



BRIDGWATER WITHOUT COMMUNITY PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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Introduction

The Community Review for Bridgwater Without Parish is based on a survey with residents conducted in 2024. The survey's results provide insights into the views of residents and opportunities for improvements in the Parish.

The findings highlighted below will inform an action plan that the Parish Council and members of the community can take forward. Funding opportunities will be identified as far as possible for elements of the action plan.

Background

Bridgwater Without is a Parish lying to the east and southwest of Bridgwater in Somerset North. It includes the villages and hamlets of Dunwear, Horsey and Slape Cross to the east, and the new developments of Kings Down, Willow Down, and Strawberry Grange to the west of the M5.

The population of Bridgwater Without has grown rapidly over the past decade, from 428 in 2011 to 2,800 in 2021.[1]

Methodology

A Steering Group was set up to include a Parish Councillor, the clerk to the Parish Council and other residents. The Steering Group identified key issues through an initial survey in June.

This information enabled the Steering Group to construct a survey questionnaire covering the subject areas below:

- Community activities and facilities
- Children and young People
- Health and wellbeing
- Local environment
- Traffic, travel and transport
- New developments
- Communication
- Volunteering
- Respondents' demographics

[1] <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/customprofiles/build/>

Key Findings

The survey was open between 7 September and 15 October 2024 and promoted on Bridgwater Without's Parish Council's website, through social media, posters around the Parish and leaflet drops to people's homes.

There were 217 responses which, with a population of 2,800, indicates an 8% response rate.



Community activities and facilities

Very few consider that there is currently enough leisure and recreation provision in the Parish. Most respondents feel more is needed for families and teenagers.

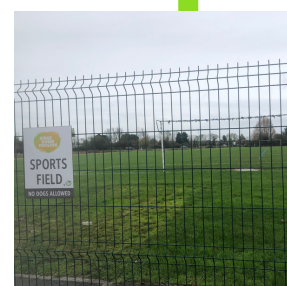
Provision for older people, working age adults and primary school children are all suggested by 1 in 3 respondents. Provision for pre-school/parents and people with disabilities as well as for carers and those who are socially isolated would also be welcomed.

With attendances relatively low for current groups, this suggests there are opportunities to expand community activities in the Parish, with a craft / making group, coffee morning and gardening group being the most popular activities suggested.

Fitness classes, exercise for the over 50s and walking groups were the favourite suggestions for sports activities.

An outstanding number of respondents feel that better knowledge of activities and events would help them take part in social or community activities in the Parish. More convenient times, improved facilities and cheaper cost would also help others.

Just under half those responding think there should be a new Community Centre in the parish, as well as Kings Down Pavilion, possibly because it is difficult to access without a car.





Young People

Most respondents with connections to young people use the play area at Kings Down followed by breakfast and after school clubs.

Other activities referred to in the comments include the Sunday school at the Salvation Army.

Young people would use improved playgrounds according to a sizeable majority of respondents.

A community garden / orchard/ allotment, a Youth Club and Dance /drama / music making /other arts group, skate/bike park and Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) would also be used by young people in the Parish.



Health & Wellbeing

Just over half the respondents rate their physical health as good or very good. A large number consider their physical health as fair, whereas 19 respondents think their physical health is bad or very bad.

A slightly larger majority rate their mental health as good or very good, whereas 69 respondents consider their mental health as fair, while 25 reported that their mental health is bad or very bad.

The large majority of those with a view would like to see wellbeing support groups such as a 'Chatty Café'

A Befriending scheme would also be welcomed, and to a lesser extent a budget cooking group.

The extensive comments include more for people and children with autism and SEND, better play areas for children, and shared outside space such as allotments.

Getting a doctor's appointment is difficult or very difficult for the small majority of respondents (120). 67 people find it neither easy nor difficult, while a small proportion find it is easy or very easy.

Many people (45 respondents) need more help to access services such as healthcare and related support, and healthy living advice such as fitness, weight loss or smoking cessation. Travel and community transport is an issue for some people too.





Local Environment

A sizeable majority of respondents think that there is not enough natural green space in their community. Many people would like to enjoy nature more and would like benches and picnic tables in any green space created. A community woodland and garden would also be appreciated.



For the notable majority of respondents dog fouling is the top issue affecting the local environment followed by litter.

Fly tipping, pressure on drainage and sewerage systems and noise pollution are all concerns for a sizeable number of respondents.

There are extensive comments on concerns about the local environment, including lack of safe play areas and natural habitat, the burning of rubbish, and the need for more dog waste bins. Litter and fly tipping is a problem all around the Parish.

The majority of respondents think that improvements are needed to the hedgerows, followed by rights of way and drainage.

Other suggestions include more dog waste bins, and improvements to the play areas and roads, as well as better maintenance of the rhynes and the River Parrett.

A community orchard, allotments, and / or a community garden to support local food production is the most popular option to reduce carbon emissions. Others feel a community swap shop, jumble sales/bring and buy events, and a repair café would help them reduce their carbon footprint.

To improve biodiversity and wildlife conservation many people would actively get involved with planting trees and wildflower planting. Other popular activities to help address this are a local wildlife and conservation group, garden event days and planting hedgerows.





Traffic, Travel and Transport

The outstanding majority of respondents use a car to travel about locally. The majority also walk while a smaller number cycle. Very few use the bus.

The volume and speed of traffic are primary concerns for most respondents. Parking and parked cars are also of notable concern for many. Unsafe walking routes and the lack of pedestrian and cycle crossing points are also seen as risks, particularly given the number of respondents indicating that they walk.

Bus frequency and to a lesser extent access to bus routes also concern respondents, which may reflect the small number using these services.

Many respondents see traffic calming measures as the best way to reduce traffic problems and say improved bus services would help.

Other popular measures include vehicle weight restrictions, improved footpaths, and pavements.

More frequent weekday services would encourage most respondents to use public transport more. Followed by affordable journeys and to a lesser extent, weekend services. Further suggestions include more bus stops and routes, as well as better information and a reliable service.

If community transport was available at an affordable rate, then 1 in 3 respondents would use it.



New Developments

The large majority of respondents think that traffic congestion is the main concern around new developments, and a similarly large number are worried about the loss of green space and access to the countryside.

Other concerns for the majority are the pressure on the medical services, the impact on infrastructure including drainage, lack of parking, pressure on schools and traffic speed.





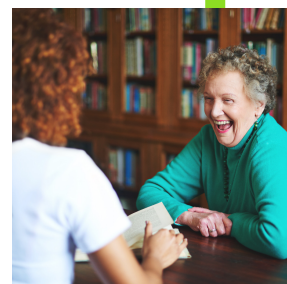
Communication

Most respondents like to find out about what is going on through local community Facebook groups. An improved Bridgwater Without Parish Council website would be welcomed, alongside noticeboards and to a lesser extent posters. Several respondents suggested a parish newsletter and leaflets through the door as a potential source of information.



Volunteering

63 respondents are interested in volunteering on community projects, and 96 people may be interested.



Respondents' demographics

Most of the respondents are under 50 years of age with the largest number aged between 30-39 years. Around 1 in 4 are in older age groups (60+ years).

Respondents live in all areas listed for the Parish. The majority live in Kings Down followed by Bridge Estate, Bower, Dunwear and Horsey, and other respondents are in East Bower, Silver Springs, Chedzoy Lane and Sydenham.



Next Steps

The review highlights the opportunities ahead for Bridgwater Without Parish Council to work with members of the community to improve facilities and communication. It also provides a starting point to consider developing a wider, inclusive programme of actions, events, and activities.

The next step will be for the Steering Group, with support from CCS, to develop an action and funding plan. Elements of the action plan will then be implemented when funding / resourcing allows.

Implementation of initiatives within the action plan will depend on funding, resources, engagement of the community and availability and assistance from volunteers.

This will be a “working” document with regular updates on progress and developments from designated working groups, volunteer committees and Bridgwater Without Parish Council.

This report is expected to be reviewed for change in perhaps a 4-5 yearly cycle, and for specific aspects to be developed when thought appropriate by Bridgwater Without Parish Council.



Thank You

With thanks to all who took part in the survey and the Steering Group, and to all those taking the action plan forward in the future.

Privacy Statement

Analysis will be conducted by the Community Council for Somerset (CCS). Data is captured for legitimate and contractual purposes. Information is collected and analysed in accordance with Community Council for Somerset's role as a Data Controller and Data Processor.

Bridgwater Without Parish Council's Community Review Steering Group will enter any paper copies using standard proprietary online survey software and data is shared in accordance with the Data Sharing Agreement between CCS and Bridgwater Without Parish Council. Once entered all paper copies will be destroyed.

Digital copies are retained for 12 months and deleted after this period. Any personal data that is captured is anonymised with the report and held securely for the purposes of analysis.

No data will be published which can identify an individual without their consent. If you have provided contact details for the prize draw, your data is shared with Bridgwater Without Parish Council Community Review Steering Group.

If you would like to find out more about how we use your data or want to see a copy of information about you that we hold, please contact, info@somersetccc.org.uk or call 01823 331222. Protecting your Personal Data is important, and we fully comply and adhere to the Principles of Data Protection set out in our Data Protection / Privacy Policy visit <https://ccslovesomerset.org/data-protection-policy/> and <https://ccslovesomerset.org/privacy/>

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