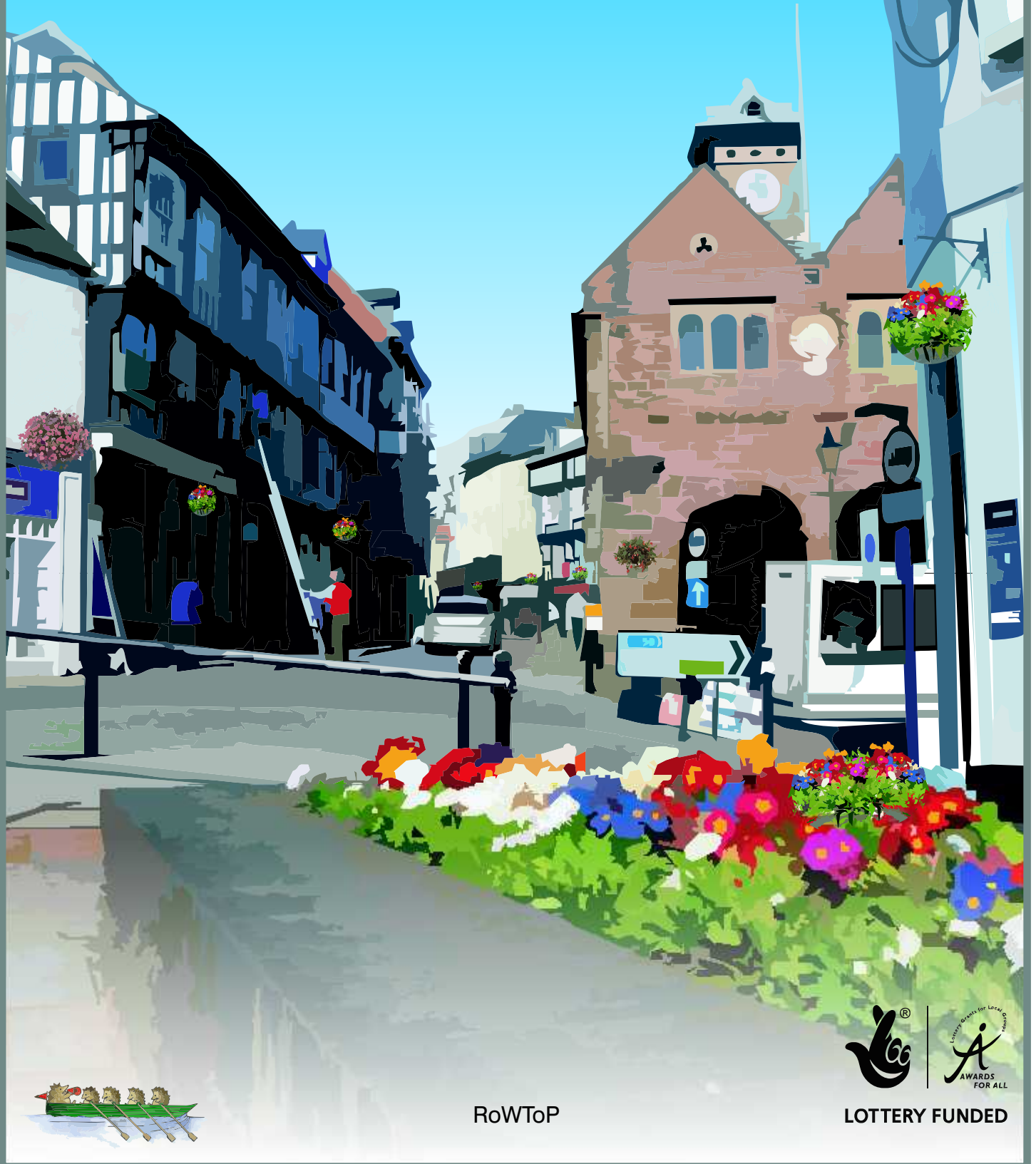


Ross-on-Wye Town plan



RoWToP



LOTTERY FUNDED

Summary of Main Recommendations

Some of the proposals included in the report can be activated almost immediately - others are medium to long-term objectives. The main recommendations are summarised below:

- It is proposed that the Town Plan report should be adopted by the Ross Town Council(RTC) and Ross Rural Parish Council as the basis for a business plan for the future
- The report should be used to provide Additional Planning Guidance for the local planning authorities
- Certain powers be devolved by Herefordshire County Council to the Ross Town Council, notably traffic management, parking and public buildings.
- A monitoring body be set up to help ensure that the actions included in the report are followed and outcomes achieved within realistic time-scales
- Review possible reduction in retail units. Compile property database.
- Study impact of traffic congestion. Consider park and ride scheme.
- Look at possible changes to existing one-way system
- Update traffic and other signage
- Coordinate volunteer transport provision.
- Open riverside picnic site and kick-about areas. Create tourist trail.
- Form special group to protect historic buildings and landscape
- Continue search for cinema in Ross.
- Improve sporting and leisure facilities
- Plan to increase number of allotments
- Monitor repair of potholes and pavements
- Keep recycling centre open for longer hours
- Liaison body with police to help maintain public order
- Campaign against dog fouling
- Long-term plan to press for by-pass
- Support pressure for more “social” housing



Introduction to the Plan

BACKGROUND

Ross-on-Wye, with its 10,000 population, is a service centre for some 18 surrounding parishes in Herefordshire plus adjacent areas of the Forest of Dean, a catchment area of about 26,000 people altogether. The Steering Group, made up of volunteers interested in the future of Ross, has used its best endeavours to gather information from all parts of that community and all shades of opinion. Methods used have included:

- ✓ Re-evaluation of earlier reports such as the ComDev study
- ✓ Reviewing back copies of the local newspaper
- ✓ Interviews with cabinet members and senior officers in Herefordshire Council
- ✓ Consultations with other specific groups
- ✓ Planning for Real
- ✓ Focus Groups
- ✓ Questionnaire to all households in the town
- ✓ See Appendix A for details.

The consultations identified several key topics that evoked strong feelings from residents and visitors. These have been clustered into four main groups:

- ✓ Economic Development, Housing and Employment
- ✓ Transport, Traffic Management and Pedestrian Safety
- ✓ Sports and Leisure Activities
- ✓ Town Services, Visual Appearance of Ross and Security

PRINCIPLES

The business agenda is based on a specific, underlying set of guiding principles to do with: the locational advantages of Ross-on-Wye, heritage values, sustainability, plan evidence and data gathered the process of plan-making and governance issues.

Location

The site and location of Ross-on-Wye in the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) at the end of the M50 is the key to its economic future. Locational advantages should be exploited but more care needs to be taken, in choosing strategic development sites. For example, how this should link with community planning.

Natural and Built Heritage

Ross people, both those born in the town or locally and relative newcomers, value the town's heritage and its unique character. So do tourists. Heritage conservation is important and Ross-on-Wye is still today, as it was dubbed in the 1930s, a major gateway to the Wye Valley.

Sustainability

In these times of economic and environmental change and uncertainty, the plan seeks to maximise the resilience of Ross-on-Wye by strengthening local communities, businesses and services.

Evidence

The four clusters of main issues mentioned previously contain specific issues and actions examined in this report. Business plan recommendations have been defined only after exhaustive consultation. Some of the evidence is inconclusive e.g. pedestrianisation issues. Some is conflicting e.g. shopping and the scale and siting of new housing. The data will need to be added to and tested over time but it is an important body of evidence, a considerable database, which shows that the plan is relevant and supported. Better local facilities for residents is a major recurring theme and that is the focus.



Introduction to the Plan continued

The Process

The process involved in preparing the plan is important. It is a plan by and for the people of Ross-on-Wye. A more community-based approach to future development bridging local and strategic needs is now required – see response by RoWToP to the Place Shaping Consultation with Herefordshire Council, January 2010. The process we have started needs to be refined to enable better communication and cooperation between the Ross community and Herefordshire Council Planning Authority.

Governance

How the town is run, its governance, funding and resourcing issues underpin the plan. If Ross-on-Wye is to procure more responsibility for decision-making and town management, to enable implementation of this plan and influence strategic planning more effectively, the necessary steps need to be put in motion. One of the essential steps is a cohesive community-led plan.

WHY A TOWN PLAN?

Overlaying purposes reflect what we can do. The final purpose listed below (No.6) gives the view of RoWToP that most effective action depends on powers devolved from Herefordshire Council to the town's governance.

1. To build upon and improve the assets of Ross-on-Wye.
2. To expand local economic activity or encourage its expansion more to raise average income levels.
3. To encourage a better balance between residential and retail opportunities in the town centre.
4. To implement a set of actions in the short and medium term.
 - Timescale of plan
 - Funding and resources
 - Monitoring and review
5. To recommend that the plan is adopted by the Ross Town and Ross Rural Councils as a basis for a business plan for the town. Once the plan is adopted application should be made to Herefordshire Council for it to be given Specific Planning Guidance status.
6. To recommend that in due course the Ross Town and Ross Rural Councils seek devolved powers from Herefordshire council to enable more effective action to be taken locally.

VISION

After the implementation of this Plan, Ross will have maintained its historic importance and improved its economic and cultural importance within Herefordshire. It will grow in line with Herefordshire Council's LDF proposals. Congestion in the town centre will have been alleviated and pedestrian safety everywhere improved. There will be better sports and leisure facilities for all age groups. The historic built environment and landscape will have been preserved. Tourism will have increased. More independent retailers and modern industry will have moved here, encouraged by the foregoing and the provision of suitable housing, both mid-range and affordable.

NOTES



The Ross on Wye Town Plan

ISSUE

Special Enabling Objective: The Ross Town Plan has identified the following 32 objectives to be converted into a series of actions. In pursuing these objectives it has become clear that there is an overarching need to review the current powers available to Ross Town Council and to seek to enhance these.

Action

Ross Town Council (RTC) to review current local governance and fiscal arrangements with a view to seeking additional decision-making and fund-raising powers.

Economic Development, Housing and Employment

1. ISSUE: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Objective: To encourage economic growth in Ross-on-Wye.

Evidence: Economic growth is all being concentrated on the development of "Model Farm," at present with no more additional provisions being put forward. Currently average earnings in Ross are amongst the lowest in the country.

Action: Commission a study to discover what level average earnings would have to be raised to, to increase the G.V.A. (Gross Value Added) to the level of a comparable shire market town. Maximise the benefit to Ross-on-Wye of its favourable proximity to motorway access (M50) for commercial development. Encourage the establishment of a group to explore and press for economic growth.

Area of Responsibility: H.C. – South Herefordshire Regeneration Officer, RTC.

Priority/Timescale: High priority. Long term.

2. ISSUE: AFFORDABLE/SOCIAL HOUSING

Objective: To address the demand for more affordable/social housing provision in Ross-on-Wye.

Evidence: The majority of respondents (58%) to the questionnaire said they were in favour of council owned properties to rent. A minority (18%) were against council housing. Approximately the same number (36% each) were in favour of or opposed to a small housing development in their part of town. Written comments suggested that in some cases this opposition was due to the area already being fully developed. The most popular types of accommodation to be provided were low-cost starter homes and mid-range family homes. Herefordshire Council has identified areas for development in its SHLAA (Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment) "Shaping our Place 2026" document.

Action: This information should be discussed with Herefordshire Planning Dept and Strategic Housing Teams. A meeting between Ross Town Council and Herefordshire Council planning representatives needs to be arranged. Self build schemes should also be explored. Update 2005 database of housing needs.

Area of Responsibility: HC, RTC and registered social landlords.

Priority/Timescale: High priority. Medium term.



3. ISSUE: INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT NEW DEVELOPMENT

Objective: To ensure that any future development is supported with adequate service provision for example surface water drainage/flood alleviation, sewerage facilities, water provision and road capacity.

Evidence: Developing information in the LDF exercise. Information concerning proposed development was not available during the consultation period and there is a need for further investigation in view of current proposals.

Action: Explore existing capacity to ensure it is adequate to support further development. Work with H.C. and R.T.C. to explore the implications of "Shaping Our Place 2026," and other options.

Area of Responsibility: HC, Welsh Water Authority (WWA). R.T.C. and utility and service providers.

Priority/Timescale: High. Medium term.

4. ISSUE: DIGITAL SERVICES

Objective: To improve the quality of digital services in Ross-on-Wye.

Evidence: 25% of respondents to the questionnaire indicated that they did not want broadband while 50% indicated that they already have it. A further 10% responded that they don't currently have it but would like it. Digital television provision is patchy in this area.

Action: The difficulties of receiving digital services should be investigated and the Town Council needs to stay in touch with national developments.

Area of Responsibility: RTC.HC.

Priority/Timescale: High. Medium term.

5. ISSUE: INTERNET ACCESS

Objective: To encourage the development of sufficient internet access to satisfy demand in Ross-on-Wye. This is an important factor in the development of Herefordshire's economy as 40% of employment is knowledge based.

Evidence: In the questionnaire 42% of respondents indicated that they would like a free access location to computers. The Ross Library refurbishment may satisfy some of this demand.

Action: An improved internet cafe or community facility is required. Ross Town Council to talk to local businesses and other agencies about extending provision and to find out what the library will be providing.

Area of Responsibility: RTC .ROSS ON WI-FI

Priority/Timescale: Investigations: high priority and short term. Implementation: medium term.



Transport, Pedestrian Safety and Traffic Management

6. ISSUE: TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT AND ROAD SAFETY

Objective: To better manage the pressure of current and future traffic levels. This would involve dealing with traffic noise, pollution and problems with access and parking.

Evidence: There are problems with traffic congestion, especially at "pinch points", such as Copse Cross Street and Alton Street. There were many comments in the questionnaire responses, as well as a long history of letters to the local paper, a submission from the Civic Society (see appendix A), comments to elected representatives etc. However, the necessary actions arising from the questionnaire data were unclear.

When asked if they would be in favour of pedestrianising the town centre, if alternative vehicle routes were available, 47% of respondents said YES while 46% said NO. When this question was asked assuming that present routes stayed the same 23% were in favour of pedestrianisation and 65% against. The Civic Society was unable to support the pedestrianisation of the town centre as, in its view, this would be dependent upon the creation of a by-pass between Walford and Hildersley resulting in the loss of the Town and Country Trail.

Opinions on the one-way system were even more mixed with 30% against change of the existing system, 7% supportive of reversing it, 16% removing it altogether and 28% in favour of altering parts of it.

There is minority support for prioritising pedestrians in the town centre (38% for and 46% against) and requests for lower speed limits and more pedestrian crossings. Residents who took part in the Goodrich Court Focus Group commented on the lack of a pedestrian crossing outside Goodrich Court where they felt crossing the road is very dangerous. During the focus group with Adults with Learning Disabilities the comment was made that "Crossing the road can take ages as there are so many cars."

When asked if they would be in favour of a southern bypass between Hildersley and Tudorville 56% of respondents to the questionnaire said YES and 24% NO.

Action: Further investigations are required to develop a set of clear options for further consultation. RTC could ask Herefordshire Council (HC) to initiate these. A study should be set up to determine the impact of congestion on the economy of the town and the effect of the plans to increase in population will have on this (proposed new homes at Oveross, Hildersley and Tanyard Lane). Seek realistic solutions if there are any. In the current and widely predicted medium term financial situation at local and national levels, a southern bypass seems unlikely to be built for many years. Ross should lobby for this road as part of future land use development. Monitor and measure traffic conditions to support the development of options. Explore a park and ride scheme to link Ross Town with Wilton car park and Labels Store.

Area of Responsibility: RTC, Herefordshire Council Planning and Traffic Management Depts.

Priority/Timescale: Medium priority. Long term.



7. ISSUE: SIGNAGE

Objective: To rationalize the official signage in and around Ross-on-Wye so that it is effective. In its current form it is confusing, misleading and full of omissions.

Evidence: Comments made during the Goodrich Court and Lions Club Focus Groups "People find it hard to come into Ross due to traffic signage and the one way system," "Town not tourist friendly re: signage, parking, Sunday opening." A number of representations received from individuals and organisations. Coach drivers have complained to the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) staff about the poor signage for coaches coming to Ross. Members of ART report that customers visiting their shops complain about the signage.

Action: Signage sub-committees have already been established by the Ross Town Council and , Tourist Information Centre with representatives of the Civic Society and Association of Retail Traders.

Area of Responsibility: RTC, HC, Highways Agency, Ross TIC, ART.

Priority/Timescale: High priority - this links to economic development and appearance of the town.

8. ISSUE: REPAIR OF PAVEMENTS AND ROAD SURFACES

Objective: To ensure that road and pavement surfaces are maintained to a high standard.

Evidence: When asked if they are satisfied with the current state of repair of the highways within the town approximately 64% of questionnaire respondents said 'NO' with regard to both pavements and roads. Focus group comments include "some of our friends can't get around very easily because they are in wheel chairs," "The paving in Ross Town causes problems for those disabled or elderly." And "Partially sighted people would also struggle with the pavements in Ross."

Action: Ross Town Council to liaise with Amey and HC to determine the programmed schedule of repairs and improvements and seek to ensure this is properly prioritised.

Area of Responsibility: HC Highways Dept.; Amey; RTC

Priority/Timescale: Medium priority. Medium term.

NOTES



9. ISSUE: PARKING

Objective: To improve the quality of car parks in Ross by ensuring they are pleasant to use (clean, tidy and well managed), clearly signposted and, accessible.

Evidence: When asked in the questionnaire if there are enough car parks and spaces (within 250m) of the shops in Ross 73% of respondents said YES and 21% thought there should be more.

There is strong evidence from the questionnaire that there is adequate parking provision in Ross. However, the available spaces are poorly signposted and some car parks are perceived to be dowdy and unattractive.

Action: Review management of existing car parking spaces. Examine car parking costs and proposal by the Association of Retail Traders to improve parking facilities.

Area of Responsibility: Association of Ross Traders (ART), HC, RTC.

Priority/Timescale: Medium priority. Medium term.

10. ISSUE: COORDINATION OF VOLUNTARY TRANSPORT

Objective: To maximise the effectiveness of the voluntary transport that is currently available and ensure that it is made available to all potential users.

Evidence: During a meeting held in November 2007 between representatives from the Steering Group and Debbie Griffiths of the Women's Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS) the following was noted: "Debbie has wide experience of the various voluntary and statutory agencies that can provide transport and associated services for the frail and the disabled. The services are not co-ordinated and consequently less useful to the residents than they could be. In particular, there is no central clearing point and some of the agencies restrict their responses to their own service. They do not refer the caller to alternatives. Co-ordination would make the services more widely available and could lead to better services for a similar expenditure."

In the survey 75% agreed or strongly agreed (combined figure) that there should be a single, well publicised, number to call at all times for transport. Almost 50% of respondents were in favour of a similar website.

Action: RTC to investigate further.

Area of Responsibility: RTC, WRVS, Age Concern and other voluntary groups.

Priority/Timescale: Medium/high priority and achievable in the short term.

NOTES



11. ISSUE: WALKING ROUTES

Objective: To increase opportunities for people to walk rather than having to resort to more expensive and polluting means of transport to reach their destination.

Evidence: According to questionnaire results better management and extension of walking routes may lead to 25% of respondents walking more for pleasure and 11% more for work and pleasure. This is another activity that people visit the area specifically to take part in and which brings revenue with it in addition to being an environmentally friendly and sustainable form of transport for the local population. Goodrich Court Focus Group suggested that the footpaths by the river be extended to the left (towards Wilton Bridge).

Action: RTC to liaise with HC, the Ramblers Association, Ross Walking Club, Walkers are Welcome and Transition Ross to develop new and existing routes.

Area of Responsibility: RTC, HC, the Ramblers Association, Ross Walking Club, and Walkers are Welcome,

Priority/Timescale: Medium priority. Medium term.

12. ISSUE: CYCLE TRACKS

Objective: To provide more routes and better facilities for cyclists. To encourage an increase in bicycle use as a sustainable/low carbon means of transport.

Evidence: Better provision for cyclists is needed in the town, including more cycle paths and tracks. When asked if there was a need for more cycle tracks 34% said YES and 20% said they would like more bike lock rails. As part of Ross's efforts to encourage visitors simple improvements to facilities for cyclists could make the town more attractive to them. It is also important for the Town Plan to consider sustainable transport links in Herefordshire and encourage the development of these facilities.

Action: RTC to investigate establishing a cycle path network, in partnership with neighbouring Parish Councils, HC and Sustrans.

Area of Responsibility: RTC and HC working with Sustrans and the Youth Forum.

Priority/Timescale: Medium priority. Long term.

NOTES



Sport and Leisure

13. ISSUE: A SPORTS AND LEISURE STRATEGY FOR ROSS

Objective: To develop an understanding of what is needed to improve the currently inadequate sport and leisure facilities in Ross-on-Wye and to ensure that the necessary funding is secured to create parity of provision with neighbouring communities.

Evidence: The poor sports facilities in Ross are well documented. The provision of improved sports and leisure facilities was identified as the No.1 priority for students at John Kyrle High School in the "Quick Questionnaire." In the main questionnaire, across the age ranges, 18-23% of respondents rated the existing facilities as poor while 13-22% thought they were reasonable. Only 3-9% thought they were good.

Action: The RSLF was formed in 2008 to co-ordinate and lobby for improvements to sports and leisure provision in Ross. It commissioned a study to be carried out on the best way to enhance facilities at the Wilton Sports Centre. Ross Town Council, in conjunction with Ross Sports and Leisure Federation should compare provision in Ross with that in other market towns in Herefordshire to ensure that parity of sporting opportunity is maintained.

Area of Responsibility: RSLF and member clubs, the Youth Forum, HC and RTC.

Priority/Timescale: Urgent. Ongoing.

14. ISSUE: SPORTS CENTRES

Objective: To improve sporting facilities in Ross-on-Wye.

Evidence: 35% of respondents to this question also made written comments in the questionnaire with suggestions as to what Ross is currently lacking, this one being typical "There needs to be a dedicated sports centre where the majority of sports can be practised. Also more pitches for more female orientated sports such as netball and hockey (note: lacrosse is also mentioned by other contributors).....There also need to be facilities for squash and badminton." The state of the Wilton Road Sports Centre building/facilities is widely accepted to be deplorable and sub-standard.

Action: Investigate the implementation of the RSLF feasibility study on the Wilton Sports Ground and local sports/community centres e.g. Tudorville Community Centre. Support the development of a robust business case and change Tudorville Youth Centre into a self-funding, viable Community Centre. Investigate shared use of John Kyrle High School (JKHS) and other school facilities.

Area of Responsibility: RSLF, HC, JKHS, other schools, Tudorville Community Association. Halo, the Youth Forum.

Priority/Timescale: High priority. Medium term.



15. ISSUE: A CINEMA IN ROSS

Objective: To provide Ross-on-Wye with a cinema.

Evidence: Strongly supported across all consultation exercises – Planning for Real, Focus Groups and Questionnaire. Over 90% of respondents to the questionnaire on this subject said that they would attend cinemas showing new releases and 34% said they would attend monthly.

Action: RSLF to commission a feasibility study to examine the possibility of opening a cinema in Ross. This is the single most widely supported issue in the consultation and there was support amongst all age groups.

Area of Responsibility: RSLF, the Youth Forum/"Y Zone".

Priority/Timescale: High priority. Medium to long term.

16. ISSUE: PICNIC SITE AT THE RIVERSIDE

Objective: To provide a picnic area at the riverside with tables and barbecue facilities.

Evidence: This proposal attracted strong support in the questionnaire with 66% of respondents asking for a formal picnic area with benches, tables and facilities such as drinking water and a barbecue along the river bank.

Such a facility would evidently be very popular but in costing it the additional cost of keeping it well maintained, clean and tidy should also be taken into consideration. What is potentially a worthwhile new asset for the local population and visitors could easily become an eyesore.

Action: Ross Town Council to investigate taking control of the riverside, feasibility and costs including establishment and ongoing maintenance.

Area of Responsibility: HC and RTC (The riverside is currently owned and maintained by Herefordshire Council.)

Priority/Timescale: High priority. Short term.

NOTES



17. ISSUE: UPGRADE PLAY AREAS AND KICKABOUT AREAS

Objective: To improve existing play areas and provide more recreational space in Ross-on-Wye.

Evidence: In looking at the response to question 33 about play areas it is important to note that only 22% of those who answered it were in the 20-40 age group (those most likely to have young children). 17% of respondents were in favour of more play areas and 13% felt that each should have extended facilities to include provision for special needs. With regard to requests for more "kickabout/recreation areas" 33% agreed they were needed.

Action: RTC should identify where improved facilities are needed. This could be partly done by looking at the results of the Planning for Real exercises and also by further consultation.

Area of Responsibility: RSLF, the Youth Forum, RTC, HC.

Priority/Timescale: High priority. Medium term.

18. ISSUE: MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAIL FOR YOUTH

Objective: To provide a new outdoor activity facility for Ross as part of the much requested improvement to sports and leisure facilities in the town.

Evidence: A demand for a mountain bike trail became apparent during the Planning for Real (PfR) consultations. Of respondents, 24% agreed there was a need for a mountain bike trail. If created this could help to provide a much needed improvement to facilities for the young people of Ross as well as an additional attraction for tourists interested in pursuing the outdoor activities for which this area is well known.

Action: Explore the availability of a route and costs associated with both the creation and upkeep of such a facility. This links in with Ross Sports and Leisure Federation (RSLF) activity. Look for partners, possibly from the private sector.

Area of Responsibility: RTC to initiate discussions with HC, Cycling groups, RSLF, the Youth Forum.

Priority/Timescale: Medium priority. Medium term.

NOTES



19. ISSUE: ROSS SWIMMING POOL

Objective: To ensure that the Ross swimming pool is fulfilling the needs of its current and potential users.

Evidence: From the written comments in answer to question 27, concerning the provision, improvement or expansion of sports facilities in Ross, a number of respondents requested that a pool for younger children be provided as the existing one is too cold. Other comments criticise the look of the pool and its size.

Action: RTC to invite RSLF to investigate the condition of the pool, to evaluate the current facilities and enter into discussions with Halo as to the viability of providing specific facilities for younger children.

Area of Responsibility: Halo, RSLF.

Priority/Timescale: Low priority. Long term.

20. ISSUE: ADULT AND COMMUNITY LEARNING

Objective: To ensure that the local population knows what classes are available and that they meet its needs.

Evidence: 50% of questionnaire respondents indicated an interest in attending an arts and crafts club, 22% thought there should be more keep fit classes while 17% thought there should be more clubs for pensioners. A large number of people who filled in the questionnaire answered the question about the provision of adult education but only 11.6% of those felt there were too few evening classes provided at John Kyrle High School. There was, however, an issue around the advertising of the existing classes with many people responding that they didn't know there were any.

Action: Better advertising would help make classes available to a wider audience. Provision of an arts and crafts club, keep fit classes and pensioners' clubs should be reviewed to see what currently available and future potential demand is.

Area of Responsibility: HC, The Ryefield Centre, The Larruperz Centre and voluntary groups who run clubs and classes for the elderly. John Kyrle High School Adult & Community Learning, Hereford College of Technology, Forest of Dean College and WEA.

Priority/Timescale: High priority. Low cost.

NOTES



21. ISSUE: ALLOTMENTS

Objective: To provide sufficient allotment space in or around Ross-on-Wye to satisfy local demand.

Evidence: Only 2% of respondents currently have an allotment and a further 8% would like one should it be available, there is a clear demand for more allotments in Ross.

Action: A study to identify possible sites needs to be carried out. Also the possibility of setting up a community garden and/or garden sharing scheme should be examined. Landshare.channel4.com is one possible web site to look at. Ledbury Allotment Association has recently successfully applied for funding from the Big Lottery Fund's Local Food Scheme. Explore the availability of public land and encourage the establishment of a Ross Allotment Society as a pressure group to develop more allotments.

Area of Responsibility: RTC; Ross Rural Parish Council (RRPC), Tudorville Allotment Association, Transition Ross.

Priority/Timescale: High priority. Short term.

NOTES



Town Services, Visual Appearance and Security

22. ISSUE: HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND LANDSCAPE

Objective: To ensure that Ross-on-Wye's historic setting and buildings are protected, maintained and not allowed to fall into disrepair. To ensure that all planning decisions are sensitive to the town's unique setting and historic built landscape. To minimise the impact that traffic and congestion is having on the town environment.

Evidence: The centre of Ross is a designated conservation area and Ross itself sits within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It would, therefore, be negligent of this report not to address the natural and built environment in which Ross exists. The historic buildings and landscape of Ross make it an attractive and appealing place to both the people who live in it and those who visit. They form two of the town's greatest assets and as such should continue to be protected. Traffic poses one of the greatest problems to the successful future of Ross as it was not built with the car in mind so careful thought needs to be given as to the best way to tackle this problem. The difficulties of achieving a consensus approach to this are outlined in earlier topic issues. Many of the historic buildings in Ross form the main shopping streets so this issue links in with those concerned with shop fronts and empty and unsightly premises.

Action: A dedicated group should be established to carry out further investigation into the best way forward to protect Ross and the landscape in which it sits. The Townscape Heritage Initiative should be explored as a means of funding enhancement projects in the town centre as well as other sources of funding for listed buildings.

Area of Responsibility: TIC, ART, RTC, Visit Herefordshire, The Civic Society, The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

Priority/Timescale: High priority. Medium term

23. ISSUE: PUBLIC ORDER

Objective: To reduce anti-social behaviour in Ross-on-Wye.

Evidence: In the questionnaire responses 17% of people answered that night noise, rowdiness or drug abuse was a problem for them. 8% had experienced rowdiness close to a pub or club, 10% rowdiness not identifiable with a particular pub or club, 12% vandalism believed to have resulted from drunken or drug induced behaviour, 3% personal or physical abuse arising from drunken or drug induced behaviour and 21% litter, primarily of discarded alcohol or drug related items.

When asked what should be done about vandalism and graffiti, 16% thought Herefordshire Council should be asked to spend more on cleaning-up/repairs, 53% that the police should spend more on enforcement and 31% that Ross Town Council should be asked to provide a better clean-up/repair service within the existing Council Tax. Very few respondents were willing to pay more for a better service (fewer than 5%).

Action: Overwhelmingly people would like to see the police patrolling more frequently. Pass this information on to the police and ask them for a statement of their intentions/reaction to this information. Monitor the situation and publicise PACT meetings to residents as a means of getting things done. Encourage more community support and involvement. Identify hot spots from Planning for Real data. Ensure that residents are aware of The Community Protection Team and that they can be contacted to deal with littering and graffiti.

continued . . .



23. ISSUE: PUBLIC ORDER continued . . .

Area of Responsibility: West Mercia Policing Authority (WMPA), The Community Protection Team (CPT), RTC. (Note: Ross Town Council already has a Community Engagement Policy.)

Priority/Timescale: High priority. On going.

24. ISSUE: TOURISM

Objective: To continue to develop Ross-on-Wye as a tourist destination by maximising its potential.

Evidence: Historically tourism has been a major employer in Ross and important to the economy.

Action: Ross Town Council and other interested groups such as ART and Walkers are Welcome should work with the Tourist Information Centre to pursue policies that encourage visitors to Ross. An initiative to bring more coaches to the town is already underway with representatives from ART and RTC working with the TIC. This links in with better signage in the town. Ross needs to develop an identity that it can promote to potential visitors. A focus group of interested parties should be set up to address this.

Area of Responsibility: RTC, TIC, Visit Herefordshire (Destination Management Partnership), ART.

Priority/Timescale: High priority. On going.

25. ISSUE: THE HEALTH OF THE TOWN CENTRE

Objective: To maintain and develop Ross-on-Wye as an interesting and welcoming town centre with a balanced mix of independent and national retailers that encourages residents and visitors alike to shop and access services in it. To reduce the number of empty retail units and encourage the upkeep of the fabric of town centre buildings. To preserve the historic character of the town and reduce traffic congestion.

Evidence: Results of the questionnaire are encouraging with 90% of respondents indicating that they shop in Ross on a regular basis for food and convenience shopping. The SMART exercise (Advantage West Midlands) which was recently conducted has helped to provide some useful information. Ross has scored highly compared to other market towns but the local perception is that there are too many empty shops and charity shops and not enough independent specialist shops. Ledbury and Monmouth are most often quoted as the most successful town models to emulate.

Action: The option to reduce the number of retail units through change of use should be considered by planners when opportunities arise. Compile a database of property ownership. Ask Herefordshire Council to use enforcement powers when appropriate to deal with unsightly empty properties. The Association of Ross Traders (ART) should be encouraged to play a leading role in providing ways to improve the retail experience for Ross. See Action for issue 27. A great deal of further analysis is needed.

Area of Responsibility: HC, RTC, ART.

Priority/Timescale: High priority. Medium term.



26. ISSUE: SHOP FRONT DESIGN

Objective: To encourage retailers and landlords to tailor the design of their shop fronts in a manner that is appropriate for an historic town centre with conservation area status.

Evidence: The issue of poor or inappropriate, for a conservation area, shop front design was raised during the very first consultation exercise that the Steering Group carried out and subsequently during the Planning for Real exercises. When asked in the questionnaire if there should be an enforceable code of appearance for shop fronts 36% said YES, 17% said YES and strictly defined and 22% responded YES but only loosely defined.

Action: The Town Council to set up a group in conjunction with representatives from ART and landlords to establish current legislation/guidance and negotiate an approach to dealing with this problem in Ross. ART members have been circulated with Herefordshire Guidance on shop front design. Instigate a good design campaign and encourage business to take seriously their responsibility for how the town looks. Provide advice and promote grants and reward/recognition schemes.

Area of Responsibility: HC, RTC, ART, RCS.

Priority/Timescale: High priority. Long term.

27. ISSUE: IMPROVED ACCESS PROVISION FOR THE DISABLED

Objective: To improve access provision in Ross-on-Wye for people living with disabilities.

Evidence: 22% of those filling in the questionnaire said that they had someone living in their home with a disability, infirmness or long standing illness. Responses to the questionnaire suggested that the greatest negative impact on their daily lives, for those with a disability, is experienced when accessing public transport, shopping (these two maybe linked) and getting about in the dark. Goodrich Court Focus Group identified the impact the poor state of repair of pavements has on people with disabilities, high kerbs which prohibit safe road crossing to those in wheelchairs or scooters (specifically at the bottom of Cantilupe Rd), and access to some shops, particularly those with steps, and pavement obstructions. Many of these comments were echoed at the focus group for Adults with Learning Disabilities.

Action: Encourage people with disabilities to be co-opted onto the voluntary and statutory groups who make decisions for them and encourage disability groups to carry out an audit of the town centre. Further investigations needed to develop options for consultation. Urge Herefordshire Council to audit shop keepers to ensure they are complying with current access legislation.

Area of Responsibility: Social services and charitable organisations, Non – Governmental Organisations (NGO's), HC.

Priority/Timescale: High priority.

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28. ISSUE: RECYCLING CENTRE OPENING HOURS

Objective: To increase the hours that the waste disposal site in Ross is open.

Evidence: 73% of respondents to the questionnaire thought the waste disposal site on Station Street should be open for longer hours. There were a variety of suggestions as to when the longer opening should be. It is too early to say what impact the newly introduced wheelie bin recycling arrangement will have. It is widely believed that daily opening could reduce the incidence of small-scale fly tipping.

Action: Ross Town Council to approach Herefordshire Council with these concerns. Request additional opening hours. Publicise further the benefits of home composting. Request feasibility investigations of a garden waste composting scheme, possibly linked to allotments/community garden. Leominster is hoping to become the first town to have a community owned and operated anaerobic digester in Britain, could we not do the same? A Transition Town Group has recently been set up in Ross. Invite it to explore this.

Area of Responsibility: RTC, HC, EnviroAbility, Transition Ross.

Priority/Timescale: High priority Short term.

29. ISSUE: DOG FOULING OF PATHS AND OPEN SPACES

Objective: To reduce the amount of dog fouling in public places in Ross-on-Wye.

Evidence: A lot of people raised dog fouling as an issue they wanted to see tackled during the various consultation exercises. In questionnaire responses 34% wanted a campaign of dog owner responsibility launched, 63% wanted the number of "poop disposal" boxes increased and 26% favoured the set up of enforcement patrols. Fewer than 3% were willing to pay more for Ross Town council to implement the extra work involved.

Action: Launch a campaign to raise dog owner awareness of their social responsibility to clear up after their animals . Work with the Community Protection Team. Ross Town Council to investigate best practice (we could ask for a student project to investigate what other parishes are doing and whether it works) and liaise with Herefordshire Council and AMEY. Identify problem areas from Planning for Real data.

Area of Responsibility: RTC, CPT, AMEY, HC..

Priority/Timescale: High priority. On going.

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30. ISSUE: FLY TIPPING AND LITTERING

Objective: To reduce the amount of fly tipping and littering in Ross-on-Wye and ensure that when it does occur it is promptly dealt with.

Evidence: The overwhelming response (95%) was in favour of fly tipping being dealt with swiftly and deterred. The most popular means of achieving this were to ask Ross Town Council to provide a better clear-up service within the existing Council Tax (33%), request the police to spend more on enforcement (31%), and request Herefordshire Council to spend more on clearing-up (11%). The perception here seems to be that Ross Town Council should have responsibility for fly tipping when it actually falls under Herefordshire Council.

Action: Ross Town Council to work with Community Protection Team, Herefordshire Council to identify problem areas.

Area of Responsibility: CPT, RTC and HC.

Priority/Timescale: High priority. Short and long term.

31. ISSUE: YOUTH FACILITIES - NON SPORTING PROVISION

Objective: To improve non-sporting facilities for young people in Ross-on-Wye.

Evidence: At both of the Planning for Real events held in schools (Brampton Abbotts Church of England Primary School and John Kyrle High School) there was strong participation by students. The non-sporting activity provision that was requested included a cinema, a disco, a youth shelter, indoor games, a bowling alley, an arts and crafts club and rather imaginatively a chocolate factory and an ice cream factory. In the first stage of the consultation that took place November 2007 to January 2008 written submissions were received from students at JKHS requesting a milk bar in Ross that could perhaps be run by students.

Action: Investigate and develop options for further consultation.

Area of Responsibility: RTC, HC Youth Services, Youth Forum/"Y Zone", Herefordshire Partnership.

Priority/Timescale: High priority. Long term.

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32. ISSUE: HEALTH SERVICES

Objective: To improve health service provision where necessary.

Evidence: This question covered doctor, dentist, district nurse, health visitor, home help, ambulance, maternity care, chiropody, loan of medical equipment, meals on wheels, counselling, physiotherapy, prescription collection, library and Herefordshire Council at Swan House services. Analysis of what was a very complicated question indicates that, in the majority of cases, respondents seem happy, or at least not unhappy, with the services covered. 31% expressed dissatisfaction with NHS dentistry provision and 20% with counselling services. Ross Community Hospital is widely supported by the local community and The Friends of Ross Community Hospital has a large and active membership.

Action: Pass this data to the Area Health Authority and lobby for better dentistry and counselling services.

Area of Responsibility: RTC to make representations to the Primary Care Trust (PCT) and HC about improvements to National Health Service (NHS) dentistry provision.

Priority/Timescale: High. Medium term.

CONCLUSION

The Steering Group takes the view that, for the Plan to be effective, over-riding issues that prevent effective action must be tackled. Powers will have to be devolved from Herefordshire Council to the Ross Town Council and to some extent the surrounding parish councils. This could result in a change in taxation structure, with an increased budget for the Ross Town Council. That does not necessarily mean an increase in the overall tax burden. It acknowledges that the decision making and the funding should be placed where most effective.

A pragmatic approach will be needed to address these issues and so that the Steering Group recommends that the plan be adopted by Ross Town Council as a basis for a Business Plan or a series of enabling Business Plans. Once the Plan is adopted, we propose that application is made to Herefordshire Council for it to be given the status of Specific Planning Guidance.

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Glossary of Terms

AMEY – Amey, part of an international group, engaged under contract by Herefordshire Council to provide a range of infrastructure and environment related services. These include delivering and supporting transport infrastructure; tailoring and providing solutions to enhance the local environment as well managing property related, education and community facilities.

ART – The Association of Ross Traders. A voluntary organisation representing the interests of retailers and business people in Ross.

ComDev – Community Development. A voluntary organisation that conducted a major research survey of the HR9 district and its residents in 2002/3.

CPT – The Community Protection Team. The CPT is responsible for reducing the level of environmental crime and encourages respect and responsibility by all in Herefordshire.

EnviroAbility – A registered, Ross-based charity and not-for-profit company that provides and promotes projects that benefit disadvantaged groups of people, the community and the environment.

HALO – Halo is a not-for-profit social enterprise and registered charity that runs and manages leisure centres throughout Herefordshire, including Hereford and the market towns of, Leominster, Ledbury, Ross-on-Wye and Bromyard on behalf of Herefordshire Council. In Ross it is responsible for the swimming pool facilities and the Wilton Sports centre grounds and building.

HC – Herefordshire Council is responsible for many key services including education, highways and planning, social services and economic regeneration. As a unitary authority it also manages a large number of additional services, most prominently council tax collection and domestic refuse collection.

Herefordshire Housing – Herefordshire Housing is a not-for-profit Registered Social Landlord, which provides affordable homes throughout Herefordshire.

Herefordshire Partnership – (also known as the Local Strategic Partnership) was established in 2000 and comprises public, private, community and voluntary organisations committed to making a difference in the quality of life of people who live and work in the county.

Herefordshire Council Youth Services – In Herefordshire the Youth Service works with young people from the age of 11-25, with particular emphasis on the 13-19 age groups. The Youth Service is a complex network of providers, community groups, voluntary organisations and the local authority working in partnership to deliver services for young people. Partners include community safety and drugs, police, town and parish councils.

Highways Agency – The Highways Agency is an Executive Agency of the Department for Transport (DfT), and responsible for operating, maintaining and improving the strategic road network in England on behalf of the Secretary of State for Transport. It has a major role in delivering the Government's Ten Year Plan for Transport.

Herefordshire Highways Dept. – The Highways Department has responsibility for a variety of transport issues including: transport planning; road safety; public transport; advising on road engineering design and transport integration.



JKHS – John Kyrle High School. Ross-on-Wye's secondary school and 6th form.

LDF – Local Development Framework. The LDF will replace the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan and consists of:

- The Local Development Scheme,
- A Statement of Community Involvement,
- Development Plan Documents (including Core Strategy),
- Supplementary Planning Documents,
- Annual Monitoring Reports
- A Sustainability Appraisal.

The Larruperz Centre – Ross-on-Wye's community centre. Owned by the Town Council and run by an independent trustee management association.

NHS – The National Health Service.

PCT – The Primary Care Trust – The NHS in Herefordshire.

Ross-on-Wifi – Funded by Advantage West Midlands and pioneered by the former Ross Chamber of Commerce. Ross on Wifi offers free internet access in Ross town centre and is owned by Ross Town Council.

RCS – Ross Civic Society. A voluntary organisation to:

- Promote high standards of planning and architecture,
- Raise awareness of local history, natural history, geography and architecture,
- Secure the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features of historic or public interest.

RoWToP – Ross-on-Wye Town Plan Steering Group. A voluntary group producing the Town Plan.

RSLF – Ross Sports and Leisure Federation. The RSLF aims to promote the development of sporting and leisure facilities for the benefit of local residents and visitors. It provides a central forum for news and information about existing clubs plus providing leadership and direction for the development of community based sports and leisure facilities.

RRPC – Ross Rural Parish Council. A local organisation with councillors appointed to represent residents of Greytrees and Hildersley.

RTC – Ross Town Council. A locally elected body with responsibility for Tudorville Cemetery, Deanhill Park, St Mary's Churchyard, The Weather Station, The Bandstand, allotments, The Corn Exchange, The Larruperz Centre, Christmas lights, The Skate Park and public rights of way. Has separate planning and amenities committees.

Ryefield Centre – Home of the Ross-on-Wye Children's Centre and other community based groups.

TIC – The Tourist Information Centre. Part of Herefordshire Council promoting tourism.

Transition Ross – A group that aims to reduce reliance on fossil fuels, encourage the growing and consumption of local food and help the community become more resilient.

Tudorville Allotment Association – A voluntary group representing allotment holders.



Tudorville Community Association – A group representing the residents of Tudorville district. It has recently formed a group of volunteers to manage the Tudorville Community Centre.

Visit Herefordshire – A collaboration between Herefordshire Council; and the private sector working within the framework of a Destination Management Partnership on all aspects of tourism marketing, research, development and training including the management of tourist Information Centres.

Walkers are Welcome – A community-led scheme to promote walking in specific locations that have demonstrated a willingness to welcome walkers supported by Ross Ramblers and the Ross Walking Group..

WRVS – The Women's Royal Voluntary Service. An age positive charity that offers a range of practical services to help and support older people to live well, maintain their independence and play a part in their local community.

WMPA – West Midlands Policing Authority.

Youth Forum – A local group who analyse the problems for youths in Ross-on-Wye.

NOTES



Appendices

APPENDIX A

Consultations

Environment and Strategic Housing: Meeting with Cllr and Cabinet Member John Jarvis

Environment and Waste Issues: Steering Group research

Environment: Meeting with Andy Tector, Head of Department

Strategic Housing: Meeting with Richard Gabb, Head of Strategic Housing

Transport and Flooding: Meeting with Cllr and Cabinet Member Brian Wilcox

Transport: Meeting with Debbie Griffiths of the WVRs

Adults with Learning Disabilities: Focus Group

Goodrich Court Retirement Flats: Focus Group

Ross Lions: Focus Group

Detailed reports from all of the above are available on the RoWToP website at

www.rosstownplan.org.uk and at the Ross Library.

Other consultations included:

A detailed re-reading and study of the ComDev Report and the ComDev Sports & Leisure Survey

Analysis of back copies of the Ross Gazette

Invited written comments including a submission from the Ross Civic Society

A "Quick Questionnaire" for the students at John Kyrle High School

APPENDIX B

Planning for Real Statistics

Events were held at the Larruperz; the Market House; the Library; Tudorville, Brampton Abbots School and John Kyrle High School.

1922 Topic Cards were logged, covering 30 Topic Headings. The detailed records, available from the Steering Group, include the individual topics of interest and, where appropriate, their location as well as the number of people returning a card on each.

The 30 Topic Headings and the number of responses within each were:

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| Everything OK (1) | Mains Services (10) |
| Allotments (6) | Medical (4) |
| Amenities (95) | Mobile Phone (11) |
| Anti-Social (132) | Pests (5) |
| Childcare (1) | Pets (93) |
| Crime (46) | Refuse (20) |
| Cycling (74) | Retail (94) |
| Education (2) | Special Needs (12) |
| Employment (9) | Sports & Leisure (447) |
| Environment (56) | Telephone (7) |
| Flooding (9) | Tourism (10) |
| Highways (204) | Traffic (447) |
| Housing (33) | Transport (46) |
| Information (5) | TV (7) |
| Local Government (6) | Walking (30) |



APPENDIX C

Questionnaire Statistics

Some 4,700 Questionnaires were distributed; mainly by hand delivery to households in Ross and Ross Rural. An on-line version was placed on the Town Plan website. 1725 responses were received of which 88 were received on-line. This represents some 36% response rate—a far bigger return than normal for questionnaires of this kind..

A complete record is available on the RoWToP website www.rosstownplan.org.uk or at the Ross Library.

The whole Town Plan process has been overseen by the Ross Town Plan Steering Group which has 17 regular members, and many other volunteers who attended meetings and/or gave their views. Current elected officers of the Steering Group are Rob Brain, chairman; Cllr.John Edwards, treasurer and publicity officer; Caroline Utting, Secretary and Volunteer Coordinator. The group can be contacted at issues@rosstownplan.org or on 01989 565685.

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Lined area for notes.





LOTTERY FUNDED

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