



Parish Plan 2011-2016 Launch document

November 2010



Parish Plan 2: A New Year – A New Plan

Work has now started on preparing a new Parish Plan for Coxhoe and Quarrington Hill. We are devoting a significant part to this edition of the Coxhoe Chronicle and Quarrington Hill Village Newsletter to this work to both inform you and encourage you to take part in helping influence the future of our villages.

Why a new plan?

There are a number of reasons why we need to undertake a new community planning exercise in what we are calling Parish Plan 2.

As the time period the plan was designed for is now coming to an end it is time to consider the old plan's replacement. In addition, a great deal of what we set out in the first Parish Plan has been achieved or is ongoing. As a result there is a need to decide where any further activity should focus. When the last plan was undertaken our residents and businesses identified key priorities in each of the two villages. After five years it is possible that such priorities have now changed and our communities may wish to see a different focus on how we shape the future of our villages.



We are in different economic circumstances now. There are significant cuts in public spending and this will have an impact on how the Parish Council, Coxhoe Community Partnership and Quarrington Hill Village Partnership work with our partners to secure the very best for our communities. Money is tight, there will be less funding to deliver large schemes and partners will have to work more closely to deliver improved public services, achieve value for money and efficient and effective use of resources. There will therefore be a need to focus service delivery to where it is needed most at a time when resources are scarce. A new Parish Plan is important as it will help establish local priority for the delivery of services in our villages.

Finally we have some significant land use planning challenges facing the villages. The County Council and its partners produced County Durham's Sustainable Community Strategy this year. The County Council is now working on the County Durham Plan which is the 'Local Development Framework' for the whole of the County. This is an important planning document which will have implications for future development in our villages. For example, there is much potential for new housing development in and around Coxhoe but arguably an inadequate social infrastructure such as health facilities and local school places to cope with any further significant population increases. On the other hand, while there may be less pressure to develop in Quarrington Hill, housing development may be required there to ensure the vitality and viability of the village. A new plan will be able to secure local views on how our villages may develop and help influence planning decisions made by the County Council in the future.

What is this document about?

This document is designed to let you know:

- How the villages produced the last plan;
- What has been achieved as a result;
- How we are thinking about going about producing a new plan;
- How you can become involved



We are looking for your informal feedback on how you feel you would like to be engaged and how we should be going about things. We are therefore asking some key questions for you to start thinking about along the way. If you have any views on any of the key questions please contact any of your local Parish Councillors or contact the Parish Clerk at clerk@coxhoeparishcouncil.gov.uk Further contact details are provided on Page 7.

Parish Plan 1 2004 – 2010 What was done last time

In March 2004 Coxhoe Parish Council learned about community planning and the benefits it can bring to our villages. It decided to do a Parish Plan. The aim of the Parish Plan was to make the local environment, including the two villages of Coxhoe and Quarrington Hill, more attractive and pleasant places to live and work; places where people would want to live now and in the future. Working with partners, a vision was agreed as 'Utopia at the end of the rainbow'.

In producing the plan the Parish Council helped set up and worked with the two Village Partnerships. Advice was taken from a number of sources including Durham Rural Community Council and Durham County Council. A Steering Group was formed with representation from elected members as well as residents from the local community. A small grant of £3,500 to do the plan was received from the Countryside Agency.

The first consideration in putting the plan together was to ensure that the community engagement process was inclusive, representing the views of residents of all ages from across the Parish. It was also identified that informing the community of what was happening was important. To this end there were regular reports in the community newsletter, an information leaflet was produced and circulated to every household, and even the local businesses were kept informed.

A variety of consultation methods were used including a household questionnaire, public meetings, a young people's questionnaire and a questionnaire for the primary school children. These were undertaken between June and September 2004. During October and November 2004 exhibitions of the results of these were provided in the villages. During this process 11 clear community priorities were identified as follows:

- Traffic and road safety;
- Crime and community safety;
- The environment;
- Housing;
- Public services;
- Employment;
- Education;
- Health and social care;
- Young people;
- Community information; and
- Sport and leisure



Residents were then asked if they would like to join priority focussed working groups with the aim of working to develop action plans. These Working Groups met between November 2004 and January 2005 to produce the action plans. Much information was gathered in the process and this was fed into the final plan which was endorsed by the Parish Council and published in February 2005. You can access a copy of the plan on the Parish Council website www.coxhoeparishcouncil.gov.uk

The Parish Plan included an all important Action Plan which identified key themes and priority actions. Over the past five years the Parish Council and others have been working tirelessly to achieve improvement and change through the Parish Plan and have had notable successes particularly in relation to environment and heritage, activities for young people, play and leisure provision as well as traffic calming measures and improved community safety. We have worked to achieve the priorities that you have set.

Key Question 1: Can you remember being involved in the process and would you like to be involved again?

Parish Plan 1 2004 – 2010 So what has the Parish Plan done for us?

Over the past five years Coxhoe Community Partnership, Quarrington Hill Village Partnership, the Parish Council, County Councillors and others have been working tirelessly to achieve improvement and change through the Parish Plan. In partnership we have had notable successes particularly in relation to activities for young people, play and leisure provision as well as traffic calming measures and improved community safety. We have worked to achieve the priorities that you have set. We know that there is still a lot to be done. Here is a summary of some of the key achievements, and areas for improvement, in relation with the priorities you set and helped to develop the actions to achieve improvement:

Traffic and road safety

- Traffic calming measures including speed humps, chicanes, improved crossing facilities at traffic lights and elsewhere and speed visors installed in both villages;
- Monitoring and reporting of illegal parking and provision of bollards in hot spots;
- Redirection of waste tip traffic to avoid Quarrington Hill; and
- Improved cycle and walkways and sustainable access within and between communities.



Crime and Community Safety

- Improved lighting around the churchyard and in Coxhoe Front Street;
- Secured more community policing by working closely with police to improve service delivery, issues targeted, with improvement in levels of reported crime.

The environment

- Significant environmental improvements in Front Street Coxhoe including streetscape works and planters;
- Improved floral displays including hanging basket provision during the summer;
- Improved entry signs to the villages;
- More public seating and dog bins provided;
- Green Wheelie bins provided in Quarrington Hill;
- Worked with County Council to promote improvements to key buildings;
- Memorial Garden and St Mary's Heritage Centre schemes completed;
- Consultations undertaken on future of open spaces in Coxhoe but action needs to be taken to design and implement improvements;
- Worked with Premier Waste to reduce nuisance from the waste tip;
- Significant improvement to access to the countryside through Limestone LinX project.



Housing

- Conveyed residents' preferences on significant housing development to County Council in considering planning applications;
- Made representations to County Council in respect of housing issues in the County Durham Plan, Housing Strategy and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment.

Public services

- Ongoing liaison taking place with adjoining parishes and bus operators to improve services.

Employment

- This is one area where the Parish Council and its partners have so far had no key achievements and where we need to do more work.

Education

- Additional classroom provision is being built and will be available from September 2011. More may need to be done to cope with potential population increases due to any significant new building schemes in Coxhoe.

Health and social care

- Lengthy discussions with Primary Care Trust and Coxhoe Medical Practice about new health facilities have been positive but have now been affected by public spending cuts. A decision by the PCT has been postponed till next year.

Young people

- Increased use of youth room and dedicated sessions provided at Coxhoe Leisure Centre for young people;
- Indoor activities have complemented the range of outdoor activities provided around the Leisure Centre such as Skidzone and Trax;
- New activities provided for young people and progress made towards a new play area in Quarrington Hill;
- Young people engaged in a range of environmental schemes;
- More work is needed to engage young people in the life of the community.



Community Information

- Improved quarterly newsletters through the Quarrington Hill Newsletter and the Coxhoe Chronicle;
- Established a website which has since been dramatically transformed into a strong community website with significant public information and real scope for improvement and increased use; and
- Notice boards in villages kept fresh and informative.

Sport, Leisure and Culture

- Improved information on what's on in the villages in newsletters and on the website;
- Jubilees walks leaflets made available in Post Offices and Leisure Centre;
- Website promotes use of Leisure Centre;
- Community events such as opening of Sensory Gardens, Memorial Garden and St Mary's Heritage Centre arranged;
- Christmas lights secured for Christmas 2010 with a future annual switch on;
- Work undertaken with Durham County Council on the Limestone LinX cycle tracks; and
- Coxhoe United Fun Days developed



Key Question 2: What do you think has been the most successful improvement in the village?

Key Question 3: What do you think has been the least successful improvement in the village?

How are we thinking about developing Parish Plan 2?

Should we re-invent the wheel?

We have received really positive feedback on our community planning. The Durham Rural Community Council (DRCC) uses our experience as a case study in encouraging other communities to undertake a Parish Plan. The Parish Council were recently guest speakers at a county wide event in Bowburn on community planning and the communities work has received recognition nationally. Part of the reason Coxhoe were finalists in the Rural Community of the Year competition this year (See page 3 of the December Coxhoe Chronicle) was a result of how our communities have been engaged in planning the future of our villages.



Generally we feel that the process we used back in 2004 is a good one. Rather than re-invent the wheel we feel that the process should largely be the same this time round. We are therefore thinking of using the same survey and engagement techniques as previously. As a starting point we have drafted a plan of action or 'project plan' to start thinking about how we will achieve Parish Plan 2. The project plan envisages that there will be a Parish Plan 2 Steering Group (PP2SG) which will comprise of community representatives (elected and non-elected) and key partners including the County Council and the DRCC. The latter will be helping us provide an independency to the process by facilitating meetings and workshops and analysing survey and questionnaire responses. The Steering Group would make a decision on the final project plan and actually timing of activity. It will take into account any views or feedback it receives from our communities from the articles in this edition of our newsletter and the key questions it poses.

We would wish to make improvements on what we did last time so we will learn from our experiences. For example we do want to make it possible for questionnaires to be submitted online as well as on paper this time. We also want to explore with the Primary Schools and the Youth Rooms how we can engage children and young people better. In addition to this we want to engage better with local businesses.

You can access our draft project plan from the Parish Council website but in summary, if a Steering Group is formed by the end of the year, it envisages that:

- Formal project launch by end of January 2011
- First Public meetings by end of January 2011
- Questionnaire Issued during February 2011
- Analysis and publication of results by end of March 2011
- Community workshops and Young People's engagement during April and May 2011
- Develop first Draft of Parish Plan 2 with action plan by end of July 2011
- Consult communities on Draft Plan during September and early October 2011
- Adopt plan by the end of November 2011

This is indicative of likely process and timescale. It is not cast in stone and will be subject to feedback, available resources and the decisions of the Steering Group. We feel that getting the process right, getting the content of the plan right and ensuring that the plan is implemented are far more important than how long it takes. It may be that the process of formal consultation, including issue of questionnaires starts later. Any changes from the above indicative timeline will be reported in the next newsletter. We will of course not wish to see any significant delays.

What's all this going to cost?

We want to keep costs down to a minimum. There is no grant aid available now and the Parish Council is planning a small budget which will not exceed the costs of the last community planning process. We are looking to mobilise

community resources and volunteers. The DRCC will provide a great deal of free help and support to us and we have the help of our Voluntary Assistant Parish Clerk, Ian Forster, who is a retired Town Planner. If you feel that you can help in any way please let us know.

Key Question 4: Do you have any suggestions as to how we should engage our community in developing the plan?

Key Question 5: Do you have any ideas as to how we should engage our young people in developing the plan?

Key Question 6: Do you have any ideas as to how we should engage our businesses in developing the plan?

Key Question 7: Are you able to help and if so how?

Key Question 8: What sort of questions should we be asking in our questionnaire survey?

What should be our focus as we approach the Plan?

Consideration needs to be given to the focus of Parish Plan 2. As indicated earlier there were 11 priorities in the previous Parish Plan. We need to be thinking about what should be our priorities for the next five years or so. Are they the same as previously or have our priorities changed over time? We also need to be thinking of what is not a priority. If we do not have non priorities then everything may become a priority and we will not get things done. At a time of scarce resources this would be uneconomic, inefficient and ineffective.

It is also necessary for us to consider whether the Parish Plan 2 ought to have some clear policy content particularly from a land use planning point of view. This might be crucial to the future planning of the area and the vitality and sustainability of our communities. If there were such policy content there would have to be some close working with the local planning authority should any adopted Parish Plan be given any weight in making planning decisions by the County Council. However, it could be possible that the Plan could effectively convey community aspiration for the future development of land if some common ground between such aspiration and county wide policy could be achieved.



Key Question 9: What would be your Parish Plan priorities for the next 5 years?

Key Question 10: What would be your non-priorities for the next 5 years?

Key Question 11: Should Parish Plan 2 focus on policies for the village, including land use planning?

What will be the next steps?

We are looking for some feedback from you so we can plan our next steps. If you would like to express a view on any of the key questions outlined in this series of articles please let us know.

You can:

- Contact Margaret or Ian Forster through the Coxhoe e-mail address at clerk@coxhoeparishcouncil.gov.uk;
- Write to the Parish Clerk and Voluntary Assistant Parish Clerk at 17 Beechfield Rise, Coxhoe, DH6 4SB; or
- Contact your local Parish Councillor.

One of the first things we will be doing is developing a Parish Plan Steering Group. It will consider your views and the next steps.



Check out our website at:

www.coxhoeparishcouncil.gov.uk

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