
West Bagborough

Community Appraisal 2000 – 2002



*“a living viable, rural community,
open to change, but valuing its traditions...”*

Anonymous questionnaire comment.

A summary of the West Bagborough Parish Appraisal undertaken between 2000 & 2002



Produced with the support of The Countryside Agency

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A summary of the West Bagborough Parish Appraisal undertaken between 2000 & 2002



The Parish of West Bagborough

The village of West Bagborough lies on the southwest slopes of the Quantock Hills in the English county of Somerset, some eight miles from the county town of Taunton.

The village, together with the neighbouring hamlets of Shopnoller, Triscombe, Seven Ash and Westwood combine to form a parish, collectively covered by the name West Bagborough.

With a current population of around 360 the village can trace its history back to Saxon times.

The origin of the village name is open to some debate and is thought to either come from the name "Begas Barrow" (meaning badgers hill) or from an amalgamation of the family name "Baga" and the Old English word for hill "beorg". In either case by 1086, when the Domesday book was compiled, the name had become Bageberge.

What is an appraisal?

A Community Appraisal can be defined as an assessment of:

**"local characteristics, problems,
needs and opportunities"**

Hughes (1993)

One of the key features of any such appraisal is seen as the active involvement of the community in question. The appraisal process has been carried out elsewhere across a wide range of communities and demographic areas. In our case the appraisal was designed to cover the Parish of West Bagborough.

Another key feature in the undertaking of the process is the empowerment of local residents in designing, undertaking, and collating the entire process, using the support of outside agencies to provide additional expertise where required.

This work explains the appraisal process and pulls together the statistical results of our appraisal questionnaire, along with many of the individual comments included on the 'open comment' sections of the questionnaire.

Many individual comments and suggestions made by parish residents during various events held during the appraisal process are also included.

Throughout this document these individual comments can be identified by their inclusion in italics.

Acknowledgements

The West Bagborough Appraisal was primarily undertaken by Village residents, a number of whom joined our appraisal group, some remaining with the group throughout the entire process, others being 'co-opted' in as their individual talents or experiences were required. Given that the appraisal represents the views, and feedback, of the whole Parish it would seem both unfair, and unnecessary, to list the names of all involved. It would, however, seem appropriate to acknowledge the invaluable input of the Rev. Michael Hubbard, whose determination and drive undoubtedly helped maintain momentum and enthusiasm for the project. Sadly Michael died before the completion of this project.

The Appraisal process – an abridged timeline.

In the run up to the new millennium West Bagborough adopted a number of projects, including the production of a Village Design Statement (VDS)

In April 2000 the Clerk of the Parish Council informed the Parish Council that she had received details of the Community Appraisal project from the Community Council for Somerset. The Parish Council approached former members of the VDS group to see if they would be willing to undertake this project.

Following a meeting between members of this group and Nick Bacon (Community Council for Somerset) it was decided that any such project could only have validity if it were to be undertaken with the agreement, involvement and support of the local community.

To this end it was proposed that the opinions of a wider range of local residents be sought. In order to achieve this the Community Council for Somerset took a stall at the village fete (2000), presenting the proposed appraisal, and soliciting local views. This also served as an opportunity to invite the participation of other local residents.

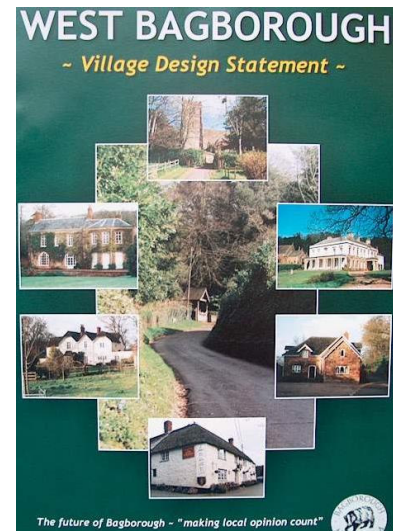
The feedback from this was encouraging and the first meeting of those wishing to actively participate was held in January 2001.

The Parish Church, Saint Pancras, was due to launch a fundraising appeal in May 2001. Whilst the appraisal was not linked to the church it was felt that it would be advantageous to launch the two projects together in order to attract maximum publicity for both.

A joint event, involving both the Church and the appraisal group was held on the 5th of May 2001, this event being publicised through a poster campaign and a leaflet delivered to every household in the Parish (see appendix one)

The appraisal group opened up the Popham Hall for the day, inviting local clubs, organisations to stage exhibition relating to their activities and inviting involvement.

The event was well supported, with around one hundred individuals visiting the hall during the day. Visitors were invited to 'have their say' on local issues, problems, and opportunities. This was achieved through the provision of 'post-it' notes allowing individuals to post their thoughts on message boards under the following titles.



- ❑ Housing
- ❑ Transport/traffic
- ❑ The future
- ❑ Age related issues
- ❑ Communication/information
- ❑ Facilities/services
- ❑ The environment
- ❑ Education
- ❑ Employment
- ❑ Leisure

Provision was also made for the inclusion of comments on areas not covered by the above list, along with the provision of a 'confidential' facility to cover any feedback or comment that individuals did not want to post on the publicly viewable message boards.

Local residents posted over fifty individual comments on the day (appendix two).

As already outlined the key to the appraisal process was seen as maximum local involvement and feedback. It was clear that the only way to ensure that as many people as possible had this opportunity was through the undertaking of a parish-wide questionnaire.

The sixty-four-question questionnaire produced (appendix three) was designed to cover a wide range of topics, with its scope being influenced by the public feedback already supplied during the open day.

The questionnaire was 'piloted' on ten households, with a number of minor changes taking place prior to its distribution by hand to all one hundred and sixty households across the parish in September 2001. The questionnaire was distributed along with a covering letter (appendix four) explaining the reason for the questionnaire and the intended use for the results. This letter also offered contact details for further advice or help in its completion, along with the offer of a 'large print' version where required.

The completed questionnaires were collected between October and January 2002. The overall response rate was good, with over 57% of household responding (covering over 60% of the parish population)

The returned questionnaires provided around 20,000 pieces of individual data to be collated and fed-back to both the appraisal group and the community.

From the collated data an initial feedback leaflet was produced entitled 'Your village appraisal – what you said' was produced and circulated to all households. (appendix five) This provided brief key points from the questionnaire results and included an invitation to an open day on the 11th of May 2002 in the Popham Hall.

The open day in the hall allowed the numerical, and written responses to the questionnaire to be illustrated using pie charts, illustrated diagrams, photographs etc. Seventy people attended the day and the overall feedback was very positive.

The appraisal process was always viewed as a starting point for further projects, work and investigation. The final stage of this initial process, however, is the production of this report, intended for public viewing.

The appraisal is also intended as a starting point for the production of an 'Action Plan' to highlight potential future projects, community needs, etc.

A number of issues raised in the production of the appraisal have been addressed, either partly, or in full, and a 'Follow-up' document is included at the end of the appraisal write-up. This highlights some of the progress made between the original questionnaire circulation and the production of this appraisal document.

This document attempts to summarise the questionnaire findings, and to highlight particular areas of concern. It cannot cover every question or response, however the full results can be found as appendix nine (where available) and can also be viewed on-line at: <http://www.west-bagborough.co.uk>

Youth involvement in the appraisal process.

If the appraisal process was to have any ongoing validity or future usefulness the involvement of the youth of the Parish was seen as vital.

The input of the younger members of our community was actively sought during the various open events held during the appraisal process.

It was also felt that the youth of the village should have a voice of their own within the process.

With the financial support of the Countryside agency the youngsters were invited to make a film about life within West Bagborough.

The services of a professional company, Planet Cosmic, were employed to assist with the process.



A five-day workshop, based in the Popham Hall, ran between the 5th & 9th August 2002. (appendix six)

The youngsters wrote the script, acted out the parts, filmed the action, edited the results and composed the backing music.

The resulting fifteen-minute video highlighted a number of concerns held by the local children, including,

- ❑ Traffic speed and volume through the village.
- ❑ Bridleways have overhanging branches and traffic frightens horses.
- ❑ The play park is too small.
- ❑ There is nowhere to 'hang out', there is no 'den'
- ❑ Nowhere to cycle
- ❑ No shop.

All those involved in the film project received a copy of the film. The film was shown to a wider audience when screened prior to a feature film screening held in the Popham Hall under the 'Little Big Screen' project.

Further recognition for the effort put in by the Parish children was achieved through a two-page article about the project in the Autumn 2002 issue of 'Thatch' magazine (the Rural Community Magazine for Somerset) and an article in the Somerset County Gazette (Aug 16th 2002) (appendix seven & seven A)



Section Two

Appraisal findings:

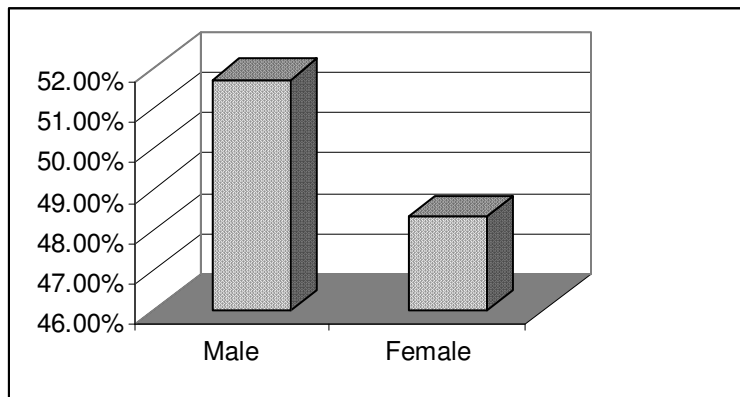


Who lives in the Parish of West Bagborough?

The Parish of West Bagborough has a long history, and a well-defined community spirit. Clearly, however, any community is a product of the individuals that contribute to it. For this reason it was seen as important to gather information on just who we, as individuals, and a community, were.

Ninety-two households (out of one hundred and sixty) returned completed questionnaires, giving us information on two hundred and sixteen individuals (out of approximately three hundred and sixty residents)

The questions in this section covered a range of areas intended to give an overall picture of the local population.



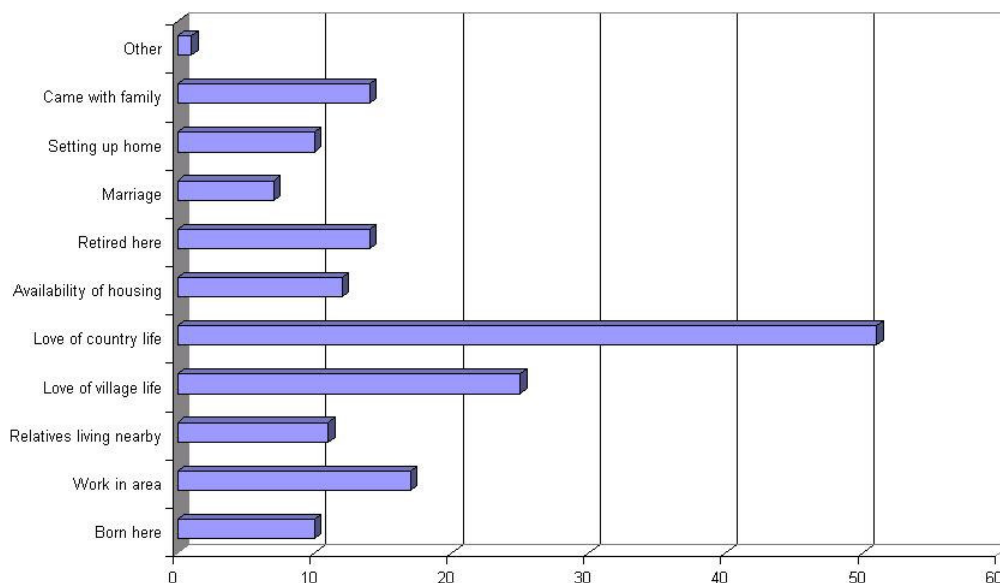
Our gender split was close to 'fifty/fifty, with males outnumbering female by around 3%

Responses were received covering a wide age range, with the spread being as detailed below:

Age	Male	Female
0-4	6	8
5-10	6	12
11-15	4	6
16-17	0	0
18-24	8	2
25-44	28	26
45-59	20	32
60-64	8	6
65-74	18	10
75-84	10	6
85+	0	0

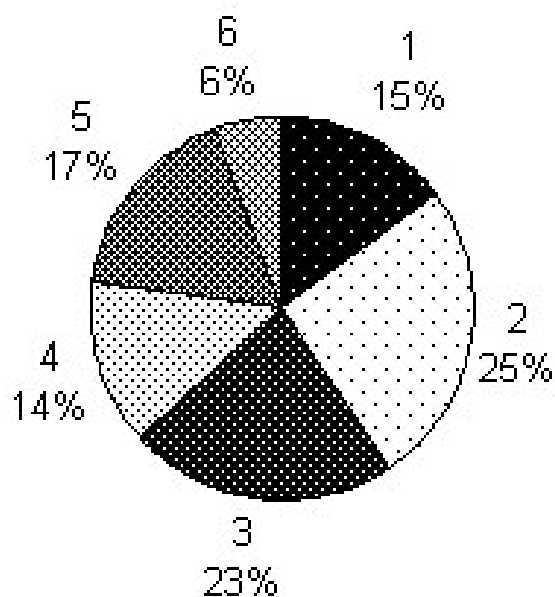
We also looked at how long individuals had lived within the Parish, and what their reasons for choosing this area were.

The responses showed that only ten percent of the respondents were born within the parish, with seventy-six percent of the respondents highlighting the love of village/country life as their reason for choosing West Bagborough.



The majority of residents had lived in the Parish for less than fifteen years.

	Section
<input type="checkbox"/> Less than a year	1
<input type="checkbox"/> 1-5 years	2
<input type="checkbox"/> 6-15 years	3
<input type="checkbox"/> 16-25 years	4
<input type="checkbox"/> 26-50 years	5
<input type="checkbox"/> 51 + years	6



The questionnaire contained many questions (and opportunities for 'free text' comment) designed to paint a picture of the views, opinions and future wishes of the Parish residents.

The final question asked on the questionnaire was:

Please tell us what, to you, are the most important aspects or priorities about life in West Bagborough.

Respondents were given a 'free text' box for their response (the largest one on the questionnaire) It is perhaps not surprising that this section gave some of the most interesting insights into the views of the parish members.

Examples of these responses are included throughout this document, and are appended as appendix eight.

Transport



The substantial majority of the adults that responded to the questionnaire (84%) were drivers who had regular access to a vehicle.

A number of respondents highlighted the fact that a car remains a necessity, rather than a luxury, living as we do in a comparatively isolated location.

Transport to work, shopping and leisure activities were highlighted as the major use to which our vehicles were put.

Comparatively few individuals share their vehicle with others for activities such as travel to work (14%), with the highest incidence of car sharing (33%) taking place during 'social and leisure' activities.

Despite the current low level of car sharing it was encouraging to see that a number of respondents indicated that they would be willing to take part in a local car-share scheme, should one be made available. The future development of such a scheme may, therefore, be beneficial.

The Parish of West Bagborough is poorly served by public transport, with the nearest regular bus service stopping on the A358, leaving most residents with a walk of between one and one and a half miles between the bus stop and their homes.

A significant proportion of those responding to the questionnaire highlighted bus stop location, timetable and reliability issues as problematic (69% of responses)

Buses on the A358 drop passengers directly onto the road, with no footpath, or safe waiting area. (shown, right)

This was highlighted by a number of respondents as a major safety concern.



Whilst clearly being seen as a necessity by the majority of residents, cars and other traffic were highlighted as a problem also.

"Speeding is endemic and there are a number of lunatics who will insist on repeatedly going like a bat out of hell through the village"

Seventy-three percent of residents feel that the speed of traffic is a problem. The village is currently covered by the national speed limit (60 MPH), and has one streetlight.



The introduction of a lower speed limit was supported by sixty-two percent of respondents, the use of traffic calming measures by thirty-one percent, and the introduction of more 'Children at Play' signs by forty-one percent.

Whilst clearly concerned about traffic speed there was also a feeling that any measures taken should not spoil the look and feel of the village, with a number of residents including comments along the line of the one reproduced below:

*"I would hate to see any measures which
might spoil the character and environment of
West Bagborough and I dread that we might
end up like Oake – all road humps, yellow lines,
street lights and road signs"*

Lack of off-street parking was also seen as a problem by the majority of respondents (66%), with the area around the Rising Sun Public House (which has no car park of its own) being highlighted as a major problem by a number of individuals.

It is also worth noting that there are no roadside footpaths within the Parish, a concern highlighted by a number of individuals.

Housing



The Parish of West Bagborough has around one hundred and sixty households.

The 'housing stock' within the Parish includes privately owned, Local Authority, Housing Association, occupationally 'tied' and privately rented properties.

The questionnaire posed a number of questions regarding the availability of housing, the nature of recent house building, and the need for future house building.



A little over four percent of the respondents stated that they were actively looking for alternative accommodation (for unspecified reasons)

The building of any new housing stock will always have an impact within a community, these effects are, perhaps, more noticeable within a relatively small community such as ours.

For this reason a number of questions were asked about the impact of recent house building, the potential for further house building, and the nature of housing provision.

Forty percent of respondents felt that the number of new properties built in the preceding years was about right, however an overwhelming seventy-six percent felt that more new housing might spoil the local environment.

We went on to ask about the potential nature of any new housing. The strongest support was for housing that fitted into the following classifications:

- Local authority/housing association
- Shared ownership
- Restricted sale to local people
- Low cost sale
- Young persons

This support for affordable, available, housing was echoed in the comments of a number of local residents.

"When all the Council houses are sold where will young people live when they leave home?"

"When Council bungalows are sold where will the older people move to?"

A number of respondents identified current and future housing needs as one of their 'main priorities' in the final section of the questionnaire.

“...more houses affordable for first time buyers or for renting”

“There is therefore a need for reasonably priced housing and for employment of various kinds in the village and near to it”

Employment

West Bagborough is situated within the Quantock Hills area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB) and has a long history of rural employment,

West Bagborough is also well situated for those wishing to commute to a number of locations, both within the southwest, and further a field.

Whilst clearly limited by the size and nature of the Parish there are a number of employment opportunities within the immediate locality. Clearly agriculture remains an important local job source, with service providers such as the two Public Houses and a number of 'Bed and Breakfast' and holiday accommodation businesses also providing local employment.

There are six purpose-built light industrial units situated within the Parish.



There was a general feeling from a number of the responses received that it was important to prevent rural communities, such as ours, from becoming little more than commuter villages.

"We feel that the village should not become a haven for commuters and the retired. Bagborough has always been a working village and should continue to be so."

"West Bagborough is historically a farming and forestry community with a bit of hunting thrown in. It would be nice if it could stay that way; failing that, small businesses should replace agriculture."

It was considered important, therefore, to identify the actual pattern of employment within the Parish.

We asked the adult population to indicate where they considered themselves within the following list. The percentage responses are shown in brackets:

An employee	(34%)
Unemployed	(1%)
Self-employed - employing other people	(9%)
Self employed - not employing anyone	(13%)
In a government training scheme	(0%)
In full-time education	(7%)
Unwaged housewife/husband	(8%)
Retired	(24%)
Permanently sick/disabled	(1%)
Other	(2%)

We also asked about the nature of paid employment, with the following responses:

Agriculture/Horticulture	(22%)
Manufacturing engineering	(4%)
Manufacturing other	(6%)
Retail/Service industry	(22%)
Financial Services	(2%)
Tourism e.g. hotels - catering - B&B	(6%)
Local Government/Public Sector	(19%)
Construction	(0%)
Transport/Communications	(4%)
Food Processing	(0%)
Work from home	(2%)
Other (please specify)	(11%)

From the results obtained it is clear that there is a wide range of occupations and roles represented within the Parish. As can be seen agriculture, traditionally seen as the rural mainstay, remains well represented, coming equal highest, alongside retail/service occupations.

Seventy five percent of respondents work outside the Parish boundaries. This clearly has implication regarding transport issues, as covered within the 'Transport' section of this document.

Communication and information

In order for any community to function there need to be mechanisms in place for the effective sharing of information.

At the time of the appraisal the following formalised methods were identified as being in place:

❑ **The Bagborough Bulletin.**

A quarterly newsletter distributed (free of charge) to each household within the Parish.

❑ **The 'Triangle' Magazine.**

A monthly magazine published in the neighbouring village of Bishops Lydeard, and available by paid subscription.

❑ **The Parish website.**

(www.west-bagborough.co.uk) Which contains a range of information, including a 'what's-on?' guide.



❑ **Parish Council notice boards.**

There are two notice boards provided within the village of West Bagborough. Whilst clearly of value it was also noted that these were of limited size, and being glass fronted they did not offer the opportunity for individuals to post notices without prior arrangement.



❑ **Telegraph poles.**

Of the many telegraph poles within the Parish three have, for many years, been used as unofficial notice boards, and are regarded by many as the main communication method within the Parish. These are used to publicise meetings, parties, car-boot sales, and numerous other events.

❑ **Parish Council meetings.**

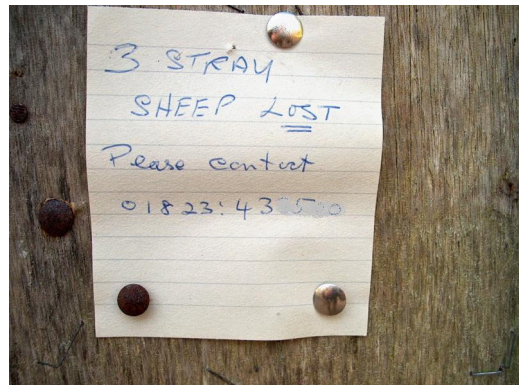
The Parish Council holds regular meetings. These are open to all to attend. Non Council members are not allowed to participate in the meeting, however an 'open' session is held prior to the opening of each meeting to allow individuals to express opinions or ask questions.

Within the questionnaire a short series of questions looked at the level of communication within the Parish.

Seventy six percent of respondents felt that the level of information available regarding Parish events was good or reasonable, with only twelve percent rating communication as poor.

There was generalised support for the siting of more notice-boards, as well as visitor information (map/guides)

Only two percent felt that improved sign posting was necessary.



Services

Within the questionnaire a number of questions were asked that looked at a variety of services and facilities available (or not available!) within the Parish.

Community Shop.

It is many years since the village shop closed, leaving residents to travel outside the Parish for shopping needs.

Many of those taking part in the appraisal highlighted the possible need for a shop. This need was further reinforced by the comments and video produced by the youth of the Parish.

"Possibilities of a mobile shop?"

"There desperately needs to be a shop or post office for community communication"

"A shop/post office - Many communities have volunteers and provide all sorts of services and I am sure it's worth trying in West Bagborough"

One scheme that has been successfully tried in other rural areas is the concept of the 'Community Shop', run and managed by volunteers. Such a scheme could only succeed if the local community were to support it both through custom, and by volunteering time and expertise.

We posed a number of questions regarding a 'Community Shop' looking at both possible usage and support.

Sixty five percent of the respondents felt that they would make regular (weekly) use of a shop. Around ten percent of those replying said that they would be prepared to help with running a shop through regular (weekly) counter work, filling shelves, or fetching supplies. There were also more than one respondent that said that they would be able to help with the accounts!

Village Hall

The Parish of West Bagborough is served by the Popham Hall. Whilst commonly referred to as the 'Village Hall' this facility belongs to Church authorities, but is leased back to the Parish for a 'peppercorn' rent.

The hall is primarily of wooden construction and provides a main hall area, a small stage, a small kitchen and toilet facilities.

Disabled access has recently been improved though the building of an access ramp to



one of the fire escape doors.

The kitchen and toilets do not currently have adequate wheelchair access. The hall is managed by a committee, and is available for private, and group hire.

A number of groups currently use the hall on a regular basis. These include a toddler group, a line dancing group, and garden club.

Seventy percent of respondents felt that the hall was adequate for the needs of the community and the groups making use of it.

Saint Pancras Church.



Built of local red sandstone, the Church of St Pancras nestles on the slopes of the Quantock Hills. The earliest mention of the church is made by the Rector, Robertus, dating back to 1278. The Church stands high above the road through the village, with access available via a steep path. Parking is limited to a small roadside lay-by (holding two to three cars) and roadside parking.

We posed the question 'is the church important to you?' offering a range of possible options.

Thirty six percent felt that the church provides a focal point for the community.

The Church was valued by many (43%) for its role in local weddings and funerals.

Fifty three percent of respondents value the church as an historic building.

Only eleven percent of respondents valued the church for Sunday worship, with a further nineteen percent replying that they do not value the church at all.

We also asked about attendance at places of worship outside the Parish. Whilst the overall number was small there were some individuals that did so for a variety of reasons including religion/denomination not catered for (5%) access problems (5%) and alternative style of worship (4%)

Post boxes and Phone box.

The parish is served by a number of post boxes and one phone box. The post boxes are used regularly by fifty nine percent of the respondents, with the phone box only being used regularly by two percent.



Mobile Library

The mobile library makes regular visits to the Parish. Only one percent made regular use of this. However perhaps of greater concern was the number of questionnaires that had this question deleted, altered or had comments along the line of 'what mobile library' added (approx. 4%). It would appear from this that many people are unaware of the service.

Village pubs

The parish of West Bagborough is served by two public houses. The Rising Sun, and the Blue Ball. In looking at their usage the appraisal committee chose to include them in services section (as opposed to the leisure section) in recognition of the traditional role of public houses within the community.

Twenty percent of respondents made regular use of one (or both) of the pubs.

"The pub used to be a great place to go but I find it strange to walk in and not to recognise anyone."

"(we need a).. village pub that welcomes village people"



"...a public house which used to be the 'focal' point. But am sorry to say the locals don't think so"

As can be seen there were a number of comments about the changing nature of these establishments.

It should be added that both establishments have come under new ownership since the questionnaire was circulated.

The Parish Council

Whilst there were some criticisms of the role of the Parish Council (within the main questionnaire responses) it was noted that only 28% of respondents had ever attended a Parish Council meeting, of these respondents the majority had not attended a meeting within the last year

“ Parish Council need to put pressure on County Council, not just talk.”

“Parish Council - Does very little except talk. Ignored by planners - why? Too set in ways.”

The Environment

As has already been highlighted, seventy-six percent of the respondents highlighting the love of village/country life as their reason for choosing to live in West Bagborough.

It can be of little surprise, therefore, that the needs of the rural and village environment rated highly in the concerns of many respondents.

We posed a series of questions that looked at environmental factors. These covers a range of topics, including local footpaths, recycling, litter, dog-fouling and the general maintenance of hedges, verges, and trees.

Recycling

One of the strongest responses was to the questions regarding recycling. At the time of the questionnaire the Parish had one recycling point, situated within the West Bagborough industrial units.

Whilst clearly valued, and used, many felt that a regular 'kerb-side' collection of recyclable materials would be of great value. (Such a scheme was running within many local areas outside the Parish at the time)



In response to one of our questions ninety-three percent said that they would be prepared to keep certain items separate from their refuse for recycling if a separate collection was made.

Taunton Deane Borough Council introduced re-cycling and the use of 'green boxes' to the village in August 2004.

Litter and dog-fouling.

'...litter all around the village especially from the main road up towards the village and in the park. Dog fouling is a problem...'

We offered an 'open text' question response to the question: Are there any places where litter or dog fouling are a problem. This elicited a number of comments on litter problems around the area, with the main route into the village of West Bagborough from the A358 being highlighted by a number of respondents.

Dog fouling was highlighted by many as a major problem by many, with the Parish's roads, footpaths, and play park being sited as problem areas.

A selection of the responses received in reply to the question on litter and dog fouling can be viewed as appendix ten.

Car Sharing

One accepted method to reduce pollution is through the use of car-share schemes. There was some support for this, as discussed in the 'Transport' section of this work.

Parking and Traffic

A number of concerns regarding traffic volume, congestion, and where parking were raised. These are discussed in the 'Transport' section.

Hedges, verges and trees.

There was general agreement on the need to keep hedges, trees, and grass verges trimmed and tidy as these were seen to limit visibility, and access for both walkers and vehicle users.

A number of comments, however, stressed the need to maintain the rural nature of the Parishes lanes and open spaces, avoiding over trimming or cultivation.



Public Footpaths

There are many miles of footpaths and bridleways around the Parish. It was generally felt that these were well maintained and accessible to most (able bodied) individuals. There were, however some incidents of paths being inaccessible due to farm crops, farm animals, mud, or overgrown hedgerows/vegetation.

Leisure Facilities

A number of leisure and recreational facilities exist within the Parish. These include numerous footpaths and bridleways, the village hall, and the two public houses. The role of these facilities has been discussed earlier in this document.

Additionally facilities within the Parish include:

The Children's Play-park

Forty five percent of respondents rated the park as reasonable to good. It is, however, also worth noting that a further forty-five percent had no opinion on the suitability or quality of the park. This probably reflects the fact that those adults without young children are unlikely to visit the park. In contrast to the forty-five percent satisfaction with the park the children of the village highlighted a number of problems in their video (as discussed in the 'Youth involvement' section of this work.)



Problems identified by the children included:

- ☐ Comparatively small size of the park.
- ☐ Poor drainage rendering over half of the available grass area too wet to use for extended periods.
- ☐ No hard surface suitable for bike riding, skateboarding etc.
- ☐ Litter (and no litter bin for them to use!)
- ☐ Dog fouling
- ☐ Park gate that leads directly onto a road (no footpath or traffic control)

Football Club and Cricket Club

The Parish has a football pitch (and associated buildings), situated adjacent to the industrial units. This is built on land donated by a local farmer, and is maintained by members of the Parish football club.

The cricket club has a pitch situated towards the centre of West Bagborough village.



As well as being used for their respective sports these areas are used for a variety of community events such as the Church Fete, car-boot sales and one-off events such as the Parish millennium events.

Whilst generally regarded as useful resources it was also noted by some individuals (and by the village youth) that these areas did not offer 'open access' for the Parish children.

It should be highlighted, however, that such access throws up concerns regarding health and safety, maintenance, and concerns regarding accidental (or deliberate) damage etc.

An 'open answer' question was presented that asked 'How could sports facilities in West Bagborough be improved? A summary of the responses is included as appendix eleven.

Follow Up By the Parish Council

As highlighted at the beginning of this work a number of points and concerns raised by the questionnaire results have been addressed prior to the preparation of this document.

Detailed below is the Parish Council's response to some of these.

Following the completion of the Village Appraisal in 2002, many of the issues identified by the appraisal have been followed up by the Parish Council. These include:

Housing

76% of respondents felt that more new housing within the Parish might spoil the local environment. At the same time a considerable number would like to see more local authority or housing association housing and affordable housing for young people.

Action taken:

Particular consideration has been given towards new housing Planning Applications. However, very few applications have been submitted for new housing and the few that have been made are all been in keeping with the surrounding environment.

With the help of the Community Council for Somerset, a Housing Needs Survey has been carried out within the Parish in October 2004 to establish the actual need for affordable housing. Depending on the results of this survey, further action will then be taken (if required) to try and establish more affordable housing within the Parish.

Speeding

73% of respondents to the Appraisal felt speed of traffic was a problem. This has been discussed extensively at various Parish Council Meetings. There was a dilemma that many people did not wish to see the village 'cluttered' with unattractive speed signs.

Action taken:

The Parish Council have contacted Somerset Highways and put the Parish on a 'waiting list' for speed restrictions to be introduced. Being on such a list simply ensures we are in a queue – it does not mean we definitely have to go ahead with speed restrictions. Also in the interim, Somerset County Council have reviewed their speed management policy and it now looks likely that if speed restrictions are introduced, there will be more flexibility on signage to ensure that any speed signs are sympathetic to the surroundings. Once we have reached the front of this queue, we will consult with the Parish again and if the feelings are still strong towards speed restrictions, then these will be introduced.

Parking

Lack of off-street parking was seen as a problem by 66% of respondents to the Appraisal.

Action taken:

The Parish Council set up a separate working group in 2003 to work alongside Somerset County Council, Somerset Highways and Quantocks AONB to look at the problems. Various possible sites for a car park

were examined, but the cost of development for the majority would have been excessive (for instance excavating into the hill) and not justifiable.

However, one possible site is being investigated further to see if the owners of a portion of land fairly near to the Rising Sun Inn could be made available. Once we have the answer from the owners of this land, the Parish Council will consult the people within the Parish again before finalising any development plans.

Public Transport

Nearly a quarter of those within the village experienced some transport difficulties getting to and from the Parish. There is currently a daily shuttle bus service, but the timing of this is not compatible for those who would wish to use it for getting to work in Taunton.

Action taken:

The Parish Council looked closely at this problem, but it was deemed that there was not sufficient demand for a regular service to enable us to persuade one of the bus companies to provide a regular service.

Crime and Police

52% of respondents to the Appraisal felt police coverage of the village was poor and many of these wanted greater police presence and better consultation.

Action taken:

The Parish Council are arranging for the local Beat Officer to attend a future Parish Council Meeting (probably in 2005) to discuss these issues in more detail.

Footpaths

58% of respondents would like to have access to maps of local footpaths.

Action taken:

The Parish Council are contacting Somerset County Council to check on availability of such maps and considering whether these could be more prominently displayed.

Rubbish and Re-cycling

93% of respondents said they were willing to support separate collections and participate in re-cycling.

Action taken:

Taunton Deane Borough Council introduced re-cycling and the use of 'green boxes' to the village in August 2004.

Local Shop

65% of respondents said they would support a local shop each week.

Action taken:

The Parish Council discussed this and while sympathetic to the need, felt that with the size of the village and the fact that it is so spread out, it was not likely to be commercially viable – even on a community/voluntary basis. Therefore, for the time being, felt this was not a priority to pursue.

Amenities for young people

57% of respondents would like to see more activities for young people. At present the village has a football club, cricket club, youth club and play park.

Action taken:

This has proved to be one of the more difficult issues to resolve. While it is still on the Parish Council agenda, it is proving difficult to establish what else could be introduced and further consultation will take place with the younger people in the village as to what they require.

Final word

The village appraisal for the Parish of West Bagborough has been a community project involving many individuals, and achieved with the support of a number of external agencies.

We would like to thank all of those involved, including (of course) those that took the time to complete their questionnaire.

If you have any questions regarding the appraisal you can contact:

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Appendices

The full appendix documentation for this work run to almost 100 pages and cannot, therefore, be included with all copies. If you are viewing a copy without appendices, and wish to view these, please contact either of the above named individuals.

You can also view the full questionnaire results on-line at:

<http://www.west-bagborough.co.uk>

Appendices

- Appendix one:** 'Bagborough the future' leaflet.
- Appendix two:** Appraisal launch topic board comments.
- Appendix three:** Appraisal questionnaire.
- Appendix four:** Questionnaire covering letter.
- Appendix five:** 'Your village appraisal – what you said' leaflet.
- Appendix six:** Youth video project paperwork.
- Appendix seven:** 'Cosmic Youth on Badgers Hill' magazine article.
- Appendix seven (a):** 'Through Young Eyes' newspaper article.
- Appendix eight:** 'The most important aspects or priorities' question responses.
- Appendix nine:** Questionnaire individual question count results.
- Appendix ten:** 'Litter & dog fouling question responses.
- Appendix eleven:** 'Sports facilities' questionnaire responses.