

# Colebrooke Parish Plan 2016



Our Parish  
Our Community  
Our Plan



# Acknowledgements

The **Parish Plan Steering Group** gratefully acknowledges the help and support of the following:

- Martin Rich, Devon Communities Together
- First Steps Fund
- Councillor Nick Way and the Locality Budget Fund
- Colebrooke Parish Council
- Sue Haynes for her inspired layout of the plan
- Leslie Silverlock, our First Steps Relationship Manager

Without the addition of our wonderful photographs, this document would not be complete and we gratefully acknowledge the following for their contribution:

- \* Parish Map – Crown copyright and database rights 2016. OS 100057441
- \* **St Andrew's Church, Colebrooke** – Peter Budd
- \* Apple Pressing, Penstone Glade – Mary Stephenson
- \* Silver Jubilee 2012, Coleford – Paul Haynes
- \* Penstone Glade sign – Mary Stephenson
- \* Penstone from church tower – Steve Hodder
- \* Church Fete 2015 from church tower – Steve Hodder
- \* Colebrooke Parish Hall – Graham Shepherd
- \* View across to the church – Mark Wallace
- \* Stream with footbridge – Mark Wallace
- \* Views of the stream at Penstone – Mary Stephenson

# Introduction

## Who are we?

We are the people of **Colebrooke Parish**, represented by a steering group of committed community volunteers, working with the Parish Council to improve services and the environment of this small, yet significant, neighbourhood in Mid Devon. To identify and achieve the community's ambitions we have surveyed, questioned and interviewed all the residents and local interests. Public meetings, well attended, have been held. We had an overwhelming response to our survey, with 56 people offering volunteer time and support. As well as this robust volunteer backing, we have started to build partnerships with Devon Communities Together, Devon County Council, Mid Devon District Council and other service providers. We also intend to harness the partnership support of the Police, Fire and Rescue, Health and Environment and other key providers who can help us sustain and enhance our community into the future.



## What is a Parish Plan?

A Parish Plan sets out:

- What we value about our parish
- What we want to improve
- How we can go about it
- Our aims for the future

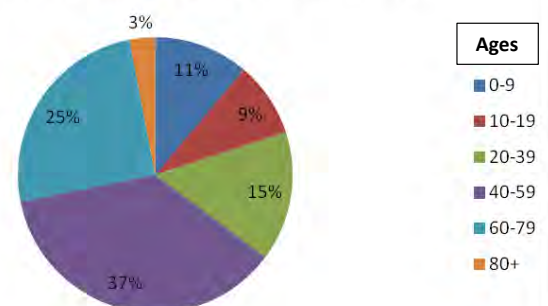
A Parish Plan also acts as valuable evidence when we approach funders, local authorities and services to demonstrate our need for improvements or support. This is increasingly necessary in these times of major cut backs.

## How our Parish is made up

(Figs: **Community Council of Devon Colebrooke Community Profile, 2013**)

- **Population:** 460  
(49.5% male 50.5% female)
- **Number of households:** 190
- **Children under 16:** 75
- **Working adults:** 305
- **Adults over 65:** 80
- **People from Black, Asian or minority ethnic groups:** 10

**Colebrooke Parish Population**



## How did we get here?

- ★ In May 2014 we held a public meeting in Colebrooke Parish Hall, attended by around 50 people, where it was agreed that we should produce a Parish Plan.
- ★ A steering group of volunteers was formed to manage the process on behalf of the Parish.
- ★ The experience and outcomes of similar sized local parishes that had produced a Parish Plan was researched, to ensure the process would be effective and useful.
- ★ Funding was obtained to enable a comprehensive and independent assessment to be made of the views of all Colebrooke Parish residents.

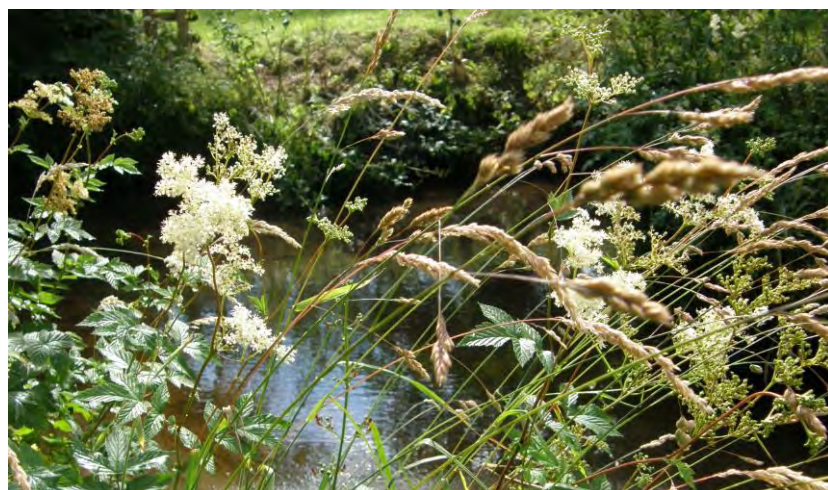


- ★ In September 2015 the survey was hand delivered to every individual in the parish aged 11 and over.
- ★ 53% of the surveys were completed and returned. Compared with similar surveys this is considered an excellent level of response, much higher than normal.
- ★ To secure an independent result the responses were analysed by Devon Communities Together (formerly known as the Community Council of Devon).
- ★ A draft Parish Plan from this analysis was written by the steering group.
- ★ In January 2016 a public meeting to consider the draft was held in the Parish Hall.

## *This Parish Plan is the result*

**T**his is a **living plan**, which will be updated regularly. Other updates will be through an extended regular parish newsletter and the Parish Council website:

[www.colebrookeparishcouncil.org.uk](http://www.colebrookeparishcouncil.org.uk)



ROADS	<b>SUMMARY &amp; NEEDS IDENTIFIED:</b> Results of the Questionnaire show that the condition and use of local roads is a major concern, particularly speeding, flooding and the impact of large vehicles
State of Roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 99 people commented about this</li> <li>• Half of respondents thought that local roads were either good or reasonable, but 55% thought that poor drainage and resulting flooding of roads was a significant problem. The parish council has good working links with the Highways Dept, but cuts in DCC budgets are making this type of maintenance work more difficult to achieve. (For example, the Parish Lengthsman service, which used to regularly clear the edges of roads and drains, has been drastically reduced)</li> <li>• Street lighting was not raised as a significant issue. A small number want more lighting, but others think there should be less!</li> </ul>
Speeding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 76 people commented about this</li> <li>• 41% of respondents would like more speed restrictions</li> <li>• Speeding is felt to be a particular problem in and around Coleford</li> <li>• Speeding is identified as one of the main community safety issues in the parish</li> </ul>
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 29% identified this as a problem. The major concern is in Coleford, where there is no specific car parking, with concerns also about the risk of parked cars blocking access for emergency vehicles through Penstone</li> </ul>
Large vehicles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 62 people made comments about this – over a quarter of all respondents</li> <li>• 39.5% of respondents thought that large vehicles caused a problem in the parish, especially in Coleford, but generally where the lanes are narrow</li> </ul>

What we want to achieve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Well maintained roads</b></li> <li>• <b>Careful and considerate driving throughout the parish</b></li> </ul>
How we will do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Engage with Highway authorities to find ways to address priority concerns</b></li> <li>• <b>Consider involvement in DCC Road Warden scheme, which would attract resources to assist local volunteer activity</b></li> <li>• <b>Consider traffic calming measures</b></li> <li>• <b>Promote awareness of DCC online system for reporting potholes and other problems relating to road conditions</b></li> <li>• <b>Work with residents to find solutions to parking concerns</b></li> </ul>

PARISH HALL & PARISH ACTIVITIES	<b>SUMMARY &amp; NEEDS IDENTIFIED:</b> There is a high level of support for the maintenance and use of the parish hall and much interest in the further development of social activities
Use of the Hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 83% make use of the Hall for village functions</li> <li>• 59% use it for concerts/musical events</li> <li>• 91% believe public funds should be used to maintain the Hall</li> <li>• A wide range of further activities were suggested, including Adult Education (64%), After School/Children's Activities (50%), Indoor Sports (54%). The challenge is to find ways to translate these aspirations into successful regular programmes</li> </ul>
Social Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Around half of respondents listed groups or activities that they have been involved with</li> <li>• 57 people have made suggestions for activities they would like to be available, ranging from youth groups and children's activities to exercise, yoga and tai chi classes, choir and conservation group</li> <li>• 39% feel we need a youth club and 36% that we need a playgroup</li> <li>• 43% say they use the Coleford Play Area. 87% consider it a valuable asset and 61% support the idea that the Parish Council's share of the Council Tax (precept) might be raised to maintain it</li> <li>• Only 15% ever use the mobile library. There may be scope for developing local book sharing schemes</li> </ul>
Walking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 56% consider that the parish's footpaths were in good condition</li> <li>• 48 people have made suggestions for improvement, mainly related to improved maintenance, possibly by local volunteers. The <i>DCC Parish Paths Partnership</i> could provide useful resources and support</li> </ul>
What we want to achieve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Places and opportunities for people to gather and get to know each other</b></li> <li>• <b>A well maintained hub, buzzing with activities for all</b></li> </ul>
How we will do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Develop ways to identify and establish successful social/recreational activities</b></li> <li>• <b>Parish Council to consider feasibility of taking on management of playground, if required</b></li> <li>• <b>Consider book sharing scheme</b></li> <li>• <b>Consider feasibility of group to maintain footpaths</b></li> <li>• <b>Continue improvement and investment in parish hall</b></li> <li>• <b>Make the hall more usable, accessible and desirable</b></li> </ul>

COMMUNITY SUPPORT	<b>SUMMARY &amp; NEEDS IDENTIFIED:</b> <b>Responses show a high level of support for the creation of local Emergency Help Teams and for the use of public funds to support community facilities and maintenance of communal areas</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 78% support the idea of Emergency Help Teams and 55% would be willing to be members</li> <li>• 12% of residents live alone</li> <li>• 3 people are registered disabled or housebound. While this is a small number, it is important to ensure that everyone is able to participate and function effectively in the community</li> <li>• Main crime and safety concerns are Burglary (61%) and Speeding (65%). While speeding is identified as a significant issue that people notice on a daily basis, it is worth noting that the burglary rate in Mid Devon is 4.3 per 1000 population and extremely rare within the parish</li> <li>• The development or extension of Neighbourhood Watch schemes comes up in a significant number of suggestions for preventative measures. While Coleford and Penstone have existing groups, a previous proposal for a Colebrooke group received little support. It may be appropriate to revisit this</li> <li>• 86% feel their religious needs are met within the parish</li> <li>• 60% feel St Andrews Church is important for ceremonies (weddings, baptisms etc.) and 32% for worship</li> <li>• 75% would like to see a community shop, ideally situated at the Hall or New Inn</li> </ul>

What we want to achieve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>A community where people look out for and support each other</b></li> </ul>
How we will do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Make links with Devon Communities Resilience Forum (set up by Devon Communities Together) to support development of Emergency Help Teams</b></li> <li>• <b>Explore further development of Neighbourhood Watch scheme for the whole parish</b></li> <li>• <b>Provide information about local crime to help reduce fear of crime</b></li> <li>• <b>Consider action/activities to support residents with limited mobility</b></li> <li>• <b>Consider Telephone Cascade systems</b></li> <li>• <b>Consider how the need for a shop might be met in other ways</b></li> </ul>

<b>TRANSPORT</b>	<b>SUMMARY &amp; NEEDS IDENTIFIED:</b> While most residents own a car, a significant minority experience transport problems resulting from the limited public transport service. There are only two buses a week and the nearest railway stations are Yeoford or Copplestone.
<b>Travel</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 34% of respondents are retired or not working, so do not need to travel to work</li> <li>• 66% of respondents work either full or part time or are students and of those working, roughly half do so in the parish or from home</li> <li>• 84% own their own car, but 22% experience transport difficulties</li> <li>• 22% would be interested in car sharing</li> <li>• 7 people experience difficulties in getting to health care services such as doctors or the chemist</li> <li>• Road flooding is often mentioned as causing travel problems</li> </ul>
<b>Public Transport</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 18% use the bus service</li> <li>• 43% use the train</li> <li>• The lack of a regular bus service is a significant factor for many people</li> <li>• Additional early morning train services would help with travel to work</li> <li>• An additional resource is provided by <i>Crediton Community Transport</i>, although nobody commented on this</li> <li>• Ensuring footpaths to railway stations are in good condition is important</li> </ul>

<b>What we want to achieve</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Everyone able to travel when necessary with the least possible difficulty</b></li> <li>• <b>Help and support for those with limited mobility</b></li> </ul>
<b>How we will do this</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Explore potential for local voluntary schemes to help those with transport problems, and</b></li> <li>• <b>If potential exists, appoint coordinators to set up &amp; manage local networks and to disseminate information</b></li> <li>• <b>Work with Communications Focus Group to provide regular info on available transport</b></li> <li>• <b>Engage with rail pressure groups re local needs &amp; the provision of a notice board with train timetable information</b></li> <li>• <b>Improve condition of footpaths</b></li> </ul>

<b>COMMUNICATIONS &amp; COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT</b>	<b>SUMMARY &amp; NEEDS IDENTIFIED:</b> The geographical nature of Colebrooke Parish means that communication with residents is not simple or straightforward and needs to be achieved by a variety of means. The <i>Parish Newsletter</i> is widely read, but may need reviewing. While a number of organisations exist in the parish, only the Parish Council has responsibility for representing the interests of the parish as a whole
<b>Parish Communications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are three noticeboards – in Colebrooke, Penstone and Coleford - where notices can be placed by anyone. The Parish Council has a separate noticeboard in Coleford</li> <li>• 85% of respondents say they read the monthly <i>Parish Newsletter</i>. There is uncertainty however as to whether this is primarily a church newsletter. 65% are unaware that it is possible to contribute items to this</li> <li>• There is an email newsletter produced by the Parish Hall group; 37% say that they are on the circulation list</li> <li>• A number of people get local information from the <i>Crediton Courier</i> and <i>Yeoford Voice</i></li> </ul>
<b>The Parish Council</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 70% of respondents say they understand the role and work of the Parish Council</li> <li>• 42% think that the Parish Council publicises its activities well or reasonably well, but 27% thought that it did so poorly</li> <li>• The Parish Council now has a website where all details of meetings, minutes, policies and other information are published - <a href="http://www.colebrookeparishcouncil.org.uk">www.colebrookeparishcouncil.org.uk</a></li> <li>• Suggestions for improvement included better use of newsletters, noticeboards, and email</li> <li>• Reductions in County and District Council budgets are likely to result in Parish Councils being increasingly asked to take on additional responsibilities for local services and facilities</li> </ul>

<b>What we want to achieve</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Make sure all are informed about activities, events and developments in the parish and are able to contribute</b></li> </ul>
<b>How we will do this</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Review and develop the <i>Parish Newsletter</i></b></li> <li>• <b>Promote awareness of Parish Council website</b></li> <li>• <b>Encouragement to attend Parish Council meetings</b></li> <li>• <b>Use website, newsletter, social media and other methods to update on progress of parish plan</b></li> </ul>

<b>BROADBAND &amp; MOBILE CONNECTIONS</b>	<b>SUMMARY &amp; NEEDS IDENTIFIED:</b> Slow broadband connection was a priority issue for 45% of respondents and was the most reported concern
<b>Problems for the community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good access to broadband has become a vital utility for businesses and households. Running businesses, working from home, job searches and applications, children and students' work all depend on good broadband connection</li> <li>• People working from home, children particularly but not only in higher education, and businesses run from premises in the area are utterly dependent on good broadband links. The independence and quality of life of the retired is enabled by access to well running computers. With Post Offices now closed, Government requires us to use their website for our compulsory returns to Departments; for example - with farm returns, tax returns, PAYE and VAT returns, TV licence renewal</li> <li>• Low lying areas in the community, including Coleford cannot receive mobile telephone signals</li> </ul>
<b>Actions to date</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During the formulation of the Parish Plan and at the direction of the Parish Council, a Focus Group has already been formed and has been working with <i>Connecting Devon &amp; Somerset (CDS)</i>, a partnership involving the County Councils and BT to improve broadband speeds for 90% of rural communities</li> <li>• The Focus Group has been pressing to improve the coverage within the parish in this phase, but is working to ensure that the whole parish will benefit by the end of the next phase to cover at least 95% of the county by 2017</li> </ul>
<b>What we want to achieve</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>By 2020 all households and businesses within Colebrooke Parish to have access to broadband speeds of at least 10 mbps, as promised by the Prime Minister in October 2015</b></li> </ul>
<b>How we will do this</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Continue to work with CDS and Devon County Council towards achieving superfast broadband coverage across the whole community through centrally funded programmes</b></li> <li>• <b>Identify alternative suppliers to provide competition to ensure prices of broadband are as low as possible</b></li> <li>• <b>Work with adjacent parishes and communities to enhance our leverage over providers and County Council</b></li> <li>• <b>Promote and encourage the community to use IT to maintain their independence</b></li> <li>• <b>Identify and lobby mobile phone suppliers to improve coverage so that it covers the whole area</b></li> </ul>

**Check out our website:** [www.colebrookeparishcouncil.org.uk](http://www.colebrookeparishcouncil.org.uk)

OTHER ISSUES	NEEDS IDENTIFIED
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 52% did not wish to see any increase in housing in the parish</li> <li>• 48% would support some increase, ranging from 5 houses upwards</li> </ul> <p><b>There are no current plans for housing development within the parish. It is recognised that we are lacking the necessary infrastructure to support any significant increase in population. On the other hand, such development would provide a larger group to support and make viable some community activities, e.g. youth clubs, playgroups</b></p>
Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 36% (56% of those who had a view about this) think that tourism should be encouraged</li> <li>• Main suggestions are for support for local arts and crafts; developing visitor leaflets; providing details of local walks</li> </ul>
What we want to achieve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>A viable and thriving community</b></li> </ul>
How we will do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Make sure the Parish Council is able to reflect the range of views regarding housing development</b></li> <li>• <b>Engage with <i>Heart of Devon</i> initiative (part of the <i>Devon Tourism Partnership</i> to promote and support tourism in mid-Devon)</b></li> </ul>



# Our Parish, Our Community, Our Plan



# What do we do now?

## *Focus Groups*

We will form Focus Groups which will tackle the various issues identified by you in the survey:

- Broadband & mobile reception
- Roads
- Village Hall/Parish Activities
- Community Support
- Transport
- Communications e.g. newsletter/social media

Each Focus Group will have a member of the Steering Group on it to report back to the Parish Council. After six months each Focus Group will see how they have done and discuss where they want to go from there.

*If you would like to join a Focus Group or any of the activities listed above, please contact:*

**Mary Stephenson Tel: 01363 84543**

## **VOLUNTEERS**

**We were delighted by how many of you filled in the volunteer form.**

**This willingness to generously give time to make this a vibrant community providing:**

- ✓ Support
- ✓ Stimulation
- ✓ Strength in numbers

**is inspirational and means we can achieve the best for our community.**

**These are the groups that already exist within our parish:**

**Sole Mates walking group  
Short Mat Bowls Club  
Colebrooke W.I.  
Colebrooke Mothers' Union  
Penstone Glade Association  
Colebrooke Junior Choir  
Bell ringing group  
Neighbourhood Watch schemes  
Penstone History Group  
Badminton Club  
Book Clubs  
Rotary  
St Andrew's Arts & Crafts group**

## **TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER**

### **STEERING GROUP MEMBERS:**

**Paul & Jayne Clemence - 85124  
Steve Graham – 84309  
Steve Hodder – 85523  
Val Pennington – 84250  
Graham Shepherd – 85051  
Mary Stephenson – 84543  
Nicky Wallace - 84321**

**The Steering Group wishes to acknowledge the huge contribution made by the Late Geoff Smith in the early stages of the project.**