

Compton Valence

West Compton

Toller Fratrum

Wynford Eagle

PARISH PLAN

FOREWORD

NEW MOVES in the politics of the nation are forecast to promote new opportunities and new responsibilities for local communities. It is possible that we will see a significant shift in powers away from central authority towards the potential for an increase in influence by the public in general. This important development is the driving force which is encouraging communities and local parish councils all over the country to record in broad terms their current position, and to set out their aspirations for the future.

Following much deliberation in council meetings, and after the collation of information gathered in preliminary surveys of residents' views, the Parish Councillors of The Comptons, Toller and Wynford Parish Council have put together the following proposals for our Parish Plan.

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INTRODUCTION

THE ‘LOCALISM BILL’, the legislation for which is currently passing through Parliament, should lead to a reduction in levels of bureaucracy in central government, and possibly in local government too. It is intended that this in turn should give local communities more opportunity to ‘do things their own way’.

There are four main areas which will be covered by The Bill:

- *The empowerment of the community*
- *Decentralisation and strengthening of Local Democracy*
- *Reform of the Planning System*
- *Reform of Social Housing*

In order to be ready to respond to the changing circumstances and keep our joint interests as a parish to the fore, it is highly desirable for us to have a carefully formulated plan of proposals which reflects our needs at this time, and our aspirations for the future, both for ourselves and for future generations.

To this end, and as briefly mentioned in the Foreword to this document, the Parish Council have put together a considered Parish Plan which should help to form the basis for our future decisions, and a copy or copies of this can then be ready to produce to relevant parties as and when the needs arise.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PARISH

THE JOINT COUNCIL covers a beautiful rural area in West Dorset, consisting of 1,808 hectares (4,467 acres) of a mixture of uplands and small river valleys, and with a population of 200, approximately 150 of whom are voters. It has no major settlement, and as a consequence has none of the usual public facilities, such as schools, hospitals, surgeries or shops and pubs.

The upland areas are used largely for grazing animals (sheep with some dairy), and the valleys which have given shelter and good water for many centuries are home to the small communities of Compton Valence, Toller Fratrum, West Compton and Wynford Eagle.

In common with adjacent parts of West Dorset, this area has a history of civilization from the Iron and Bronze Ages, through Roman occupation and Celtic development to modern times.

Whilst through almost all of these centuries, settlements have been of a farming nature, times since the Second World War have witnessed large changes. Farming is still prevalent here, but the numbers of population engaged in it have fallen significantly with the advent of machinery and changed farming practices.

As a consequence we see today a large segment of the population which has work commitments outside the area whilst continuing to live here. From this description it can clearly be seen that transport and movement in and out of the area are of equal importance to the quality of life here.

The council area is bounded north and south by busy main roads, (A35 and A356), with an increasing amount of traffic using the area as a short cut. This creates danger and noise in our villages, and especially so with heavy goods vehicles using our lanes which are totally unsuitable for their size, weight and speed.

We lack all the normal facilities within our boundaries, and in this sense we are an area which is inadequately served. We have to make our own arrangements wherever we can. Recreational facilities are nonexistent except for the Village Hall in Compton Valence.

Reception for radio and television, broadband and mobile telephones across the entire area is well below the standard we might expect in a modern world. Mobile phone reception is impossible in places.

We have four churches within the parish area, with two redundant and two operating, but one of those two is planned, by the Diocese of Salisbury, to become redundant in the near future. This will leave just the one active church in the area at Compton Valence.



Photograph courtesy of Kris Dutson

Compton Valence

COMPTON VALENCE nestles in the bottom of a downland basin, six miles to the west of Dorchester. It has a long history of settlement, and the Romans used the water that rises in the heart of the village to feed Dorchester via a complex number of aqueducts. It has always been a farming community which has evolved from a series of level strips, which can still be seen, and were abandoned during the plague in 1348, to a large mixed farm in the early 1980's. Although Compton Valence is still dominated by agriculture few inhabitants work on the land, and the farms have adjusted their production to market forces.

The village is made up of 27 dwellings, of which 30% are owner occupied, the remainder being farm cottages which are now let out

on the open market. Although one house has paid for mains water to be brought in, the remainder are fed from three bore holes. There is no mains sewerage or gas. None of the properties are used as holiday lets, and at the time of writing there are no 'weekenders'. The village has no shop, but has a wonderful church which has a service once a month, with a vicar provided from the Winterborne Valley benefice. Compton Valence also has a Village Hall which was refurbished from a Lottery Grant six years ago, and is now used for a limited number of social and business engagements.

The population of the village is 68, of which 19 are in full time education at a variety of schools. The school bus comes through the village, picking up children for the local primary school in Winterbourne Abbas, and the middle and secondary schools in Dorchester. Where necessary the local Council provide a taxi for children who are educated elsewhere.

The only public road through the village is single track with a number of passing places. The road suffers badly in the winter, and requires continuous maintenance to keep the potholes filled in. The hedges are maintained by the local farmers, who cut them as late as possible in order to provide food for the abundant bird population. The village is known for its snowdrops, which provide a wonderful display in February each year. The village has tapped into this, and provide teas and lunches in the village hall, the proceeds going to support the running of the Church and Hall.

The village is a loved by those who live within it for it's peace and community spirit.



West Compton

WEST COMPTON, formerly Compton Abbas and West Compton Abbas, is a small rural hamlet situated 9 miles north-north-west of Dorchester close by and below the old Roman road joining Dorchester to the iron age hill fort of Eggardon. The parish comprises 346 hectares which includes the hamlet, two outlying farms, Higher Wynford Farm to the north adjacent to the Old Rectory and Eggardon Hill Farm to the west.

The village has a redundant church, St Michael's, whose chancel was built in 1858 following the destruction of the previous wooden church of thirteenth-century origins. The parish was considered important in the diocese of Salisbury with strong connection to Milton Abbey.

Traditionally West Compton has been an agricultural community; in previous centuries allegedly up to 200 people were resident in the village although by 1871 this had reduced to 98 and now, in 2010, this figure is 47 with all but 5 eligible to vote. In the past agriculture was the main employment provided largely by absentee landlords. Now very few residents are directly involved in farming, the majority are employed working beyond 5 miles from the village with a smaller number of self employed working from home. Approximately 10% are retired.

The last part of the twentieth century witnessed the greatest change. In 1980 the hamlet consisted of the Manor House, one other owner occupied house and four other properties that were rented out, mainly to agricultural workers. Since then the hamlet has been substantially developed through barn conversions as well as one new build farmhouse at Eggardon Farm. Now of the 23 properties in the parish, 12 are privately rented, 2 provided as part of employment and 9 are owner occupied. The hamlet's infrastructure, not least the private water supply, has struggled to keep pace with this development.

West Compton does not benefit from any public services, apart from a weekly refuse and recycling collection, or recreational facilities and is an unsuitable abode for those without their own means of transport. The nearest bus service, shop and pub are at least 3 miles away; the roads to them are poorly maintained and hazardous for pedestrians. While inhabitants readily acknowledge enjoying a quality of life commensurate with living in an area of outstanding natural beauty adjacent to a world heritage site, their

concerns remain principally unsustainable development, poorly maintained roads – particularly in winter, speeding traffic, poor communications including Broadband, fly tipping and litter. The community clearly would benefit from the provision of some sort of recreational facility.



Toller Fratrum

Toller Fratrum looks promising from afar, and lives up to its promise splendidly . . .

Nikolaus Pevsner – *The Buildings of England, Dorset*

THE OLDEST EVIDENCE of human occupation at Toller Fratrum is from the Bronze Age, the finds from which are deposited in Dorchester Museum. It has seen Roman, Celtic and Mediaeval occupation and was known at one time as Toller Parva (Little Toller).

Today the hamlet still stands on the south bank of the River Hooke (anciently the River Toller), and this river carries very high

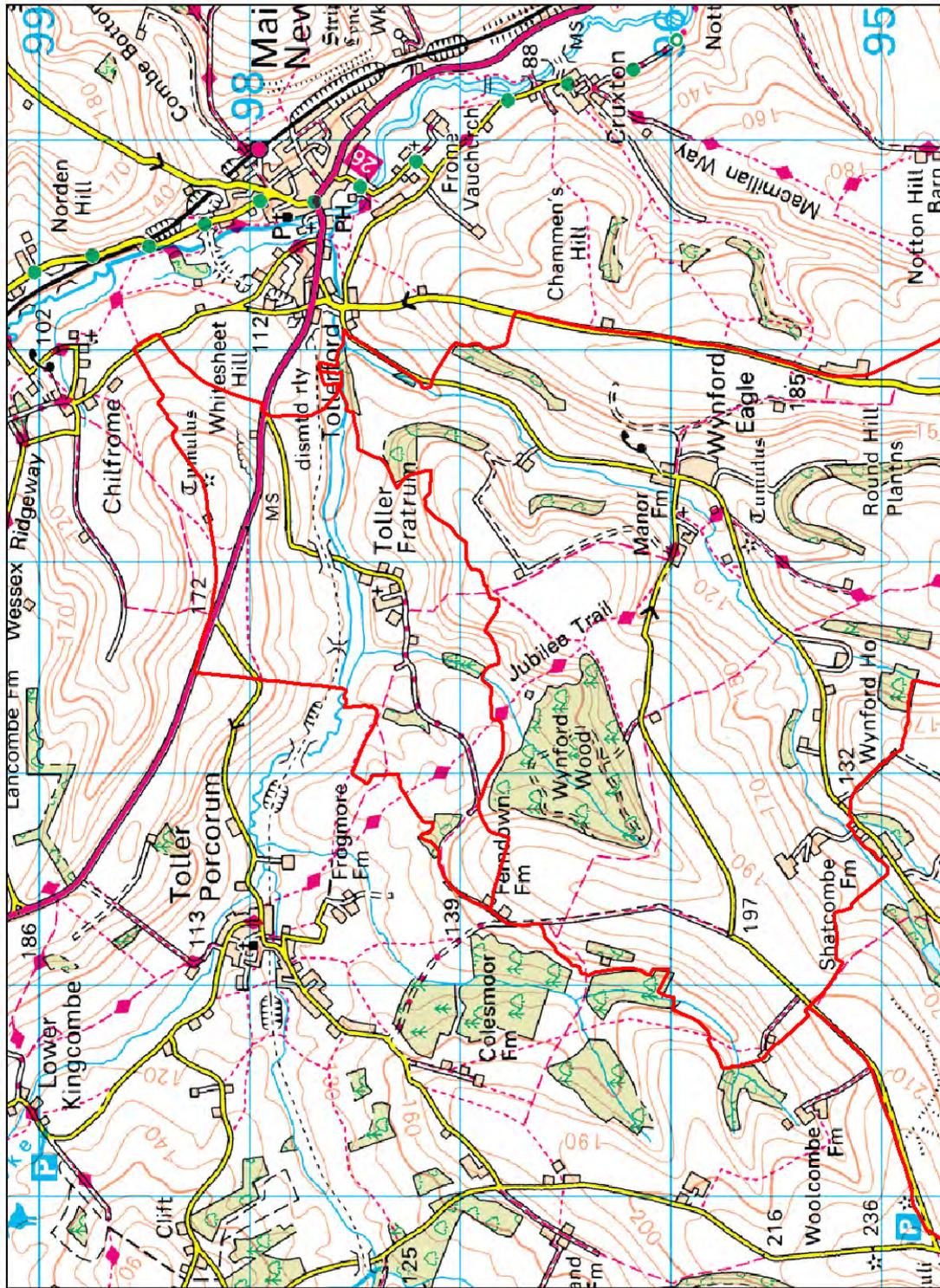
quality water (one of Wessex Water's highest rated rivers). The river is subject to flash flooding several times a year, and leaves the village temporarily cut off.

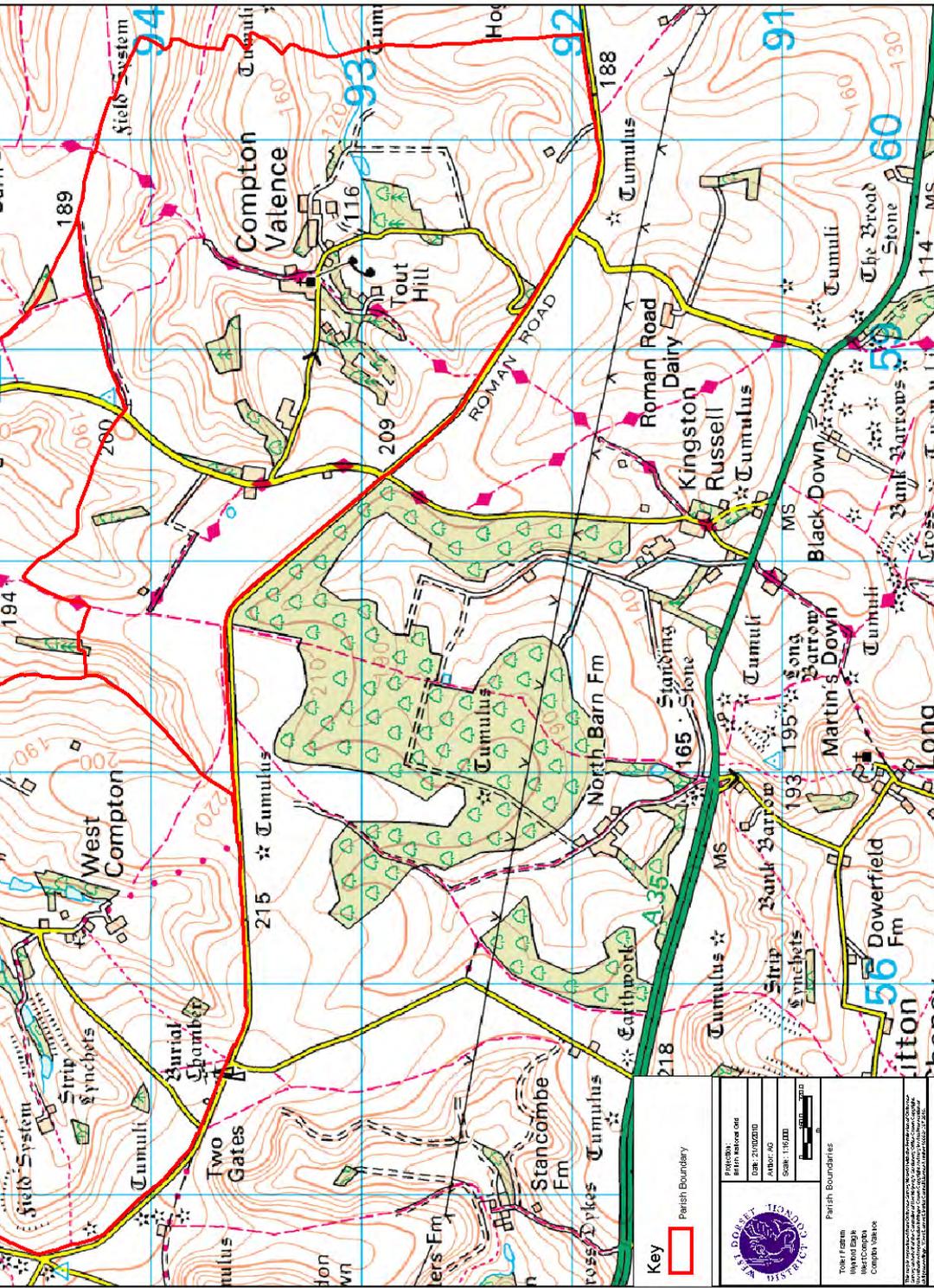
There is excellent spring water here and the entire settlement has a private water supply, and private drainage.

Toller Fratrum has a large farm in fine buildings, still family run, and this is surrounded by several smaller private dwellings. It has been described with great enthusiasm by Nicholas Pevsner and Sir Frederick Treves no less. The ancient Parish Church of St Basil is now scheduled for closure by the Diocese of Salisbury, despite having a thriving congregation of worshippers who come from the surrounding area. This is a further example of authorities abandoning rural areas, and goes against the principles of the Localism Bill currently in passage through Parliament .

The hamlet is set at the end of a cul-de-sac and has offered utter peace and quiet for many many generations. There are three working households, one being the aforementioned farm, and three occupied by retired professional people, two of long standing. One property is rarely used and then only as a holiday retreat by a Londoner, and one (half) cottage is empty. Eight residences in all.

There is an ominous threat to the peace and health of the neighbourhood with the potential re-development of the former disused quarry at Whitesheet Hill – itself shown on both Dorset County Council and Countryside Agency maps as designated 'open country' land with a right to roam. The hamlet is totally united in the strongest of views that this should not be allowed to happen, for all the reasons that we as one of the nearby communities most





Key Parish Boundary

<p>PROJ: 2011 Edition: 1st Date: 21/02/2010 Author: AG Scale: 1:10,000</p>	<p>WEST DORSET DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>1:10,000</p>	<p>Parish Boundaries</p>
<p>Town: Farnham Weymouth Dorchester Bournemouth</p>	<p>West Dorset District Council Planning Department Dorchester, Dorset</p>

threatened put forward to the County Council enquiry.

The proposed development is adjacent to our already dangerous exit on to what is a very busy main road, and this needs serious reconsideration. The state of our village road generally needs attention from both a surface and drainage point of view as highlighted by the observations in our residents' survey..

Radio, television and broadband reception are poor, as is reception for mobile phones – which in places is impossible.

We have a telephone line to the village, and otherwise the only mains service here is electricity.



Wynford Eagle

WYNFORD EAGLE ('Wenfrot' in the Domesday Book) is a hamlet in the true sense of the word; a collection of houses surrounding a private chapel and manor house, but with no public house, shop or post office. It is situated in the most glorious rolling Thomas Hardy countryside, is part of the Dorset AONB and has a very rural character which is highly prized by the sparse and scattered population. The Wynford Estate (1,115 acres of combinable crops, sheep, woodland and rented properties) is the main land holding in this parish; providing a private water supply to the hamlet inhabitants and the owners of the estate are very

Careful to preserve the agricultural ethos of this beautiful area. The parish is well served by bridleways and footpaths, affording magnificent views of our downlands and valleys. A stream, the Wyn, flows through the hamlet before joining the Hooke at the northern end of the estate which eventually becomes the Frome in Maiden Newton. The area has Norman origins and the Manor, which is a fine example of a compact seventeenth-century manor house, had a very prominent role to play in the English Civil War as well as being the birthplace of Thomas Sydenham, known variously as the 'Father of English Medicine' or the 'English Hippocrates'.

This unique history is well worth preserving in this day and age and consequently any thoughts of developing redundant farm buildings for new housing or business units have to be balanced by the effect it would have on our rural environment and infrastructure; for instance increased traffic on our already overused and dangerous country lanes. The locals cite verge litter and excessive, noisy and speeding traffic as major concerns at least as important as poor radio, television and broadband reception.

In general the population realise that the price they have to pay to live in these idyllic surroundings means that facilities usually taken for granted in these times are not always freely available, but they still feel that our lanes are not up to the standard required to cope with the excessive traffic using them.

SUMMARY OF SURVEY FINDINGS

Community

THE POPULATION of our parish area is made up as follows:

Compton Valence	66
West Compton	30
Toller Fratrum	18
Wynford Eagle	86
<i>Current Total</i>	<i>200</i>

Below, age groupings are based on the current total number of inhabitants:

<i>0-15</i>	<i>16-24</i>	<i>25-39</i>	<i>40-64</i>	<i>65+</i>
35	12	33	101	19
17.5%	6.00%	16.5%	50.5%	9.5%

The percentage of inhabitants of working age, 16-64, is 73%. We have no reliable breakdown of those in that age group who are unemployed, those working in semi-skilled or highly skilled jobs, or those in this age group who are recently retired. Outside this group we have 17.5% below the age of 15 and 9.5% over 65 years of age.

Environment

THE ENVIRONMENT and our surroundings are a very precious asset, not only to those of us who live here and work to preserve/conservate it in prime condition, but precious also to local wildlife and the national scene generally.

Maintenance, use and enjoyment of this aspect showed in our preliminary surveys as a key issue to residents.

	<i>Land Area</i>
Compton Valence	534ha
West Compton	346ha
Toller Fratrum	205ha
Wynford Eagle	723ha
Total Parish Council Area	1,808ha

Last year we mounted a cogently argued objection to proposals to re-open the quarry at Whitesheet Hill in the Toller Fratrum parish area. We had expert and specialist evidence to show that it would be seriously detrimental to the area and its inhabitants if it went ahead, but nonetheless the County Council gave their approval. We strongly believe this decision should be rescinded as soon as possible.

Transport

TRANSPORT and movement in and out of the area are of equal importance to the quality of life here.

The council area is bounded north and south by busy main roads, (A35 and A356), with an increasing amount of traffic using the area as a short cut. This creates danger and noise in our villages, and especially so with heavy goods vehicles using our lanes which are totally unsuitable for their size, weight and speed.

Access to these major routes is essential to the way of life here, but in winter this can be severely restricted or even prevented as the servicing of our local roads by the Area Council is lamentable.

Travel outside the area is necessary for work in most cases. Travel is also necessary to access the following facilities, none of which exist within its boundaries:

- *Schools – Primary at Maiden Newton or Winterbourne Abbas; Secondary at Beaminster or Dorchester*
- *Doctors – Maiden Newton*
- *Hospitals – Dorchester or Bridport*
- *Shops – Maiden Newton*
- *Railway – Maiden Newton*
- *Library – Dorchester (mobile service is not comprehensive)*

The surveys from all four parishes indicate very clearly that our residents are extremely dissatisfied with the state of the roads and the lack of their upkeep. This is one of the most frequently quoted concerns of our residents. There are no public bus services connecting the area, so the car is the main form of transport.

Further worries are expressed continually about the size, weight and frequency of traffic passing through the area, or visiting farms and communities. Wynford Eagle is particularly blighted by this aspect, as it is the conduit through which passes most of the external traffic cutting through the area.

This creates danger, noise, pollution and is a threat to the peace of such a rural area.

Housing & Development

OUR SURVEYS show that there is currently no need for any extra housing in the area.

Development in broad terms is not desirable, as almost exclusively residents have chosen to live in the area because it is free of threats from development and the resulting transport, noise and danger levels.

Leisure

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES are nonexistent except for the Village Hall in Compton Valence.

We have to make our own arrangements wherever we can.

There is very little if any flat land in the parish area which could provide space for most of the normal activities such as games pitches etc, so alternative sources of joint leisure activity should be sought.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

MOST SURVEYS show that residents wish to be left alone to enjoy the peace and tranquillity provided by living in such a beautiful area. The most valuable features to residents – and which we must strive to preserve and improve – are the unspoilt countryside and scenery, footpaths and bridleways for countryside access, peace and quiet, and the local wildlife.

Our recommendations for the future are as follows:

- *Better internet should be provided*
- *Better mobile telephone coverage is needed*
- *Radio & television reception needs to be improved*
- *A way must be found to prevent fly tipping*
- *‘Traveller’ sites in the council area should be discouraged*
- *The community should have a presence on the internet, primarily for the dissemination of information to residents and not for tourism promotion purposes*
- *Developments in the broad sense should be opposed if they are likely to upset the fragile infrastructure and character of the area*

ACTION PLAN

THE PRINCIPAL needs for action relate to roads and the provision of services in the area.

Roads

- As a priority we must insist on signing at all main entry points from the adjacent main roads into our area banning or at least strongly discouraging the use of this area for shortcuts across country by cars and especially heavy goods vehicles.
- The Council must be lobbied to greatly improve road maintenance, and provide very much more efficient gritting services and supplies of grit in winter.
- Investigate the best ways of reducing traffic speeds at certain trouble spots. See that these are implemented, preferably without a proliferation of intrusive signing.

Services

- We must be aware of the new Water Act and new water regulations which are developing. These could seriously impact on the excellent spring and borehole supplies which we currently enjoy. Almost without exception local residents would prefer the status quo to being put onto mains supplies with all that implies – increased costs and worsening quality.

- We must press for improvements to signal reception for broadband, television, radio and mobile telephones, asking for meetings with the relevant authorities if and where necessary. Also, Dorset has no dedicated radio service but is amalgamated with surrounding counties: this should be rectified.
- We must press the Council to do whatever is possible to discourage/prevent fly tipping.
- Having already experienced serious disturbance and inconvenience due to the incursions by ‘travellers’, most notably in the quarry at Whitesheet Hill, we should emphasise that any attempts to place sites for them in our council area would be unwelcome.
- We must raise awareness of the activities of the Parish Council.
- We must invite and encourage more public participation to engender opportunities for residents to get involved in communal activities.
- Create a programme of events such as small exhibitions and lectures in the Compton Valence Village Hall to encourage public participation. These could be wildlife and environment based and utilise some of the talents we have living in the area for example, with some input from outside visitors where thought necessary.
- We should investigate ‘community purchasing arrangements’ for our fuel such as oil and gas, to see whether we could benefit from bulk buy prices.

- In the longer term we should institute discussions on renewable resources, such as a farm anaerobic digestion system, (one of which is apparently already operating near Dorchester).
- We should investigate the possibilities and costs for setting up a blog site, considering carefully the advantages and disadvantages which this might create. As a part of this we might consider a ‘notice board’ for small ads etc. This may facilitate social exchange and grow into an exchange of skills, further helping us to unite as a community.
- We should investigate the likely outcome and impact of new developments which will be brought about by such new legislation as the Localism Bill, and study how we can best implement the possibilities and difficulties presented in the best interests of our residents.
- We should work to maintain and where possible improve the footpaths through our area, having in mind the provision of ‘dog friendly’ stiles where necessary and where possible.
- We should encourage residents to discuss their planning aspirations with neighbours and parish councillors before applying for planning permission, thus (hopefully) ensuring a smoother passage through the process.