



Community Led Plan Case Study

SOUTH STOKE

The Community...

South Stoke is a small village situated about 6 miles from the market town of Wallingford on the east side of the river Thames, with Moulsoford on the opposite bank. It is surrounded by beautiful countryside.

The Parish includes the hamlet of Little Stoke and a group of small businesses including an airfield near Ickfield farm. The main railway line runs through the village on an embankment with the nearest station 2 miles away at Goring & Streatley.



Getting Started

April 2009 - Annual Parish Meeting

The Parish Council, was concerned that they needed a forward plan to inform the council's decisions. ORCC presented Community Led Planning approach to the Annual Parish Meeting. The parish council decided that this could be a helpful framework to galvanise the preparation of a Plan.

May 2009 - Village Meeting

Cllr Ward and Anton Nath from Oxfordshire Rural Community Council (ORCC) described the process of developing a village plan. Volunteers came forward to work on different aspects of the plan.

June 2009 - Village Plan Steering Group

The steering group of 10 people was formed from the volunteers who came forward at the Village Meeting including 2 parish councillors. They met for the first time on June 5th, agreed roles and constitution, and a monthly meeting schedule. They began with a series of open meetings to identify issues, likes and dislikes from everyone over the age of 8.

KEY FACTS:

Population: 500

Plan Published: 2011

Funding: £1,500

District: South Oxfordshire

County: Oxfordshire

"What was terrific was the community involvement, people being motivated to get involved in their village and change things."

Geoff Ward Chair Parish Council





Community Led Plan

Getting it done

- **The core steering group** formed quickly from the initial launch event with two parish council representatives to provide strong links to the parish council. They followed the CLP framework, adopting it fully as a way of taking the Village Plan forward.
- **Love it / Hate it** preliminary survey reached most people in the village with a good response rate.
- **Events** were held to get a wider group of people involved in the Village Plan, to encourage the community to respond to the questionnaire and to get their help for future implementation of actions, rather than “dump” it on the Parish Council for action.
- **Project teams were formed** from residents across the village for the “Top Ten wants”, with designated team leaders. Progress was made on these activities in parallel with the Plan process.
- **Strictly South Stoke”** event in Nov 2009 presented the main issues from the preliminary survey. Between 25 and 30 people attended, provided further ideas, and some expressed interest in helping to take forward actions.
- **Local Authorities** supported priority actions with Oxfordshire County Council responding to ideas for improving the bus service (Community transport scheme Go Ride awarded the contract) and advising on broadband, and from South Oxfordshire District Council for landscaping a recreation ground.



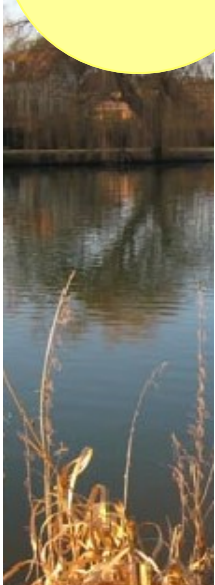
“The CLP process kick-started activity. ..The first few steps are important. It’s a marathon not a sprint.”

Geoff Ward, chair Parish Council

**83%
Response
Rate**

The Questionnaire

- The steering group distributed a preliminary survey “Love it/Hate it to find out what issues people in the village cared about. This formed the basis for the questions asked in the full questionnaire
- The questionnaire—“To Be or Not To Be and As You Like It” - was piloted with the Women’s Institute.
- They found that processing the open questions was more of a challenge.
- Respondents could put their name and contact details on the questionnaire if they chose, or remain anonymous.
- The village was split into areas with questionnaire distributors/collectors for each. With 250 households, these distributors made face to face contact with most people, were careful to time their visits well, and then went back to collect or negotiated a time to pick it up.
- The high response rate (83%) was the result of “hard work and determination to make it a face-to-face experience. ... it gives you credibility” (Nicky Kennedy, questionnaire lead).



Case Study - South Stoke

Achievements

The village achieved its top priority actions: a village shop and recreation ground, a much better bus service, improvements to the village hall, additional activities and a revamped newsletter. Other actions may be progressed in time such as speeding on the local roads, broadband, a footbridge or ferry across the river and a

“The recreation ground with the village shop beside it is used by crowds of people in the summer” Roy McMillan (Chair, CLP steering group)

The Village Shop:

- the project began in summer 2011 and the shop opened in March 2013 in a converted shipping container on the recreation ground.
- A committed lead person helped by a small team, researched the options, visited other community shops,, applied for grants and took advice from ORCC's village shop adviser.
- The shop is an important community space run by a rota of volunteers and 2 part time paid managers.



***“Everyone buzzes about the village shop and the bus service”
Geoff Ward, chair Parish Council***



“Go Ride”: Improved bus service

- A steering group member researched the available bus services, spoke to the county council, neighbouring parishes and the bus operators and worked up a substantive proposal for an improved bus service.
- The hard work paid off: South Stokes proposal to use Go Ride minibuses and to offer 13 services a day into the village was awarded a 3 year contract in the county council's tender process.



The recreation ground:

- Funds were raised for landscaping and playground equipment. It is now a lovely playground and landscaped area with the village shop beside it. There are wonderful synergies between the shop and the playground.

Community Led Plan Case Study

South Stoke

What happened next

The plan was completed in 2011 and the steering group distributed a copy to every household and published it on the village website www.southstoke.org.uk. A meeting was held where the final plan was presented to the community with a call for volunteers to help take the actions forward.

In late 2014 South Stoke decided to refresh their Plan to address new challenges.



“we had to fight on many fronts.....the highs and the lows have been tremendous”

Nicky Kennedy, village shop lead