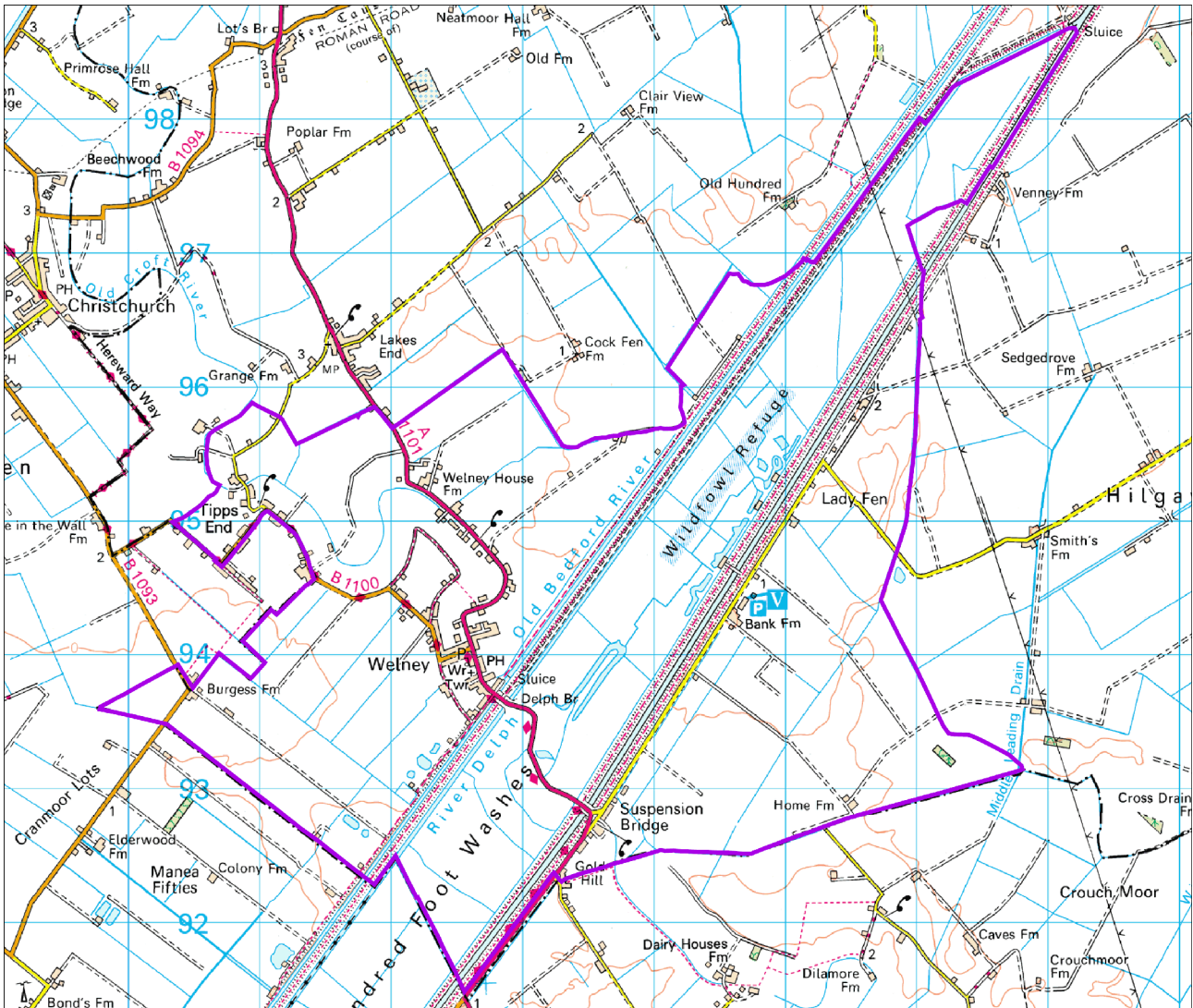


The Welney Parish Action Plan



February 2008

Welney Parish Boundary



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Acknowledgements

Tim Bennett (Co-ordinator)	Christopher Fraser MP	Lynne Radford
Trevor & Christine Bray	Ken Goodger	Wendy Redman
Mark & Rachel Brown	Janice Howell	Elaine Sweetman
Pat Copeman	Vicki Howling	Grant Tomkins
Charlotte Cox	Steve Kerr	The Parishioners
Tom Fisher (For Inspiration)	Marlen Moss-Eccardt	The Children of Welney School

Any others who helped and whose names have not been given to us, we are grateful to you all.

Printed by Kings Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council

Design and layout by Mark Brown

Foreword from the Parish Council Chairman

I am very pleased to be able to write this foreword for the Welney Parish Action Plan.

The project was initiated back in the autumn of 2005, when a steering group was formed under the chairmanship of Tim Bennett comprising Parish councillors and several volunteer parishioners, whose help was extremely valuable in bringing about this final document.

The group formulated the questionnaire that all households received both within and adjacent to the parish boundary. The latter were included as the group felt it was important for us to consider the views of those that lie outside of our parish boundary but are part of our community. Many hours were spent drafting the final questionnaire and trimming the final list of questions to the 85 that we considered suitable for our Parish.

The group of willing volunteers ably distributed these around the Parish and they were all collected and returned on time. The 94% response was a great success and is credit to all those persons that completed one.

A lot of time and effort was spent collating the results and I must thank Trevor Bray, whose skills with the computer in laying out the questions and collating the results have helped tremendously. While we must not forget to mention his lovely wife Christine, whose wonderful suppers kept everyone focused during those dark winter nights; a big thank-you to you both.

The results tables were distributed last year and it is now this final document that gives us all a Parish Action Plan to work to in the future.

This plan summarises the residents' views of the village and their hopes and aspirations for the future; it will be a guide to the Parish, Borough and County Councils to work to when shaping the future of our village. It is also a guide for all of us within and around the parish.

The Parish Council has given this document their backing and will use it to help build a strong community with great a spirit for the future.

During the two years since the plan started we have seen major changes to our village; namely the loss of our shop and post office and the abandonment of plans for a new public house to be built alongside the Old Bedford River.

However, the largest community project for Welney in almost 100 years will hopefully soon be coming to fruition, as plans for a new community centre are developed using information gathered from the questionnaire.

It is hoped that this can become the focus for our community for the coming century and will continue to contribute to the future spirit of Welney Parish.

Ken Goodger

Chairman, Welney Parish Council

CHRISTOPHER FRASER MP

South West Norfolk



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Ken Goodger Esq
Chairman
Welney Parish Council

29 January 2008

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dear Mr Goodger".

WELNEY VILLAGE ACTION PLAN

I am delighted to learn that the Welney Village Appraisal, originally carried out some ten years ago, has been revised and updated to reflect the concerns and aspirations of residents in the 21st century. I would like to offer my congratulations to members of Welney Parish Council for undertaking this initiative, and for their immense hard work in distilling into an Action Plan the views of all those local people who responded to the survey.

A great part of the charm of rural Britain relies on the unique character of our local communities. I believe that this Action Plan will make a very important contribution to the future development of Welney at a difficult time for the rural economy and with pressure to increase housing development across the area.

I have been very pleased to work with the Parish Council in seeking a sustainable and long-term solution to the flooding of the A1101 wash road, which causes such inconvenience to villagers. Having raised the issue in the House of Commons, I was encouraged that the Environment Agency acknowledged the problem and committed to work to minimise the risk of future flooding. I am determined that we should get equal treatment to those upstream in terms of flood alleviation measures.

The Appraisal raises other important areas of concern and I look forward to supporting the Parish Council and the Community as it evolves.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Yours sincerely Christopher Fraser".

CHRISTOPHER FRASER MP

Introduction

Way back in 1997 an important document was delivered to the door of every Welney resident. It was the culmination of much effort by a committed band of volunteers, who, under the leadership of Tom Fisher, had managed to produce the Welney Village Appraisal. In those days the idea of a local community undertaking such a project was quite novel, so credit is due to all those who had the foresight and determination to carry one out in our own village.

Essentially a kind of auditing exercise, a village appraisal can simply be seen as a snapshot of life in a defined area at a particular time. A historical review of the past, coupled with an account of known changes, helps to put everything in context.

Whatever the content and style of the published document, a village appraisal immediately becomes a vital piece of archival material designed for regular referral. A Parish Action Plan is quite different in that it is designed to look into, and plan for, the future. It is intended to be far more of a working document that contains the hopes and aspirations of the community and states how and by when it expects to achieve the set targets.

It is difficult to conceive of there being a Parish Action Plan without there already being a village appraisal in existence, although it is possible to produce both at the same time. When Tom and his team published the Welney Village Appraisal they always envisaged that someone would take up the challenge and move the project on to the next stage.

Admittedly a gap of ten years is hardly ideal, but publication of the Welney Parish Action Plan has, fortuitously, come at a time when there is probably a better political climate. Decision-making is steadily being devolved down to the local level, where communities are increasingly being encouraged to go along the road of self-determination. In other words, we should be saying what we want before someone else decides we are not having it! A good example is the situation about future housing development in the village. The majority of residents are in favour of at least some additional housing, but the current Borough Council policy is extremely restrictive. With the publication of our very own plan the Borough Council will be obliged to consider our views before making their decision.

Parish Action Plans are intended to feed into the now well-established Local Structure Plan system, as and when these are reviewed and revised. Once formally adopted by the Parish Council, the Welney Parish Action Plan will be regularly reviewed by becoming an agenda item at least once a year. This way, the Action Plan will be a truly "live" document that will have new challenges added and completed projects removed. You too can remain directly involved, as the Parish Council will be relying on you to come up with new ideas. The Action Plan will also provide an objective means of judging the performance of your Council by assessing how well it does against agreed targets. The Parish Council is accountable to you, so underperformance of your representatives can be dealt with in the time-honoured way!

Finally, please make the effort to thoroughly read and critically analyse this document and bring any suggested amendments and additions to the attention of the Parish Council at the earliest opportunity.

Tim Bennett

How It Was Done



Following publication of the Village Appraisal in 1997 it had always been intended that an action plan would eventually be produced. However, the idea had all but died away, until some correspondence drew the Parish Council's attention to the desirability of resurrecting the concept.

Political changes, coupled with the prospect of receiving some guidance and, possibly, financial aid, encouraged the Council to take steps towards embarking on the project to produce a plan for Welney.

Guidance from both Norfolk Rural Community Council and Fen Leader + (a European regeneration programme) led to a successful bid for grant aid which has made this, the previous documents, and public meetings possible.

A Steering Group was set up including councillors and other interested parishioners. Additional help was provided by a number of other individuals who had particularly useful contacts, such as Lynne Radford (School) and Julie Perkins-Jones (Youth Club).

Using the highly recommended University of Gloucester CD designed for use with "Windows", the team set about the task of paring down the comprehensive selection of questions to a manageable total. During this exercise some questions were modified in order to make them more relevant, while one or two specific questions were added. Little was it realised that this was later to cause major problems.

Consideration was given to which households to include in the survey. In addition to those living within the Parish it was decided to include adjacent households that were effectively also within the official boundary. The Cambridgeshire parts of Tipps End and Gold Hill thus received a pack of questionnaires too.

From the outset it was decided that the project needed to be all-inclusive by attempting to seek the views of as many people as possible. Separate questionnaires were therefore devised for the 5-11 and the 12-17 year-olds - an innovative approach. Young people in both age groups were subsequently encouraged and helped to complete the appropriate forms by Lynne and Julie.

When packs were delivered to homes, the occupants were asked if either or both of these questionnaires were needed. Any youngsters in the house could, and indeed were encouraged to, complete the standard questionnaire, too.

To encourage a good response rate, the Parish Council decided to put up some money for a prize draw into which every household (or individual in the case of the youngsters' versions) returning their forms would be entered.

Publicity by means of articles in the Welney News and the holding of a public meeting to launch the project helped to raise general awareness. The eye-catching design on the folder containing the questionnaires made it clear that there was a real financial incentive to complete the forms. This approach, coupled with the face-to-face encouragement by those distributing the packs and the admirable persistence of one "terrier" in particular, paid great dividends, as the exceptionally high response rate demonstrates.

Once it was clear that all the completed forms that were ever going to be returned had come back, the process of collating and analysing the results began. The decision to do this by hand as a back-up was taken at an early stage and proved to be both prophetic and fortuitous. Despite the many attempts to get it to work, the computer programme would not operate, and morale and momentum could so easily have faded away. Fortunately, another team member, who was between contracts at the time, was able and willing to give the returns his full-time attention and keep the project moving.

In order to maintain the immediacy of the project it was decided to circulate the basic results at the earliest opportunity. Every household therefore received a document containing the raw data from all three questionnaires.

Now, rather belatedly, the project is completed with the publication of this plan. However, this is actually only the start of a continual process intended to lead to the careful management of our community's future.

Tim Bennett



The Results of the Survey

The Welney Action Plan questionnaire raised several important issues concerning the future of Welney Parish, and with a returns figure of 94% the Parish Council believe that it represents an accurate picture of the general views held by Welney residents on these issues.

The Parish Council is committed to promoting Welney and improving village facilities at every opportunity, and will seek to act in the best interests of Welney residents at all times. Where money is required to fund improvements and/or additional facilities, as requested in this survey, the Parish Council will pursue the channels favoured by respondents to the questionnaire, namely grant aid (70% in favour), fundraising (44%), and sponsorship (39%).

On the question of how the results of this survey should be made known, the Parish Council and Action Plan Steering Group have tried to accommodate the wishes of all those who responded, by holding a public meeting; publishing this booklet; and making announcements in both the Welney News and on the Welney web-site.

The future of a small, rural village such as Welney relies on many things, not least the active involvement of its residents to ensure that the community of which we are all a part continues to flourish, and that projects are able to succeed.

Household

Survey Results

The survey of households in Welney found that there were 556 people within the parish, with males outnumbering females by just nineteen. Of these, nearly 50% (of both sexes) fell within the 25 to 59 age bracket. Although women of pensionable age slightly outnumbered men by 72 to 57, this figure reflects the fact that women are currently eligible for their pension 5 years earlier than men. The under 18s showed a slight bias in favour of boys, who outnumbered girls by 49 to 44.

Nearly 80% of villagers live in owner-occupied dwellings, with detached houses being the most popular form of residence. These were closely followed by bungalows and semi-detached properties.

Mains water and electricity are virtually universal in Welney these days, while the days of popping outside to spend a penny seem to be fast-disappearing, with nearly 93% of residences boasting an inside WC. Central heating was another amenity shared by nearly all Welney residents, and around 80% enjoy the benefits of energy saving devices such as double glazing, loft insulation and lagged hot water tanks. Over half of villagers showed their 'green' credentials by using low-energy light bulbs.

Although 14 households reported 'many problems' with flooding and/or surface water, the vast majority of households seem not to be affected. It will be interesting to see if the predicted changes to our climate bring about a significant change to these figures in subsequent surveys.

Housing



Overview

In the ten years since the publication of the original Parish Appraisal there have been three significant additions to the housing stock, all of which have been sited within the main part of the village.

On the north side of Main Street, close to the junction with New Road, six detached houses were built in 1998. Shortly after this, the same developer (Law Bros of Littleport) built a row of six bungalows on the north side of March Road, starting just beyond its junction with New Road. The most recent development has seen six Housing Association properties built adjacent to the Lamb and Flag car park. These homes, which are specifically for people from Welney, are rented.

Until recently, all other changes have been additions or improvements to existing properties. However, at the time of writing a project to convert a range of outbuildings to a private residence on Wisbech Road is nearing completion. This is the first such re-use of an original building, a concept that would appear to meet with the broad approval of respondents to the questionnaire.

Unfortunately this would appear to be at odds with the Borough Council's planners, who are currently not enthusiastic about further development in the Parish. In contrast, Fenland District Council appear to be adopting a completely different strategy by allowing "ribbon development" along the Cambridgeshire side of the road through Tipps End. There is, however, outstanding consent to convert the Three Tuns site in to a row of link villas.

Survey Results

Almost exactly half of those who expressed a view felt that Welney could accommodate more new houses, arguing that future development would improve, or bring no change, to the parish. However, a third of respondents disagreed with this opinion, believing that more housing could spoil the parish.

Opinion was split over whether recent developments blend in with existing buildings, although when asked what kind of accommodation was required the clear leader was homes for young people. The conversion of redundant buildings, and single dwellings in controlled locations were the most popular choice as regards type of development, although small groups of fewer than 10 dwellings gained significant support. In keeping with the current trend, increasing the

number of owner-occupied properties found favour with villagers, though many saw a need for local authority/housing association properties to rent.

There is also a demand for low cost housing and the principle of restricting sales to local people, ideas that undoubtedly attract support in many rural areas due to the spiralling cost of property and the fact that many local young people are forced to relocate away from their village because of the unavailability of affordable housing.

Action Points

Results of this section of the survey will be sent to the Local Authority Planning Department. The Parish Council will maintain a dialogue with the Planning Department with the express purpose of identifying suitable areas for development. Welney cannot afford to lose its few remaining amenities, namely its school, church and public house, and we feel that suitable, controlled development is the only way to ensure the future sustainability of the village.

Employment

Overview

Judging by outside appearances there would appear to have been very little change in employment opportunities in the immediate area. One probable exception is that of the Wildfowl & Wetland Trust Centre which, having undergone a complete rebuild, is attracting more visitors and thus requires additional staff.

Continuing advances in I.T. do though provide increasing opportunities for people to work from their own homes. The authors are aware of several places around the village where successful businesses are being carried out in buildings that look much the same as they did years ago.

Survey Results

Results show Welney to be a working community with little unemployment, though nearly one quarter of the population of the village have retired from full-time employment. Perhaps surprisingly for a rural community, less than 6 per cent of workers are employed in farming and agriculture. This figure no doubt reflects to some extent the demise of small, family-run farms, many of which have been swallowed up by larger businesses operating more mechanised, less labour-intensive methods of modern farming.

More Welney residents are employed in the building and construction industry than any other, with the education, health and retail sectors all following close behind. However, there was huge diversity of employment among villagers, with nearly fifty categories of job represented.

An interesting point to emerge from the survey was the distances people are obliged to travel to their places of work, with over three in every ten having to make a daily journey of over 25 miles each way. The growth in car ownership has obviously made longer journeys possible, though it is worth remembering that car ownership amongst local residents is by no means universal, with lack of access to transport being cited as the biggest problem for those actively seeking work. The final point to note regarding employment is that villagers showed a general lack of interest in taking vocational training, with less than 8% responding positively.

Education

Overview

Having survived a period with a small enough roll to cause concern for its future, the Wm. Marshall V.C. Primary School now appears to be on a firm footing. Changes in both policy and use of funds have led to great improvements in the facilities available on site. The main change that has ensured its survival is the formation of a partnership with Upwell Primary School, with which it now shares its Head Teacher.

Staffing levels have otherwise changed very little, and the school has managed to retain its unique identity. Pre-school activities have in the past few years gone from an enthusiastic and very successful launch to a depressing closure through lack of support. Parents wishing to make use of such facilities nowadays have to take their youngsters to Christchurch, or elsewhere.

Survey Results

The William Marshall School was shown to be of huge importance to villagers. A majority of those who responded were keen to see the school facilities made available to the local community, though the favoured venue for activities was the Parish Hall.

With regard to educational facilities, the greatest demand was for adult education evening classes, with after school clubs and a holiday play scheme also garnering significant support. There was some support for a playgroup, though the winding-up of the Welney Cygnets seems to indicate that it is not sufficient to maintain this facility.

Action Points

Results of this section of the survey will be sent to the Board of Governors and Head Teacher of the WM School. A letter will also go to the local education authority with regard to adult education classes.



Health

Overview

It may not seem like it, but health facilities have undoubtedly improved in recent years. Changes in funding and in particular the holding by General Practitioners of their own budgets has led to the expansion of Upwell Health Centre and the services that it is able to offer. Many minor medical procedures can now be carried out at the Centre, which reduces the need to visit hospital – a definite benefit to our remote, rural community.

The establishment of a dental practice within the complex was a great asset, which has recently been lessened by its removal from the NHS system. However, in Littleport the expanded dental practice currently continues to treat NHS patients. Weekly visits by a doctor from the Upwell Health Centre continue, whilst the collection of prescriptions can now be made from Delph House (formerly Marifa Lodge) following the closure of Welney Post Office.

Survey Results

A small proportion of residents reported some difficulty accessing health care, though it is not known whether this is due to a lack of availability or whether issues such as problems with transport are to blame. The single most difficult branch of health care to access emerged as dentistry, a result that is no doubt repeated across the country as increasing numbers of dental practices close their books to all but private patients.

In terms of general health, over 80% of villagers have visited a doctor within the past three years, whilst nearly one in six reported having used the parish clinic during this period. The latter figure also applies to those who have been visited by the district nurse.

As for further health-related services in Welney, demands for a family planning clinic, baby clinic and residential provision for disabled people all received support from around 10% of villagers, whilst sheltered housing and a nursing home gained the support of 17% and 15% of villagers respectively.

Action Points

Results of this section of the survey will be sent to the local NHS trust and inquiries made as to the availability of rural transport to and from medical facilities.

Public Services

Overview

On the surface there would appear to have been few changes in the delivery of our public services over the past few years. The most obvious change has come about through the great improvement and accessibility of technology. With so many people now carrying mobile phones, the need for call boxes has dramatically reduced, resulting in the removal of two out of the four that there were in the Parish.

The long-promised scheme to connect the main part of Welney to a sewerage system looks likely to get underway during 2008, and although siting of the actual treatment works has yet to be determined, the fact that the scheme is also going to include Christchurch, suggests that it is likely to be sited somewhere between the two villages.

Although the firms that supply us with power have been privatised and bought each other out, delivery to individual households remains essentially the same even if people are paying a range of different tariffs. The generation of some of our power now takes place a little closer to home, as several wind farms are now visible from within the Parish. Further turbines have been proposed in the same general area, but more strategic thinking about the suitability of their siting means it is unlikely that there will be any right on our doorstep. There is still no prospect of mains gas being made available to local residents.

Policing of our streets has, if anything, become even less frequent than before. Fortunately, crime is still a rarity in and around Welney, which probably accounts for the demise of the “Homewatch” network.



Survey Results

Thankfully, the emergency services receive relatively few call-outs to Welney, with the ambulance service emerging as the most requested, by just over 12% of residents. Views on the standards set by these services are therefore dominated by the ‘don’t knows’, but for those who did express an opinion both the fire and ambulance services did well, with ‘good’ representing a comfortable majority. The police, however, fared less well, and both the emergency policing and community policing appear to leave a lot to be desired, with ‘poor’ being the most popular view. This was particularly noticeable in regard to community policing, where those who deem the service to be ‘poor’ outnumber those who consider it to be ‘good’ by a figure of seven to one. One-third of villagers are concerned by vandalism and anti-social behaviour, whilst nearly two-thirds regard theft as their chief crime concern. A lack of police officers ‘on the beat’ has no doubt contributed to both the concerns over theft and the poor opinion of community policing, something that the Government would do well to consider.

Utility companies generally did well in the survey, with the standard of mains water and electricity supply largely regarded as good. The same can also be said with regard to refuse collection, whilst Internet users were largely satisfied with the standard of service. For the rest, however, the

figures make grim reading. From road care to street lighting; pavements to verges; pedestrian access to public seating; and wheelchair to pushchair access, all fared terribly, with 'poor' being the overwhelming opinion. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that when asked to comment on their local government representatives Welney residents showed themselves to be far from impressed. Although all three levels of local government were seen as 'average' by between 36 and 41% of villagers, neither the Borough nor County Council could persuade more than a handful of people in the parish that they were doing a good job, whilst a third of villagers rated their performance as 'poor'. Only the Parish Council emerged with any degree of credibility, with 24% of villagers rating their performance as 'good', 41% 'average', and 14% regarding their efforts as 'poor'.

Sadly, almost six in every ten villagers admitted to never having attended a Parish Council meeting, though 26% of respondents felt the issues discussed did reflect their concerns, as opposed to 16% who felt this not to be the case. People were largely happy with the way the Parish Council publicises its decisions and activities, whilst the level of satisfaction about how the precept is spent was evenly split between those who are 'quite satisfied' and those who are 'unsure as to how the money is spent' - each group attracting around 40%. When asked if they would be prepared to pay a slightly higher precept element from their council tax to improve parish facilities, a third of villagers said they supported this idea, though just over half answered 'no'.

Finally, in relation to visitor information services, Welney residents clearly saw the need for more, with notice boards, local information points and signposts all requested by a significant number of parishioners.

Action Points

Results of this section of the survey will be sent to the emergency services, utility companies, and Borough and County Councils, highlighting the issues of concern to villagers. A letter will also be sent to the English Tourist Board requesting better signage throughout the parish. The Parish Council will continue to encourage involvement by parishioners in village affairs, whilst seeking to keep villagers fully informed of all business conducted on their behalf and to clearly identify how the precept is spent.

Roads and Transport

Overview

A countywide review of road priorities has made no appreciable difference locally. Apart from some re-surfacing works within and around the village there have been no other changes.

Attempts to resolve the chronic problem of the Wash Road and flooding after each incident have so far got nowhere. Following a particularly prolonged spell of flooding, starting in November '06 and continuing well into March '07, the profile was raised to new heights. The national press covered the problem and the local MP asked a question in the House of Commons.

The availability of public transport comes and goes along with the subsidies that support it. At present the village is benefiting from a more frequent service with three buses a day to March and to Downham Market with connections available to both Wisbech and Kings Lynn. Unfortunately, the services are not well supported (partly because of reliability problems) and could well be withdrawn once the grant aid is reviewed. Particularly unfortunate is the near duplication of

service on a Friday, when another operator also goes to Downham Market within minutes of the first.

Recently a new 40mph speed limit has been introduced covering the whole stretch of road linking Lakes End to the onset of the 30mph zone in Welney. An electronic flashing sign now warns drivers entering the village from the Littleport direction of the restriction, and efforts continue to further reduce traffic speeds.



Survey Results

The most popular means of transport for Welney residents is, unsurprisingly for a rural village, the car, which is favoured by nearly 90%. This resulted in less than 10% of villagers saying that they often experienced transport difficulties. However, as many of this 10% are undoubtedly elderly, their problems should not be overlooked.

With a car-sharing scheme being favoured by just 15% of drivers, those without access to a car are therefore reliant upon the bus service, used mainly by those on shopping trips. Users generally rated the service as average, although a majority regarded the timetable as 'poor', but for those who rely on this means of transport the situation seems unlikely to improve in the near future. The privatisation of bus companies has resulted in the decline of many services, especially in rural areas where passenger numbers are unable to generate sufficient income for shareholders; but with 'sustainability' now one of the buzz-words favoured by government in regard to small, local communities, it should be remembered by policy-makers that frequent, reliable and affordable public transport is vital to any sustainable rural community, especially its elderly residents for whom the use of a car is often not an option.

A large majority (80%) of villagers are in favour of action to improve road safety, with 65% citing traffic speed as the main problem, although lorry traffic was also seen as a significant contributor to the problems on our roads. Various methods were suggested in the survey, and the favoured choices were, in order of preference; more speed limit markings on the roads; traffic calming measures; fixed speed cameras; and an extension of the speed limit. The Parish Council has already begun addressing these problems, and it is hoped that the ongoing dialogue with the Highways Department will provide some solutions to many of the requests made by villagers.

With regard to paths and street lighting, over 45% of villagers said they would like more footpaths and pavements, while pelican crossings, dropped kerbs and more cycle paths all attracted a healthy number of backers. It was the idea of more street-lighting however, which attracted most support, with just over 50% giving the thumbs up to this proposal. Parishioners again showed their 'green' credentials, with environmentally sensitive streetlights finding favour with 40%.

Finally in this section, Welney residents were asked whether they found the flooding of the Washes inconvenient, and although a majority of 58% answered 'yes', after the 2006/7 winter during which the A1101 Wash Road remained under water for 97 days, it seems reasonable to suspect that this figure may now be significantly higher. As residents of Welney will know, it is not the flooding of the Washes themselves that inconveniences people; after all, the area was designed as a flood storage reservoir. However, the failure by the Environment Agency to ensure that flooding of the road is kept to a minimum has now become a major issue within the parish, and one that the Parish Council has sought to bring to the attention of the wider world. All available methods of publicising our plight have been, and continue to be, pursued via local newspapers, local and national radio, television and even in the House of Commons, where the local MP has raised the matter.

On one point at least it seems there is general agreement. Scientists are now virtually unanimous in their acceptance of global warming, one of the main consequences of which will be milder and wetter winters.

The question then, is whether Welney can continue to function as a working village if a large stretch of its main road remains under water for up to four months of the year. It is a question easily answered, especially by the owners of threatened local businesses. What remains to be seen is whether those with the power to resolve the problem will act before it is too late.



Action Points

Results of this section of the survey will be sent to the Highways Department, the Environment Agency and local bus companies. The Parish Council will continue to bring to the attention of the Highways Department the issues raised by parishioners and efforts will be maintained with all relevant authorities to attempt to resolve the problem of flooding on the A1101.

Social

Overview

Although relatively few organised activities take place within the village itself, Welney retains a strong community spirit.

It is hoped that should recent moves towards providing the village with a modern Community Hall come to fruition a number of new clubs and societies will be encouraged to start up. The recent formation of the WASH (Welney Archive and Social History) Group and the continuing success of the Youth Club provide some optimism.

Doubtless many residents are involved with various organisations in surrounding towns and villages, where there is also a wide range of concerts and other artistic events on offer.

Survey Results

Over 95% of those who reside in Welney do so on a permanent basis, with over 60% citing its rural location as the most important factor. Village community life and a healthy environment were also much valued, while a quarter of residents regarded the limited scope for housing development within the parish as important. With regard to quality of life and how this has changed over the past ten years, 18% said they believed it was now worse, with just 7% arguing that it had improved. A third of villagers saw no change, while a further third said they did not know, no doubt due to the fact that many have been resident in Welney for less than ten years. Only 14% of respondents were actually born in Welney.

When asked whether they would take part in a variety of sporting, social and entertainment activities villagers displayed a wide range of interests, with evening classes, dance classes, drive-in movies, a gardening club and a rambling club topping the list. Art, amateur dramatics and woodwork classes also gained support, as did bingo, currently the only activity from the above list regularly taking place within the village. This is perhaps not surprising when one examines the figures for those willing to organise and run activities, with only a handful prepared to take the lead.

As for sport, villagers saw a greater need for indoor facilities over outdoor facilities (42% versus 24%), and it is to be hoped that a new community centre will provide the opportunity for a number of activities, such as badminton and keep-fit classes, to take place.

Action Points

The Parish Council will encourage community life by giving the appropriate support to all individuals and organisations seeking to offer parishioners the opportunity to partake in village-based activities.

Parish Facilities

Overview

Unfortunately Welney lost its general store/Post Office in June 2007, when Wendy and Peter Redman decided to retire after 31 years in charge. Although the property remained on the market for several months, a buyer could not be found. Ironically, despite a programme of cuts to rural post offices Welney escaped the axe, and the Post Office have since reiterated their commitment to providing a service in the village. However, at the time of writing no firm offer has yet been forthcoming from anyone willing to operate the service which, incidentally, can be run from any premises (with full training provided). A new post box has recently been placed, fittingly, outside the Old Post House opposite the Lamb & Flag, as a replacement for the one lost due to the closure of the shop and post office in New Road.

The Lamb and Flag Inn is now the only pub left in the village and currently enjoys a very good reputation, especially for its food and guest ales. After a period when it seemed that a new riverside pub could be built where the old Three Tuns building currently stands, it now appears that the Lamb & Flag is more likely to undergo substantial refurbishment.

Presently there is no children's play area. The various items residing in the corner of the Playing Field were deemed to be unsafe and removed in 2006. It is the Parish Council's intention to provide a new play area once a suitable site has been agreed. A special fund already exists specifically for this purpose.

One very positive thing to come out of the 1997 Village Appraisal was the launch of the bi-monthly "Welney News". Its popularity is demonstrated by the fact that it is delivered to the majority of houses in the village and has now reached its 60th edition.

Survey Results

There was strong support for what was almost certainly the most important facility within Welney, that being the village shop and post office, now sadly no more. Reasons given included a general willingness to support the local shop, the social contact offered and the convenience of being able to purchase 'last minute' items, though the availability of post office facilities proved to be the most important factor.

The postal service within the village was also given strong support, with only a small minority regarding the service as poor.

When it came to the availability of information provided, the Welney News proved to be a clear winner with 72%, although a majority of readers asked for more information on local events. This is certainly an area the editor is constantly trying to improve, though it is to some extent a 'two-way street', with Rachel relying on those who have news about local events to make contact so that information can be made available to the readership. Contact details are published in each edition of the magazine.

The former post office naturally proved to be an important source of information for villagers (48%), and its closure represents a big loss to villagers keen to remain 'in the know', while placing even more importance on the remaining information outlets. On a positive note, a healthy reliance on 'word of mouth' for local information (37%) offers much encouragement to those of us who value social contact with our neighbours, something that can often be sadly lacking in many of our larger towns.

Welney residents with an interest in 'cyber-space' are also well catered for, with both private and public village web sites available to those who prefer their information via computer screen.

With regard to the parish hall and playing field pavilion, a majority said they would like to see the two facilities combined as a way of reducing running costs, and should plans for a new community centre come to fruition villagers will hopefully get their wishes. The same can also be said for a children's play area (requested by almost 80% of adults), as plans for the community centre will also incorporate a brand new play area for all the children of the village to enjoy.

Action Points

The Parish Council will maintain a dialogue with the Post Office plus any interested parties in the hope that this vital service can be restored to the village. The Parish Council will also continue to push forward its plans for a new community centre and children's play area.



Environment

Overview

Recycling rates have risen dramatically in recent years as the Borough Council has introduced doorstep collections. The fact that the green wheelie-bin is much larger than the normal black one is designed to further encourage residents to make greater use of it. Much enhanced facilities at the nearest recycling centres and the three "banks" near the Lamb & Flag now make it far easier to dispose of most of our waste responsibly. However, the scourge of fly-tipping has nevertheless increased markedly in recent times.

Disappointingly, despite the fact that there are several "dog-bins" around the village and signs reinforcing the by-laws relating to dog mess, the pavements of Welney are still regularly blighted by the anti-social practice of dog owners not cleaning up after their pets.

The Parish is fortunate in having such a lengthy network of public rights of way, but unfortunately these are largely linear, necessitating 'there and back' walks. All the rights of way are clearly waymarked, but a village-based map has yet to be designed and installed. In addition, a number of other routes are regularly used by walkers with the tacit agreement of adjacent landowners.

The various international designations bestowed upon the Ouse Washes for their rich biodiversity are both well known and have long been appreciated by people living in the area.

On a completely different scale, but nevertheless of interest - if only because of the relative rarity of trees in the fens - the planting of two small areas of woodland in the Parish have at least added a change in scenery.

Under the careful management of its current owners, Pisces Country Park along Bedford Bank West is becoming increasingly attractive to both the human eye and to wildlife. In recognition of this, the site has won a David Bellamy Conservation Gold Award for environmental excellence in each of the past three years.

Further subtle, but nevertheless significant, changes are underway because of recent developments in farming policy and practice. Many local farms have now introduced grassland and wildflower margins to some of their field edges.

Survey Results

This section of the survey began by asking people whether they would, or already did, use recycling facilities, currently situated in the car-park of the Lamb and Flag public house.

The results showed that the recycling of glass and paper was practised by a majority of villagers, with large numbers showing a willingness to extend their recycling practices to cans, clothing, garden waste and scrap metal. This news was acted upon immediately by the Parish Council and an aluminium can bank was subsequently installed alongside the existing banks. The proposed development of a new community centre is intended to house all future recycling facilities within the village, and the Parish Council will seek to provide as many of the requested recycling banks as possible.

As well as more recycling, which, with 58%, topped the list regarding possible measures to help protect the local environment, residents were also in favour of energy saving, renewable energy, reducing traffic and improving public transport. More local employment was supported by nearly a third of villagers, while a quarter of parishioners backed the idea of community power generation.

Residents were less than satisfied with the number and location of litter bins within the parish, whilst despite the presence of several, easily accessible dog bins, a majority of those who expressed an opinion still saw dog mess as a problem in the village. The failure by a minority of irresponsible dog owners to clear up after their pets, most notably along the pavement of Main Street, is something for which there is no excuse, and the Parish Council will continue to issue reminders in the Welney News that this selfish and anti-social practice is unacceptable, not least for the health hazard it presents.

As local residents will know, low-flying aircraft are by no means uncommon in the skies above Welney, and 20% of villagers regarded this as a problem, while 37% said the village suffered from traffic noise. However, it was fly-tipping that came out on top (48%) when villagers were asked to choose from a list of problems suffered in the parish.

In relation to the natural environment, parishioners overwhelmingly said that they considered all forms of nature to be very important, with wild flowers, birds and animals heading the list at 74%, though these were closely followed by washes and wetlands; trees; rivers and drains; dykes and ditches; open spaces; hedges and banks.

In terms of improving the natural environment of the parish there was strong support (85%) for keeping rivers clean, whilst keeping ditches clear; planting more trees; and keeping hedges neat

and tidy were also seen as important. When it came to protecting wildlife; looking after wetlands and water-courses, and reducing pollution in the countryside were the favoured options, though nearly 50% said they would like to see local nature reserves created, a surprisingly high number when one considers the fact that we already have a large and important nature reserve in the form of the Ouse Washes on our doorstep.

The final questions in this section concerned footpaths and bridleways, both of which are used by a majority (55%) of villagers, though 57% of respondents said they would like to see more walking routes established. The biggest problems emerged as poor signposting and footpaths becoming overgrown, although we are assured that all rights of way are clearly marked.



Action Points

Results of this section of the survey will be sent to the Borough Council and Environment Agency. The Parish Council will seek to encourage all methods outlined in the survey of protecting and enhancing our local environment by working in conjunction with the aforementioned bodies. The Parish Council will explore the possibility of creating and displaying a village map, including all rights of way

Religion

Overview

After a period of four years without an incumbent, the United Benefice of Christchurch, Manea and Welney formally adopted the Revd. Kevin Fitzgibbon as its Priest-in-Charge.

Survey Results

A majority of 53% of villagers claimed that the church in Welney was important to them, with those who attend places of worship outside Welney doing so primarily because their religious denomination is not catered for within the Parish.

A third of respondents said their spiritual needs were being catered for by St Mary's Church, though almost as many people had no interest in the church at all. The traditional service was greatly favoured over the modern type, while there was significant support for the idea of using the church for additional activities; namely children's activities and as a community/drop-in centre.

Action Points

Results of this section of the survey will be sent to the Vicar and Ely Diocesan Office.



Parish Future

Survey Results

When asked how they would like to see Welney parish develop one third of residents favoured a working community, whilst a further third were happy to see the village remain as it is. In terms of business development, both small businesses and the bed and breakfast trade received good support, as did tourism and small scale industrial workshops, though it was boating that topped the list, with 42% of residents wishing to see greater use of our waterways.

Questioned as to whether the village needed a public toilet, 42% agreed that it did, though just over 50% did not see a need. As for Welney being twinned with a foreign town or village, although 25% thought this to be a good idea, an overwhelming majority of nearly 60% said they were not in favour of this proposal.

Finally, villagers were asked if consideration should be given to our nearest neighbours, Tipps End and Lakes End, being merged with Welney parish. The results showed a majority in favour in both cases, though Tipps End received greater support (46% in favour; 27% against), as opposed to Lakes End (38% in favour; 33% against).

Action Points

Results of this section of the survey will be sent to the Borough Council. The Parish Council will investigate the issue of a merger with Tipps End and Lakes End.

Mark Brown & Tim Bennett

Parishioners' Comments

A selection taken from the 'Additional Comments' pages of the completed Questionnaires

Highways / Speeding Problems

Consider Suspension Bridge/Hundred Foot Bank when making decisions about Welney.

Residents of Suspension Bridge are deeply concerned by the number of accidents involving vehicles hitting the crash barriers at the bridge over the Hundred Foot river. Several accidents a month – it is only a question of time before a death occurs. Better signposting and speed restrictions should be considered. (Lots of requests for speed limit and traffic calming measures throughout the parish.)

Cycleway across Wash Road to encourage greater community cohesion / Appoint village speed officers.

Village Events

Organise more community/village events e.g. Fetes/Galas for the whole family.

Flooding of Washes

Think of a service available to use/cross the wash when flooded at school times (e.g. boat service) to transport the children to school and back.

Bells Drove

What influence does Parish Council have regarding Bells Drove in respect of street lights, state of the road, fire hydrant (where is it) and signs? Still only get one plastic bag for refuse.

Planning

Keep the Lamb & Flag as it is / Stop lorries using the car park

Stop more houses behind the parish hall.

More homes should be built in and around Welney to attract people and extend the community.

A pub should be built in Tipps End to bring the community together.

Village School

Make better use of our school as a facility and a community. Extending the school to encompass community needs will help ensure the future of a school under threat. No school leads to dying community and no development.

Parish Church

Consideration should be given to area in churchyard where cremation plaques are. The area needs levelling. The designated space for each plot is too small.

Community and Social Needs

Develop a volunteer culture – help with lifts, shopping, childcare, skill-sharing, checking on elderly or needy neighbours / Be nicer to each other!

I moved here to escape the rat race, to be able to be a part of the landscape/seasons. I wish the church was more popular and could again be the centre of village life along with the pub and post office. I would like to retain a bit of old England.

The Lamb & Flag must be saved and developed as a larger more prestigious village amenity. It is a defining building in Welney – even more so than the school or church. Without it the parish would be immeasurably poorer. I would add that I think it is scandalous that it has been allowed to deteriorate. It has needed remedial work for years.

The loss of the working committee of the Parish Hall who had many years' experience and service was huge – leading to end of village pageant history. Unless team and community spirit can be restored rather than individuals seeking personal glory I cannot see it improving.

Children's Saturday morning film matinees held in village hall or school. Same for adults during the week.

Security lighting: too many lights, too bright, on all the time "Why?". They shine into our house and garden interfering with our lives – waste of energy. Have one sensor.....have they tried being in the dark? It's amazing just how much one is able to see.

Need mains drains – people in Welney are living with third world sanitation conditions.

Time to rename Tippsend. Give it something that reflects the area, something more attractive. Ask the question and gauge the results.

The last bus from Downham to Welney is at 12.05, but there are buses to Downham from Welney at 13.30 and 15.47! Welney people can return from the last two outward journeys if they foot the 3 miles from Lots Bridge.



Youth Questionnaire

5 to 11 Age Group

52 children in this age group answered the questionnaire. 68% of these children attend Welney School, while others go to Christchurch, Ten Mile Bank, Downham Market, or Ely schools.

The most popular out-of-school activities were; watching TV (81%), reading (67%), playing computer games (61%), and spending time with friends (58%). Of physical or sporting activities, the favourites were swimming (46%), bicycle riding (48%), and going for walks (46%). 52% of the children thought that there was plenty for them to do in and around the village, though about 27% thought what was on offer was poor or very poor. The most popular activities in the "like to try" category were; art (61%), swimming (61%), dancing (56%), 10-pin bowling (52%), nature studies (52%), football (42%), drama (42%), martial arts (40%), and fishing (40%).

88% of the children would like to attend a junior Youth Club in the village with discos and games as the favourite activities, and 90% would like to be able to go on outings organised by a youth club. Swimming came top of this list at 77%, then cinema trips (75%) and theme parks (71%). Bowling, outdoor activities and zoos were also very popular.

75% of the children would take part in after-school clubs and activities. 60% would use a local minibus to get to nearby events and activities. A large proportion (40-46%) were unaware of what events or activities were available in nearby towns, e.g. Ely and Wisbech.

69% of the children felt that the village playing field needed to be improved. Additional features should include a mountain bike/BMX track (73%) and a wildlife area (73% again). There was also keen interest in having a marked football pitch (50%) and a rollerblading area (52%). It was important that any play areas should be in a fenced-off area (77% of responses) and should have sections for different age groups (69%). 65% of children would not want to attend a Sunday School or Sunday morning club.

Asked if there were places in Welney where they felt unsafe, 46% of the children in this age group said 'yes'. The majority of responses seemed to relate to road safety; - too much heavy traffic, too many speeding vehicles, traffic very close to pavements, narrow pavements offering little protection, lack of pavements in some areas, no cycleways, difficulty crossing the road near the school, and through traffic as a source of 'stranger danger'. There were also concerns about the playing field; - poor state of equipment and fencing, poor lighting, and no 'safe adults' nearby. Other concerns mentioned included poor lighting throughout the village, again giving rise to fears about strangers being able to wait unseen; and levels of pollution in the rivers as a hazard to those wishing to fish, walk dogs along the riverbank, etc. A resounding 84% of children would like to see a pedestrian crossing by the school.

73% of children had concerns over bullying, 50% worried about theft, and 46% about bad or anti-social behaviour. 63% of children had never spoken to a police officer, mostly because they simply hadn't encountered any in the village or school; and, disturbingly, some felt suspicious or mistrustful of the police, or felt that they seemed unapproachable if encountered. Most children seemed to feel that they had someone to turn to if they had problems of any kind; 69% would go to a parent, 60% to a teacher, and 52% would talk to a friend.

Finally, a number of children wrote in the general comments section at the end of the questionnaire. Issues raised included:

The need for something to be done about speeding traffic

Traffic speed cameras

Traffic signs to reduce speeding

Lollipop lady at school crossing

More police on the beat in Welney

Fencing and gates at the playing field

More shops

A skateboard park

More activities to celebrate Christmas

Discussion of issues raised

There is a strong interest in sporting and other activities in this age group. The Parish Council will be investigating ways of bringing more activities to the village, and will communicate with neighbouring PCs about shared community transport to enable children to get to facilities and events outside the village. More information needs to be made available about events and activities in local towns and Leisure Centres; Welney News is already beginning to address this, and village noticeboards could also be used more to provide short-term information. Preliminary enquiries to sports providers have proved fruitful: the Sports Development Unit based at Lynnsport can loan out sports equipment to village groups; equipment available includes carpet bowls, table tennis, soccer goals, short tennis and badminton. Sports coaches are available to help with summer holiday activities for 5-11 year olds, and will also run sessions for youth clubs. Activities include football, cricket, athletics, and netball.

The children expressed a strong interest in a junior youth club. Enquiries to the current Youth Leader in Welney revealed that for the younger age group, the regulations are different and include a much higher ratio of adults to children, so that any junior group would be much more dependent on parental support or on having extra police-checked volunteers. The parish council would however like to find out if it is possible to set up a group, especially in view of the success of the existing club for 12-17 year olds, and will be investigating possible sources of funding.

The playing field, and future play equipment, either at the playing field or elsewhere in the village, are valuable resources for the children; and all questionnaire results will be taken into account in future plans for the playing field itself and for any purchase of equipment. Currently, the money raised towards play equipment is being held in a separate fund; as plans progress for a new village community centre, the new play area will become part of those plans. Further consultation with children and young people will take place when the whole project is further forward.

Road safety is clearly a major issue for young children, and the Parish Council will be bringing the questionnaire results to the notice of the Police and the Highways Department. The Parish Council were very glad to get so much information from the children about road safety and other safety issues, and hope to visit the children in school to discuss these face-to-face with them.

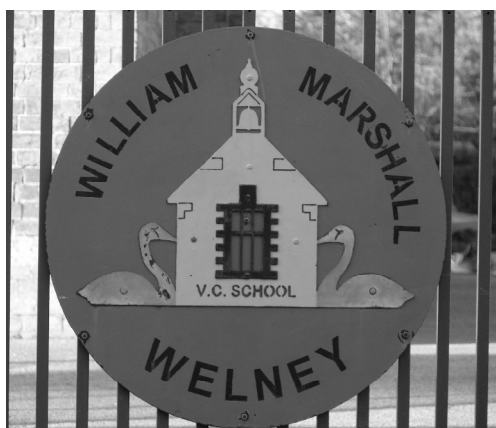
Community policing has of course been an issue for many years. The Norfolk police are well aware of this, and this year are launching their 'Safer Neighbourhood Team' initiative. The county will be divided into 52 'neighbourhoods', each with its own team of police officers, community support officers and special constables. The aim of the teams is to improve contact and

communication between the police and local communities, to address concerns about crime and other issues, and simply to become more 'visible'. There is also a new project to link villages along the A1101 'corridor' via local Homewatch groups. More about both of these will hopefully appear in 'Welney News'. Meanwhile, the Parish Council will be raising the matter of friendly police contact directly with the Chief Constable.

The school already plays a part in providing extra-curricular activities for the children. Welney children are involved in netball, cricket, football and cross-country tournaments hosted at schools in Downham Market. There are active Guitar and Craft Clubs, which are well attended. The school still has links with the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust; WWT staff visit the school, and the children at intervals go to the Centre for pond-dipping sessions etc. The school has in the past provided the venue for sports coaching events in the school holidays and would be happy to do so again, if any individual or organisation wished to take on the planning of similar events.

Concerns over bullying, and the issue of personal safety in general, are very much addressed in the school curriculum. Under the heading of 'Personal, Health and Social Education' the children are able to discuss subjects such as bullying, being in threatening situations, 'stranger danger', dealing with strong emotions, and many others. As well as this provision in the curriculum, staff are always ready to address any individual concerns. The school is assisted by the Fire Brigade who run an annual session at the school for Year Six children, all about responding to emergencies and dangerous situations.

Finally, members of the Parish Council and the Parish Action Plan team would like to say a big 'thank you' to all the children who filled in their questionnaires and provided so much valuable information!



Youth Questionnaire

12 to 17 Age Group

43 young people in this age group filled in questionnaires.

When asked about how they spent their free time, the responses were these: spending time with friends 72%, watching TV 65%, listening to music 65%, computer games 63%, visits to local towns 35%, and reading 35%. Sport did not appear to be as popular; football was most quoted at 21%, and fishing was 19%. Swimming and table tennis were 14% and 12%.

In contrast with the younger age group, more of the older children said that facilities in Welney were poor or very poor (70%), while only 5% thought the facilities were good or excellent. There was quite a wide range of interest in trying different activities if they were brought to the village or if transport was available; these included pool (42%), computer games (37%), swimming (33%), youth football and badminton (26%), karate and 10-pin bowling (26%), and scuba diving (23%).

56% of responders said they used the existing youth club in Welney, and they felt that Thursday was a good day for meeting, with Friday a close second. 37% said they were prepared to help with the running of the club. Popular activities were: pool (67%), TV room if available (67%), table tennis (53%), discos (49%), computer games (49%), and playstation (44%). First Aid training was high on the list too (42%). 79% of young people said they were keen to go on outings organised by the youth club, and favoured destinations were theme parks (67%), cinemas (47%), and ten-pin bowling (44%). Of physical sports, the most popular were swimming (40%), and canoeing/sailing/other outdoor activities (37%).

A resounding 77% would like to use a minibus service to get to events outside the village, and favourite destinations were cinemas (74%), ten-pin bowling (67%), swimming pools (53%), and concerts (49%).

Generally, around 30% of responders were aware of what events and activities were available in local towns while about 50% were not. The exception was Downham Market, where about 60% knew what was available. 70% of children and young people said that more information should be placed in Welney News about nearby events, 65% said the village shop, 60% village notice boards, and 44% the village website. funfairs, local village fairs and concerts were the most popular events to be publicized (44%, 40%, and 35% respectively).

The Village Playing Field: needs improvement (79%), and better access (30%), and should have a fenced-off play area (67%), with age-appropriate zones (63%). There should be a hard-surfaced court for netball, volleyball etc (47%), a marked football pitch (42%), and mountain bike/BMX facilities (33%). Skateboarding and rollerblading were slightly less popular at 26% and 21%. There should be toilet facilities (79%).

Of other suggested activities or interests, amateur dramatics and bingo came equally at 26%.

70% of young people would not attend church, even if there were a minister they felt to be approachable and a modern order of service. However some might be tempted by modern music (26%), and an informal/club type atmosphere (33%).

Meeting areas in the village: 72% of individuals would use a shelter/meeting area where they could spend time with friends. 49% said a shelter would need to be somewhere that felt safe (49%), some said that it should be (not too) near houses for security (40%); or on or near the playing field (33%). Some felt that the field near Chestnut Ave would be a good location (16%).

67% of individuals would use a meeting room with some facilities. A pool table was popular (70%), and a soft drinks/refreshments machine (67%). A music source would be popular (60%), and so would darts (56%). The meeting room should be in a safe location and easy to get to, and the favourite location was the playing field (70%), while fewer people thought it should be by the village hall or near Chestnut Avenue (14% each). Only two responders said there should be adult supervision. 42% said they would keep to a users' code of conduct.

Personal safety: 60% of individuals said there were parts of Welney where they felt unsafe. There were some general concerns about bullying and mugging (both 28%). Theft and anti-social behaviour were also concerns (21% and 16%). Other worries related to lighting at night, especially in the area of the pavilion and playing field (25%). Road safety, traffic speed and lack of footpaths were again an issue, but for fewer individuals than in the younger age group. 65% of responders had never talked to a uniformed police officer. 55% would talk to their parents if they were experiencing a major worry, and 42% to a good friend.

Village Youth Committee. Responders over the age of twelve were asked if they would be willing to join a Village Youth Committee to discuss issues concerning young people in the parish, and to form a link with the Parish Council. 44% would be interested, 47% would not.

Additional Comments

Comments were received on a number of issues, and many of these related to personal safety. There were repeated comments about the lack of lighting around the playing field and the access area to it, and the same for access to the Pavilion when the Youth Club were using it on winter nights. Antisocial behaviour was a worry for some, especially in Chestnut Avenue or near the pub at night. There were one or two mentions of fear of abduction relating to through traffic on the main road. Some responders expressed concerns about heavy traffic through the village, and speed of traffic; footpaths on March Road and Wisbech Road were considered to be desirable by some.

Other comments related to village facilities, activities and classes; interest was expressed in Judo, Karate, Keep Fit, Dancing, First Aid, Art and Craft, and Hairdressing. Some would like to see canoe or boat hire on the river, and a public toilet near the riverbank for anglers, walkers etc. There was one wish for access to musical instruments for band practice.

General Comments

More play and sports equipment needed / More arranged events for young people

More places for young people & teenagers to spend time

Hard court for tennis/netball

Access to playing field is a problem / Playing field lighting a problem

Please combine the hall/playing field facilities

More transport should be available for access to local towns eg Downham Market

The village shouldn't get bigger; new developments don't suit the village

Julie Perkins-Jones has "done a brilliant job" with the Youth Club; BUT "the village as a whole should go further to make Welney a better place for children and young people, giving them more positive opportunities rather than leaving them with a vacuum"

Discussion of Results

In this age group there was a different focus for leisure time pursuits; though sports still featured strongly, there was also an emphasis on more social pursuits such as going to the cinema or ten pin bowling; and overall there seemed to be a greater need to access sports and other leisure facilities outside the village. The Youth Club is popular as it helps fulfill a number of requirements; providing a range of games and activities, and somewhere to meet socially in the village; and regular trips away from Welney (Play2Day, Paintballing, cinema trips, and others).

However there still seemed to be strong dissatisfaction with what Welney has to offer young people in this age group. The situation is likely to improve to an extent when the proposed new Parish Hall/Community Centre is built, along with an associated new outdoor play area. The Parish Council will review questionnaire results with the hope of including suitable leisure equipment for this age group, along with a sheltered meeting area. The practicality of providing an indoor meeting facility as part of this development will also be assessed.

Information on leisure pursuits beyond the village is already being included in Welney News, and there are plans for online information too. As mentioned in the discussion section for 5-11s, the Parish Council hopes to investigate community transport in co-operation with other villages. In addition, some sports/leisure activities could perhaps be brought to the village once the new Community Centre is built.

A brief investigation found that Leisure Centres in the area all operate some form of discount leisure card system for young people, and offer a range of activities; eg at Downham Market Leisure Centre there is a Friday night football club for 8-15 year-olds and a fitness gym, 'Shokk Gym', again for 8-15s. Littleport Leisure Centre offers judo, karate, archery, rollerskating, dance, badminton, and Bodyzone (gym) sessions. Age divisions are 7-12 and 13-16, all activities are led by coaches, and sessions cost as little as £1-50 or £2-00. The high school at Downham Market offers archery, cricket, badminton, softball, basketball, rounders, a drama group, and two orchestra/band groups outside school hours. It is likely that a systematic search would find far more activities in the locality; these could all be publicized in Welney, and linked to the potential need for transport.

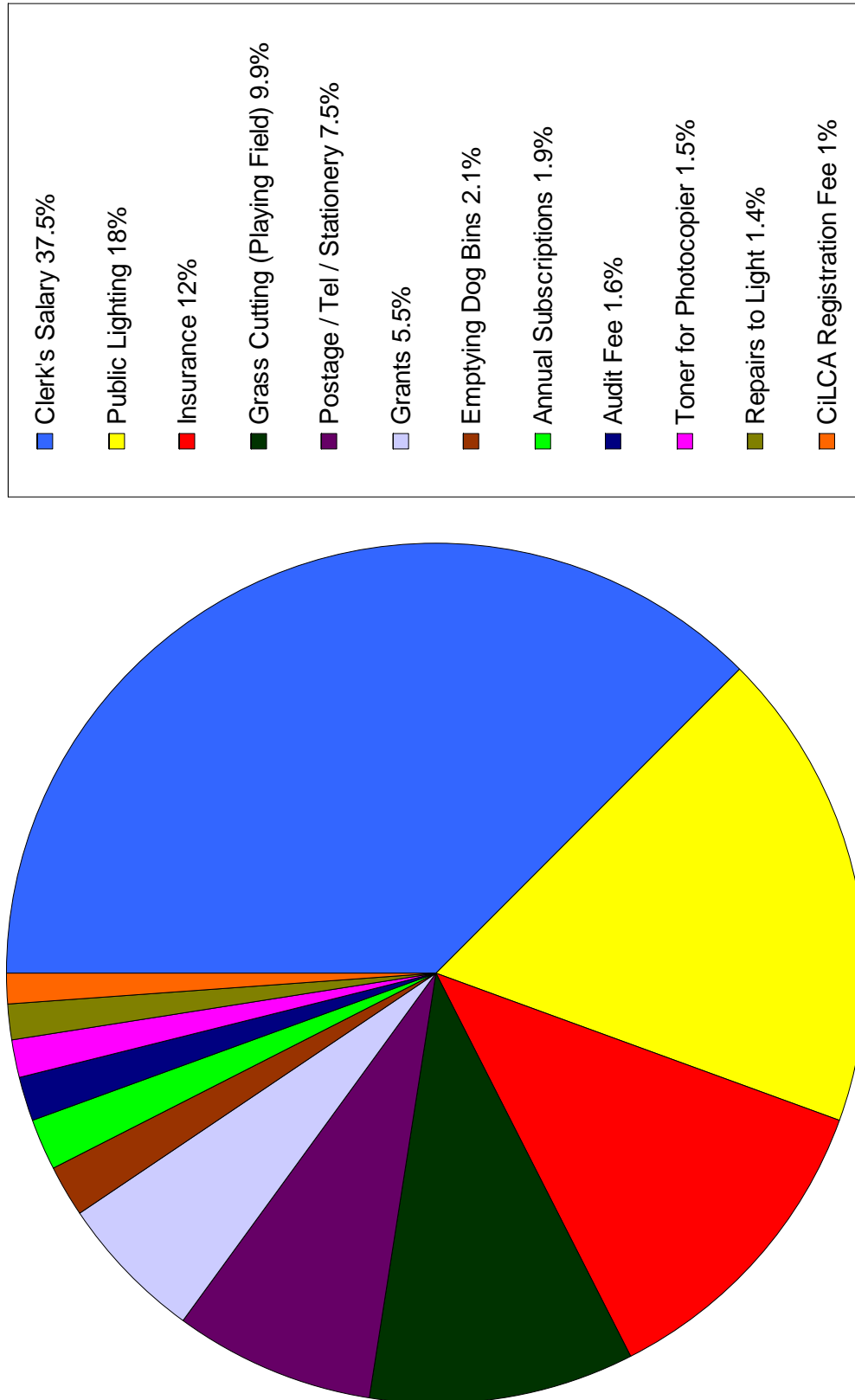
Concerns about personal safety in the community, and about antisocial behaviour, will be taken up by the Parish Council. Parish Council members intend to communicate with younger village members via the Youth club about their worries, and will also be writing to the Chief Constable with relevant results from the questionnaire. Bullying and relationships in general are addressed as part of the High School curriculum; in addition, some staff at the school, officially and otherwise, provide a sympathetic ear for those in need of support. Bullying is also discussed at the Youth Club, and the Youth Leader again is prepared to offer support where necessary.

The Parish Council will also write to the new Welney Minister discussing the survey results relating to the church. The subject of a village 'Youth Committee' will be investigated further, to ascertain level of interest and practical considerations.

Once again, the Parish Action Plan team and the Parish Council are very grateful for the time taken to fill in the questionnaires by young people in this age group, and for all the additional information given.

Karen Fleming

Welney Parish Council Annual Precept Spending 2006/7





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