

Parwich Village Action Group

(In conjunction with Peak District National Park Authority Community Planning and Parwich Parish Council)

visit our community website at www.parwich.org

14th Jan 2009

Andrew Morgan
Director of Skills and Communities
Emda
Apex Court
City Link
Nottingham
NG2 4LA

Dear Andrew Morgan,

Re Live and Work Rural Initiative

The Parwich Action Group would like to support the bid by the Peak District National Park Authority for funding from EMDA's Live and Work Rural Initiative. The Action Group met with the Deputy-Chair, Chief Executive and the two staff of the Community Planning Team yesterday and were told of the importance of this bid for the continuation and development of the work of this Team in future years.

Parwich has benefited significantly from the Service provided by the Team over the last eight years, in relation to the process of establishing our own Group and developing our Village Plan, and in relation to their providing a fantastic contact point with the Authority for the community as a whole.

Our experience of the Officers involved in this scheme, and our experience of the Service as a whole has been unfailingly positive. Government policy is now looking to develop local democracy, reversing the previous trends to centralisation and weakening of Parish Councils. The Community Planning Team gives the National Park Authority an ideal tool to respond to the implications of the recent 'Communities in Control' White Paper. The Peak District National Park has a relatively small resident population with only some 20,000 households, placing the Authority in a stronger position to understand their residents' needs than most Local Authorities.

The Parwich Action Group is a vital example of what can be achieved with the support of this Team, especially its role in supporting significant increases in the social capital of the village. Some of the outcomes are expressed in the attached briefing note which was prepared for the meeting with the National Park Authority; the increase in the vibrancy of the village has fostered greater mutual support in the community, a greater sense of how the community together can achieve a more sustainable village and support for more affordable housing and a more traffic friendly sense of place.

With continued support for this Team the Action Group believes that the benefits which this village has gained over the past few years can be extended to other communities in the Peak District. The Group urges you therefore to consider favourably the bid from the National Park Authority.

Yours sincerely

Peter Trehitt
Chair

cc.

- Geoff Sevens, Board Member, emda, Apex Court, City Link, Nottingham, NG2 4LA
- Patrick McLoughlin MP, House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA
- Narendra Bajaria, Chairman, Peak District National Park Authority, Aldern House, Baslow Road, Bakewell, Derbyshire, DE45 1AE
- Christopher Carr, PDNPA Member (Parish Councils Rep.), Town Head Farm, Tissington, Nr Ashbourne, Derbyshire, DE6 1RA
- Jim Dixon, Chief Executive, Peak District National Park Authority, Aldern House, Baslow Road, Bakewell, Derbyshire, DE45 1AE
- Irene Ratcliffe, Deputy Chair, Peak District National Park Authority, Aldern House, Baslow Road, Bakewell, Derbyshire, DE45 1AE
- Karen Wigley, Clerk to Parwich Parish Council, Cliff Cottage, Alsop Road, Parwich, Nr. Ashbourne, Derbyshire, DE6 1QN

Parwich Village Action Group

The Community

Parwich is an enthusiastic living working community within the Peak District National Park:

- More than 90% of village houses are occupied throughout the year
- Less than 10% of properties are second homes or holiday lets
- There are over 80 businesses, small businesses and sole traders based in the parish
- Some 50% of the working population have work based in the parish (only some 20% commute more than 10 miles, and a growing proportion of those work part time at home)
- Over 40% of the working population are self employed (contrasts with the Peak Park average of 25%)
- Only 6% of the working population are employed in tourism/catering (contrasts with the Peak Park average of 24%)
- Although our figures are now out of date Parwich is thought to still have a more balanced age mix than many Peak Park communities

There are some 28 active voluntary organisations and societies in the village

The community has a record of realising significant projects, including the British Legion Club, the current Memorial Hall, the creation of sports facilities, the purchase of Parwich Hospital with its redevelopment as the Care Centre, and the building of the Social needs housing at Parson's Croft.

Recently there have been threats to the community with the loss of the Care Centre in 2000, the closing of the Methodist Chapel in 2008 and the Shop closing in 2008. However, this has been balanced by the new shop located in the Pub, the £500,000 BLF lottery grant towards the redevelopment of the Memorial Hall (community hall) and our very successful community website (PARWICH.ORG) achieving 20,000 page views in December.

The Village Action Group

Parwich Village Action Group was set up in 2000 in response to the PDNPA Discovering Villages Initiative. The first Village Management Plan was established in conjunction with Parwich Parish Council, on the basis of various public meetings and a village survey. Our current Village Management Plan was updated in November 2004, following a second survey and public meetings, and is due for review.

The Action Group in conjunction with PARWICH.ORG also collated a community response to the 2008 Defra consultation on direct elections to NPAs strongly supporting at least some board members being directly elected by Park residents.

Our current main areas of concern are:

- General issues around communication and consultation
- Affordable Housing
- Environment
- Roads & Traffic

General

Discussion Points:

- **We have benefited greatly from the Authority's Village Officers, and would be pleased to undertake any further action that might help the Authority secure funding to ensure their future.**
- How is the Authority acting to maintain balanced communities essential to retain the character and economy of the Park?
- How is the Authority seeking to implement government policy of increasing community participation in policy setting and planning decisions (e.g. Communities in Control white paper). It is felt there are specific problems with the Planning Service.
- The need for generally developing communication and consultation. We also have concerns that the Authority's consultations with residents increasingly rely on use of technical documents on-line which excludes many residents or use of informal discussion, which though valuable also has limitations. Any consultation also requires a level of education and informing.
- How do we develop the Authority as channel of communication for Park communities with EMDA, Defra and government in general?
- Multi-agency working: the local government structure involves Parish, District and County Councils as well as the NPA and voluntary groups such as ourselves. How do we get the Authority's support (see also below for specific issues) in projects that require multi-agency input? How do we prompt involvement from the Authority (see also below for specific issues) in exerting pressure on other agencies for action?
- The Authority's website though not always easy to navigate has excellent levels of information but this is not accessible to all, and it is important that the Authority does not over rely on this.
- Need for improved broadband speed and ensuring full access across the Park, given the increasing number of people working from home (being raised in the meeting with PARWICH.ORG and the PDNPA at 3-45pm)

Affordable Housing

Achieved 3 houses at Parsons Croft, but a further planning application was withdrawn by Notts Housing Association in the light of PDNPA Planning Service's opposition. Also we have supported various planning applications and housing requests, where we feel they are important to maintain our balanced community.

Aim:

- ***Ensure provision and continued availability of low cost housing in the village***

Discussion Points:

- Problem of current schemes being based on housing needs surveys, especially when people are increasingly surveyed out (at one point there were three housing needs surveys and our village questionnaire in a two year period). After a while people give up on forms.
- **Also surveys looking at single villages with relatively small numbers are subject to disproportionately large fluctuations, especially as people, knowing there are not local options) make decisions about living elsewhere before the need arises (e.g. if you are thinking about having a family you move to Ashbourne or Derby well in advance). At present we have a significant**

number of single young adults living with their families. They are not a current housing priority but unless there is housing they will need to move away when they want to establish families.

- Need a variety of housing stock for people to move to larger or smaller homes as their need changes, in line with the traditional use of housing in the nineteenth and early twentieth century (increased property ownership has resulted in decreased mobility within the village).
- Also problem of older people requiring accommodation other than that for single people or married couples (e.g. situation where one person is the main carer for a sibling). It is far from ideal when old or disabled people have to make a new life outside their established support networks.
- How can we overcome the problems of Planners not engaging with the community and other sections of the Authority? Planners need to recognise when they get it wrong (e.g. the inappropriate insistence of dressed stone in courses which nearly scuppered the Parsons Croft scheme)

Environment

Achieved a number of restoration projects. We have started, but not completed, a statement of what is valued in Parwich (also village design statement needed), and a list of potential improvements. Also lobbied on various issues and in 2008 collated a community response to the Parwich Conservation Area Appraisal.

Aims:

- ***Protect and maintain the green and open spaces in and around the village***
- ***Protect village heritage and lifestyle***
- ***Identify and promote specific improvements to enhance the village environment***

Discussion points:

- **Need for a statement of what is valued and village design statement**
- **Flooding and brook course: currently we have at least 7 households (3 of which are listed buildings) still not back in their homes from the flooding in September 2008 involving over 18 properties including the School. What is the role of the Authority in working with ourselves and other agencies in ensuring future maintenance of the brook course and flood prevention.**
- Specific projects outstanding: restoration of pin fold; monitor and improve biodiversity on verges and 'waste' in the village; establishment of more benches; etc
- The previous European grants for environmental projects are coming to an end, what opportunities are there likely to be for funding future environmental projects
- Update list of desired improvements and investigate possible projects/schemes beyond the village.
- What is the timescale for the Authority developing a management plan for the Parwich Conservation Area following the 2008 Appraisal?
- Sustainability issues are increasingly important and the way forward is being shown by such as Sustainable Youlgreave and Sustainable Winster, how is the Authority promoting and supporting other communities such as ourselves to respond to the problems and opportunities.
- Light pollution within the Park and from outside the Park
- Concern about creeping urbanisation (see Roads & Traffic) below

Roads & Traffic

So far we have had a lobbying role.

Aims:

- ***Ensure traffic in the village does not exceed safe speeds***
- ***Investigate solutions to parking difficulties***

Discussion Points

- Highways causing creeping urbanisation (e.g. proposed bus alighting area on the village green, bollards and chicane in Creamery Lane). How can we get the NPA to take a more active role in lobbying?
- Highways modifications, increased signs and changed priorities with excessive road markings does not make the roads safer
- **Proposal that Parwich is pilot scheme of shared space with a 20mph speed limit and removal of all signs and road markings within the 20mph limit. Although this is under negotiation between Highways and the Parish Council it is more likely to happen with the support of the Authority**
- Increase in size and speed of tractors damaging verges (compounded by changed priorities in some locations)

Village Hall & Sports Hall/Pavilion Facilities

Investigation of joint village/sports hall facility on the sports fields met local opposition, but investigations prompted the Memorial Hall led initiative to redevelop the community hall on the current site. Parwich Parish Council is setting up a new group to oversee and manage the village's sports facilities.

Aims:

- ***Redevelop the community hall facilities on the Memorial Hall site in line with the identified needs***
- ***Identify separately the needs, if any, for improved sports pavilion facilities at the playing fields***

Teenagers & Young Adults

Following the successful development of the children's play area, a group was set up to investigate the needs of teenagers in 2005/06 but the teenagers involved became involved in GCSEs, etc. and the group lost its momentum. The Memorial Hall Management Committee is looking at this in relation to community hall facilities as part of the BLF bid commitments.

Aims:

- ***Identify the social/recreational needs of older children and teenagers in the village.***
- ***Involve children/teenagers fully in this process.***

Other Areas requiring investigation

Identified as requiring further investigation:

- *the needs of older people (The Memorial Hall Management Committee is looking at this in relation to community hall facilities as part of the BLF bid commitments.)*
- *a village newsletter (partly superseded by the creation of PARWICH.ORG, though the needs of those not on-line still needs addressing)*
- *public transport (especially evenings)*
- *a village post office*
- *crime*