



Community Vision – Final Report

Introduction

The 'Community Vision' consultation took place in the Derbyshire parish of Chinley, Buxworth and Brownside during the Autumn of 2014.

This consultation was initiated by Chinley, Buxworth and Brownside Community Association. A Parish Plan was developed 10 years ago: this study is a '10 years on' follow up to look at current community services and leisure activities, how these could be improved and what else is needed or desirable.

The consultation was made possible thanks to a grant from Social Investment Business.

Chinley, Buxworth and Brownside parish is ...

The parish of Chinley, Buxworth and Brownside is situated in the High Peak borough in the north west of Derbyshire. It also lies within the Peak District National Park area.

The parish comprises two villages, Chinley and Buxworth, and a number of hamlets and isolated farmsteads. According to the 2011 Census it then had a population of 2796. In the Borough Council's Local Plan Chinley is described as a 'large' village and Buxworth as a 'small' one. There are also other hamlets in the Blackbrook valley which lie outside the parish boundary but due to the geographical relief regard themselves as part of this community, for example Whitehough. With Chinley's population almost three times that of Buxworth it forms a natural service centre for the area.

The parish as a whole has Index of Multiple Deprivation scores which are average or better though this hides isolated pockets of deprivation. The parish is off the beaten track: a B road forms the axis of the parish, winding its way for nearly 3 miles along the north side of the Blackbrook Valley from the A6 (Buxton – Stockport) to the A624 (Chapel en le Frith – Glossop). Bus and train services are limited, and don't cater for evening entertainment.

Facilities within the community include

- The Community Centre, WI Hall, Parish Room in Chinley, the Scout Hut in Whitehough and the Buxworth War Memorial Social Club in Buxworth
- 3 churches (of which only the one at Chapel Milton has social meeting space of any size)
- A small group of shops in Chinley including a small village store, post office, launderette and Indian restaurant and takeaway. A café and a Fish and Chip shop opened shortly after this consultation took place.
- 1 pub in Buxworth, 1 on the edge of the parish on the Hayfield road and a further 2 just outside the boundary in Whitehough, but well used by locals. A further two have closed in the last 5 years.
- Two primary schools and a school and day centre for people with learning difficulties.

There are currently just over 1100 homes in the parish. Planning permission has been granted for 182 new homes to be built on the site of an old mill just outside the parish boundary but close to the centre of Chinley, and community-wise regarded as Chinley. The High Peak local plan is likely to allocate at least 60 more homes in other parts of the parish. In total this is likely to produce an additional population of around 600 who will look to Chinley for their local needs – an increase of over 20% on the present population.

Background to the Consultation

In 2005 a Parish Plan for Chinley, Buxworth and Brownside parish was developed in conjunction with the Rural Community Council for Derbyshire (now known as Rural Action Derbyshire). As a result of this Plan, a Community Association for the parish was formed to address the community and leisure needs of the parish. This group set up a number of community activities in response to aspirations expressed in the Parish Plan.

A further action of the Community Association resulting from the Plan was to take on the running of the Community Centre from Derbyshire County Council (DCC). At this time the Centre was a DCC Youth and Community Centre, and it was not easy for the community to make use of it: other than Youth Club sessions, and a couple of weekly community bookings, it was unused for the majority of the time.

The Community Association began discussions with the County Council, and was soon able to take on the Centre via a license. It has successfully run the Centre with a growing number of groups using it since 2007, but would like to see the Centre in community ownership on a long-term basis either via a lease or an asset transfer.

The building is not in a good state of repair (and might be deemed no longer fit for purpose with its constricted entrance and antiquated toilet and changing facilities), and needs investment for refurbishment or replacement. Under the

lease agreement between DCC and the Parish Council, on whose land it stands, if DCC wishes to surrender the building it must either be put into good condition or demolished and the site cleared. The current proposal from the Parish Council and the Community Association is that DCC contribute a sum of money equivalent to the necessary refurbishment costs to a fund where it can be used as match funding for substantial improvements or a rebuild (or demolition if most appropriate).

At around the same time, Chinley and Buxworth Women's Institute (WI) began to look at the state of their hall nearby, and began to look for grant funding to help with its refurbishment. The Community Centre and the WI Hall together provide the core meeting spaces in the community, fulfilling complementary functions with the WI Hall providing a stage and a larger audience / participant space for performances, dances, shows and exhibitions, and the Community Centre a small meeting room and a larger room suitable for larger groups, exercise classes and functions. The WI and the Community Association became aware of each others plans, and decided that it would be better to work together, to assess the needs of the community for the future, and address the facility needs in parallel.

In order to assess current and future requirements of these facilities (and others locally) for community activities, the Community Association therefore needed to review the current community and leisure needs.

Chinley Buxworth and Brownside Community Association raised funds for a community consultation, formed a Project Team comprising representatives from the Community Association committee, the Parish Council, the WI and residents from Buxworth, and commissioned help from High Peak CVS to carry out the consultation. The resulting 'Community Vision 2014' consultation was carried out between October and December 2014.

Methodology

The key questions that the consultation set out to answer were

- How could present community and leisure activities be improved?
- What further activities would people like to have on offer?
- What would improve the local community facilities and spaces?

The consultation process was carried out via a survey (paper and online) and a series of 'Community Conversations'.

The overall consultation was promoted in a number of ways:

- Articles in the parish newsletter and local press
- Posters at every possible place – shops, notice boards, lamp posts, etc – and 'help yourself' business card-sized adverts left at various venues
- Online on the CA website and Facebook page
- Targeted emails or letters to community and leisure leaders
- Copies of the survey delivered to every household

- Word of mouth amongst friends, family and neighbours, and via the organisers of the many activities that already take place
- Flyers in school bags
- Stalls at events, for example the WI Coffee Morning, a Halloween party, school fairs

The survey was devised by a small subgroup of the Project Team in conjunction with High Peak CVS. It was formatted in such a way that it could be completed online via a SurveyMonkey questionnaire or on paper. Paper copies of the survey were delivered to every household in the parish, and the online version was promoted extensively. Numerous secure collection points were set up in shops, schools, churches, the WI Hall, the Community Centre and the Parish Rooms where people could return completed paper copies. Volunteers from the Project Team transferred data from the hand-written responses onto the SurveyMonkey database.

Four Community Conversations were held:

- A community and activity leaders session to which around 60 people were invited
- A wine-tasting session open to anyone interested
- An open session at Buxworth Club
- A focused session for Youth Club leaders and members

Structured questions were devised for each session, intended for discussion in groups of 4-6 people. People were also given the opportunity to contribute comments and ideas individually and anonymously (using post-it notes or writing on the paper tablecloths).

Results

The survey attracted 286 responses completed on behalf of just over 600 people; 115 of these responses were on paper, the rest via the SurveyMonkey. The highest number of responses were by and on behalf of the under 18s and the 30-44 age groups, though there was a good level of response from all age groups including the over 60s.

The Community Conversations also attracted a good level of participation:

- Leaders meeting – 34 participants
- Wine tasting evening (open to any adults) – 16
- Youth Club focus group – 16 (and informal conversation with Guides – 20 girls and leaders)
- Buxworth Community Conversation – 19

The Wine Tasting evening was held at the Community Centre but attracted people from Buxworth (and two people who were staying in the area temporarily for work); the Buxworth Conversation included several people who had not been able to attend the Leaders Meeting but who were active in the local community whether or not they lived in it.

Responses from the survey and the conversations are categorised under six headings:

1. Developing or participating in further community and leisure activities
2. Improving publicity and communications
3. Increasing community involvement and volunteering
4. Improving community collaboration
5. Addressing travel and physical links within the local community
6. Improving community buildings and spaces

1. Developing or participating in further community and leisure activities

Over 150 people left responses to the survey question '*What leisure activities or community services would you like to take part in if they were available in the future?*' Several made a number of suggestions and further suggestions were made at the Conversation events.

Suggestions included more sports of all sorts, including Keep Fit for older people and more swimming at Peak School; arts and crafts including photography, pottery, life drawing, sewing and tailoring; dance; cookery, gardening and food growing; DIY and furniture restoration; local history; village clean-up; a community café; cultural activities such as more varied cinema / film, musical activities and more talks by book authors; language, computer and mountain skills classes; lifts to shops and medical appointments for the elderly, and a request for activities for older men with deteriorating mobility; and more community events where the whole community works together.

The survey asked if people would like to help set up the new activity they've suggested. Sixteen people said 'Yes' and a further 77 'Maybe'. Twenty one people left contact details alongside this answer.

One of the key barriers to taking part in activities is the time of day that they take place. About one third of survey responders wanted events during the day, but double this number wanted weekday evenings, and almost as many wanted weekend activities. Many comments were left by people who worked during the day, about activities they would like to attend but which currently run in the daytime.

Recommendations:

- i. Pass on relevant feedback about existing activities to leaders and building managers
- ii. Look closely at suggestions and the times of the week these have been requested, and check whether the activity already runs at this time, has vacancies and needs better publicity

- iii. Work with the willing to explore what of their suggestions can be set up and provide support to get these activities up and running
- iv. Consider what other suggestions would be beneficial to pursue and look beyond the Community Association committee itself for help to set these up (see Volunteering and Community involvement below).

2. Improving publicity and communications

The survey attracted a significant number of comments about publicity for activities and events, and how this could be improved. This and the wider issue of communication between activities and organisations in the villages was also a focus of the Leaders Conversation.

Buxworth voices at Conversations and in the survey responses felt that communication in Buxworth and with Buxworth residents was especially poor. There was discussion about the usefulness of the Parish Council notice board and access to it, and the lack of any alternative. One responder said 'I really think Buxworth residents need to set up their own newsletter / website ... A notice board in the village on its own is no good. Alternatively Buxworth should have ... its own section on the CHINLEYCA website.....'

It is recognised that in this era of IT Revolution older members of the community still look for posters and printed newsletters, and perhaps an email news bulletin, while younger audiences look to their preferred form of social media, and at this time all are still needed in order to reach all age groups in the community.

The difficulty of keeping website information up to date was mentioned, along with that of accessing physical notice boards (particularly the Parish Council notice board in Buxworth) and keeping these up to date.

Participants at the Leaders Meeting suggested putting on a computer club / café where people could access a computer and to help the less IT-savvy to become acquainted with Facebook and other forms of electronic communication.

There were also comments, discussion and requests about

- The need to link websites and Facebook pages
- Providing a website where each group / organisation / activity can have a page which it manages
- A calendar of regular events and activities (which can be displayed physically and online)
- Other places where information could be displayed
- Improvements to the parish newsletter

A further concern expressed was that it is not currently possible for organisations to jointly plan dates of events so as to avoid clashes.

Recommendations:

The Community Association's website already provides an online calendar for regular and one-off events and activities, and for groups and activities to have their own page within the website. However it a) does not currently have buy-in from groups and activity organisers, b) there is limited awareness of it in the local community and c) it isn't accessible to those who do not use the internet

- i. Parish calendar and promotion of regular events and one-off events – Improve awareness and use of the Community Association website: Working Group with some relevant IT knowledge to be set up to look at what the current website provides, any opportunities for improvements, (such as automated monitoring of page updates) and to discuss with group and activity leaders about their publicity and communication needs so as to encourage a good level of buy-in, and ask leaders to promote the website to their members. Ideally this working group should include representatives from both Chinley and Buxworth, particularly to address conceptions that the chinleyca website is for Chinley alone.
- ii. Provide calendar information in hard copy at key locations such as doctors' surgery, community venues and church notice boards where it can be refreshed easily on a regular basis (eg bi-monthly)
- iii. Make people aware (e.g via the parish newsletter) of where the physical and online calendar can be found and how they can contribute to it
- iv. If possible request that the Parish Clerk be an overall point of contact for the calendar for anyone who doesn't use the internet but would like to add an event to it.
- v. Pilot a 'Comfortable with Computers' Café for those with little or no experience of or access to a computer.

3. Increasing community involvement and volunteering

There is clearly already a very high level of community activity in both Chinley and Buxworth. Leaders and community activists at both the Leaders and the Buxworth Conversations nevertheless spoke of the need for more volunteers and in some cases of it feeling like 'the same people doing everything'. Some felt though that everything happens in Chinley and that Buxworth is 'a desert'.

Both the survey and the Conversations indicated that people were keen to be involved, or more involved if they could (and some expressed regret that other personal commitments were inhibitive). Many people left an email address or other contact details at some point during the consultation process, expressing a desire to know what happens as a result of it.

Recommendations:

The consultation has engaged the community well, and provided an excellent opportunity to follow up and exploit this interest. The enthusiasm needs a

quick response to retain the momentum. As mentioned in the above section on communication, getting the news out more regularly and systematically about what is going on will help people feel in touch and involved.

There is also an opportunity for individual groups to think how they would like to get more people involved in their activities. Where the activity needs volunteers, say for an event such as a fete, inviting people to take on specific roles, where the level of commitment, the time involved and what they might get out of it, would all help. Also, people 'grow into' taking bigger volunteering roles, and the person who helps on the tea stall and the fete for a couple of years is more likely to step up to taking a place on the fete committee than someone who is completely new to participating in community events.

People rarely feel they can ask to join a committee so organisations need to make it clear where they would like more help, and if so what help is needed. Existing committee members should be prepared to make direct approaches too.

There was willingness amongst leaders at the Leaders Conversation to offer help and pass on skills and experiences of running community events and activities to others. The Community Association and others could offer an informal signposting and brokerage service to help local groups to get set up and progress.

4 Improved community collaboration

At the Leaders Conversation there was enthusiasm to collaborate more, sharing equipment and resources where appropriate (with the provision that it is clear who has permission to use what and property is respected), and to share skills and help each other to set up, grow and develop activities.

There was also enthusiasm to work collectively to promote activities in the community. As well as the many and varied discussions about notice boards (physical and virtual), one suggestion met with enthusiasm was to hold a 'Freshers Fair' style event where all groups could promote their activities and people could meet leaders and find out more about activities before committing to joining.

Alongside this were some deeper comments and discussions by Buxworth residents about their community, which acknowledged a historical separation between the communities of Chinley and Buxworth. There was a feeling that although part of the same Parish, Chinley and Buxworth are quite distinct communities and the limited transport links (see below) exacerbate this. . Comments varied from 'It would be great if there were more activities available in Buxworth, eg at the Memorial Club' and 'There is currently too much focus on Chinley as a venue for everything. Buxworth feels like the poor neighbour. Let's have more organised in Buggie.' to someone who returned to the survey to leave a further comment '... If [the CHINLEYCA] website is for Chinley AND Buxworth, then the web address and key titles should reflect

that. It is currently just for Chinley people. Why else would it have that address? In fact, do Chinley people really want Buxworth included in this consultation? There are some fundamental issues to be addressed before the two communities can move forward cohesively.'

At the Buxworth Conversation several voices expressed disengagement from both the Community Association and the Parish Council. 'What does the Community Association do?', 'Do you have anyone from Buxworth on the Community Association?', and 'Would the Community Association and the Town Council like to come and hold open meetings at Buxworth Club so Buxworth people can get involved?'

That 19 people turned out on a winter evening at short notice to the Buxworth Conversation (and others from Buxworth attended the Wine Tasting and the Leaders Meeting) indicates that smaller community's level of interest and concern, but from their comments, a sense of being peripheral.

Recommendations:

- i. Develop a system for sharing skills and resources amongst groups and publicise it
- ii. Try running a 'Freshers Fair'-style event to help people find out what activities are available and to offer tasters, and to celebrate the vibrancy of the community
- iii. Explore how the Community Association can become more representative of and accountable to the whole of its community, and gain credibility from those in the community who currently feel excluded or that it doesn't serve their needs. This might include recruiting representative Buxworth residents to the committee, re-branding the website and locating further regular activities in Buxworth (say at the Club if this is possible) to respond to requests and comments from that part of the community. More generally the Community Association would benefit from developing and involving a 'membership' of users and supporters. This would have mutual benefits: for the Community Association it would provide a visible mandate to their community developments; and for local residents it would bring empowerment, democracy and a sense of involvement and belonging. The Community Association was originally constituted as a membership organisation but as with many community organisations, membership became the committee. The engagement and enthusiasm prompted by the Community Vision consultation offers an ideal springboard from which to build an active membership. Perhaps it would be worth re-exploring how the organisation's membership offer could be shaped.

5. Addressing travel and physical links within the local community

The road linking Buxworth to Chinley has limited stretches of pavement alongside (much of which is substandard width, and switches sides with awkward crossings e.g. at railway bridges) and overall the road is perceived

as dangerous to walk along. Local bus services are limited, and non-existent in the evenings.

A number of comments in both the survey and the conversations mentioned local transport and the parking difficulties. At the Leaders Conversation there was some interest in a community bus service, to provide transport to and from activities (and perhaps more generally), and the Hayfield Sustainable Transport project was mentioned, where community groups have access to a minibus, and local people are trained to drive it

The 'Tramway' dating from the era of canal transport, linked the Bugsworth Basin canal terminal to the quarries at Dove Holes beyond Chapel en le Frith. It runs up the Blackbrook valley mostly just south of the parish boundary but is seen as one of the community's key assets. The section from Buxworth to Chinley is in relatively good condition. During Conversations in particular, there was enthusiasm to see the Tramway improved, ideally including lighting so it can be used at night, so as to provide a safe, sustainable transport (ie walking and cycling) route linking different parts of the community. People suggested that it needs to extend to Chapel en le Frith, and that there should be a path linking it to Chinley Primary School, also that in some places the surface needed improvement, that parts were overgrown and there appeared to have been tipping. (One survey respondent said 'Hard to get along greenway from Whitehough to Charley Lane [at the eastern end]' and 'Tramway – needs to extend to Chapel' and 'Tramway – part of Manchester-Sheffield cycleway' at Leaders Meeting.)

Recommendation:

Recruit a group of interested people to look at how the Tramway could be improved, including whether adequate links exist from it (and the canal tow path at the Buxworth end) to key venues and focus points in the community. The group would need to discuss their ideas with relevant staff in the Borough and County Councils: a 'Friends of' working group may be an acceptable approach.

The course of the Tramway still exists towards the quarries at Dove Holes in the Buxton direction. At a Local Plan consultation in 2013(?) staff from High Peak Borough Council's Planning Department mentioned informally that it could be extended / reclaimed as a leisure facility (and indeed there is potential for an off-road route much, if not all the way to Buxton). Elsewhere the Tramway has been mentioned in a proposal for a Manchester-Sheffield cycle route. A 'Friends of the Tramway' group may also wish to look at wider scope for developing its leisure opportunities.

In the longer term there may be call to look more widely at travel needs and sustainable travel options for this community.

6. Improvements to community buildings and spaces

Over 150 survey respondents left comments about the facilities and spaces and how these could be improved, and there were many more made during the Conversations. One summed it up 'None of the spaces are very 'nice'. All have issues with access, size, facilities, etc. Something needs a revamp!'

Community Centre and WI Hall

Of all the community facilities and spaces, the Community Centre received the most comments on its poor state of repair and the need for updating

- 'it looks as if a good wind will blow it down!'
- 'it is a very run down building that really needs updating'

Both the Community Centre and the WI Hall received mixed comments about general décor, lighting, cleanliness, kitchen facilities, toilets and changing facilities. Space for some activities was mentioned as too limited – e.g. rooms not big enough to accommodate everyone who wanted to take part; ceiling in Community Centre too low. Storage is also a problem. ('There is very little storage space, which makes running activities and events quite difficult.')

While both were also appreciated for the facilities they offer, and the improvements and opportunities offered since the Community Association took on running the Community Centre, some had high aspirations for improved facilities 'Would like to see a new, purpose built facility to cater for a wider variety of activities and the whole Community Centre complex comprehensively redesigned to make better use of the space.' Some suggested a new-build combining the facilities of the two on the site of the Community Centre while others were clear that the WI Hall provided a larger space and facilities not available elsewhere in the community, and should be retained.

There are indications that users of both these buildings have experienced some tensions at times. One group mentioned the hurt they'd felt when they had put up a display which had then been moved, another left a comment 'Leave [cinema] curtains alone' and an individual spoke of a 'less than welcoming attitude from the owners'.

Recommendations:

An evaluation of both these buildings and the options for refurbishment or new-build need to be considered both objectively and sensitively, recognising the human investment that has been made in these buildings over the years as well as comparative costs of different options and the future needs of a growing population.

An assessment of what the groups and activities using the spaces need, both in terms of sizes of spaces, storage and notice board or display places would obviously be part of this. This exercise would also provide an opportunity to get detailed feedback on users' experiences (regular and one-off users) and discuss how improvements could be made. The following comments and concerns were raised:

- Storage space
- Opportunities for sharing resources
- Sufficient hand-over time
- Is the room in an appropriate state to start the next activity – clean, tidy, heated / aired appropriately?
- The experience for one-off rentals
- Property and notice boards of regular users needs to respected
- What additional facilities would make the experience better for specific regular user groups and how could this be accommodated?
- Is the 'welcome' all that you'd like it to be?

Following on from this, a regular (eg annual) meeting and survey for users of these venues would enable constructive feedback and any issues to be addressed, and provide scope for networking which could lead to greater collaboration among users.

Buxworth Club

Several survey respondents from Buxworth were concerned that most events were in Chinley and would like to see more activities in Buxworth too. At the Buxworth Conversation held in Buxworth Club it became clear that local people do not know who the Club is for, who can use it and under what conditions. As well as the bar and snug, the Club has a larger room used on weekday mornings for the Pre-School and occasionally for events provided by the Club's Management Committee (e.g. a Spring Ball / Dinner). At the Conversation there was interest in making use of this room for meetings, exercise classes and small arts events. The room could be used as it is during the afternoons (when the bar is not functioning). However modifications need to be made so that the room can optionally be used either completely separately or in conjunction with the bar area. (This could involve a sliding screen, but the independent access to the room needs to be considered and may need to be improved, and toilet facilities for the bar when the room is being used separately would need to be provided.)

Recommendation:

If the Buxworth Club's members agree that they would like to see greater use of their facility, its Management Committee should promote its availability and work with the Community Association to invite, initiate or arrange activities that would appeal. The Community Association, High Peak CVS or Rural Action Derbyshire may also be able to help the committee look for funding for modifications if they would like the room available for separate use in the evenings.

Chinley and Buxworth Recreation Grounds

The survey and Buxworth Conversation received a number of comments and suggestions about children's play facilities in both Chinley and Buxworth: their age, condition and the desire for more modern and varied apparatus. Access to Buxworth Recreation Ground from the road beside the Buxworth Club was

mentioned as being of concern as it is steep and difficult for those with push chairs. The Pre-School would like to use it as an outdoor facility, but both the access and the overflowing rubbish bins are prohibitive. The Recreation Ground also suffers from poor drainage and the intrusion of moles and rabbits.

Recommendations:

Both recreation grounds are owned by the Parish Council. It would be appropriate for the Council to discuss with interested parties, e.g. the Rec Rock Committee, Buxworth pre-school and individual users of these facilities what they would like to see in more detail, establish what might be possible and what community involvement could help to achieve these improvements.

Conclusion

The 'Community Vision 2014' consultation has shown that the local community of Chinley, Buxworth and Brownside is very active, and there is huge enthusiasm to do more. This sets a challenge for the Community Association and other local community activists to respond to the expectations and the enthusiasm built up through the consultation.

Alongside this is a need to address how a growing range and number of activities are to be accommodated. The imminent increase in local population will add to the demand for facilities. Meanwhile, the consultation illustrates that existing facilities are perceived as in need of improvements to make them fit for purpose for present and future demand.

There is much work ahead. Some of it will be difficult. If focused, the ideas and enthusiasm engendered by consultation will make this community an exciting place to live.

Appendices (attached separately)

1. What other community and leisure activities would you like to take part in? (SurveyMonkey responses)
2. What would help you take part in local activities? (SurveyMonkey responses)
3. Comments on current community buildings and facilities (SurveyMonkey responses)
4. Leaders Conversation write-up
5. Wine Tasting evening write-up
6. Buxworth Conversation write-up
7. Youth Club Conversation write-up
8. Notes of discussion with the Guides
9. Notice board comments