

CURRY RIVEL

PARISH PLAN

2015- 2025

Curry Rivel Parish Plan 2015-2025

Vision Statement:

Helping Curry Rivel to be a healthy and balanced community offering a safe and friendly environment for people of all ages to live, work and prosper.

Message from the Chair of the Parish Council

The Parish Council, under whose auspices this Plan has been developed, would like to thank all those who have been involved in bringing it to fruition. My thanks go to the volunteer Theme Leaders, all of whom have some expertise or particular interest in their subject, who researched and wrote the background material, and to all those members of the Parish who attended meetings and wrote comments on paper and on the village website, to provide the information from which we have formulated our future aims for our village community.

Through the Parish Plan the Parish Council now has a list of short and longer-term aspirations of the community and progress will be monitored regularly. The intention is for the plan to be reviewed after 5 years, however your ideas can always be raised and will be welcomed at the monthly Parish Council meeting held on the first Thursday of each month starting at 7.30 pm.











Madelaine King-Oakley

ARRANGEMENT OF THE THEMES

Each of the 10 themes in the Parish Plan has been put together in three sections:

1. **BACKGROUND** - information outlining the current position in the theme
2. **ARISING FROM CONSULTATION** - formulated from the comments received during our public meetings, on the Village website and notes dropped into the boxes in local shops.
3. **RECOMMENDATIONS** - this section is divided into short and longer term suggestions, based on section 2 above, which are for the consideration of the Parish Council who we hope will adopt many of the recommendations, either very soon or in the future as finances etc. allow. Suggestions, which are not feasibly within the remit of the Parish Council, have not been included - for example, the return of a surgery to Curry Rivel would be a decision for the Langport doctors.

In many places the 10 themes interlink and these linkages are denoted by symbols in the margin by the relevant text as follows:

 Farming, Agriculture & Horticulture	 Countryside & Wildlife
 Built Environment	 Education & Young People
 Business	 Physical Environment
 Communication	 Public Services & Public Safety
 Community	 Transport & Traffic

BACKGROUND AUTHORS' DETAILS:

Theme	Author	Contact details
Built Environment	Madelaine King-Oakley	01458 253976 madelaineko@gmail.com
Business Environment	Tony Greenaway	01458 252495 tgreenaway51@gmail.com
Communications	Robert Atkins	01458 253008 yeatesatkins@btinternet.com
Community	Greg Phillips	01458 251773 greg.phillips2@btinternet.com
Countryside & Wildlife	David German	01458 259688 Davidgerman555@gmail.com
Education & Young People	Ginny Smith	01458 250997 thesheiling@yahoo.co.uk
Farming, Agriculture & Horticulture	Henry Lang	01458 251380 henrylang@homefarm.gb.com
Physical Environment	Peter Goodenough	01458 250091 pwgoodenough@aol.com
Public Services & Safety	David Gibson	01458 251697 dwrgibson@googlemail.com
Transport & Traffic	Patricia Cilia	01458 251697 patricia_cilia@hotmail.co.uk

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in the Themes:

Abbreviation	Meaning
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CLYP	Community Learning Youth Project
CR	Curry Rivel
CRN	Curry Rivel News
FWAG	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
GP	General Practitioner
KS	Key Stage (An educational stage)
MUGA	Multi Use Games Area
NT	National Trust
PC	Parish Council
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SCC	Somerset County Council
SID	Speed Indicator Device
SLINKY	A Community Transport Scheme
SSDC	South Somerset District Council
SWT	Somerset Wildlife Trust
URC	United Reformed Church (The Chapel)

Index of Themes

Parish Plan – Summary of Recommendations	6
Built Environment	9
Business Environment	12
Communications.....	15
Community	18
Countryside & Wildlife.....	21
Education and Young People.....	24
Farming, Agriculture and Horticulture.....	28
Physical Environment.....	31
Public Services & Public Safety.....	35
Transport and Traffic	39

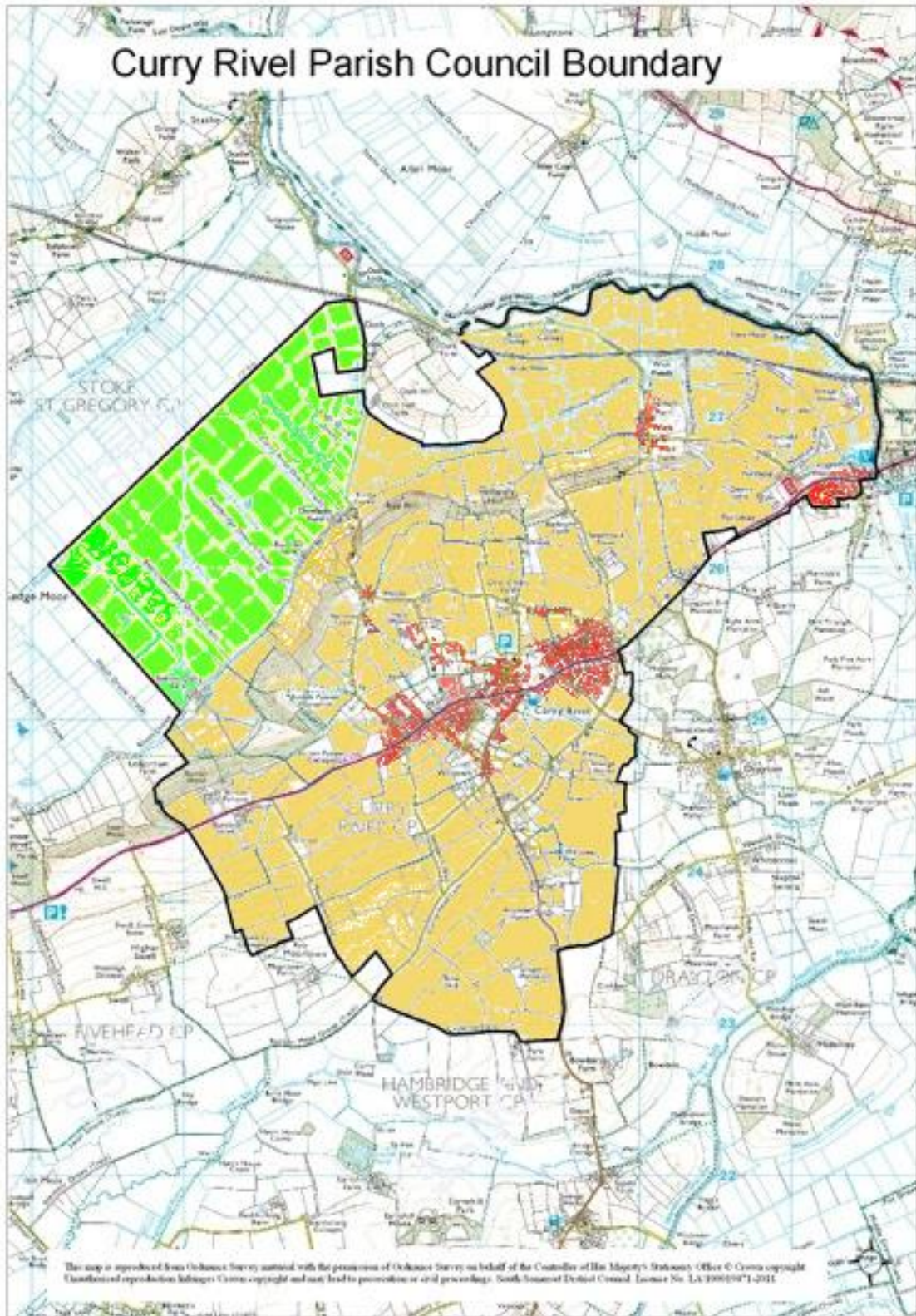
Annex. The Annex contains details of references. It has not been included in the hard copy of the Draft Parish Plan but it is available on the Curry Rivel Community website together with the Draft Plan.

The map on the following page

shows the Parish Council boundary with key areas highlighted as follows:

- Green** the part of the West Sedgemoor Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within the Parish which is managed by the RSPB and also used for Agriculture
- Red** the main housing area
- Yellow** other land used for farming/agriculture
























Map Showing Curry Rivel Parish Boundary














Parish Plan – Summary of Recommendations

Summary of Recommendations arising from this Parish plan with the themes they can be found in




Short Term

In themes:	Recommendation
	Publicise Planning applications for new houses as early as possible to give more time for comment.
 	The Parish Council should always advance the wishes of the community on planning applications
	Establish the capacity within the Parish to support the setting up of new businesses.
	Develop links with the Somerset Business Agency and the Langport Business Association
 	Survey community to establish support for community hub and examine viability of possible locations
 	Monitor the progress for both the broadband upgrade and the improvements to mobile phone coverage.
 	Purchase and place a large notice board in a central position.
	Consider the introduction of a "welcome pack" for newcomers to the community.
	Incentivise community groups to get more involved in the Annual Parish Meeting.
	Explore the setting up of a Community Transport scheme (SLINKY).
	With church leaders set up working party for the maintenance of the Parish Church buildings and churchyard and also the URC Chapel.
	Identify interest in entering Britain in Bloom in 2016; seek volunteers to form a committee if required.
	Work with volunteer committee to arrange biennial Open Gardens day.
 	Work with FWAG to minimise the effect of flooding.
 	Review maintenance and signage of footpaths and wildlife corridors on farmland.
 	Set up a volunteer action group to promote countryside, wildlife and biodiversity.
















Summary of Recommendations

In themes:	Recommendation
	Encourage greater responsibility among all dog owners for the proper disposal of dog mess.
	Appoint a Parish Council member to liaise with the school and young people.
	Seek greater community involvement to help develop/fund school projects.
	Investigate good safe cycle routes, particularly to Langport.
	Set up a group to promote awareness of existing footpaths and work with landowners to improve access.
	Work with young people to review existing and potential activities in the village and seek more adult help.
	Commission a series of articles for the CRN on the farming year from a local farmer.
	Work with FWAG to develop a blueprint for maximum water retention in gardens and on farmland.
	Investigate purchase of water butts at a low or zero cost by the PC.
	Liaise with Links and Friends of Langport Surgery to ensure easy access to services.
	Obtain a professional survey of safety, traffic calming and noise reduction measures on the A378.

Longer Term

In themes:	Recommendation
	Work with suppliers to take stronger broadband signal to outlying parts of the Parish.
	If need identified, seek a suitable site for a modern Community Hub and manage project to completion; consider the selling of existing Community Land if necessary.
	Review the future of Eastfield as a community orchard or meadow, versus its sale value.

Summary of Recommendations

	Approach the Combined Charities Committee regarding widening their remit.
In themes:	Recommendation
	Work with volunteers to raise awareness of local Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Nature Reserves.
	Consider a new Local Nature Reserve to help to slow down water flows on the ridge.
	Set up a volunteer committee to plan an annual community wildlife day and organise wildlife events.
	Work with builders to ensure that any new housing brings starter homes, flats and more play spaces.
	Evaluate the existing play equipment with a view to upgrading.
	Investigate the potential of a permanent youth club building.
	Survey existing and new sports, educational classes and other activities available to the community.
	Survey local employer future skill needs and expectations of young people 18+ years.
	Lobby authorities on additional bridleways in the parish;
	Investigate setting up a Community Land trust.
	Approach agencies such as Age UK to facilitate a weekly Day Centre.
	Introduce a telephone "Befriending Service".
	Investigate public interest in bringing natural gas to the village.
	Obtain finance, fulfil planning regulations to build a cycle route to Langport.

Built Environment

BACKGROUND

\$
♥
At the time of the 2011 census there were 2,148 residents and 975 dwellings in the Parish of Curry Rivel. The village has a great variety of housing, from blue lias cottages (using stone from local quarries), Victorian villas and farm houses to estate developments during the twentieth century. There are many listed buildings and protected trees but no conservation area. One notable listed building is the Bell Hotel, which has now been derelict for some time and is an eyesore in the centre of the village. Planning permission exists for it to be converted into residential accommodation but the current state of disrepair has made development uneconomical for the owners.

New development is controlled by the planning department at South Somerset District Council, and all planning decisions adhere to the policies in the Local Plan. The new South Somerset Local Plan 2006-2028 is now adopted.

In the South Somerset Local Plan 2006-2028 Curry Rivel which is designated as a Rural Settlement for planning purposes, being land outside Yeovil, the Market Towns and Rural Centres is considered as 'open countryside'. The proposed policy states: "Therefore development in Rural Settlements (not Market Towns or Rural Centres) will be strictly controlled and limited to that which:

- Provides employment opportunities appropriate to the scale of the settlement; and/or
- Creates or enhances community facilities and services to serve the settlement; and/or
- Meets identified housing need, particularly for affordable housing.

Development will be permitted where it is commensurate with the scale and character of the settlement, provides for one or more of the types of development above, and increases the sustainability of a settlement in general. Proposals should be consistent with relevant community led plans and should generally have the support of the local community following robust engagement and consultation. Proposals for housing development should only be permitted in Rural Settlements that have access to key services."

The Housing Survey 2013

A housing survey was carried out in the village and the results are available on the Parish Council tab on the Curry Rivel website or from the Parish Clerk. The results of this survey can influence the types of dwellings proposed in new developments.

The Planning Process

A planning application is normally completed within 8 weeks and follows a standard consultation process. Consultees include the neighbours of the site, your Parish Council and your District Councillor. Most decisions, governed by the policies in the Local Plan, are made by the South Somerset District Council planning department. However, if there are numerous objections, your District Councillor can request that the decision be taken by the

district councillors at the Area North committee. Curry Rivel is situated in Area North of South Somerset District Council and the committee meets on the fourth Wednesday of every month in a local village hall. If the applicant is unhappy about the decision they can appeal to the Planning Inspectorate and the decision can be overturned by an inspector.

ARISING FROM CONSULTATION

There were strong feelings against significant further development in the parish, with the following points being made:

- Whilst the new Government National Planning Policy Framework has rightly increased opportunities for both residential and industrial development, the unintended consequences of this has meant that the potential for unplanned opportunistic urban development into the surrounding countryside at and beyond the limit of sustainability is now being approved in a number of areas in the District largely owing to the late adoption of District Council Development Plans.
- Several respondents felt strongly that, unless there are compelling reasons otherwise, further development in Curry Rivel should be in accordance with the South Somerset District Council (SSDC) Local Plan 2006 - 2028 in that development should be strictly controlled and limited as described in the background. It was felt that Curry Rivel should not be turned into a dormitory village for Somerset towns, but that any future housing development should be matched by enhancing employment in the village so that as many people as possible could walk to work and thus reduce their carbon footprints.
- Affordable homes were thought to be the only type of development that should be allowed by one resident, but another point was that, although retirees are often seen as cost to the community, they have a very small carbon footprint as they often do not travel on a daily basis and they undertake a lot of voluntary work, so retirement homes have benefits to the community. Another resident thought that a maximum of four new houses should be built on any one site, each being different to retain the character of the village.
- A plea was made for all new housing to be built with natural stone, or suitable bricks, rather than “fake stone”.
- In areas where street lighting is in proximity to farm land, the use of bat-friendly lighting, possibly illuminated by LEDs, should be considered.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Short and Longer Term

- Planning applications for new houses should continue to be well publicised as early as possible so people have the chance to voice their opinions on them at Parish

Built Environment

Council meetings and to make comments about them on the SSDC Planning Department website.

- The Parish Council should bear in mind the points that arose from consultation when commenting on planning applications and should use any influence it has with those in the planning chain of command to ensure that the wishes of the current community are considered.
- The Parish Council should encourage the adoption of bat-friendly, power saving LED lights in this rural community.

Business Environment

BACKGROUND

The Parish of Curry Rivel has a small number of businesses that employ more than 10 people, for example, Sandpits, Living Pretty and Crisp Clean. Farming, once the main area of employment in the Parish, now employs only small numbers of workers.



- A number of businesses on the Westover Trading estate fall within the parish boundary although these businesses have more contact with the Langport business community.
- The majority of businesses employ less than 5 people, for example, Wiltown Garage.
- There are a large number of self-employed/one person businesses operating from home.
- Many people work part time and may have more than one income stream.
- Most economically active people travel to other places for their employment.

Job opportunities within Curry Rivel are limited as there is little or no encouragement for new or established businesses to set up within the Parish.

Over the years Curry Rivel has lost some long-standing businesses and there is a concern about further closures in particular the Post office and the Shell Garage. Another long-standing business currently has its premises up for rent.

Although there are socio-economic factors contributing to this, there is a sense that the village is slowly but surely stagnating especially as so many young people have to leave the village for work and housing. If new enterprise is not encouraged, Curry Rivel will become no more than a dormitory village and young people will continue to drift away due to little or no prospects for jobs and housing.



Encouraging and supporting new and existing businesses on a limited scale makes a lot of sense to reverse the trend towards a dormitory village. The benefits include:

- Local jobs for local people.
- Greater prosperity increases demand for other services, for example, shops, schools, pubs, housing which increases the number of jobs available.
- Fewer people needing to commute to larger towns for their employment reducing the number of vehicles on the road.
- Opportunities for people to start their own business.

All well and good but the community would need to be prepared to accept that:

- There might be more local traffic and possible environmental implications.
- An increase in population and therefore demand for housing.

Arising from the Consultation

A group comprising Trevor Bedford, Henry Lang, Kate Macey, Paul Frost and Tony Greenaway with input from Paul Thresher of the Somerset Business Agency considered the original discussion document and comments from the community.

The Group considered that it essential that the Parish Plan should be a blueprint for the Parish Council to set out a future agenda for business development and that Councillors would need to demonstrate a clear commitment to its success.

The group considered several ideas that would support business development and also the wider Parish Plan and links with other themes:



- The re-opening of Langport Railway Station to provide access to the major towns in Somerset as well as better access to London and international airports.
- The imminent closure of the Post Office provides an opportunity to look at other options for a village 'hub', for example, the Bell Hotel which currently is an eyesore having been empty for several years.
- Any proposal for land or buildings for businesses would need to be considered with the Built Environment proposals.
- Skills, training and education would need to be considered alongside business growth in order to ensure a supply of people with the skills required by businesses.
- Communications will play an important role in particular the provision of high speed broadband, due in the Parish during 2015, and a good mobile phone signal, both now considered essential when businesses decide where to locate their business.
- Provision of good roads, safe footpaths and cycle ways to enable people to travel to work safely.


RECOMMENDATIONS

To encourage and support new enterprises and the growth plans of existing businesses.

Short Term

- Develop links with the Somerset Business Agency and the Langport Business Association to raise awareness of the financial and other support available for new and existing businesses, for example, through local seminars, CRN, portal on the community website.
- Work closely with the Somerset Business Agency to identify and target businesses with growth potential and ambition.
- Offer a Business Review through the Somerset Business Agency.

Longer Term

- Establish the capacity within the Parish to support the setting up of new businesses.
- Examine the viability of the Bell Hotel (empty for 5 years) or other premises as possible sites for a Parish 'hub' and for business starter units/managed offices. 
- Identify barriers to growth and how these can be overcome.
- Review on a regular basis the needs of existing business.

Communications

BACKGROUND

This theme embraces all current means of communication, from reading a noticeboard through using a landline or mobile telephone to Internet access via broadband. In the parish we communicate via person-to-person conversations, Noticeboards, The Curry Rivel News, Meetings, Village events, e.g. Big Breakfast, Flower Show etc., mobile phones, landline phones, email etc.

Notice Boards

These provide a simple and effective way of providing basic and event information to the community. In Curry Rivel there is a notice board outside the Village Hall, central to the village, school and church. The Parish Council noticeboard is outside One-Stop.

Curry Rivel News

The Curry Rivel News was first published in September 1996 with the aim of being a free publication, reaching all parishioners, creating interest in the community, bringing people closer together, generating interest and support for the range of clubs and societies that exist and thereby increasing the enjoyment of living in Curry Rivel.

It is distributed to all homes, free of charge, monthly by a team of some 35 volunteers and is funded by including, for a small fee, advertisements for locally provided services.

Curry Rivel Community website (www.curryrivel.org.uk)

A comprehensive website containing lots of useful information under such headings as About Curry Rivel, Community Groups, Parish Council, Local Info Business Directory. With links to social media such as Facebook, it is expected that the website will be used increasingly as an important form of communication.

Curry Rivel Post Office

Post Office Services are about to change and it is likely that during 2015 the Services will be relocated to another outlet in the village resulting in the closure of the shop. For many, the Post Office has played a very important part of village life, providing additional services such as ATM facilities, provision of cards, stationery, newspapers and magazines etc. As a busy shop it serves as a good source for person-to-person communication.

Village Events



The village is active in running a number of events such as The Big Breakfast, film evenings and the Flower Show. Such events seem to be very popular and are well attended. As such they serve as a further link for social communication.

Broadband and the Internet

\$ For local businesses fast broadband is an essential tool to remain competitive. For many others in the community, broadband communication has become at least as important as the mobile phone. It provides access to email or Skype, social media, on-line shopping, games, entertainment and encyclopaedic information.

Curry Rivel is poorly served in respect of Broadband, with low data speeds and connections dropping out. Connecting Devon and Somerset is a government-funded project to bring high-speed communications to rural communities. As at February 2015, the project expects to connect Curry Rivel during 2015.

Mobile Phone Network Coverage

Mobile phone signal coverage can be patchy, depending on location. This may affect all service providers, or be limited to specific ones.

In July 2014 the BBC conducted a nationwide survey to establish the network coverage provided by Orange, T-Mobile, O₂, 3 and Vodafone. The survey was hardly conclusive as it relied on what turned out to be a quite small sample of people providing their results to BBC. It did show that Orange appeared to provide good coverage between Curry Rivel and Langport and Vodafone was particularly good along the length of the A378. Others were poor or at best patchy. As at December 2014, the Parish Council had received a planning application for alterations to the mobile phone mast array and it is hoped that this may result in better phone coverage. It is understood that the Government has negotiated a plan with the major service providers that should provide good coverage for 90% of the country.

ARISING FROM CONSULTATIONS

- The problem of poor broadband speeds was commented on by a number of contributors. Hopefully this issue will be resolved during 2015 when high-speed broadband is scheduled to reach the village.
- Patchy mobile phone coverage was also raised during consultation; this network also seems set for improvement although no date for achievement is known.
- The impending closure of the Post Office will mean a loss of a notice board and a new large one will be required elsewhere.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Short Term

- Progress for both the broadband upgrade and the improvements to mobile phone coverage should be monitored. Particularly useful would be parishioners reporting their download speeds after broadband connection to a central database, to ensure that their importance to the community remains high on the list of priorities of the providers and

our local representatives. If possible the Curry Rivel Newsgroup could host such a database.

- Purchase and placement of a large notice board in a central position.

Longer Term

- Efforts to find economical ways of bringing faster broadband speeds from the main junction box locations in the village to those outlying parts of the Parish.

Community

BACKGROUND

There are numerous examples of voluntary community groups and associations, which can be divided into 4 main categories:

- Youth organisations - Youth Drama Group, Youth Club, Cubs Rainbows, Brownies, Scouts, Guides, photography, chess, cheer leading groups at the school.
- Sport and fitness clubs - Indoor Bowls, Cricket Club, Walking Group, Pilates, Langport Runners.
- Social and special interest groups and events - Art Group, Entertainers Drama Group, Music Club, Book Club, Bridge Club, Royal British Legion, Get Together Club, Women's Institute, Speed Watch, Neighbourhood Watch, Summer Flower Show, Twinning Association, Sedgemoor Gardens Club, Parish Council, Singing Group, Historic Society, Out and About Group, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Movies in the Village Hall.
- Church groups and events - congregations of St. Andrews Parish Church and the URC Chapel, Messy Church, Bell Ringers, Parish Church fete, URC Craft Fair.

A recent example of community action is the rebuilding and refurbishment of The Old School Room. Once a thriving school room, it had fallen into disrepair and was just a shell. Here the local community got together to raise enough money to make this, once again, a community resource.

Another recent case in point is the village hall. Once a hub for community events and clubs, this too suffered from a lack of use in recent years. So much so it was feared that it would close. A group of community minded volunteers not only took on the challenge of making it the centre of the community but has raised enough money to build a new extension to the hall and refurbish the kitchen.

Besides the two halls mentioned above there is a hall attached to the United Reformed Church, which is also used for community activities. Both the URC Chapel and St. Andrews, the Parish Church, are community buildings greatly valued by their congregations. Others from the parish go elsewhere to worship; the churches they visit include the Baptist Church in Fivehead, St. Clear's in Somerton, the Roman Catholic Church in Somerton, the Parish Church at Drayton and the Methodist, Salvation Army and Christadelphian churches in Taunton.

St. Andrew's Parish Church is a large, grade one listed building with a sizeable churchyard to be maintained. The United Reformed Church Chapel is grade two listed and shares many of the maintenance issues of the Parish Church. In the future, with dwindling, aging congregations, it will depend on the village community whether they wish these assets to the village to remain in the well-kept state that they are at present. Without regular help from the




village, particularly the physically fit, the standard will shortly begin to deteriorate. An alternative may be some financial help to fund contractors. The two local congregations occasionally worship together, sing together and support each other's fund raising events. They also, along with other churches in the area, support the Community Learning Youth Project (CLYP) which enables a student worker to carry out important work with our teenagers who attend Huish School and other youth projects in Langport.

The Village Hall provides a venue for events such as the Big Breakfast, Friday Night Live, Village Quiz etc. as well as being used by the community for private social functions. St Andrew's Church and the United Reformed Church also offer places where community events are held.

Parish Council managed areas include a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA), play area and football pitches at Westfield, a community field at Eastfield, rich in wild flowers, the Green, the War Memorial, the central car park and the cemetery. In addition, there are two other play areas for small children within the parish. The Cricket Club is located at Lower Wiltown.

Curry Rivel has an allotment site known as Heale Lane Allotments, managed by a committee that rents the site from the Parish Council. As well as producing food, allotments promote the sharing of knowledge and skills and provide mental and physical wellbeing.





ARISING FROM CONSULTATION

- 
 - Eastfield should be allowed to establish as a wildlife haven and wildflower meadow for the community to enjoy.
- 

 - In the long term, the Parish should aim to build a modern community hub able to provide a number of key services as well as be a home for all community groups and sports teams. Ideally it would provide managed office services including office space with high speed broadband for new and existing small businesses. The Bell Hotel, a blight on the village, would be an ideal premises for this provided money and grants could be raised.
 - Another respondent thought a new village hub an excellent idea, but proposed that it was sited in a position where it could have much better parking and access than the current hall and also have changing facilities, sports pitches and play grounds on the same site. The building could also have a Parish Office where all the databases relating to the various activities of the Parish could be stored. It could also be the Combined Charities and Grant Officer's office. A strategic goal for the Parish Plan could be the finding of a suitable site, preferably donated, the planning of the site and obtaining planning permission and then the phased building, financed partly by grants and appeals but also by the selling of existing Community Land.
 - A proposal was put forward for enhancing community spirit in the Parish by increasing interactions between the many people and groups organising events and community actions in the Parish. The Annual Parish Meeting should become a much more meaningful event but could be improved by including refreshments and making more of a social event.




- Also raised was the issue of the Combined Charities, which is run by a small team in the village to give small grants to deserving individuals from an invested pot of money donated in the past by Curry Rivel philanthropists. It was suggested that a fund raising drive could be initiated to benefit this charity. Perhaps this charity could bring in additional grant funding and widen its remit.
- A suggestion that Curry Rivel needs a SLINKY (Community Transport Scheme) using a minibus that is adapted to take wheelchairs as existing taxi services cannot do this. Our village is one of the few places in Somerset without one.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Short Term

- Consider the introduction of a "welcome pack" for newcomers to the community, possibly including a current CRN, copy of the emergency plan, Parish Church and URC Chapel details and information on other activities, with a welcome message from the Parish Council. 

- Investigate what is the current position with the Bell Hotel and when the existing planning permission for it to be converted to residential use runs out. 
- Consider incentives to community groups to get more involved in the Annual Parish Meeting and allow discussion between them as suggested above. 
- Explore the way to go about setting up a SLINKY scheme.
- Survey the community to establish whether there is a strong feeling that a community hub is desirable and if so, whether they are prepared to help to raise the necessary funds.
- Consider the need for a working party of representatives of St. Andrews and the Parish Council to plan for the long-term maintenance of the church buildings and churchyard.

Longer Term


- If a community hub is considered desirable, the finding of a suitable site and a properly managed project to building completion. Consideration should be given to the selling of existing Community Land if necessary. 
- The future of Eastfield as a community orchard or meadow, versus its sale value to help finance the building project above, would have to be considered. 

- The Combined Charities Committee should be approached regarding widening their remit.

Countryside & Wildlife

BACKGROUND

Our village lies at the centre of approx. 6 sq. miles of beautiful and varied Somerset farmland, parkland, woodlands, wetlands and moors. The River Parrett is our northern and eastern boundary with the River Isle to the south. The RSPB manages a large area of West Sedgemoor within the northern part of the Parish which is also a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The RSPB also manages Swell Wood on our western boundary, which is said to be home to the largest Heronry in SW England. These sites are marked in green on the map included in the Annex.

There is a small area of woodland, grass and scrub near the top of Red Hill managed by the National Trust with great views over the moors. The ridge running east from the NT land is wooded and is in multiple private ownership but unused for any commercial purposes. Thus it forms a wildlife reservoir for many native species (finches flock there in large numbers and there are many raptors and large mammals). Thus there is a wildlife corridor from the RSPB reserve along the ridge in the Parish. There is a 4-acre local nature reserve off Holden's Way called Batty Piece, which is privately managed to conserve an example of rapidly disappearing grassland meadow.

 Some local farmers pride themselves in following good agricultural practice to encourage wildlife alongside arable farming. This is particularly true on the Southern arable farms around the Hambridge road (Lang Holdings) and the Burton Pynsent estate to the north west of the village. However, the issues of public access to farmland, wildlife conservation and farming require cooperation from both farmers and the public; however we all need to appreciate how easily commercial crops and animals can be damaged, resulting in reduced yields and financial implications for farmers. Where biodiversity is encouraged by farmers, disturbance destroys their efforts. Thus public access to productive farmland must remain strictly on designated footpaths and go hand in hand with appropriate behaviour; however, farmers have responsibility to ensure that footpaths are well signed and kept clear and safe. Most of the Parish can be explored by footpaths. A map of these is displayed on the Parish Council noticeboard outside One Stop.

Building on this unusually large reservoir of wildlife, gardeners also have a huge role to play in its future. Encouraging nature in our gardens particularly in times of food shortages for wildlife can be rewarding and inexpensive. Making a small change to the way we garden can add interest and make a huge difference to wildlife. See Annex for more information.

A number of local residents are volunteers with the Somerset Wildlife Trust (SWT), RSPB, Butterfly Conservation and the Hawk and Owl Trust helping to protect habitats and carry out wildlife surveys. The local primary School helps to introduce children to the natural world and has plans to develop this important work.

The Local Plan states that the sparsely built up edges of the village should not be further urbanised. It is important to protect the endangered species of shy birds that are thriving and breeding in these peaceful places.

ARISING FROM CONSULTATION

There were some 50 responses from the consultation. These are summarised under the following headings:

Flooding

Respondents showed awareness of the 2014 Somerset Levels and Moors Flood Action Plan and how it identifies the need for Catchment Sensitive Farming in a location such as ours in the catchment area for the River Parrett. The Physical Environment theme identifies how we may be able to work with FWAG to improve water retention on farmland on the ridge.



Biodiversity

There were suggestions that the Parish has a great opportunity to protect and improve biodiversity by appropriate management of Eastfield (already owned by the Parish) in line with SSDC and SCC policy. For example, the suggestion was made that we could create a Community Orchard in this meadow, which is already rich in wild Pyramidal and Bee Orchids and many other plants, insects and small mammals. This abuts Batty Piece and would augment that important reserve. An alternative or supplementary suggestion for a community orchard/Parish Nature reserve was to use some tenanted land on the ridge already in public ownership (SCC). This would help slow down water flows from the ridge, increase biodiversity and increase public involvement in conservation. It was suggested that this would be the start of a scheme to encourage wildlife corridors connecting the ridge area of the Parish to the southern area and this would require identification of some hedge boundaries and verges that could be managed for wildlife i.e. by cutting verges at an appropriate time for wildlife and not cutting hedges so low.



To raise awareness of its importance for the future of the Parish, it is thought critical that people are involved in investigating and recording the biodiversity currently within the parish. Records of sighting of all forms of wildlife should be collated via the record centre at the SWT. (See separate appendices for more information.)

Farming, Wildlife and Footpaths

There was a suggestion that there should be a map of all footpath routes on the Village Website or a paper copy with footpaths, wildlife notes, viewpoints, etc. should be produced and made available. Footpath maintenance and signage was raised and it was noted that several footpaths are inaccessible for various reasons.



It seems clear that there is a feeling that there is a need for contact between local farmers and the village community to establish a better understanding of sometimes conflicting interests. Some kind of contact group was suggested.



Several people raised the problem of dog mess on footpaths and in other public places in the village and various suggestions were made as to how to alleviate this problem.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Short Term

- We should aim to compete in Britain in Bloom in 2016 and encourage and support the organisers to arrange further Open Gardens days in future years.




- In conjunction with the Parish Council, a group should be set up with representatives from the three themes of Farming, Countryside and Wildlife and the Physical Environment to work with FWAG to minimise the effect of flooding on the community and our effect on flooding elsewhere.



- This group should also consider how biodiversity can be maintained and wildlife flourishes in our Parish. The proper maintenance and clear signage of footpaths on farmland is part of this and the setting up of wildlife corridors should also be examined. Good representation of farmers on the group is vital.
- A volunteer should be sought to make contact with other groups like The Sedgemoor Gardening Club, SWT, RHS, Britain in Bloom and others to produce an action plan to promote this subject in the Village.
- Dog owners must be urged to act responsibly and to pick up poo left by their dogs to avoid unpleasantness to others as well as the risk of infection to children. Having bagged it, disposal should be in their bins at home because more public bins would cost the Parish money.

Longer Term

- The development of a community orchard on part of Eastfield in order to help increase the size of the species rich meadow area should be fully discussed within the community.
 - The means to encourage greater awareness within the community of local Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Nature Reserves needs to be considered.
- 
- The possibility of creating a new Parish Local Nature Reserve to include tree planting to help to slow down water flows on the ridge should be investigated.
 - Involving the community in an annual wildlife day, by keeping a record of wildlife seen in our gardens or on a walk along a familiar footpath should be considered as a way of increasing interest in our wildlife, i.e. a 'Wildlife Audit'.
 - A village group should be set up to follow up on progress in achieving these aims and organise wildlife related events locally.

Education and Young People

BACKGROUND

There is evidence that a school was formed in Curry Rivel in the second half of the 18th Century linked to the National Sunday Schools' Movement. In 1819 the Rev. Henry Alford offered a room at The Limes, for a small fee, and local parishioners financially supported it, with 95 pupils on the roll. By 1828 the Church provided land for the increasing number of children and a building was provided: this is what we now know as the Old School Room.

By 1870 it was decided to build a new school as numbers were over 100, and in 1874 a Church School, able to accommodate 150 children, was built on the site of the present school. Curry Rivel Parochial School became a Church School and is now Curry Rivel Church of England VC Primary School.

The numbers on roll have varied over the years from 100 to over 200, with evacuees from London increasing the numbers during the 1939-45 war. Today, school admits the children from 4 to 11 years of age and presently has 131 pupils on roll in 6 classes. In recent years additional classrooms, offices, a hall, computer suite and a large kitchen have been added. Classes are relatively small, allowing for expansion of the village population.

'Wrap Around Care' will be in place for January 2015. Plans to purchase extra land to develop a wild life area are moving ahead. A complete re-design of the outdoor areas starts this year in stages, due to financial constraints and will create a natural, versatile and challenging outdoor environment to encourage outdoor learning and play, problem solving and teamwork.

Pre-school children are already very well cared for before and after school as well as during the school holidays. In January the same high quality care will be available to all pupils before and after school and during all school holidays.

Education pre-school has changed considerably over the years. Historically for only a few sessions per week, the playgroup is now joined with the Foundation Stage of the school, renamed Little Pips and based within the school, creating a seamless move from early years at playgroup to a continuous education from 2-7 years, i.e. Foundation and Key Stage (KS)1, with the classes all using the same learning style.








At the end of KS2 (aged 11) children move to Huish Episcopi Academy for 5 years to complete their secondary education. A number of young people from the village attend Independent Schools in local towns or further afield to board. Further Education can continue at either Huish Sixth, local colleges in Taunton, Bridgwater, Cannington, Yeovil and Street, plus sixth form education is also available at the local Independent Schools. Transport to many of these is available.

At 18 some leave the area to attend a wide variety of universities throughout the country whilst others seek apprenticeships, some of which are in Curry Rivel or local villages.

During their leisure time our young people take part in a wide range of activities, offered either at the Primary School, Huish Academy or at clubs in the village and further afield. There are a wide variety of activities on offer, including well attended uniformed groups (Rainbows, Brownies and Guides in Curry Rivel with Scouts and Cubs in Langport), the performing arts, language groups, bell ringing, photography, Messy Church, chess, cheer leading etc. The Youth Club, established in 2014, is well attended and offers a variety of activities. There is a most dedicated youth leader with very few volunteers to help him put into practice the plans that he has for the future development of the club.

The annual free Kids Fun Day held in September is very popular.

ARISING FROM CONSULTATION

-  
 - Most of the young people consulted, particularly the younger age group, are very happy about living in Curry Rivel. They like the open spaces, the peacefulness, friendliness and feel very safe in the village, except for the main road where perceived excessive speed is an issue. They also said that Curry Rivel is the right size but they would like better and safer cycle routes, not only in the village, but also linking with Langport and surrounding villages.
 - They would also like more paths for walking around the village and through fields.
 - The younger children said that they used the parks and playgrounds a lot and would like more equipment in them.
- 
 - The future loss of the Post Office and shop was a significant disappointment for all age groups.
- 
 - There are requests from all age groups for an archery range, a swimming pool, tennis courts, a picnic area and a community orchard.
- 
 - Some activities are only on offer at the Primary school as after school clubs and it was felt that if clubs for teens were set up they would be well patronised.
- 
 - Whilst older age groups take part in wide ranging sporting activities they also want additional facilities. A dedicated youth club building was high priority so that they could have a café, and a place to meet and chat. Also mentioned was a medical centre, a pub, the development of a meadow, and a climbing wall.
- 
 - Those over 16 had concerns about transport costs, which are high for them. They would like to see more casual employment, whilst they are at school/college either in the village or nearby. Others would like permanent employment in the area.

- They would like to attend adult/youth education classes (as many adults also mentioned) in the village. They suggested the use of the school and the halls in the village for classes such as dancing, digital photography and computer workshops.
- All age groups show concern about the price of houses. A significant number would like to live in the village but are priced out due to the shortage of affordable houses and flats.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Short Term

- The Parish Council to appoint a member to liaise with the school and report back as new developments occur.
- Seek possible community involvement as volunteers to help develop/fund school projects.
- Investigate the possible development of good safe cycle routes, particularly to Langport, involving the young people in the process.
- As discussed in other themes, find ways to familiarise the community, especially young people, with our existing footpaths and work with landowners to improve on what we have.
- Involve a group of young people to look at activities in the village and to investigate the potential take up of new ones amongst their peers, covering all age groups.
- Follow up the need for more adult volunteers at the Youth Club to ensure its future.



Longer Term

- Work with builders to ensure that new housing brings more play spaces.
- Involve the youngsters in evaluating the existing equipment with a view to upgrading where appropriate.
- Investigate the potential development of a permanent youth club building and how to raise funds for such a development.
- Canvas the village regarding the siting and potential take up of archery as a village activity. Investigate where it is available locally for young people access. Also, look at tennis courts, a picnic area, a community orchard, a meadow and a climbing wall, plus existing local availability where relevant.



- Canvas the local community on more specific adult/youth educational classes and establish their potential commitment if these were available in the village. Also contact Huish Episcopi Academy regarding their adult education classes and future development plans.



- Seek information on village plans for future developments, such as starter homes and flats. Survey the 18+ years to ascertain in detail, their working commitments and future plans.
- Determine exactly the type of local employment the school leavers want and approach local employers. Plan ahead for future school leavers.

Farming, Agriculture and Horticulture

BACKGROUND

- Parish size 5.7 mi² or approx. 3600 acres.
- 6% Woodland, approx. 185 acres.
- 10% Built Environment (including gardens, roads etc.) approx. 200 acres.
- 84% Farmed Environment, approx. 3200 acres (22% moorland/West Sedgemoor).
- Soil Type: Majority is grade 3 (1= good 5 = poor) clay loam over limestone (blue lias), some of which is prone to drought or waterlogging. West Sedgemoor is peat.

Ownership

The farmed landscape is generally privately owned apart from the RSPB reserve that is mostly situated on West Sedgemoor. Ownership ranges from 1 small paddock to many hundreds of acres.

Occupation

As well as owner-occupiers there are different types of tenancy arrangements ranging from:

- Informal agreements.
- Annual grass keep agreements - typical of the moors and levels.
- Traditional farm tenancies that can be passed down through generations.
- Farm Business Tenancy agreements that have been popular in more recent years.

Land use

▪ ***Pasture***

Many of the smaller fields and much of Wick and West Sedgemoor (a Site of Special Scientific Interest) are in pasture. This includes the numerous smallholdings and horse paddocks seen in and around the village. There is also a substantial acreage of parkland, for example some of the land within the Burton Pynsent estate.

This pastureland is mainly used for the rearing of beef cattle but other uses range from a flock of 500 milking Friesland ewes at Burton Dairy Farm to smaller grazing flocks and horse paddocks. Unfortunately at present, there are no dairy herds left in the village.

There are some notable ancient and newly created wild flower hay meadows of considerable environmental importance because of their great biodiversity.

▪ ***Arable***

The majority of the parish agricultural land is in arable production, with winter wheat being the primary crop and winter oilseed rape, spring field beans and linseed being the principle break crops. Winter and spring barley is sometimes planted. There is also the occasional forage crop grown within the parish, principally forage maize and infrequently stubble turnips for animal feed.

There is a small acreage to the north and east of the village, dedicated to wheat reed production for use in the thatching industry.

Three farms have substantial grain storage and drying facilities and most of the wheat produced in Curry Rivel supplies the feed mill at Westover, Langport and is then used for laying hen feed.

- ***Cider orchards***

The cider orchard area is a shadow of its former self with many of the traditional orchards being built on or falling into disrepair. Fortunately there has been some new planting of traditional cider apple varieties in recent years, resulting in farmhouse cider still being made in the village.

- ***Horticulture***

An area off Water Street is home to Northwing Nurseries, a wholesale specialist in hanging basket and patio plants supplying garden centres nation-wide.

Employment

As mentioned previously, the nature of the land occupation means that many farmers in Curry Rivel farm land outside the parish, conversely there are farmers in surrounding villages who farm land in the village. Consequently, numbers employed in agriculture are difficult to quantify, added to this many are part-time or seasonal. According to the 2011 census profile of the ward of Curry Rivel there are 40 people employed in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (3.4% of total population). The number actually working in agriculture in the village is substantially less, but there are many people employed in the supporting industries i.e. veterinary services, engineering, mechanics, etc.

Land Management and Environment

A large proportion of agricultural land in the parish is under environmental stewardship schemes that are in place to preserve and enhance our wild plants and animals in the farmed environment. Examples of how farmers are delivering effective environmental management are as follows; maintaining hedgerows, creating 6 metre wide wild flower margins around arable fields, restoring and/or reinstating wild flower meadows and skylark plots to name but a few.

Summary

In the not so distant past agriculture would have played a much greater role in village life, providing the majority of employment. This brief overview of farming in Curry Rivel in 2014, however, demonstrates that agriculture and food production still utilises 80% of the parish land showing the continued importance of farming to the community today.

As land ownership is private, future development and management of the farmed environment is specific to each and every person who owns and works on the land, but a financially viable and vibrant agriculture sector relies upon good farming practise with due regard and respect for the natural environment.

ARISING FROM CONSULTATION

- More interaction between farmers and the rest of the community is thought to be





desirable. Footpaths are the main point of contact and it was observed that neither party accepts them wholeheartedly. Farmers see no benefit to themselves in maintaining footpaths and non-farmers often walk off the designated paths and let their dogs roam unheeded on farmland.

- A suggestion was made regarding the setting up a Footpath Group with representatives of both groups to explore the idea of a covenant with landowners to help with footpath maintenance and to negotiate areas where dogs may roam. Some footpaths in the parish can no longer be identified and perhaps they should be officially abandoned so the group could concentrate on those paths with a realistic chance of being used regularly.
- A request for more bridle paths was raised, in particular the designation of South Drove as a bridle path, as it would then allow a safe, 10 mile soft/off road loop to Fivehead for horse riders.
- It was thought that the Curry Rivel News has a part to play, through a series of regular articles, in educating the community in the progress of the farming year and any current problems.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Short Term

- Approach the editor of the CRN regarding commissioning a series of articles on the farming year from a local farmer. 
- Under the auspices of the Parish Council, set up a Footpath Group with the remit described above, but with full involvement of the farmers over whose land the paths run. 

Longer Term

- Horse riders may wish to lobby the appropriate authorities regarding additional bridleways in the parish; however, the statutory period to identify long established bridleways and footpaths has expired so any new rights of way would have to be permissive.

Physical Environment

BACKGROUND

The Parish of Curry Rivel sits, rather like a saddle, on a ridge of rock known as Blue Lias. Most building lies just below the top of the ridge, with the land sloping away to West Sedgemoor on the north side of the village and also towards the river valleys of the Parrett, which forms the eastern boundary, and the Isle to the south. In 2014 the ridge of Blue Lias is particularly significant because of the new 20-year plan for water management in the river valleys and on the Sedgemoors. To understand and appreciate the importance of this water management plan one needs first to be aware of the role of Blue Lias.

Geology of the Blue Lias Ridge

Blue Lias is an impermeable mudstone that was laid down in the early Jurassic period between 200 and 195 million years ago. At that time the land mass that now makes up southern Britain was in an area further south, roughly parallel to where the northern Mediterranean is now. The area was characterised by two large basins named the Wessex and Bristol Channel basins; these became the Bristol Channel and Wessex regions of Britain. The mud that was compressed to become Blue Lias was lying in the shallow water filled basins full of bivalve molluscs. As these died they fell into the mud and as more mud was deposited they became preserved, leading to the massive number of fossils found in Blue Lias. The lias in the south of England was buried by a further 1.6 kilometres of other material, not as much as in other areas of the country. The deeper the burial the more compacted and thus harder the stone. Thus Curry Rivel Lias is relatively soft and not really suitable for building, as it erodes easily, hence the many tie bars seen on old Blue Lias cottages holding the crumbling stone together; truly biodegradable houses! Since the stone was laid down in the Jurassic period a northern movement of the tectonic plate that Europe sits on has thrust the Blue Lias upwards by a small amount. This was followed by erosion, so that the ridge in Curry Rivel is now a maximum of 65 metres above sea level and drops precipitately from the ridge, the tops of Red Hill, Hellards Hill and Wick Hill, down to sea level.

Importance of Blue Lias for Water Management

Although itself impermeable, Blue Lias does not form a continuous impermeable sheet from 65 meters to some depth below sea level. It is interspersed with thin bands of limestone and eroded material (clays) that hold some water. However these do not really form aquifers in the true sense and are quite difficult to replenish after depletion, by pumping from wells for instance. Thus most water falling on the ridge will not be absorbed. It is therefore probably quite lucky that the Parish of Curry Rivel lies in a rain shadow area. As the prevailing westerly winds have to cross either the Exmoor/Quantock range or the Blackdowns they tend to deposit most rain there. Long term averages (easily searched on the Met. Office site) show that the land area inland from Bridgewater Bay has less precipitation than most of the surrounding areas. Clearly in times of extreme rain, as in summer 2012 or winter 2013/14, the minor changes caused by the rain shadow effect are overwhelmed! Thus the Levels and Moors, such as West Sedgemoor, were probably originally utilised only in the summer (Somerton = Summer Town) because the summers are very dry when compared

with much of western England and are in fact on a par with Essex. They were regularly flooded during winters until artificial drainage channels were cut. Obviously the winters of 2012-2014 have shown these are no longer sufficient to prevent serious flooding and that other measures, such as holding back water in the catchment areas above the moors, must be brought into play.

20-Year Plan to Manage Water in the Tone and Parrett Catchment Areas

How can water be retained? The obvious way is to use vegetation. The Chair of the Committee on Climate Change Adaption, Lord Krebs, wrote in 2014 to the then Environment Minister, Owen Patterson, concerning the long term plan for the Somerset Levels and Moors. He said “There is some evidence to suggest that targeted tree planting in upland areas can be effective in helping to reduce, or delay, surface runoff volumes and so help mitigate downstream flood risk. For example, recent field trials in Wales (Pontbren) reported a 78% decrease in surface run-off from tree-planted plots compared to grazed plots (reference below). Detailed mapping of current levels of woodland cover in the upper catchment area would be useful for identifying where further targeted tree planting is likely to help mitigate flood risk in the levels. Consideration should also be given in the long-term plan to putting in place large scale field-scale experiments of tree planting in targeted parts of the upper catchment to monitor the effect this has on downstream flood risk ”(reference to full letter below).

ARISING FROM CONSULTATION

A public meeting was held on 23rd July 2014 with Ben Thorne, Senior Adviser of the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, (FWAG) speaking on “Flooding, Development & Land Management in our area”.

A brief overview was given of the current work to reduce flooding on the Levels. Since the floods earlier in 2014 there have been 3 phases of work - the immediate help for those affected, the recovery phase of reseeded grassland, repairing and obtaining money and thirdly making the Levels and their communities more resilient to flooding. The right amount of flooding, at the right time, is necessary and assumed in the 20-Year Plan.

£33.5 million had been made available from Government to support the delivery of the plan. Progress in dredging the rivers and the repair work being done to spillways, river banks, pumping stations etc., was described, before a detailed description of the land management aspect, which is what FWAG is responsible for.

Curry Rivel is in the mid - catchment area, at the interface between hill and moorland. The upper and mid catchment areas cannot hold the volume of water seen in the winter of 2013; this would have required a space equivalent to 26,000 Olympic swimming pools. The aim for these areas is to slow down the run-off of water. Planting trees is effective, but it is not reasonable to expect farmers to plant whole fields with trees as the value of land in this area is far greater when used for food production. Flow path modelling can show where the greatest run-off occurs and less drastic actions in these places, such as managing the soil differently, planting a belt of trees, making a bund or even changing the position of a gate,

can have considerable effects. The ideal is to hold back water for 4-5 days and then release it slowly.



The type of farming on the Levels also affects the period of flooding. Part of the RSPB reserve is in CR Parish, and the land is managed for birds. Elsewhere on the Levels, farmers may need to change from rearing milking cows, which require rich grass, to beef cattle. FWAG is working with farmers and can help with grants if they will change to more flood-friendly farming. Some communities are adopting Community Land trusts, buying land and then leasing it back to farmers. With new capital and a realistic rent, the risk for farmers is reduced and they can farm more sensitively.

In the wide ranging discussion following Ben's talk there was much interest in how Government might maintain the drainage systems and how individuals can store some water in the winter using water butts and other methods. The issue of building development was discussed and the extra run off this causes. However it was apparent that, generally, we tend to overestimate the run off caused by the built environment and underestimate how much compacted farmland contributes to run off. It was clear that both need to be addressed and that is why the Land Management plan as run by FWAG is so important to parishes like Curry Rivel, where 80% of the land is farmed. Trees slow overland flow, may fall into watercourses and slow flow down by creating debris dams and in the flood plain itself slow water movement. Therefore it would be advantageous if a community such as Curry Rivel could encourage local farmers and individuals to plant trees in the right place. The idea of the community buying land for this purpose was discussed. There are fields owned by the local authority (currently tenanted to local farmers) who are keen to sell them, in the parish, and some people would like to see their purchase by the community to become Community Land Trusts, with measures advised by FWAG to delay run-off applied to them. Other land might become available in the future.

In these discussions and in other consultations, either electronically or in person at one to one events, there was only one individual who broadly did not agree with the strategic goal of developing a working relationship between the Parish and FWAG. The dissenting view was that all of this was work that was being done or should be done at County level.



By increasing the number of small areas of woodland there would be an increased amount of wildlife and these areas would help to form wildlife corridors linking back to the main wooded area on the ridge; thus slowing run off of water could benefit insects, birds, reptiles and mammals. If a network of corridors could be planned across the Parish in conjunction with FWAG then both slowing down of water and increasing habitats for wildlife could be achieved.

Clearly the main interaction with FWAG will be by the Farming Community and it is important the Parish as a whole supports and encourages the optimal Land Management system being developed. If some land on the ridge above West Sedgemoor could be taken into Parish ownership as a Community Land Trust, then either a community orchard could be planted or the tenant of the land could be encouraged to farm using a water conservation strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Short Term

- The Parish should develop a blueprint on how homeowners could store water during the winter using water butts, ponds etc. for use in the dry summers. Advice on planting gardens to hold water during wet spells should be sought and disseminated. Both of these could form interesting series in the CRN; possibly the Parish Council could obtain water butts at a low or zero cost for Parishioners.
- The Parish should work with FWAG and the Farming Community to develop an understanding of where best to conserve water by use of their advocated practices.



Longer Term

- If possible a Community Land Trust should be set up, targeted at an area where maximum effect could be achieved by either permanent planting of fruit or other trees or the use of best farming practice by a tenant farmer. It would seem to a layperson that the ridge overlooking West Sedgemoor would be ideal for this purpose but expert evaluation and advice by FWAG would be needed.



Public Services & Public Safety

BACKGROUND

Health Services, Emergency Services and Social Services

General Practitioner Services are provided by the Langport Surgery. Until the 1960s there was a singlehanded GP in Curry Rivel. At the time that the practice in Langport set up seven Branch Surgeries in surrounding villages, including Curry Rivel, our GP joined this group. All seven Branch Surgeries were then closed in 1990 and in conjunction with South Somerset District Council a Community/Surgery bus service was introduced to take patients to the Langport Surgery.

Langport Surgery is run by a Partnership of 5 Doctors covering an area of 10 miles radius from Langport and has nearly 12,000 patients registered. It is a training practice for 2 Registrars and a Research Practice linked with Exeter University. Other services provided from the Surgery are Physiotherapy, Podiatry, a nail cutting service, Counselling, District Nursing and Midwives.

The Surgery has a Dispensary, dispensing medication to anyone living more than 1 mile from Langport. Repeat prescriptions can be delivered to the village Post Office and there is also a service provided by the Friends of Langport Surgery to deliver repeat medication to patients who are housebound. Repeat prescriptions may be ordered on-line. A service for booking appointments on-line has been introduced to ease access by phone.

- **Out of Hours Service**

Between the hours of 18:30 and 08:00, services are currently provided by the South West Ambulance Trust; this includes call centre providing advice, and treatment centres at Musgrove Park Hospital, Yeovil District Hospital and Bridgwater Hospital.

- **Emergency Services**

Ambulance Service is provided by South West Ambulance Trust with bases in Taunton, Ilminster, Yeovil and Bridgwater. There are also First Responder volunteers within the community who are available to attend emergencies such as chest pain, breathing difficulties etc., ahead of an ambulance arriving. The nearest Defibrillator is based at Langport Surgery.

- **Other Medical Services**

Hospital services are at Musgrove Park Hospital in Taunton and Yeovil District Hospital.

There are dental surgeries in Langport and Somerton that accept both private and NHS patients.

There are opticians in Langport and Somerton.

- **Social Services**

Provided by Somerset County Council.

Other Public Services

- **Fire Service**

This is provided by Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service with stations in Taunton, Ilminster, Crewkerne, Martock, Somerton, Yeovil, Street and Bridgwater.

- **Police Service**

At the moment the nearest Police Station is in Somerton. Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) have formed close links with the village.

Utilities

- **Gas**

The village has no mains gas supply. It might be possible to be linked to the supply network if there is sufficient demand, but there is likely to be a considerable cost involved.

- **Refuse and Recyclables Collections**

There is a weekly collection of recyclable food waste and newspapers, glass bottles, jars, cardboard, metal cans, aluminium foil, clothes, shoes and car batteries.

Every other week non-recyclable household waste is collected, if placed in a black-wheeled bin. On alternate weeks when there is no household waste collection, there is a collection of recyclable garden waste on payment of an annual rental charge for a green-wheeled bin. More than one can be rented. The nearest recycling site is at Somerton where a variety of refuse can be taken directly at no charge; opening hours need to be checked. Bulky waste can be collected by arrangement and facilities can be provided for Assisted Collections. Full details are included in their website (refer to Annex).

- **Water & Sewerage**

Wessex Water supplies piped water. They are also responsible for sewerage services. Details are available on their website (refer to Annex).

Emergency Plan

During 2012, an Emergency Plan was published and distributed to all households in the Parish. An Emergency Committee was established; it exists to coordinate, support and assist First Responders, the Emergency Services and District and County Councils in the event of an emergency. The purpose of the committee is to:

- Identify and assess likely risks to the community,
- Give structure and consistency to local protection activity,
- Plan responses to emergencies.
- Assist in the setting up of emergency and respite centres in the Parish if appropriate.

The following possible eventualities were identified for planning purposes:

- Flooding.
- Severe cold weather events.
- Electricity failure.
- Burst water mains.
- Major incidents such as road, rail or aircraft accidents, major fires, gas leaks, explosions or acts of violence.

- Serious medical infection events.
- Radiation leaks, e.g. from Hinkley Point nuclear facility.

The Emergency Plan can be found on the Curry Rivel Community website at www.curryrivel.org.uk

Neighbourhood Watch

Neighbourhood Watch is a nation-wide, community-based, voluntary organisation, which aims to deter crime and improve security in a neighbourhood. The Curry Rivel Neighbourhood Watch was formed several years ago and a group of volunteers now covers large parts, though not all, of the village. The Parish Council continues to support the watch and has funded its modest administrative expenses.


Working closely with the Parish Council and with the Police the Curry Rivel Neighbourhood Watch depends on a sufficient number of volunteers coming forward to act as representatives and co-ordinators. The duties of Neighbourhood Watch representatives are not onerous and should not take more than a few minutes per month. The responsibilities of co-ordinators are not much more demanding. There is a need for more representatives and co-ordinators if the watch is to be extended to the whole village.

ARISING FROM CONSULTATION

- It has been suggested that there should be a doctor's surgery for Curry Rivel.
- A comment identified that Social Services, provided and funded by Somerset County Council, are seeing a dramatic decrease in funding for the support services offered to the residents of Housing Associations and Local Authority tenants of Sheltered and Extra Care Schemes throughout the county. This will place greater reliance on voluntary organisations.
- Recent reports of the harmful emissions of oil particulates may result in a move to reduce the reliance on oil as an energy source, making gas a possible alternative, if available. Wind and solar energy sources may also gain greater credibility.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Short Term

-  Liaise with such organisations as Links and Friends of Langport Surgery to ensure easy access to services at the Surgery in Langport, especially for the elderly and disabled in the village.

Longer Term

- With the predicted increase in the number of elderly over the next 20 years and associated increase in problems this will cause, including dementia, the role of carers

within the community will become more important. In addition to the support already given by the Active Living group, an approach should be made to a voluntary agency such as Age UK to facilitate a weekly Day Centre for elderly people in the village, particularly those living alone.

- A telephone “Befriending Service” exists in some rural areas whereby volunteers make a regular weekly phone call to an elderly/disabled person for just a chat, to show that actually there are people in the community who care about them. Consideration should be given to introducing such a scheme in Curry Rivel.
- Investigate whether there is sufficient public interest in bringing natural gas to the village and, if there is, pursue this further.



Transport and Traffic

BACKGROUND

Public Transport

Public transport through Curry Rivel is at present operated by two Bus Companies, First Group and WebberBus.

- **First Group**

The 54 Service operates in both directions between Yeovil and Taunton. During 2014, First Group has re-introduced the Sunday and Public Holiday services on the 54 route and also extended the route to take in Musgrove Park Hospital, Taunton. In addition to the hourly service, a half-hourly service has been introduced operating between 9-5 Mondays to Saturdays. Not all buses go to Yeovil; a number of them start and finish at Somerton Square. Information on bus times and fares can be obtained by telephoning 01823 211 180.

- **WebberBus**

WebberBus operates hourly in both directions between Wells, via Street to Musgrove Park Hospital, Taunton. There is no service on Sundays or Public Holidays. Information on bus times and fares can be obtained by telephoning Freephone 0800 096 30 39.

- **Other Transport Links**

There are railway stations at Taunton, Castle Cary, Yeovil and Crewkerne providing services to London and Exeter with connections to many other parts of the UK. Coach services run between Taunton, Ilchester, Yeovil and London (Berry's Coaches) and there is a network of routes provided by National Express. Heathrow airport is some 2 hours away by road but there are regional airports within easy reach at Bristol, Cardiff and Exeter.

Private Transport

- **Vehicular Traffic**

The A378 is the main road running through Curry Rivel; it is always a busy road with some 3,000 vehicles a day. In places, the pavements through the village along the A378 are very narrow or non-existent, a matter of concern, for many children walk along this route to and from school and older people also experience difficulty. There are no pedestrian crossings in the village on the A378.

The speed limit through Curry Rivel is 30 mph. The majority of vehicles recorded by Speed Indicator Devices (SID) exceed this. Curry Rivel now has SID operating regularly at both ends of the village.



In the five years up to February 2014, only 4 slight injury accidents were recorded in Curry Rivel, three on the A378 and one on the B3168.

Police operate a Camera Van at intervals in the village and Speed Watch volunteers regularly monitor vehicle speeds throughout the year.

- Pedestrian Traffic

Many of the pedestrian routes to the village centre and school involve walking on pavements so narrow as to place users at risk from vehicles with large protruding mirrors. This is a particular concern through the heart of the village along the line of the A378.

There is a footpath between Curry Rivel and Langport but in places the hedgerows and verges have not been cut back which can force pedestrians to walk closer to the vehicular traffic.

- Cycle Traffic

A significant number of people use cycles to move around the village and the area attracts significant numbers of touring cyclists. There is no safe cycle track into Langport.



ARISING FROM CONSULTATION

- People are concerned about the speed of vehicles through the village and their concern is confirmed by SID recording which indicated that some 3 in 4 vehicles exceed the 30 mph limit.

- Pedestrian safety is a concern for a number of residents resulting from the volume of traffic, the narrowness of the pavements and the speed of many vehicles. Suggestions put forward include:

- Pedestrian crossings - a crossing near Westfield and one between the Post Office and The Bell.
- A Professional Survey should be commissioned to design the optimal layout of pavement areas, as having one wider pavement rather than two narrow ones may be a solution to the problem in some places.
- Kerbside railings.

- A cycle track between Curry Rivel and Langport was discussed as this would serve those wishing to cycle to work in Langport and students going to college in Huish Episcopi. A suggestion was made that it might be possible to upgrade the existing footpath to a width suitable for sharing with cycles.



- Other footpaths were mentioned and the comments on these have been amalgamated in the Countryside and Wildlife theme.



- Curry Rivel By-Pass

- Quiet tarmac, chicanes and speed bumps were all suggestions from the community to reduce the impact of traffic noise.
- ♥
 - Reopening a railway station on the main line to London at Langport or Somerton is something members of the community would value.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Short Term

- Commission a professional survey to design the optimal layout of pavement areas and comment on the possible use of pedestrian crossings and traffic calming and noise reduction measures on the A378.

- ☀
 - Encourage relevant landowners to keep hedges adjacent to the footpath to Langport cut regularly to provide maximum width for walkers.

- ☑
 - Obtain advice on the viability of a cycle route into Langport.

Longer Term

- ☑
 - Obtain finance, fulfil planning regulations and build cycle route to Langport.
 - Set up consultation on the results of the survey mentioned above.
 - After consensus is obtained, raise finance for planning permission, legal costs and implementation of agreed improvements.