

CLENT PARISH PLAN



A COMMUNITY VIEW FOR THE FUTURE

Produced for Clent Parish Council



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From the Chairman

As Chairman of the Parish Council I would like to thank the members of the Parish Plan Steering Committee for their dedication and hard work in compiling a finished document of the highest quality.

The excellent detailed analysis of the information recovered from the questionnaires will ensure that any future plans and policies carried forward by the Parish Council will be in line with and driven by the wishes of the electorate.



Ed Sheppard
Chairman of the Parish Council
September 2005

THE PARISH OF CLENT

As the first tier of Local Government, being within the perview of Bromsgrove District Council and Worcestershire County Council's being the final tier. The Parish is about equidistant from the towns of Bromsgrove, Kidderminster and Stourbridge.

Geographically the Parish is spread over a wide area with Gallows Brook forming the ancient boundary with Hagley Parish. The brook runs from the Clent Hills to the north-east through to the Parish north-western boundary at Sweet Pool. The boundary meets Broome Parish in the south-west. Belbroughton Parish adjoins Clent on its southern border.

A large proportion of the Parish is made up of the Clent Hills. Now owned and managed by the National Trust the Hills are defined as a Landscape Protection Area covering over 500 acres of open space, woodland and farmland. The highest point is Walton Hill, which rises to 1035 feet. The Hills form part of the range of hills running from Kinver in the north to the Lickey Hills in the south and create a natural barrier between the West Midlands Conurbation to the north and east and the Worcestershire Plain running west to the Clee Hills in Shropshire to the Malvern Hills in the south west.

It is vitally important that the landscape surrounding the Hills is protected, they cannot stand in isolation - they need the accompanying landscape to be of value to all who visit them. The protection of the Green Belt surrounding the Hills has been a paramount policy of the Parish Council. Due to its closeness to the Conurbation there has always been, and continues to be, a great deal of pressure on the Parish from developers wishing to develop in the Green Belt.

Clent has two designated Conservation Areas, namely 'Clent' from St Leonard's Church, Adams Hill to Bromsgrove Road and 'Holy Cross' covering Holy Cross Green and Bromsgrove Road.

A source of special pride for Clent Parish is that it is one of only a few Parish Councils to have its own Warrant of Arms, which entitles it to use its own Coat of Arms. The motto is 'I will lift up Mine Eyes to the Hills', referring to the Clent Hills. The Lord Lieutenant of the County presented the Letters Patent to the Parish in 1999 and the original Warrant of Arms is held at the Worcestershire Archives.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Parish Plan Steering Committee, a sub-committee of Clent Parish Council, was established in June 2004 to determine what the parishioners of Clent wanted the Parish to be like in the future. Comprehensive questionnaires were sent to every household in October 2004 which resulted in an excellent 40% response.

In order to meet Parishioners aspirations as expressed in the replies to the questionnaire the Steering Committee recommend the following guidelines to the Parish Council:

- Strict enforcement of the Green Belt.
- Any 'affordable housing' to take into account the views of the parishioners expressed in the survey.
- Any limited developments to be in keeping with existing properties.
- Road noise reduction to be a priority in any future road repair / development.
- Planting of additional trees.
- Action to reduce litter and dog-fouling.
- The re-establishment of a village general store / Post Office.
- Retention of the village school with provision for 'before' and 'after' school care and sports.
- Provision of some adult education classes.
- Establishment of a regular dedicated parish news bulletin.
- A substantial reduction in the frequency of electrical supply failure.
- Increased level and visibility of policing together with extension of the Neighbourhood Watch scheme.
- Improvements in road and pavement maintenance and cleanliness.
- Introduction of traffic calming measures.
- Retention of the bus service.
- Improvement in facilities for cyclists and wheelchairs / prams.
- Establishment of additional sports facilities especially for teenagers.
- Provision of recreational land in the Pinewoods / Clent area of the parish.
- Improved frequency of collection and placing of refuse bins.



While some of the actions may prove too costly in the short term they are commended to the Parish Council as the basis for on-going development

INTRODUCTION

In November 2000 the government made a strong commitment to a major change in the way local government and parish councils respond to the needs of their constituent communities.

The Rural White Paper 'Our Countryside – The Future' launched the concept of parish plans whose purpose is to:

“ set out a vision of what is important, how new developments can best be fitted in, the design and quality standards it should meet, how to preserve valued local features and to map out the facilities which the community needs to safeguard the future ”

Plans should

“ identify key facilities and services, set out the problems that need to be tackled and demonstrate how distinctive character and features can be preserved ”

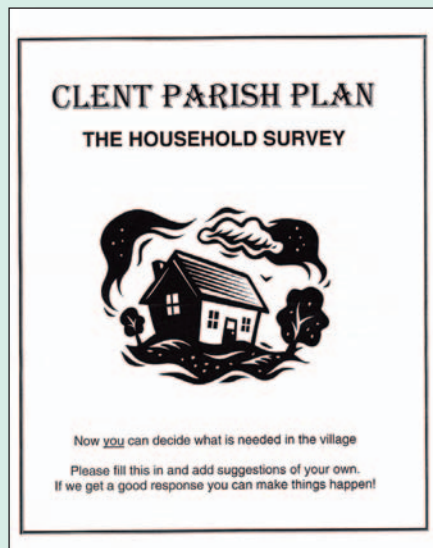
Parish plans are part of the Countryside Agency's 'Vital Villages' initiative and grants of up to £5000 have been made available to parish councils to help fund the cost of producing such plans.

Late in 2003 Clent Parish Council called a general meeting of the Parish to discuss how our Parish Plan could best be developed. 'Brainstorming' teams were asked to identify the main areas of interest and concern. Afterwards volunteers were asked to put their names forward to form a Parish Plan Steering Committee. There were around 15 volunteers.

The parish Council felt that, although the Steering Group would be a sub-committee of the Parish Council, it should produce the Plan largely independently. However two members of the Council were appointed in an advisory capacity. The inaugural meeting of the Steering Committee was held on 12th June 2004. As time passed a number of the original volunteers withdrew due to other commitments leaving the following hard core team:

Suzanne Sweeney (Chair), Annie Harris (Treasurer), Stan Bloxham, Steven Malek (Parish Councillor), Dick Chater, Ed Moore (Parish Councillor), Andy Martin, Paul Stamps

In its introductory brochure, the Countryside Agency suggested a number of ways to determine the needs of the Parish. These included discussions with special interest groups eg clubs and societies, setting up of a series of focus groups, and production of surveys.



The Steering Committee decided that everyone in the Parish should have the opportunity to have a say in future developments.

The only way to carry this through effectively was with a comprehensive questionnaire.

This was produced and two copies were sent to each household in the Parish in October 2004.

Through a detailed statistical analysis of the responses the needs and wishes of the Parish could be quantified, clearly showing the depth of feeling on any particular issue.

The Steering Committee has met regularly since October last year. Through careful study of the results of the survey and the accompanying comments it believes it has established a clear idea of what Clent Parishioners want now and in the future.

Its findings are laid out in this Parish Plan.



A BRIEF HISTORY OF CLENT

The earliest record of Clent is in the Domesday Book (1086) as the named manor of the Worcestershire Hundred, lying just outside the Royal forests of Feckenham and Kinver. In Mediaeval times the farming community of Clent was strongly influenced by Halesowen Abbey, established in the 13th century.

From the 16th century scythe makers and later wheelwrights, locksmiths and nailers thrived in the area. At about this time almshouses were built near the church. The village was still quite small, there being only 160 persons over 16yrs recorded in 1676.

In the 1700's Clent began to resemble the village we know today. Squire John Amphlett of Clent House founded the village school. Old Clent Grove, and the castle folly at Adams Hill were built by the Liells. Lord Lyttleton set up the Four Stones on Clent Hill.

After 1800 prosperous industrialists began to buy and develop houses in the village. Links with the Black Country became closer still when in 1834 men from Lye cut through Buttonbank to form The Rocks cutting. By 1864 the church had to be extended and was subsequently rebuilt. A railway line through Clent to Bromsgrove was planned but never materialised, though the 'Woodman Hotel' (now the 'French Hen'), a part of this plan, did get built.

Other buildings from the 19th century include the Police station, Wesleyan chapel and the Foresters Convalescent Home. A new infant school and extended junior school were the work of the Durant family who now occupied Clent Hall. The Amphlett estate cottages and Clent Cottage were completed in 1879. Towards the end of the century Field House was built, and developments were commenced around Western road. The Cross Keys Public House (now residential) was also built at this time adjacent to Gallows Brook, which still marks the border between Clent and Hagley.

Thousands of visitors a year were attracted to the area in the early 1900's. Boarding houses and shops flourished. The 'Alfred Roberts' Parish Hall and the All Saints Home for Girls were erected, and after the First World War houses were built in Summerfield Road and Pool Furlong. A former Tudor malthouse was donated to the Catholic Church and converted into a chapel.

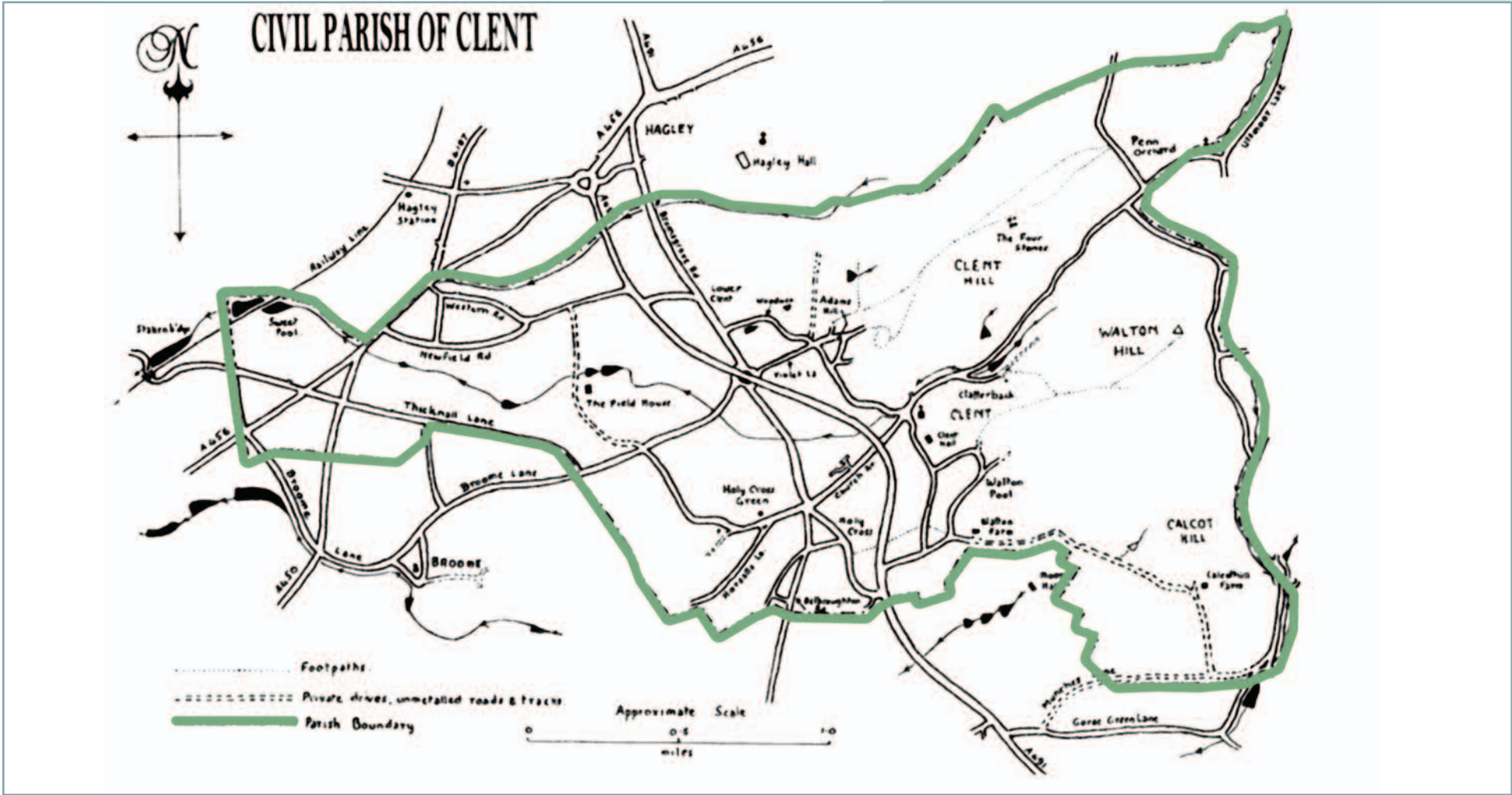
A BRIEF HISTORY OF CLENT continued



After the Second World War more houses were built in King's Meadow. There was also considerable development around the Pinewoods Avenue/ Newfield Road/ Western Road areas which now hold a substantial proportion of Clent's inhabitants. To accommodate the needs of a young population within the Parish, the junior and nursery schools were extended.

Today, in addition to the two churches, this lively parish boasts a number of active societies and groups. It is well served with restaurants and pubs and has a few retail outlets, although it lacks a general store.

Historically Clent has consisted of a number of scattered settlements, and in the 1960's was split by the A491 link road. Despite this, its residents have a strong sense of community, demonstrated not only by their enthusiasm for the recent Centenary and Millennium celebrations, but also by the response to the Survey on which this document is based.



CLENT FROM THE AIR



Aerial view circa. 1985

SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

In October 2004 over 2000 questionnaires were sent to 1018 households within the Parish. By December, 407 envelopes had been returned containing over 600 replies. This is a very good response, being in excess of 40%. These returns represent the views and wishes of the Parish as a whole.

The returned questionnaires were professionally analysed by specialists in this field, 'Community First Partnership'. They have produced an excellent detailed statistical report.

Using only the information contained in this report, and after detailed discussion, the Steering Committee, came to the following conclusions about what Clent residents want now and in the future:

HOUSING AND LAND

The vast majority of residents (87%) feel strongly that there should be no relaxation of the Green Belt rules to allow for general housing development.

When specifically asked, 36% of respondents feel that some provision should be made for "affordable housing" for first time buyers, However 47% disagree with land provision for this purpose.

Over 90% of respondents are in favour of any developments being in keeping with the present Parish character. "Modern" styles are favoured only by 8% of residents.

Across the parish, between 86% and 90% of respondents agree that existing buildings should be preserved.



SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRE DATA



ENVIRONMENT

Noise from traffic is considered to be a major issue, the A491 & A456 being highlighted as problem areas by 381 respondents.

Firework noise is also identified by 12% as a significant nuisance.

It is generally agreed that open spaces, footpaths and private land are tidy and litter free. However, nearly 40% of respondents feel that the roadsides/pavements are inadequately cleaned.

A majority (54%) of replies make reference to unacceptable amounts of dog fouling in the Parish.

33% of respondents state that exhaust fumes are a significant threat to air quality.

Most respondents feel that wildlife habitats are adequately protected, although 59% of householders state that the parish would benefit from the planting of more trees.

There is overwhelming support (94%) for the preservation of existing open spaces in and around the village.

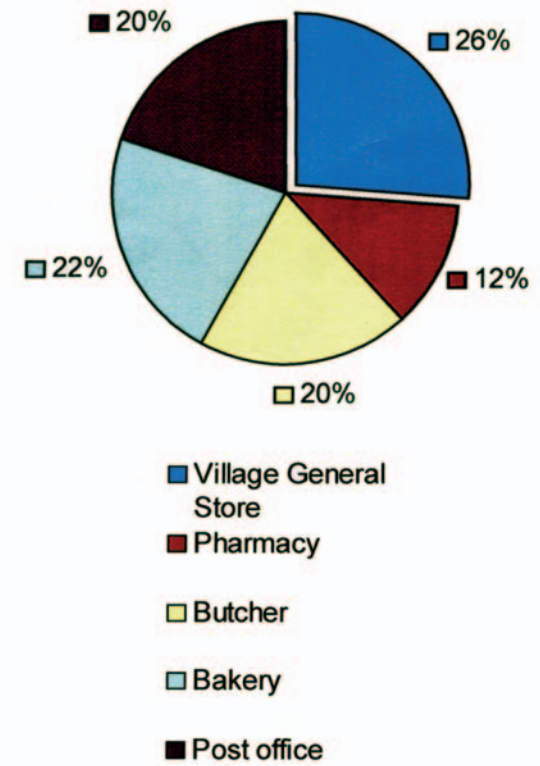
SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

SHOPS/RETAIL

There is a clear majority in favour of reinstatement of a village General Store, especially amongst those living furthest away from existing shops.

The parish is considered to have sufficient cafes, restaurants and licensed premises.

PREFERRED RETAIL OUTLETS



SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRE DATA



EDUCATION

Education needs are generally well catered for, within acceptable travelling distance.

Among the residents that have children at Clent Parish School there is strong agreement that they would use 'before and after' school care if available. Some after school competitive sports are also favoured.

Of the 25% of respondents who currently have children in the education system, three quarters feel that their children's needs are well met within reasonable travelling distance.

Further education courses at local venues are a popular concept.

HEALTH AND RELIGION

Most respondents felt that their health care and worship needs were satisfactorily catered for within easy travelling distance.

SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

HERITAGE

There is a very strong response in favour of retaining existing boundaries.

Over 90% of respondents were adamant that the green belt should be preserved.

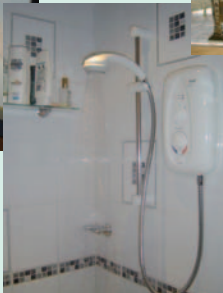
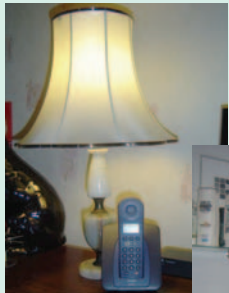
POLICING

The survey shows that throughout the Parish there is an overriding dissatisfaction (40% of respondents) with levels of crime and with the policing services. 57% state that police presence and visibility within Clent is very poor.

Neighbourhood Watch schemes are already in operation within the Newfield/South/Western Road areas. There is substantial interest (25% of replies) in the extension of such schemes, with particularly high interest in the Walton Pool/Hill area.



SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRE DATA



UTILITIES

There is general satisfaction with water and gas services.

However, a third of respondents feel that the frequency of power cuts is unacceptable. Those in the South East of the parish express the highest degree of dissatisfaction.

A fifth of replies express concern about drainage problems.

A quarter of respondents are dissatisfied with the Refuse Collection service. The main issues concern the supply of the correct bins/boxes and the infrequency of the collection.

Current recycling sites are considered satisfactory.

Although a number of people express dissatisfaction with the positioning and intensity of street lighting, no overall pattern is discernible.

PERSONAL TRANSPORT

Very few people use the local bus service so the level of replies is very low. Most of those who replied appear to be satisfied with the service.

There is some interest in the provision of extra off-road parking in the Parish although the majority said they would only use this occasionally.

Cyclists, wheelchair, pushchair and pram users feel that provision for them is poor. 48% of these respondents say that facilities are inadequate. Holy Cross is particularly highlighted in this respect.

SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

COMMUNICATIONS

At present most people obtain information about Parish news and events through the Church Magazine, Parish Notice Boards, local newspapers or 'word of mouth'. However a third of respondents stated a preference to receive information from a regular dedicated Parish news sheet.

There is virtually no interest in a centrally located, community internet facility.

HIGHWAYS AND ROAD MAINTENANCE

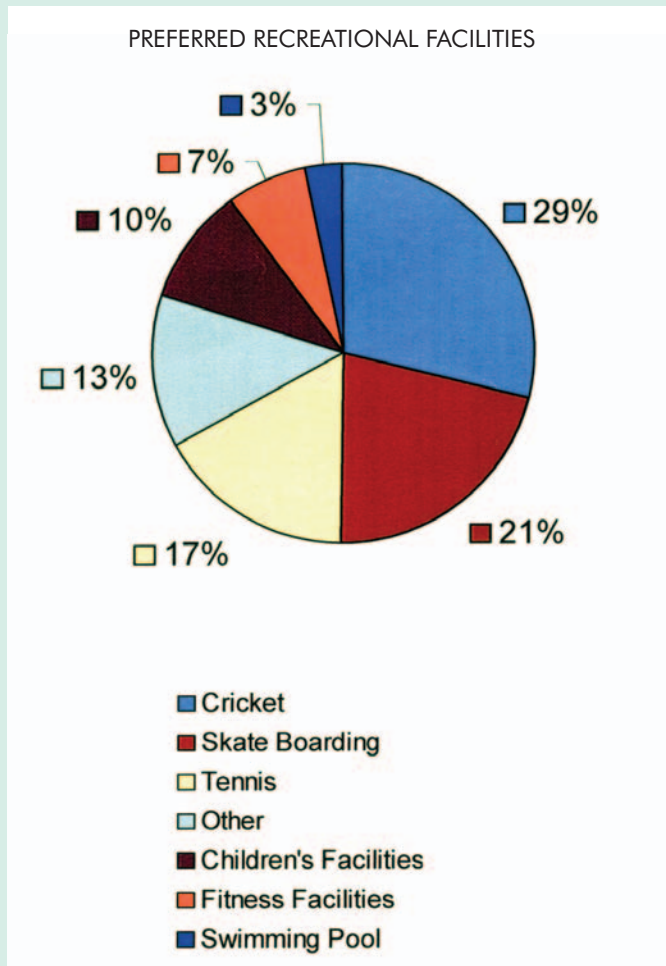
There is general satisfaction with the road network, but a high level of dissatisfaction with maintenance. Over a third of respondents express concern with road sweeping and litter removal.

Nearly half of all respondents feel that non-local traffic passing through Clent is a major problem, and almost three quarters are concerned about traffic speed.

The majority of people are in favour of introducing 'traffic calming' measures. However there is no clear preference for which type.



SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRE DATA



SPORT AND RECREATION

There is general satisfaction with the existing sport and recreation facilities within the Parish.

However a village cricket pitch is highlighted as particularly desirable, closely followed by a skateboarding facility, and tennis courts.

Centenary Field at Holy Cross is used mainly by those who live close to it. The main reasons for not using it being 'too far away' or 'not enough time'.

Most people use Centenary Field/Recreation Ground/Playing Field as a through route.

Informal sports, the children's play area, relaxation and experiencing nature, and jogging and organised sports are all mentioned as popular activities.

The trim trail appears to be used very little.

Improvements to recreation facilities were requested. These include better control of dog fouling and provision of more seats.

In Holy Cross, provision for children's play is seen to be sufficient, but in the Pinewoods/Clent area only 1/3 of respondents were happy with these facilities.

Only 22% of replies state that there are adequate outdoor facilities for teenagers.

Generally around the Parish no great need for allotments is expressed, although some interest is shown in the Pinewoods/Clent area.

SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

EMPLOYMENT

38% of respondents agreed that there are adequate employment opportunities within a reasonable travelling distance of the Parish.

Although 22% of replies support additional employment opportunities within the parish, less than 10% state their support for manufacturing work.

Over a quarter of respondents state that there are adequate Employment Advisory Services and support within reasonable travelling distance.

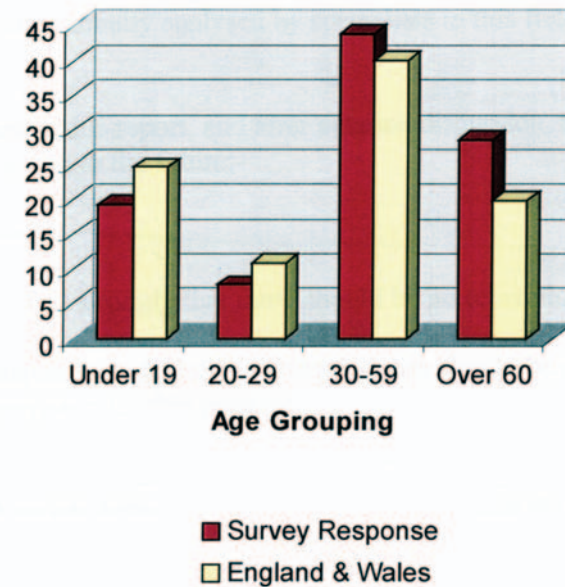
AGE OF RESPONDENTS

The responses show that the Parish has a generally older population.

The most significant variation from the national figures is in the age group 20-29 with 6.6% compared to a national average of 12.6%

The complete Survey Results and Consultation Report may be viewed on application to the Clerk to the Parish Council.

AGE BY SURVEY / ENGLAND & WALES



CLENT PARISH PLAN 2005

ITEM	ACTION	LIAISON*	TIMESCALE**
HOUSING & LAND			
Clent Parish requires maintenance of the Green Belt restrictions.	Enforcement of existing regulations.	Clent Parish Council Bromsgrove District Council	Ongoing
Any new housing developments must be in sympathy with existing parish styles.	Close control of Planning Applications.	Clent Parish Council Bromsgrove District Council	Ongoing
The possibility of subsidised housing for younger buyers who wish to remain resident in Clent Parish.	Investigation of possible sites for 'Affordable Housing', taking into account the views of the Parishoners expressed in the survey.	Clent Parish Council Local consultation Bromsgrove District Council	12 months
ENVIRONMENT			
Any development or repair of the road system around Clent should include installation of special road surfaces to reduce noise.	Liaison with the relevant authorities to effect improvement.	Clent Parish Council Worcestershire County Council Highways Authority	Ongoing
Tree planting, particularly at roadsides, will improve the environment and reduce noise.	A tree planting initiative to be instigated.	Relevant (Councils) Authorities Local Landowners	2 years
Firework noise was highlighted as a considerable nuisance by residents.	Enforcement of 2004 Act.	Clent Parish Council	1 year
The parishioners wish to see a reduction in dog-fouling.	Education campaigns, improved signs. Enforcement of 2004 Act.	Clent Parish Council	1 year
The parishioners would like to see a reduction in litter.	Education campaigns, improved signs. Enforcement of 2004 Act.	Clent Parish Council	1 year
RETAIL OUTLET			
A General Store & Post Office is wanted within the Lower Clent/Holy Cross area.	Investigation into feasibility, possible sites and human resources.	Clent Parish Council Countryside Agency	1 year

CLENT PARISH PLAN 2005

ITEM	ACTION	LIAISON*	TIMESCALE**
EDUCATION			
The community wishes to retain Clent School.	A letter to be drafted and sent to the LEA explaining the strength of the parishioners feelings, to be kept on their files.	Clent Parish Council Local Education Authority	8 weeks
Extra-curricula activities for school children, such as organised sports and some 'before & after' school care are required.	A meeting to be instigated to action these points, where possible.	Clent Parish Council Local Education Authority School governors	1 – 2 years
COMMUNICATIONS			
Introduction of a regular dedicated Parish News.	A feasibility study is needed	Clent Parish Council	1 year
UTILITIES			
The current frequency of power cuts is unacceptable.	Pressure on supplier to give short timescale for stable supply	Clent Parish Council Bromsgrove District Council Local MP Electricity Supplier	1 year
There is dissatisfaction with the condition and maintenance of the drainage system.	Pressure on the relevant departments to improve maintenance	Clent Parish Council Worcester County Council Severn Trent Water	1 year
There is dissatisfaction with some aspects of the Refuse Collection service.	Pressure on the Collection Service to address customer complaints	Clent Parish Council Bromsgrove District Council	1 year
POLICING			
Parishioners expressed concern that there is a low Police presence coupled with slow response times.	Pressure to be brought to increase the visibility and improve response times	Clent Parish Council Chief Constable, Police Authority	Ongoing
There is strong interest in the possibility of setting up further 'Neighbourhood Watch' schemes.	Parish Council to call a public meeting with Community Police involvement.	Clent Parish Council Community police, Parishioners	1 year

CLENT PARISH PLAN 2005

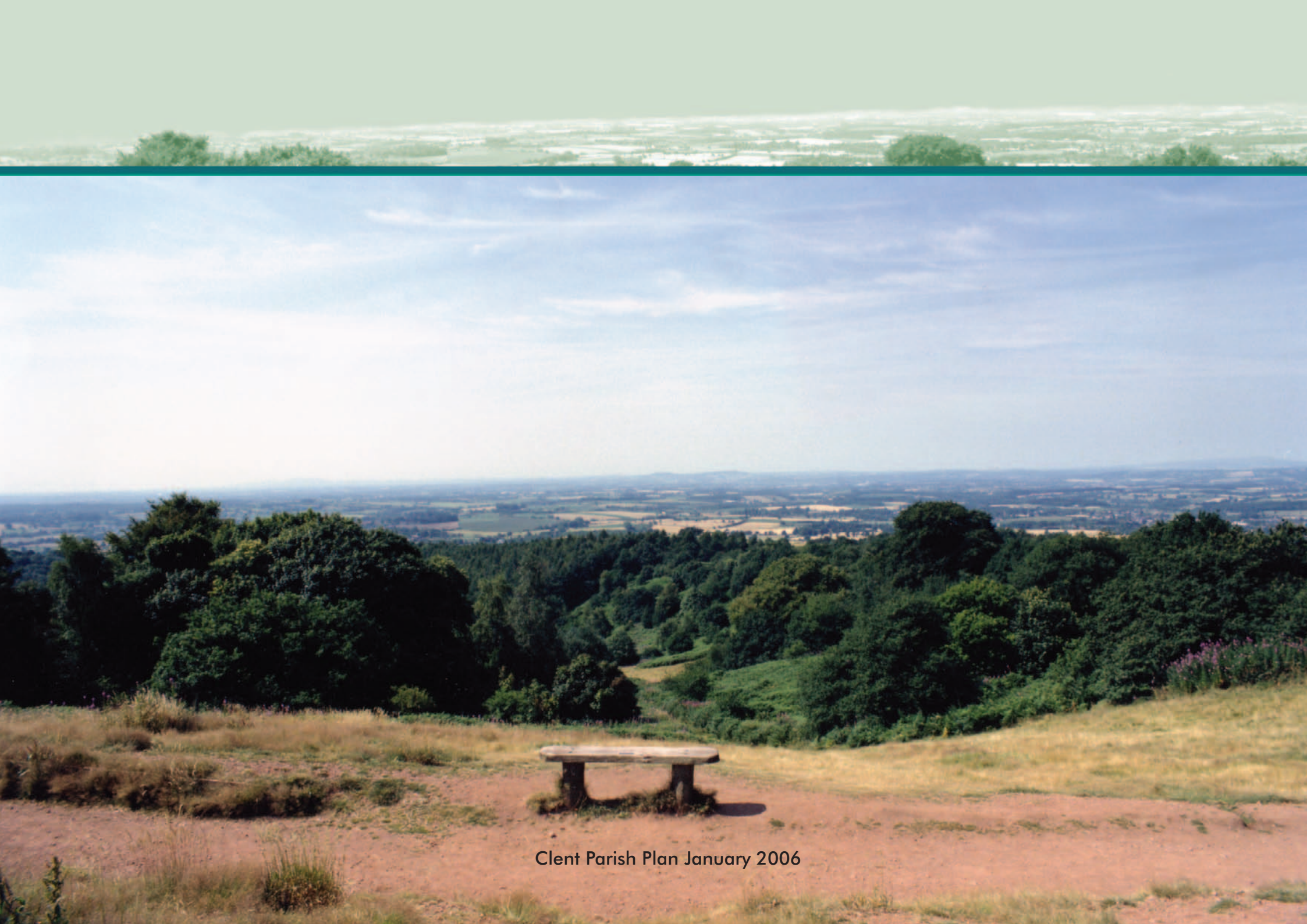
ITEM	ACTION	LIAISON*	TIMESCALE**
HIGHWAYS & MAINTENANCE			
There is general dissatisfaction with the maintenance of roads, pavements, fences and roundabouts.	A survey and report is needed to establish areas where improved road and pavement maintenance is required.	Clent Parish Council Highways Authority Worcestershire County Council	1 year
There is a need for a way of reducing traffic speeds within the parish.	A survey and report is needed to establish the types and positioning of possible traffic calming measures.	Clent Parish Council Highways Authority Worcestershire County Council	1 – 2 years
There is general dissatisfaction with the cleanliness of roads and pavements and litter removal is thought to be inadequate.	A survey and report is needed to establish areas where improved road and pavement cleanliness and litter removal is required.	Clent Parish Council Highways Authority Worcestershire County Council	1 year
PERSONAL TRANSPORT			
The bus service appears adequate for current demand and should be retained.	A letter to be drafted and sent to the Omnibus Company explaining, in general terms, the result of the survey and the wish for the present service to be retained.	Clent Parish Council Omnibus Company	1 year
Cycling facilities were seen to be inadequate.	A survey and report is needed to establish where better facilities for cyclists could be provided.	Clent Parish Council Highways Authority Worcestershire County Council Bromsgrove District Council	1 year
There should be improved provision of access for wheelchairs and prams. The existing provision also should not be allowed to become obstructed.	A survey and report is needed to establish where better facilities and access for prams and wheelchairs could be provided. The police need to enforce the laws of obstruction in these areas.	Clent Parish Council Highways Authority Worcestershire County Council Bromsgrove District Council Police Authority	1 year

CLENT PARISH PLAN 2005

ITEM	ACTION	LIAISON*	TIMESCALE**
SPORTS & RECREATION			
There is clear support for the introduction of a variety of sports facilities. The needs of Parish teenagers should be considered in any provisions.	Feasibility study to be actioned	Clent Parish Council Local Residents	2 years
The Parishioners require continued maintenance of Centenary field/Recreation grounds but requires more attention to litter removal and dog-fouling.	Education campaigns, improved signs, and enforcement of 2004 Act.	Clent Parish Council	2 years
The Parish residents have stated that more seating is needed in the Centenary Field.	More seats to be provided	Clent Parish Council	2 years
There is an indicated need for outdoor recreational facilities in the Pinewoods/Clent area of the Parish.	There should be exploration of possible land provision and a feasibility study for this.	Clent Parish Council Bromsgrove District Council	2 years

* Not exhaustive - other interested parties may be involved as required.

** For guidance only and effective from date of publication.



Clent Parish Plan January 2006