

PARISH PLAN RE-FRESH

SOUTH STOKE



2009 to 2011...

The South Stoke Village Plan Project was kicked off in May 2009 by the Parish Council (PC) in an open meeting to hear villagers views on whether it was thought that a Plan would be a good thing for the Parish, and if so, to seek volunteers willing to devote time and effort to act as a Steering Group for the project. The answer to the first question was 'Yes' and enough villagers offered their services, resulting in formation of the South Stoke Village Plan Steering Group.

The first action of the Group was to raise funds to cover administrative and publicity needs. Two grants were received - £1500 from the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council (ORCC) and £500 from the PC.

The next task was to distribute to each household a very simple preliminary questionnaire, asking what people liked and disliked about the village and what they would like to see in the future. The results of this questionnaire were compiled and provided the Steering Group with a long list of wants and ideas.

Throughout 2010 various events were held in the village to publicise the ideas, and to seek further input from parishioners on prioritisation of the ideas and how the whole process might be taken forward.

In early 2011 the Steering Group - with the help of ORCC and SODC - designed an in-depth questionnaire around the identified top-ten list of wants. This questionnaire was delivered to every household and business in the Parish, with a copy available for each person over 8 years old. Special efforts were made by the Steering Group to ensure that as many replies as possible were collected.

An 83% return rate was achieved – the best of any Village Plan in Oxfordshire at the time.

Gratefully, SODC analysed the results using their SNAP analysis programme. In May 2011 the Steering Group held a very successful **Party on the Rec** to announce the results.

In the Summer of 2011 the Steering Group - with financial assistance from the local estate agents – produced a 27 page glossy A4 booklet outlining the results of the questionnaire and a suggested route map as to the way forward. A copy of this was circulated to every household.

The main work of the Steering Group culminated in an open meeting in September 2011, when volunteers were sought to manage each of the top 10 projects identified in the finished Plan document.

The individual project teams then came together and with support from the Steering Group, commenced their work to try and take their individual projects forward.

The work of the Steering Group came to an end in early 2012, when it handed over to the PC the responsibility for assisting each of the project Groups to move forward. The PC also made a commitment to the Steering Group that it would carry out a formal review of the progress of the Plan in 2014/15.

Managing the Plan forward...

Each of the project groups was led by a Project leader and they mostly organised themselves into a team, with different people addressing and researching different aspects of the challenge ahead.

Initial seed-corn funding was available from the Steering Group who at the time of their disbandment still had some £900 ring-fenced in the PC's bank account.

Inevitably some of the project groups moved ahead and others – some with enormous hurdles in front of them – lost impetus and withered on the vine.

Those that progressed were assisted to some degree when called upon to do so by the PC, as well as by outside organisations such as ORCC, SODC, OCC and WREN, and in at least two cases where there were large financial challenges, with successful grants won.



Summarising our joint achievements on the 2011 projects...

Key Actions		
Assess the feasibility of setting up a Village Shop	✓	Improve the local bus service so that it better meets the needs of the village ✓
Undertake improvements to the recreation Ground	✓	Look at the viability of a new village hall to better serve the needs of the village ✗
Create a safe, traffic-free cycle route between South Stoke and Little Stoke	✗	Set up more community activities ✓
Assess the feasibility of generating power from renewable sources	✓	Arrange a 20mph speed limit on the village roads ✗
Explore the feasibility of a bridge to join Moulsoford and South Stoke.	✗	Improve the quality and speed of telecommunications links to the village ✗

Village Shop

The team worked tirelessly to prove the viability of the shop, raise £60,000, deliver and establish a shop with all the required legal framework. The shop opened in March 2013 and has gone on to return a small operating profit in its first year of operation.

Recreation Ground

Rather than just update the playground, the project decided that the whole Recreation Ground needed to be remodelled. Designs were commissioned, funding in excess of £45,000 raised and the Recreation Ground has been transformed with wild flowers, trees, seating, paths and a great playground.



Renewable Energy

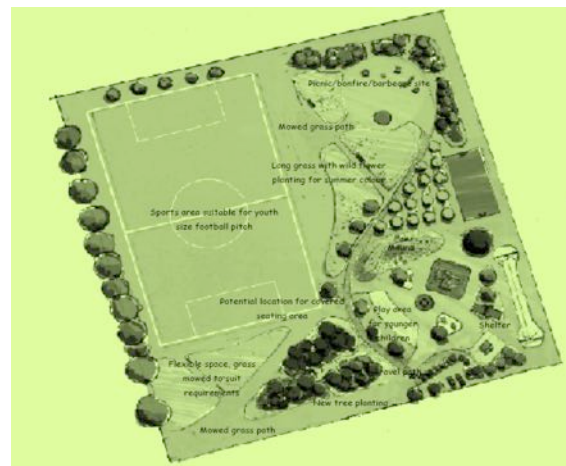
Detailed investigations into wind and solar power showed that they were not environmentally or financially viable in our location. Thermal imaging showed some villagers how better insulation could reduce heat loss.

Bridge to Moulsoford

Some feasibility work has been undertaken but further support is needed.

Improved Bus Service

After extensive negotiations with OCC, local parishes and bus companies, a new and vastly improved bus service was introduced. More people use the bus than ever before.



A New Village Hall

Little progress was made on this project although the Parish Council have set a timeline that we should plan for a replacement hall within 10 years.

Broadband Speed

BT are due to deliver Fibre to the Cabinet in 2015.

More Community Activities

A significant number of activities were held, many under the banner of 'Fun in the Village Hall'. They were all most enjoyable.

20mph Speed Limit

After many discussions it is clear that OCC will not allow a 20mph speed limit and the Police would not enforce it. More work is needed to improve road safety in the village..

The 2011 Village Plan was such a success that the Parish Council has decided to initiate a Refresh of the plan and to encourage the development of a revised list of 10 projects. This will form the beginning of a Community-Led Plan for South Stoke Parish. We can carry forward the 5 projects left open from 2011 and plan to add a further 5 projects. To this end, a public meeting was held in September 2013 and a number of projects were suggested and voted upon. The final 10 from that exercise are:

Key Actions	
More Sports Facilities, tennis & BMX	Improve wildlife & the environment
More small to medium sized housing	Safe cycle route to Little Stoke
Better road safety with traffic calming	Provide Community gardens
Better broadband	Permanent premises for Village Shop
New Village Hall	Bridge or Ferry to Moulsoford

More Sports Facilities

The project will need to look not only at providing new sports facilities but the better use of existing facilities including those privately owned.

Housing

See over the page, the section on Development in South Stoke.

Better Road Safety

A 20mph speed limit may be out but more innovative ideas like gateways to the village need to be considered.



Better Broadband

Although BT are due to deliver in 2015 our infrastructure means that much of the village will not benefit greatly. Many of our copper cables need to be replaced.

New Village Hall

What facilities do we want in a new village hall, where should it be, how do we fund it? This is potentially a big project that needs to run over the next 5 years or more.

Wildlife & the Environment

The countryside and resources in the Parish - the meadows, the park, the river and our footpaths - all offer ways to better enjoy the nature around us.

Safe Cycle Route

We need to step up our campaign by bringing in support from agencies responsible for the Ridgeway, the Cotswolds etc.

Community Gardens

Can we provide the facilities of an allotment in South Stoke? Where and how should it operate?

Village Shop Premises

The shop has proven its value to the community but we now need permanent premises. Where should they be and how do we raise the funds?

Bridge to Moulsoford

Is this really a possibility? It would bring significant benefits to the village and beyond with more flexibility for walks, better access to restaurants, schools and the pub.

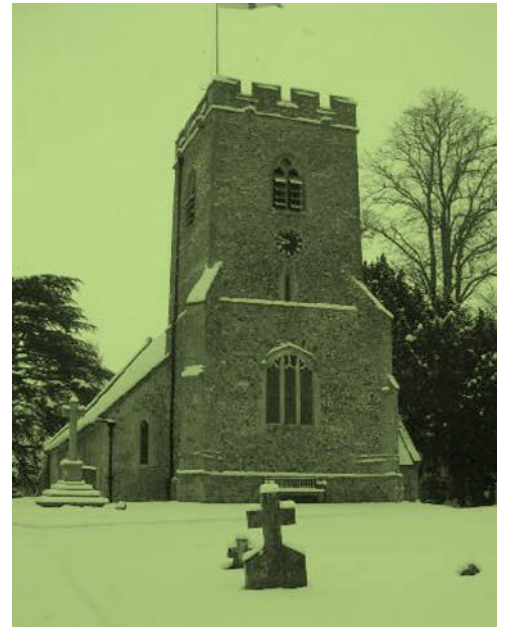


Development in South Stoke

The 2015 Parish Plan Re-Fresh differs from the original 2011 Village Plan in that we will also consider the housing development needs and desires of the community. Do we want more housing in the Parish? If so where and what kind of development?

The project needs to consult extensively to understand the feelings of the community and then set out clear ways to deliver that agreed vision. We could go the full extent like Woodcote and invest in developing a Neighbourhood Plan. If we don't want any development, maybe we need do nothing. Alternatively we can use planning policies in our Community-Led Plan and we can use Community Right to Build to help deliver our agreed vision.

In itself, this is a significant project although there are funds available and much support from ORCC, SODC and others. We can draw on the experiences of Woodcote and other local communities to guide us to the best route forward.



Moving Forward – Next Steps

The success of the 2011 Village Plan has been undoubtedly due to the enthusiasm and sheer hard work that the project teams have put into the projects. A number of individuals put their heart and soul into a number of successful projects. Going forward with new projects in 2015 will only be possible if we can find the right people to form the new project teams. Indeed, if a particular project does not attract a viable project team, it will be dropped and we will concentrate on those that have the best chance of success. Our list of projects may drop to 7 or even 5.

So the first step will be to call a public meeting to discuss the various projects and to call for volunteers to take part in those projects. The Parish Council will help in the process, and help each project team to form and to select a project leader. Representatives of each of the project teams will then form a steering committee to drive the whole process forward against guidelines developed by ORCC on behalf of SODC.

It's time to get started...

The first meeting will be
Thursday 5th February 2015 at 8pm
in the Village Hall

You can get more information
E-mail roy@rmcmillan.com
Telephone 01491 873202

If you want to get involved
contact Roy as above

