

North Mundham Parish Council

Strategies for the Future – 2009 Update

An Action Plan

The Action Plan was adopted by North Mundham Parish Council

on 3rd November 2009 Signed Denia Turnbull Chairman

Introduction

In 2004 the Mundham and Runcton Residents Association (MARRA) undertook a survey to inform an Action Plan published by North Mundham Parish Council, under the title of Strategies for the Future – 2005. During 2009, the Council undertook an opinion survey, with a view to gathering information to update the Action Plan.

The initial analysis and report of the 2009 survey showed that many statistics, views and opinions remained unchanged. A copy of the survey report is in Annex A. However, there was sufficient new data to enable us to refine our Action Plan, and in some respects we have been able to define actions more specifically. This report explains the conclusions we have drawn, and the actions we propose in response.

Survey Issues and Proposed Actions

1. The Local Population

Issue: The age distribution shows a bias towards older people, with 43% of respondents aged 60 or over.

We do not see this as necessarily a cause for concern, and we note that both the Village School and the Sunbeams Nursery School attract families with children to the parish. However we believe that the existing age distribution is only sustainable if the existing level of transport provision and local facilities is maintained. We address specific provisions below.

Issue: Ten per cent of responses are from those who have moved to the parish within the last two years.

We believe a regular influx of new blood helps to maintain a thriving local community and is to be encouraged. The welcome pack which we introduced recently seems to be valued by those who receive it, as an aid to integrating newcomers into the community. We should therefore ensure it is kept up to date, and is made available to future new arrivals. We note we may be less aware of changes to the local population in the larger estates in North Mundham, and recognise the challenge of keeping up to date with happenings in all parts of the parish and ensuring that new arrivals are identified. We should nevertheless recognise that participation in community life and activities is a personal choice.

We have therefore identified a specific objective to improve communications with the local population, by means of a Community Engagement Strategy, to encourage involvement with the local community and help foster a sense of parish identity:

Action 1.1: Develop and maintain a Community Engagement Strategy.

2. The Local Environment

Issue: When asked what is important about the parish, an overwhelming majority (87%) value the natural and rural environment. The responses voted strongly for the village sense of community (70%), the peace and quiet (84%) and the rural landscape (86%), and supported village activities (49%), as elements of the environment that they valued.

We believe there is scope for the Parish Council to become more involved in enhancing the natural and rural environment. We recognise that we need to know more about what aspects of the natural environment would benefit from our intervention, and equally where we would be better advised to ensure things are left undisturbed. Specific examples include the route of the old canal as a wild-life habitat, and the various ponds and roadside verges within the parish. To this end we propose to seek expert advice, ideally in the form of a Wildlife Survey, to guide us in doing the best to preserve the environment.

Action 2.1: Seek expert advice, in the form of a Wildlife Survey, or a series of surveys, to provide guidance on how best to maintain the natural environment.

We also recognise that our boundaries include part of Pagham Harbour, albeit only a small portion, and we believe we need to act in concert with other authorities that have Pagham Harbour as their main focus.

Action 2.2: Maintain liaison with authorities involved in maintaining the environment in the Pagham Harbour Nature reserve, taking particular note of any proposals which impact the parish.

It is generally recognised that planting trees can make a significant contribution to the local environment, in terms of wildlife habitat, as an absorber of carbon dioxide, and as objects of beauty and a contribution to the landscape in their own right. In a parish which contains so much intensive agriculture and horticulture, opportunities for widespread tree planting are necessarily limited, but we will continue to seek out suitable sites, particularly on road verges, where new trees can be planted without interfering with road safety.

Action 2.3: Seek opportunities to plant trees where they can, with safety, make a contribution to the landscape.

3. Local Activities

Issue: A majority value the community and its activities.

The Parish Council is already closely involved with, and actively supports, the bodies that administer the Village Hall, the playing fields and pavilion. They help to define the parish identity, and are seen as making a substantial contribution to the quality of life in the parish, both in their own right and as a focus and venue for other activities. Clearly our support must continue.

Action 3.1: Continue financial and practical support to the Village Hall, playing fields and pavilion.

Action 3.2: Support pavilion development.

4. Travel and transport

Issue: The responses revealed a heavy dependence on cars for transport.

Travel is a major factor determining the quality of life in a rural community. We note that the relatively recent increase in the frequency of the local bus service has been widely welcomed, and is something which we would wish to see continued. At the time of writing there appears to be no threat to the bus service at the existing 15 minute frequency, but we would be seriously concerned if there was any suggestion it should be curtailed, and would see it as our duty to lobby intensively for its continuation.

Action 4.1: Monitor the provision of the local bus service with a view to ensuring it is maintained.

The provision of bus shelters helps to support the attractions of bus travel as a means of access to Chichester. However, we recognise that the bus service will have little impact on those parts of the parish further from the B2166, since residents have to travel a significant distance to reach the buses. It is likely that, if they start their journey by car, they will complete the journey by car rather than, for instance, using the village hall car park as a 'park and ride' facility. But we believe that we could make some contribution to the 'green travel' agenda if bicycle use could be encouraged, and we see two avenues to investigate further.

Firstly, there may be scope for providing cycle racks in North Mundham and/or Runcton, either near the Village Hall or near bus stops. Obviously potential users would need to be convinced of the practicality of such an arrangement, not least the security implications of leaving a bicycle there while they continue their journey.

Action 4.2: Investigate the provision of cycle racks to encourage cycling as an environmentally-sustainable mode of transport to access the Village Hall and the bus service.

Secondly, we recognise that, despite efforts to provide dedicated safe cycle routes, parts of the route between North Mundham and Chichester are still potentially hazardous. In particular, the short stretch between Church Road along the B2166 towards the Hunston roundabout represents a very real disincentive to anyone contemplating cycling to Chichester, even though the rest of the route can be safely completed along quiet roads, dedicated cycle ways, and the canal tow path. One option might be to seek a re-routing, or a new pathway,

from the area of Aylwin place around the perimeter of field boundaries to join the existing pathway close to Hunston dairy.

Action 4.3: Investigate possible improvements to the provision of a safe cycle route to Chichester.

We note that the network of footpaths within the parish helps to support an environmentally-friendly mode of transport and provides access to the rural environment. The local footpath network should be maintained.

Action 4.4: Ensure the local footpath network is maintained, together with the associated footbridges, gates and stiles.

5. Maintaining a sustainable community

Issue: A small majority of respondents (54%) favour encouraging more small businesses in the parish, and a substantial minority would like to see more local jobs. As regards housing, there was little enthusiasm for more housing with the majority opinion (71%) that it would spoil the environment. However a small number of responses recognised that there was a need for affordable accommodation for young families to benefit the community.

Perhaps the greatest challenge will be to reconcile the desires of those who like the parish ‘just as it is’ with the need to take practical steps to ensure a viable and lively community. We recognise the need to take a positive view of proposals that will bring local employment opportunities to the parish, but they will make little impact, or even a negative one, if they merely provide jobs for workers who travel in from other areas. We should clearly retain an open mind in looking at proposals to provide a limited amount of new housing in the parish – indeed it is likely we will come under some pressure to facilitate such developments. But we should still recognise that new developments must meet the housing needs of those who can make a positive contribution to the local community.

Action 5.1: Support the development of small businesses where it can be shown they will increase the opportunities of employment for local people.

Action 5.2: Support the development of housing where it can be shown that it will be of benefit to the existing local community.

Summary

Specific actions identified by this report are listed in Annex B in the form of an Action Grid.

Updating the Village Plan – Results from the Questionnaire

It would seem that the principal challenge will be to try to reconcile the current general satisfaction and the desire to keep the parish ‘just as it is’ with the need to ensure a lively and vibrant community for the future. This may mean making provision for some limited local employment opportunities, and careful control of housing development to maintain the village atmosphere and peaceful rural environment.

Background

In 2005, the parish published its Village Plan following analysis of a very detailed questionnaire. Since then, the District Council has suggested we should make sure we keep the plan up to date, since it can be one of the things that influences decision making and in some cases sources of funding on which we might draw.

A number of things have changed since the Village Plan was published. Perhaps the most noticeable change has been the closure of the village shop. We have also seen a delay to the publication of the Local Development Framework, complicated by renewed doubt about the upgrade of the A27, and the ability of the local infrastructure to support more housing.

It therefore seemed appropriate to circulate another, shorter, questionnaire to see what might have changed since the Village Plan was published.

Headline Results

Much has remained unchanged, in terms of the age distribution in the parish, the sort of things people value, and how people work and travel. And it is clear from the results that the vast majority of people value and enjoy the parish just as it is, and would not like to see it changed. However we see some significant changes since the previous survey in attitudes to small businesses and more jobs in the parish. Generally speaking, the parish remains unconvinced about whether tourism should be encouraged and those who express an opinion are evenly divided. But there has been a noticeable change in favour of encouraging small businesses and, to a lesser extent, more jobs.

Results in Detail

The overall response was 301 completed questionnaires, representing a very impressive response rate of 65%. The completed returns represent the views of 604 local residents aged 16 and over.

The age distribution shows a bias towards older people, with 43% of respondents aged 60 or over. Ten per cent of responses are from those who have moved to the parish within the last two years.

When asked what is important about the parish, an overwhelming majority (87%) value the natural and rural environment, and a majority value the proximity to Chichester and the

community and its activities. The proximity to the sea and access to London are less important.

Perhaps reflecting the age distribution, slightly less than half the responses (43%) came from households with someone who travels to work, though this will not reveal those who work from home. Travel to work is predominantly local – even though a few questionnaires revealed journeys of over 50 miles, the overall average was just under 14 miles. The responses revealed a heavy dependence on cars for transport (84%) – indeed at least one respondent pointed out that for much of the parish public transport is not a realistic alternative.

A small majority of respondents (54%) favour encouraging more small businesses in the parish, and a substantial minority would like to see more local jobs. The responses were much less definite about encouraging tourism, with nearly equal minorities for and against, and the majority declaring no view or not responding at all.

As regards housing, there was little enthusiasm for more housing with the majority opinion (71%) that it would spoil the environment. However a small number of responses recognised that there was a need for affordable accommodation for young families to benefit the community.

The responses voted strongly for the village sense of community (70%), the peace and quiet (84%) and the rural landscape (86%), and supported village activities (49%), as elements of the environment that they valued.

Asked about the lack of a village shop, the responses were definite but almost equally divided, with half the responses (50%) reporting that it caused difficulties.

Reflecting the general satisfaction with the existing environment, there was a general view (76%) that increased development would spoil the quality of life in the villages.

Finally, a significant minority reported a close family member who had expressed a wish to live in the parish, but the wording of the question makes it difficult to interpret this as a proportion who would actually move here if the opportunity were available.

Summary

Overall, the questionnaire brought no big surprises, and many views remain unchanged since the previous survey. However, we see signs of a growing concern to maintain some small businesses and local job opportunities within the parish, as contributors to a thriving community.

Action Grid

Objective	Action	
1		Improving communications with the local population
	1.1	Develop and maintain a Community Engagement Strategy.
2		Enhancing the natural and rural environment.
	2.1	Seek expert advice, in the form of a Wildlife Survey, or a series of surveys, to provide guidance on how best to maintain the natural environment.
	2.2	Maintain liaison with authorities involved in preserving the environment in the Pagham Harbour Nature reserve, taking particular note of any proposals which impact the parish.
	2.3	Seek opportunities to plant trees where they can, with safety, make a contribution to the landscape.
3		Supporting local activities
	3.1	Continue financial and practical support to the Village Hall, playing fields and pavilion.
	3.2	Support pavilion development.
4		Supporting local travel and transport
	4.1	Monitor the provision of the local bus service with a view to ensuring it is maintained.
	4.2	Investigate the provision of cycle racks to encourage cycling as an environmentally-sustainable mode of transport to access the Village Hall and the bus service.
	4.3	Investigate possible improvements to the provision of a safe cycle route to Chichester.
	4.4	Ensure the local footpath network is maintained, together with the associated footbridges, gates and stiles.
5		Maintaining a sustainable community
	5.1	Support the development of small businesses where it can be shown they will increase the opportunities of employment for local people.
	5.2	Support limited development of housing but only where it can be shown that it will be of benefit to the existing local community.