

Lympstone Neighbourhood Plan: Summary Report from Focus Groups

Introduction

We have run focus groups on three of the themes discussed at the initial community consultation on the 18th April. The focus groups were advertised in the Herald and on this website. They are part of the process of generating suggestions for the Plan. Each group had a wide ranging discussion, and you can access detailed reports by clicking on the appropriate link below:

 Community 26th June
 Infrastructure 3rd July
 Environment 4th July

This report is a brief overall summary of the discussion, to give people who were not present a flavour of some of the themes that emerged. Hopefully it will generate thought and discussion amongst the community, since the Neighbourhood Plan needs to take account of as wide a range of views as possible.

This report does not necessarily reflect the views of the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, or the views of any individual focus group members. The fact that an issue is raised here does not mean that it will appear in the Neighbourhood Plan, nor does the order of points reflect any priorities. The Plan will be subjected to widespread consultation in both its draft and final forms, and can only be adopted if approved following an independent inspection and community referendum.

There will be further focus groups on housing and development, and consultation with specific stakeholders. If you are interested in helping with these please look out for more information on the village website or in the Herald.

From the focus groups some broad themes emerged about what people value in the parish, and how we can develop, enhance, and protect these features of our community.

What people value in the Parish

- The range of local facilities and amenities e.g. shop, post office, pubs and school. Some of these are threatened, and all need continued community support.
- The significant landscape features e.g. the foreshore, and footpaths. As well as their aesthetic impact these give people, especially children freedom, the ability to roam.
- The train service
- The variety of people in the parish, in particular the range of ages, and the healthy mix between traditional inhabitants who bring a sense of continuity, retired professionals who bring a vibrancy and range of interests, and younger couples with children.
- The variety of leisure opportunities, groups and societies.
- The high proportion of people who live and work locally, giving a sense of community rather than a dormitory village.

- The collective feeling of being ‘a village’, a sense of coherence and pulling together. As one person put it ‘people expect to get to know each other, and you can walk down the street and people smile at you’.

In terms of development things that are important to consider are:

- Any housing development needs to avoid coalescence. There is a role for bold modern designs but these need to carefully blend the old with the new e.g. in terms of materials used. Gated developments are out of place and undermine the sense of community. There is a need for more sheltered housing in the village, to enable elderly residents to stay within the community.
- Any developments necessary for protecting the environment and combating global warming, and calming speeding cars and cyclists in the village, should consider any detrimental impact on the existing character of the built environment.
- We need to keep the amount and speed of car traffic in the village within reasonable limits, and ensure it does not undermine the sense of community. We also need to mitigate the negative impact on some residents of increasing numbers of cyclists using the village roads.
- Any proposals to build the ‘Dinan Way Link’ should include widespread local consultation. No development should take place along the link road, and steps should be taken to mitigate the effect on the local environment.
- We could consider developments such as more community facilities e.g. a community room with internet access, community approaches to generating alternative energy, and approaches to increasing opportunities to volunteer within the Parish.
- We should ensure that all groups feel part of our community, including service families and residents who live outside the centre of the village.

Mark Robertson

Focus Group Facilitator, July 2012