



Piddle Valley Neighbourhood Plan

Help make the
Vision
for our future

Newsletter 3

Progress in the last two months has widened significantly now that we have more people contributing in the various focus groups. This is giving us a much more comprehensive impression of the future needs of Valley residents so if you feel you can add more to what we are gathering you are very welcome to do so by speaking to the group leaders or direct to me either by email or telephone. Every contribution is welcome and all will be carefully recorded.

We have been noting all your comments and conversations at the various village meetings and Fetes from our small white marquee – you can't miss the large banner!



Read here how each focus group has been working to identify the key areas. The Business group has been recording all the commercial activities that many would not know are going on in our midst and evaluating what is needed to allow more employment to be provided, particularly for young people, as well as more suitable space for community uses, available to more people and much better located. Both the Housing and Environment groups are looking much more specifically at where redundant buildings could be put to good use in the future by conversion and adaptation, and new sites identified for low cost and open market housing in small areas of infill where they can support the present village fabric and infrastructure. Energy is concentrating on renewable sources, particularly from the river as the earlier mills would have done and possible future management of woodland for fuel combining with conservation objectives. The schoolchildren too have been enthusiastically contributing to energy and transport topics under their energetic head Tracy Jones. Transport has been a lively subject looking at traffic speed control measures, footpaths and the upgrading of the riverside bridleway for use as a cycleway alternative to the road.

Please read the reports below and get in touch with one of us if you can.

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Business and community needs

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We have been collecting information about the present situation in the Valley and we have run a survey in Piddlehinton, Piddletrenthide, Alton Pancras and Plush comparing the present activity with that of 20 years ago.

We found 20 years ago

- there were double the number of shops
- more farms
- more small businesses
- more pubs

But we found NOW

- there are more Bed and Breakfasts
- more second homes (20 years ago there were none)
- more leisure activities

We have also been looking at the present situation in the Enterprise Park to see how it can be improved for the benefit of those living in the Valley. Our work will now focus on the future and some of our ideas are

- finding a suitable place for small business work units largely to encourage young local people to set up here
- exploring disused buildings which could be converted for the use of work units, or a covered space for village events such as farmer's markets, garden shows, craft fairs, art exhibitions, dances, dog shows, and for use by young people in the village etc.

Community energy generation and low energy design

led by Dot Browning dot.descon@easynet.co.uk / 01300 348280

Our concentration has been focussed on the potential for renewable energy sources through the Valley, exploring community woodland options, their management and viability of hydropower and solar. A visit to Enterprise Park highlighted companies already leading the field utilising renewable solutions.

Fuel

An invitation to walk an ancient 11 hectare woodland and adjacent woods confirmed there **is** potential to harness wood for fuel ie chippings, logs and pellets for open fires and stoves; chippings with 30% moisture content burn for half the cost of oil. Further discussions are planned with landowners and foresters to identify other woodland and how it could be managed and the fuel made available for the community.

A visit to Bournemouth Renewable Energy Marketplace and discussions with a range of exhibitors confirmed pellets for biomass boilers some 2/3s the cost of oil so to be considered in any new building.

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Hydropower

Investigations have established the viability of generating energy from the River Piddle - historically, there were seven water driven mills on the River Piddle located between Alton Pancras and Piddlehinton. The Environment Agency (EA) provided river flow data for two locations, South House, Piddletrenthide and Little Puddle, Piddlehinton, so the highest, lowest and average flow rates have now been established. We have evaluated two Case studies from Hydropower installers - the conclusion that it **is** potentially viable to generate energy utilising hydropower on the River Piddle, using either turbine or waterwheel generation techniques.

The NP Energy Focus Group arranged for the EA to visit Piddle Valley School on Monday 17th June to present and lead activities with the children on different aspects of water flow, purity, flooding and water life. We hope this will be both educational and enjoyable and will continue with groups monitoring water flow etc. into the Autumn Term.

Mole Valley Feed Solutions + Eco Sustainables

Following a recent visit to the Bourne Park feed mill, Mole Valley Farmers were invited to contribute an article to inform local residents of the history of the mill, where it fits within the current Mole Valley Feeds business; and the progress and future development of running the mill with renewable energy sources.



Originally built by Hanford PLC as a grass drying plant in the late 1960's with a key raw material for feeding farm livestock already being manufactured, the decision was taken to extend the factory and manufacture commercial ruminant

diets, concentrating on larger dairy units and promoting their products as green feed.

Several years later Hanford's sold the mill which has over a period of 14 years had a succession of owners. For the last 8 years the mill has been operated and owned by Mole Valley Farmers trading as Mole Valley Feed Solutions and produces about 80,000 tonnes of livestock feeds each year servicing South and South East England.

Piddlehinton Feed Mill, one of four within Mole Valley Farmers feeds operation has a combined output of over 350,000 tonnes each year. The feed mills complement the overall business of Mole Valley Farmers which includes 50 retail outlets with SCATS in Dorchester and Mole Valley Farmers in Yeovil local to the mill.

The Mole Valley Farmers business is always looking at ways to reduce the mill costs of production, which in turn helps to make us competitive in the marketplace. This keeps the price of feed affordable to our members and farmer customers.

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Eco Sustainables

One option for reducing costs was to produce renewable energy on the Piddlehinton site. In 2010 Mole Valley Farmers and Hanford's, in partnership with ECO Sustainables, decided to build an "anaerobic digester". This was to supply the mill with both gas and electricity; with the additional output supplying the main grid. The digester came on stream in September 2012. Neither party wanted a digester that needed to use crops specifically grown to fuel the digester and the decision was made to use domestic and catering food waste, which in the main would come from doorstep waste food collections - food waste is liquefied using either pig slurry from nearby pig units or water drawn from a bore hole, then pumped to digester.



Methane gas is produced to run the engine that produces the electricity, with an additional pipe line installed to the mill where the gas is used to run a boiler; this in turn produces the steam for use in the production process. The waste product from the digester is then pumped through a pasteurizing unit into a holding tank where farmers collect the product with tractors and tankers to spray back onto the fields as fertilizer.

In addition to the digester the feed mill is also drawing electricity from the new Photovoltaic site (solar power) in the adjoining fields. This is another joint venture managed by Hanford and as with the digester this source of power generation is in the process of being expanded.

With the combined power from the renewable energy resources on the site i.e. electricity from the digester and the photovoltaic plants, gas generated from the digester and water for the plant all sourced from local bore holes, Mole Valley Feed Mill at Piddlehinton will become the only feed mill in the country to be run entirely on green energy and anticipate that the total energy generation from the site will be in excess of 10 Megawatts by the year 2016.

The Energy Focus Group is exploring further renewable energy initiatives on Enterprise Park to benefit the wider Piddle Valley community.

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Environment, landscape and farming

led by Peter Chance peter_chance@btinternet.com / 01300 348311

Whilst we realise how fortunate we are to live in the Piddle Valley environment our surroundings must inevitably be subject to a degree of change if the community is to develop and prosper. The aim of our focus group is therefore to pull together policies which will protect and enhance the environment and at the same time develop and promote policies that will cater for all age groups and different interests.

Approximately 90% of the land forming our Neighbourhood Plan area consists of farmland, 3% woodland and the balance buildings, roads, etc. By any standards we live in a very rural area, a position we would not wish to change. Farms are mainly large-scale, well structured and efficient hence viable over the long-term. Woodland by contrast, although relatively small in area is mainly unmanaged thereby offering the possibility of providing employment and a source of timber for fuel, etc. The Piddle Valley also has a substantial number of areas of grassland designated as Sites of Local Importance for nature conservation – mainly wildflower pastures. Some are in good condition, others deteriorating due to lack of grazing, a matter requiring attention.

The Group is currently walking the Neighbourhood Plan area in order to assess priorities for the future. Issues identified to-date include woodland, hedgerows, nature conservation areas, the need to protect green open spaces within each of the five communities, redundant farm buildings, business sites, possible sites for development - particularly affordable homes and sites for renewable energy development. If you have any additional aspects you feel the Group should address we shall be very pleased to hear from you.

Housing - both for open market and low cost for local people
led by Malcolm Johnston mjz@btinternet.com / 01300 34869

The members of the Housing group have completed a full visual appraisal of all the villages to better understand existing housing and other buildings and to identify potential development sites. It is recognised that in many cases the landowners may be unlikely to want developments to take place. However the intention is to recommend open land or small plots with good potential access and where development would have a positive impact on village topology and continue or complete existing runs of housing. Should the identified land be made available at some future date the Neighbourhood Plan would support its development.

Issues of affordable and open market housing, accessibility, transport facilities and village facilities such as pubs, shops and halls are being reviewed in considering community development.

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Transport, traffic speed, footpaths, cycleways and communications

led by Neil Herbert sherbetnj@yahoo.co.uk / 01300 348479

A Walk to School

One morning in May 2013 members of the Transport Focus Group, set out to walk from Piddlehinton to All Saints Church, Piddletrenthide, along the bridleway to look at the feasibility of converting it to an all weather cycleway, with a possible extension to Alton Pancras.

En route to Piddlehinton to begin the walk we came across children from the Piddle Valley CE First School walking in the opposite direction along the B3143 on their way to school, having started their walk at the Thimble Inn in Piddlehinton. The children do what they call the “walking bus” on a regular basis as part of advertising healthy life-styles and also to remind road users of the legal speed limits when using our small rural roads. The children were supervised by Mrs Claire Hudson and CPC Vickey Hedges, along with many parental and Governor volunteers. All adults and children wore fluorescent jackets to ensure that they were highly visible and safe at all times.



In contrast, the bridleway walk back towards Piddletrenthide was incredibly quiet, very few people about and totally different from the amount of traffic that morning on the B3143. These photographs show children adjacent to South House on the B3143, and the empty bridleway at nearby South Farm Cottage, only 150 metres apart - what a difference!



The January 2013 Piddle Valley School Travel Plan is very interesting; one of the actions is to establish a link with Piddle Valley Parish Council to raise awareness of the condition of the bridle path and investigate the creation of an all-weather surface. It is also noted that many families do walk to school using the off road pathways when the weather is good and would do so more often if a permanent surface was in place. The travel plan also states that many adults and children would prefer to walk or cycle to school but find this difficult due to the volume, speed and type of traffic that uses the local roads during peak times.

The 2012 Piddle Valley Parish Plan showed strong support for an off-road all-weather bridleway running from Piddlehinton to Alton Pancras; 74.9% of respondents to the questionnaire being in favour and 18.2% against. All respondents were agreed that motor vehicles must be excluded and there were some reservations concerning cyclists. By far the most frequently cited concern was the state of the roads - their condition and the problems caused by heavy traffic using them - which contributed to fears concerning road safety. It was felt that an off-road bridleway linking the villages could provide a partial solution.

The Transport Group are looking at the feasibility of converting the bridleway into an all weather cycleway, which would not only give schoolchildren the option of using it to travel to school, but also provide local residents and the general public with a viable alternative to the valley road.

Piddle Valley First School have recently run a poster competition concerning traffic and safety and the winner is being awarded the privilege of being the first to hold a speed gun on the B3143, adjacent to the school.



Traffic Survey

A visual recording of traffic movements in Alton Pancras was carried out between 7 am and 10 pm during June 2013. The total number of vehicle movements recorded in the 15-hour period was 1,109, of which 750 involved cars and 211 vans. More vehicles travelled south (593) than north (516); a total of 18% of van drivers (39) and 15% of car drivers (110) appeared to exceed the 30mph speed limit.

Traditional commuter and school traffic : 52 vehicle movements between 7 - 8 am and 86 between 8 - 9 am, while the evening period between 5 - 6 pm produced 85 movements, 6- 7 pm accounted for 61 movements.

Because of the impossibility of safely overtaking moving vehicles on this stretch of road, there were frequent incidences of short vehicle 'convoys', their speed dictated by that of the lead vehicle. Frequently convoys were led by a larger vehicle travelling within the speed limit. Speeding drivers generally were not in a line of traffic but making their own decisions on choices of speed which might suggest that if residents travelled through the villages of the valley - including Buckland Newton - at 30mph or less, thus ensuring following vehicles did the same, this would be a better regulator of traffic speed than a fixed-site speed camera.