its location at one end of the village and lack of adequate parking means it is perhaps not as well-used as it could be. Although very well used by many people in our community, teenagers, in particular, do not use the Centre on a regular basis.

Any significant housing developments could put a strain on our current services (Broomley First School is already experiencing physical space difficulties) and the doctors' surgery, as well as threatening current green spaces. However, more households could help to maintain existing services and businesses (and possibly attract new ones) as well as opening up new opportunities, such as a new village centre. Any new development would certainly have an impact on the social mix in the village. Stocksfield may become a nice place to live and commute from rather than a vibrant village with lots of local activities. We are fortunate to have a wide and well-run range of church and community facilities, for which many people give up a lot of their time. However, we cannot assume that this level of support will continue indefinitely.

Although Stocksfield is certainly a friendly village, some elderly people do feel isolated, while some of our young people feel "trapped" - the facilities they want are often elsewhere and they do not always have the money or transport to access them. New residents to the village may find it difficult to become involved in what are well-established groups and activities, particularly if they work full-time. There may therefore be a case for trying to recreate a village identity through events like a Village Show.



The Stocksfield Village Show c.1920

Sport and leisure

Stocksfield has a thriving range of sports and leisure facilities and activities, which compares well with other areas in the North East. Important amenities such as a swimming pool, athletics track, full size all-weather pitch and indoor bowls rink are always going to be provided in much larger settlements. Easy access to these services is however important for Stocksfield residents.

Tynedale has an Open Space, Sport and Recreation Strategy, which set two targets for our Parish - improvements to the sports pitches and renewal of the new Multi-use Games Area (MUGA). The former remains under discussion, whilst the latter has already been achieved.

Our Parish Plan survey of 27 clubs and organisations in the village revealed a total membership of 1479 individuals, with just over half of them resident in the parish. Membership levels are generally stable or expanding, although some clubs with a largely older member base recognise the need to attract younger members. Most of the sports and leisure facilities in the village are not owned by the clubs that run them, limiting their ability to invest in new provision. All the clubs are dependant on the work of committees and volunteers to function, although some of the larger clubs do employ staff. It is certainly becoming more difficult to both recruit and sustain voluntary involvement. All clubs were financially viable, but constantly needed to work hard to achieve the income to remain solvent and many were reliant on grant aid support particularly to fund any new development initiatives. As well as the new Multi Use Games Area, additional floodlighting at the Tennis Club has been provided so that all courts are now lit, and practice facilities at the Golf Club have been upgraded.

The sports fields at the Cricket Club are heavily used, with an increased number of teams playing cricket, rugby and soccer. Recently, there has been a request for an additional football pitch (which may involve reconfiguring existing pitches) plus proposals to upgrade the drainage, acquire new goalposts, and put in additional floodlighting for a grass training area. There have also been suggestions for widening the range of activities - for example a running track or outdoor bowls facility (as well as improving equipment for the indoor bowls that currently exists) to cater for a wider audience and age range. This in turn would mean improving the clubhouse and providing additional changing and showering facilities. An indoor sports hall with gym / fitness room and possibly a squash court still remains a possibility. All this suggests that, despite the rent of an additional field in recent years, space is still a problem and we may need to look at additional space in the village if we are to accommodate a wider range of activities.



A rugby match at the sports fields

There is already some informal use of the sports fields and other clubs, but some residents may prefer less organised activities, such as a skateboard park, youth shelter or gym. In certain cases, as with a home-made BMX bike track in the woods, this has already been done. Increasing casual use of existing facilities may be possible, but this does present challenges for clubs who primarily need to cater effectively for their members.

Although they have access to the sports field, the school does not have its' own outdoor sports area, which may limit the amount of physical exercise activities that the school can offer. Facilities for older and disabled people are also limited.

SICA does provide a range of indoor sports and leisure facilities, but they are not suitable for a number of indoor sports. Other leisure activities, such as allotments, are not widely available. The cost of some activities, such as golf, tennis or riding may restrict their wider availability.

Young people

The Parish Plan process has enabled us to discuss issues with some of our young people, but this has not been comprehensive, and the household survey report acknowledges that this age group was not well represented in its' findings.

We need to look at a range of facilities and services, for very young children, those up to 9 years old, 9 - 12s, and 13s - 18s, as their requirements are radically different.

At the younger end of the scale, facilities and activities have improved significantly in recent years. Kate's Plain and Branch End play areas have been refurbished, there is excellent childcare in the village and a thriving mums and toddlers group. The sports club and churches provide excellent facilities for some young people, and these are well used. There are also well attended brownies, cubs, guides and scouts groups. However, many of these activities are completely reliant on volunteers, and for raising their own funds. Others, such as the Methodist Church, would be willing to become more involved but lack the resources to take on any projects.

At the teenager end, youth clubs do run, but the recent experiment at SICA was not well-attended, and numbers of young people using the Baptist Church have been variable. The facilities at Prudhoe East Youth Club do not attract many young people from the village. Current buildings are not seen as being "user friendly" by most young people, and are often also being used by other groups, which put them off.

Outreach work, where youth workers go to places young people congregate has been stepped up. A more casual approach to youth provision, such as a youth shelter or internet cafe, may be a more practical option for meeting young people's needs in the village. Transport to allow young people to access outside facilities may also be a practical way forward.



Mild Peril gig for Stocksfield Utd FC Under 15s at SICA

Highways and transport

We live either side of a busy main road. The A695 is a through route to other locations in the Tyne Valley and the A68. Although discussions on traffic flows are still ongoing at a District level, a further bridge across the Tyne is unlikely and a by-pass is not an immediate option. Stocksfield is likely to remain a busy place for road traffic for the foreseeable future.

The prevalence of heavy lorries is a particular concern. Although we now have two pelican crossings, there is only one footpath along part of this road, and it is often difficult for two people to pass each other without actually stepping off the pavement. This is not acceptable for a route regularly used by parents with buggies and children going to school. As most of our village services are located on this road, and others filter on and off it, traffic can be particularly heavy.

There have been a number of accidents on the stretch of the A695 between the sports fields and Birches Nook Road. Excessive speed on the steep bend here has probably been the underlying cause. The recent introduction of speed-activated signs has helped discourage, but not eradicate speeding traffic through the village. The signs will also be periodically moved to the end of New Ridley Road near to its' junction with the Hedley on the Hill Road, as there is also a problem with vehicles exceeding the 30mph limit on this stretch of New Ridley Road. Speeding can also be a problem on many of the residential roads in Stocksfield. It is also a problem through Broomley Village, as are the volume of heavy lorries and the lack of a footpath in parts of the village. The speed and number of heavy lorries is also an issue for New Ridley.

Outside developments, such as the proposals for wind farm development, the expansion of Stocksfield Hall, Hollings Hill landfill (which could bring domestic waste through the village) and the continuation of quarrying at Broadoak Quarry outside Ebchester, may also affect the volume and type of traffic coming through the village.

Branch End Surgery has now improved its car park and bollards have been used to create a parking area outside the Branch End shops. The Spar shop development at Branch End garage does provide adequate parking. However parking remains a problem in some areas of Stocksfield. The increase in the number of cars in each household means that there is inadequate parking facilities in many parts of the village. Because many of our facilities are spread out and there is a steep hill between the top and bottom of the village, residents are inclined to use their cars. This has been highlighted by a recent complaint from the bus company that buses cannot pull into their bus stops because of parked cars. Particular “hotspots” are on New Ridley Road (despite many efforts by residents who have created their own off-the-road parking facility), on parts of the Birkdene Estate, at the end of Painshawfield Road which enters New Ridley Road, at Birches Nook and on the A695 between the garage and Branch End Play Area. Cars partially parked on pavements at the sports fields and Branch End Play Area also causes problems for other car users and for pedestrians.



Parking and traffic problems on New Ridley Road

The state of repair of the Parish roads and the level of road gritting in winter are perennial complaints regularly reported to the County Council.

Public transport late at night is still an issue. As the last train from Newcastle leaves at 10.30 p.m. (9.10 pm. on a Saturday; 8.15 pm. on a Sunday), people often use their cars to get to and from the city for social events. The evening bus service is also very limited and some of the facilities in Hexham and Prudhoe are some distance from train and bus stops, involving long walks up steep hills, with personal safety issues at night. As a consequence, there is little encouragement to use public transport to access the available sport and leisure activities.

Trains will still only allow 2 bikes per train, with no facility for pre-booking. Some commuter train services and Saturday shopping trains suffer from overcrowding, which again discourages the use of public rather than private transport.

Health and social care

As people get older, more of them want to stay living independently for as long as possible. To do so, many of them need to downsize to smaller homes or rely on a carer. Both are in short supply in our village. When independent living is no longer possible, many older people want to stay in the village in some sort of supported care accommodation – again something which is in short supply here. The fear of isolation and loneliness is a growing problem for many older people; offering a wider range of recreational activities for them, with suitable support (including cheap transport), would help. Mental health issues (for the wider community as well as elderly people) may also need to be assessed, as this is an area that is often overlooked.

The G.P. surgery now offers early morning appointments on Monday and Tuesday and evening appointments up to 8 p.m. on a Wednesday. Under new arrangements, minor injuries may be dealt with locally. A Patients' Forum has also been set up to improve dialogue between the surgery and users. Despite these improvements, not everyone in the village is happy about the standard of service they receive. Given the recent prolonged debate about rural medical services and the difficulties being experienced by the Northumberland Care Trust, we should remain vigilant about future medical services locally. There are still no guarantees about the future of village-based GP services.



Branch End GP Surgery

There was a mixed response to hospital provision. Most felt it was efficient, but some have experienced long waiting times for minor injuries. There appears to be limited childcare facilities at Hexham Hospital. There have also been debates recently about the speed of ambulances to reach rural patients requiring emergency treatment, although we are not aware this is a problem in Stocksfield. However, relocation to hospitals outside the area has been identified as a problem, as has liaison between hospitals, Social Services and the G.P. practice.

As with other parts of the country, obesity is an issue for adults and children, and needs to be addressed through a proactive exercise and diet programme. This should be reflected when looking at other themes in order to encourage wider participation and opportunities for sports, walking and cycling.

Lifelong learning

Funding for pre-school childcare is much improved and the village now has a range of provision, including childminders, parent and toddler groups, pre-school groups, a day nursery and pre and after school kids club, coordinated by a community run group. Pre-school and after-school care appears to be adequate at present. However, this should be monitored in the light of any future significant change in the make-up of the village's population.

Broomley First School provides for 125 pupils aged 4 to 9 years and early years education from 3 years. In recent years it has had to use Portacabin to meet increased demand, and does not have its own sports fields. The introduction of two-tier education in Northumberland, if it happens, is likely to have an impact on its' future. It may close or merge with another school in the area. Another possibility is to refurbish the current building or build a new school in the village which could accommodate current and future demand, including pupils from other parts of Tynedale. For secondary pupils, Prudhoe High School is also in need of significant refurbishment.

There are opportunities for informal learning locally through the Retired Men's Association, W.I, and local groups such as the Local History Society and pottery classes at Sourdust Pottery. More formal adult education classes are provided at Prudhoe Community High School, Open Door at Prudhoe and Queen Elizabeth High School at Hexham. A community computer facility exists in the Community Centre and this is used mainly by adults during the daytime. The School has opened an IT facility, which will also be available for the general public. However, each facility has been developed independently, and there could be duplication of effort and provision. Opportunities for a wider range of adult learning in the Parish remain limited. This could be addressed by more local classes, which would reduce the need to use cars, but may be unviable in terms of adequate numbers, or by community transport to Prudhoe or other locations that run classes. There is also an opportunity to link in with the University of the Third Age.



Sports Day at Broomley First School

The library stop on Mount View Terrace is proving increasingly difficult to achieve, given the level of traffic on this road. If there was any significant housing development, it is questionable whether a mobile library service would meet the needs of an expanded population.

The Parish Council

Many of the issues raised during the Parish Plan process, such as planning and development or highways and transport, are not directly within the remit of the Parish Council, but are provided currently by Tynedale District Council, and after April 2009 by the new Northumberland County Council. The drive for local management of local services is fundamental to recent Central Government legislation and the rationale

of the new County Council. This offers our village a chance to have more control over some of these services. However, there is a question mark about the capacity of the current Parish Council to take on board any further workload. Councillors work on a purely voluntary, unpaid basis, often on top of full-time work or other major commitments. The Council is still not at its full quota of 12 Councillors, and most of those currently serving have been seconded into the role. At the last local elections, there were not enough candidates to warrant an election.

Any move to take on more direct service provision would require an even greater commitment, and this may deter current Councillors from continuing as well as those who may otherwise be willing to serve at a future date. An alternative approach may be to set up some kind of community development trust or community partnership which would manage any services we were to directly provide. This in turn will require a significant commitment and range of skills from within the local community.

What people said

Most of these issues were raised with local residents during the Parish Plan-making process. Their response to them forms the basis for the Plan. They can be summarised as follows:

The Action Planning Events

Two half-day Action Planning Events were attended by 85 local people, who completed 54 questionnaires about the future of the village. They viewed an exhibition about issues and future opportunities and were asked to prioritise them. We used a variety of participatory appraisal techniques to help people do this.

The main conclusions from the two days were:

- Most people agree that some new development is needed in the village to meet current and future needs
- Development of the smaller sites should be prioritised. There was little support for the development of large sites, with the exception of Merryshields Farm, which drew equal support and opposition from those completing questionnaires
- Most people would welcome a River Tyne south bank footpath, a Quiet Lanes policy for back roads, a nature reserve at Merryshields Farm and a village policy on wind farm developments.
- Most people are happy with the current location and function of the community centre but would like to see the Community Association's role expanded in the village

- There was also majority support for more consultation with young people, possibly through a Youth Forum, to give young people a voice in the village; there were mixed views on a youth shelter or internet cafe, with a balance between those in favour and those not sure
- There was some support for a neighbourhood policing role, although many people were uncertain about how effective it would be or how necessary it was
- Many people would like to see a return of the Village Show
- A running track and skateboard park on the Sports Fields were both popular, but there was less support for more pitches and an indoor sports hall
- More car parking at the Station yard, improved public transport, a weight limit on lorries using village roads and safer pedestrian routes were all very popular.
- Although still popular with the majority, a Stocksfield by-pass, 20mph limits on local roads, resident parking schemes and a community transport scheme all attracted significant opposition or uncertainty amongst a large minority of people.
- There was very strong support for the Parish Council taking a lead role in developing land and projects for community benefit and running some local services with devolved budgets from the County Council.

The Doorstep Inquiry

The Doorstep Inquiry was a key ingredient in the Parish Plan process. Following the successful Action Planning events, held in July 2008, it was important to give a wider range of people in the village an opportunity to contribute their views to the Plan.

250 people (around 10% of the adult population) were interviewed in their homes during October 2008. This makes the Inquiry statistically “robust” and a fair reflection of the collective views of everyone in the village on the issues raised at the Action Planning events.

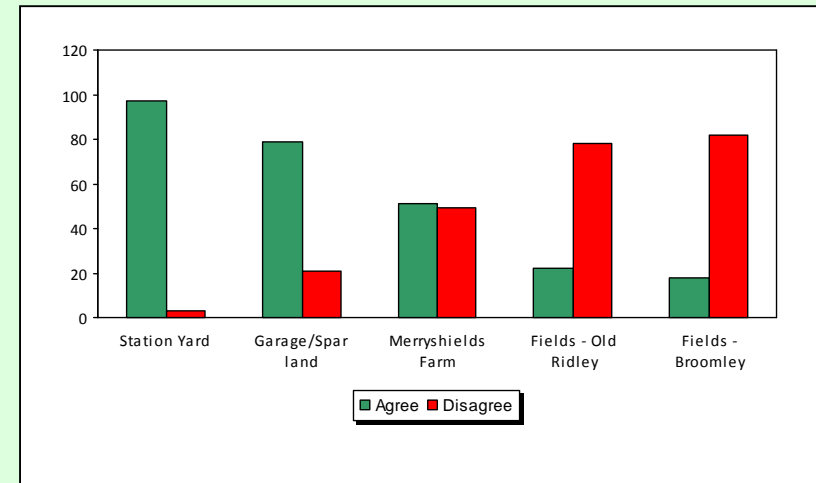
Interviews were balanced by age and geography; in practice the former proved difficult, with significant (and not unexpected) under-representation from young people. This was tackled by an outreach session with teenagers at Prudhoe Community High School in late November 2008. A good geographical spread was successfully achieved, which included Broomley Village and Hindley. A copy of the Eljay Research report and the Doorstep Inquiry questionnaire are both available on request.

The main outcomes from the Doorstep Inquiry can be summarised as follows:

Housing and development

The principle of providing some new housing and development in Stocksfield over the next ten years is accepted by more than two thirds of residents, with only a quarter being opposed. There was a recognition that the two parts of the village would benefit from being more physically joined up and that a new centre would be valuable.

However, when asked where new homes might be built, the larger proposed sites are not popular, with 4 out of 5 people opposing any development opposite Broomley School or at Old Ridley. There is more interest in developing Merryshields Farm, with just over half the residents supporting it. Development at the Station yard and at the Spar in Branch End are both strongly supported by around 80% of residents.



Local Environment priorities

Local environmental priorities are focused on a River Tyne South Bank footpath and a locally managed nature reserve at the former Merryshields Quarry. Both attracted support from around two thirds of residents. However a number of other environmental initiatives also attracted significant levels of support, with only a 'no plastic bags' policy among local traders failing to register more than 40% of residents in favour.

Strengthening community life

Two methods of strengthening community life emerged as most popular among residents – the appointment of a neighbourhood warden or community police officer and the return of the Stocksfield Village Show or an annual Community Week. Both attract support from two thirds of residents.

In contrast, the expansion of the community association (29%) and a larger more central community centre (25%) attract far less support.

Priorities for sport and leisure

Leading the priorities for sport and leisure is an indoor sports hall if a new school building was proposed – attracting support from around two thirds of residents. A running track on the sports fields is supported by half the residents, but a skateboard park found 60% opposed.

Priorities for young people

As only 9 young people were interviewed during the survey, these results should be treated with a lot of caution – they reflect older residents' perceptions of young people's priorities.

Three quarters of residents feel young people should have their own consultation process to find out their views on the type and location of facilities in the village.

A Youth Forum is supported by half the residents and a Youth shelter/drop-in place by 40%. A skateboard park and increased outreach/casual provision from youth service providers attract much lower levels of support.

Priorities for highways and transport

Top priorities here focus on the provision of extra car parking space at the old station yard, supported by three quarters of residents; and improved bus and train services at evenings and weekends, supported by two thirds. Lorry weight limits, 20mph speed limits and safe pedestrian routes were supported and opposed in equal numbers.

Perhaps surprisingly, only just over one third of residents felt the village should mount a campaign for a Stocksfield by-pass. Resident parking schemes in congested neighbourhoods were similarly unpopular.

Health and social care

Just over half of residents would like to see a combination of Lifetime and care homes in the village, to meet the needs of an ageing population.

Following the setting up of a Patient's Forum, residents were asked if there are any issues that they feel are not being dealt with at the Surgery or any improvements that could be made there. Many residents made critical comments, particularly about the quality of the reception service, but also about the appointments system and the difficulties of seeing 'your own doctor'.

The most common response on potential improvements was providing better access for disabled or partially disabled people who currently find it difficult using the stairs to see a doctor or have to wait for lengthy periods for a doctor to see them on the ground floor, plus longer and more convenient opening hours.

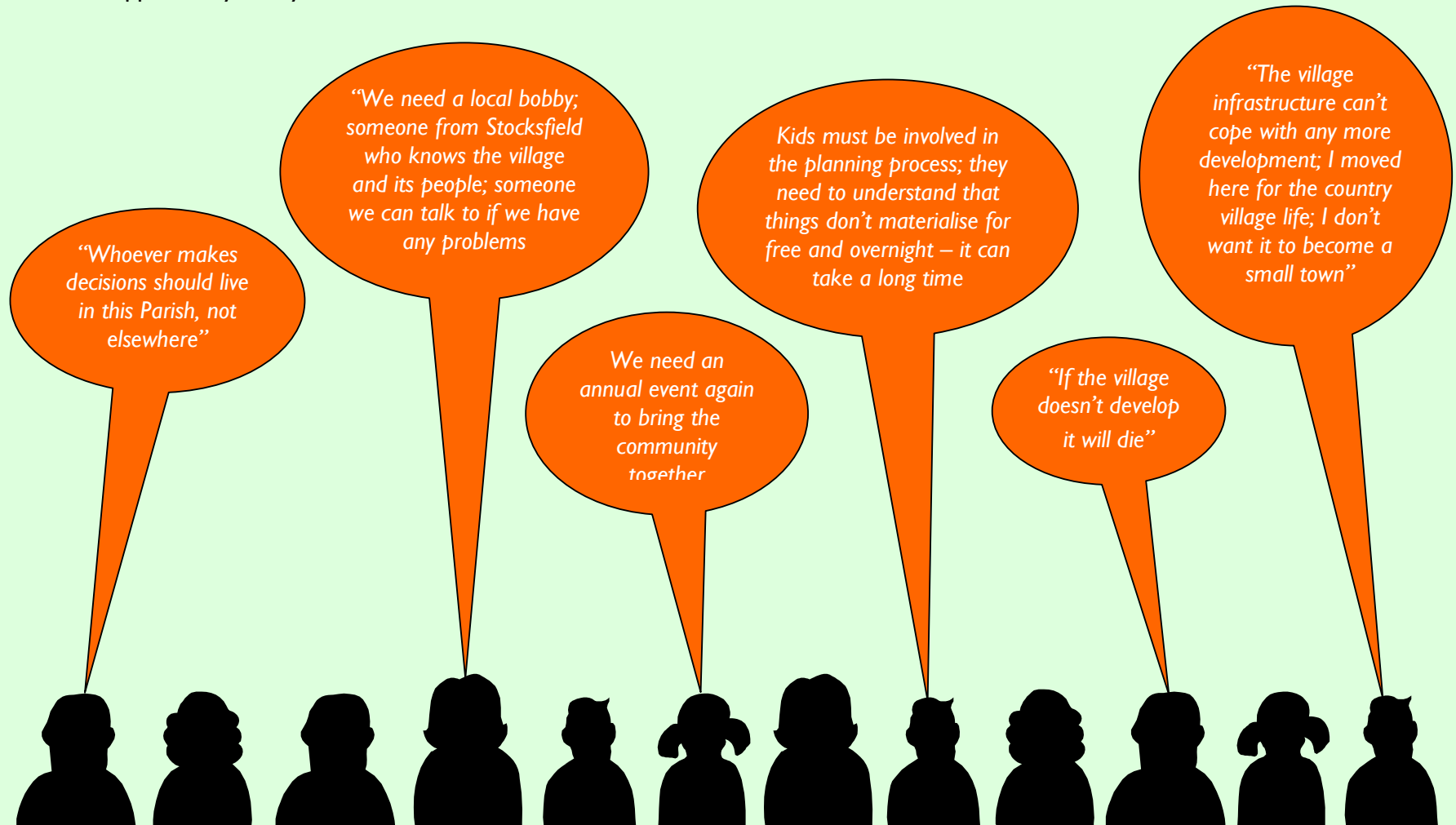
Lifelong Learning priorities

Nearly two thirds of residents want to see an expansion of Broomley School to cope with future demand and new technology; a similar

proportion wish to see increased adult learning opportunities in the Parish (61%).

The next steps

The most popular next step is for the Parish Council to take a lead role in developing land and projects in the village for community benefit. This was supported by nearly 60% of residents.



The business survey

Stocksfield has a strong business community, much of it hidden away on converted farms. These businesses are here mainly because their owners live in the area, because their type of business is well-suited to a rural environment or because of the good public and private transport connections to Tyneside. In many cases, all three factors are important.

The business survey was sent to 48 businesses located within or just outside the Parish. We included businesses at South Acomb and Bearl Farms. Just over half the businesses (26 of the 48) responded. The findings can be summarised as follows:

- 46% of business owners live in Stocksfield and/or the Parish; 54% do not
- Stocksfield businesses currently employ around 300 people, full or part-time; this may expand significantly in the next few years
- Around 90 (30%) of employees live in the village; 210 (70%) do not – they commute in, most commonly from Tyneside
- The local community facilities most regularly used by local businesses are:
 - The Garage and Spar (61%)
 - Stocksfield Post Office (50%)
 - Branch End Post Office (46%)
 - Chemist (23%)
- 13% of local businesses do not use any of the village's community facilities on a regular basis



Stocksfield Hall Business Centre

Our priorities for action

One of the purposes of this Parish Plan is to identify what local people see as being the key issues and opportunities so the Parish Council can act where it can, but also inform and influence the decision-makers at County level about our local priorities. Some of these priorities, will need to be dealt with across a wider geographical area. The Parish Council will therefore be raising them at regular meetings of the East Tynedale Parishes Forum, or any successor body which emerges following local government reorganisation in the County.

The table below sets out our Parish Plan priorities for the next ten years, under each of our eight themes. They are shown in relation to Tynedale's Sustainable Communities Plan priorities. The Parish Plan priorities highlighted in bold orange are those the Parish Council feels it should tackle in the short – medium term (1-5 years). Other priorities may also be tackled during this period.

Tynedale Sustainable Community Plan priorities	Broomley and Stocksfield Parish Plan priorities 2009 - 2019
Housing and development	Maintain the rural nature of Stocksfield by limiting new housing developments to within the built up area of the village
Provide affordable and decent housing	Focus new development on the smaller sites at Station Yard and Branch End
	Increase the range of housing available in the village e.g. affordable, supported, lifetime, sheltered
	Limit the development of Broomley and Hindley
	Explore the potential for new village facilities at Merryshields Farm
Encourage employers to make optimum use of local recruitment and assist people returning to the workforce	Support appropriate existing and future business development
Local environment	Monitor and actively pressurise the relevant authorities on day-to-day environmental issues such as dog-fouling, hedge trimming and drainage
Increase renewable energy, including wind generation	Draw up a village policy on wind farms
Ensure that new developments are in-keeping with the environment	Actively pursue the development of the former Merryshields Quarry as a locally managed Nature Reserve
Promote recycling	Actively pursue creating a River Tyne footpath along the south bank from Bywell Bridge
Reduce waste	Actively pursue the creation of 'Quiet Lanes' in the Parish
	Investigate creating more footpaths that would encourage walking and keep pedestrians away from heavy traffic
Community life	Reinstate the Stocksfield Village Show, and possibly a "Community Week" where other events are scheduled under this umbrella
Cherish local distinctiveness and value individual community identity	Explore the potential for establishing a Youth Forum with young people in the village
	Provide a welcome pack, "friendship visits" or a 'Freshers' Fair' for newcomers to the village

Provide increased opportunities for participation, and ensure everyone has an opportunity to help shape the decisions that affect their lives and access to services and information when they are needed	Investigate the potential for establishing a Stocksfield Community Development Trust to develop local services (eg neighbourhood wardens and a community bus service) and acquire assets for community benefit
Empower and support voluntary and community sector organisations, including increased employment and training opportunities and service delivery options like working with family and carers around supporting independent living	Provide more “drop-in” facilities, visits and other activities to reduce isolation
Provide more services closer to people’s homes	Look at potential funds such as Grassroots and Community Builders to assist with developing community infrastructure and provide financial and volunteer support for the wide range of social, sport and leisure activities in the village
Ensure that key public facilities, such as sports grounds, play areas, green spaces and community centres are maintained and supported	Create a community facilities network to co-ordinate events and reduce duplication of effort among local clubs and groups
Sport and Leisure	Review the current use of the sports fields and club house facilities, and investigate other potential sites for sports to accommodate existing and future demand on space and increasing the range of facilities
Increase physical and recreational activity	Investigate the potential for a small gym / fitness centre at the sports field
Increase numbers of volunteers and qualified sports coaches in sport	Include possible provision of a indoor sports hall in any long-term plans for a new school or new facilities at Merryshields Farm
	Re-use any surplus income generated from the MUGA to create a fund for sports development
	Develop a Club Directory webpage as part of the Parish Council website
	Increase awareness of the Parish Council small grants budget and other external funding opportunities for clubs
Young people	Review current funding provided by Parish Council to better reflect usage by and demand from young people and to support local activities and clubs that provide amenities for them
Tackle weight issues and promote healthy living	Ensure our local services reflect the needs of different age groups
Support youth forums and provision for young people, with suitable transport	Bring together young people to discuss how they would like to influence decisions that affect the village - possibly through a Youth Forum
Improve community access to schools for sports, play and cultural activities	Investigate the potential for a community transport scheme, as part of a Stocksfield Community Development Trust (see Community Life)
Promote and teach young people to support other young people	Investigate the possibility of a casual “drop-in” centre, youth shelter or internet-cafe type provision

Increase physical activity opportunities	Encourage existing village facilities to open up to more casual use
Affordable nursery provision	Maintain our existing high quality provision in the village
Quality play facilities for all children and young people	Maintain our existing high quality provision in the village
Highways and transport	Open up the old Station Yard to create more parking and a possible transport interchange, including more extensive covered cycle racks
Improve transport links, especially to isolated and remote areas and linking them to jobs, schools and other services	Investigate the potential for a community transport scheme, as part of a Stocksfield Community Development Trust (see Community Life)
Improve our transport systems, including public and community transport, rail links, road links, especially the A69, i.e. more dual carriageway	Continue to lobby public transport providers for better public transport in the evenings, more rail capacity at peak times, and better cycle carrying facilities
Understand road safety initiatives; maintain monitoring systems, including CCTV speeding systems; run education campaigns on safe driving	Lobby the Highways Authority for a weight limit on appropriate roads in Stocksfield
	Investigate the potential for 20mph speed limits on minor village roads and other safety measures, in consultation with local residents
Health and social care	
Improve diet and lifestyles through education	
Improve provision and access to mental health services	
Reduce smoking, alcohol and drug misuse and illness	
Explore new ways and models of providing care, and care at home	Investigate creating more lifetime homes, sheltered / care home in the village with warden support
Improve the quality of life for people with long-term needs by supporting voluntary and community groups, family, and carers	Actively create more activities and facilities to reduce isolation for the elderly e.g a community cafe, “friendship visits” and a community bus service
Develop systems that support people to manage their own care	Hold discussions with our GP practice and Patients Forum on new ways of supporting those with care needs
Lifelong learning	Monitor developments on the County education review to provide the strongest possible case for keeping our school within the village, either by developing the current premises or building a new purpose-built school
Improve access to training and learning	Produce a Learning Plan for the village, coordinating IT provision at SICA and the First School, providing more local classes and transport to other venues
Enable and encourage the voluntary and community sector to be in a position to provide employment and training opportunities	

Delivering our Plan

Over the next ten years, the Parish Council intends to:

- Take full advantage of the Government's proposals for extending the role and responsibilities of Parish Councils and the opportunities now presented by the reorganisation of local government in Northumberland
- Explore with new County Authority ways to increase Parish Council capacity and provide locally some of the services that may be devolved e.g. street environmental services, neighbourhood wardens, and youth services
- Work with neighbouring villages and through the East Tynedale Parishes Forum to develop joint services at district level where it makes sense to do so
- Investigate the possibility of establishing a Stocksfield Community Development Trust to do things for community benefit and on a not-for-profit basis that lie outside the current powers of the Parish Council. This may include developing land, projects and services for community benefit within the Parish
- Circulate the Parish Plan to key organisations in the County to exert influence on decision makers
- Consult widely with local residents before making decisions on any of the above initiative
- Respond to changing circumstances to make sure the Parish Council can effectively deliver this Parish Plan

Our village - our future

