

INTRODUCTION

The Parish Planning Exercise

In conjunction with Yorkshire Rural Community Council (YRCC), Silkstone Parish Council is looking to improve facilities in the Parish. This report has been produced by the Silkstone Parish Planning Group and will be used by the Parish Council to set policy and to seek and support funding for projects identified within the Action Plan.

The Action Plan is based on research undertaken within Silkstone Parish during September 2003. This research involved a questionnaire that was developed by the Planning Group and delivered by volunteers to 1282 households on the electoral register within Silkstone Parish. In total, 825 questionnaires were completed and returned giving a 64% response rate

The responses were scrutinised by a member of the design committee and then input into a computer programme. A member of the group typed the comments written in the response to questions 32 and 34 and a local secretary typed the many comments in response to the final question. A full copy of the Parish Plan is available on the parish website www.silkstone.org

The Village Context

Silkstone Parish lies southwest of Barnsley, centred upon the two villages of Silkstone and Silkstone Common, which are in the Penistone East ward. The villages sit between Penistone and Barnsley, have 2 schools, a play school, 2 post offices, a store with a petrol station and off-licence attached, a bakery, 2 churches and 4 public houses. Community Groups based within the villages include 2 luncheon clubs, a number of football and cricket clubs, mother and toddler groups, children's music groups, a history group (Roggins), a CARE (Community Action in the Rural Environment) group, Guide and Scout Groups, and a Village in Bloom Group. In the year 2000 the Parish won the Britain in Bloom 'Small Rural Town' category and the Northeast region 'Village of the Year' award.

Areas for improvement

The Parish Council had already identified a number of areas it felt could be improved, which they wanted to take forward in order to make the Parish a better place in which to live. However, the Council also wanted to consult with people who lived in the Parish to ascertain whether those areas the Parish Council had identified were the same as those that local people also felt needed attention. The Parish Planning Group sent out the questionnaire to identify, for the Parish Council, what the people in the Parish wanted. The survey explored a number of issues and asked directly about the importance of the areas identified by the Parish Council. The results showed the strength of feeling there is in the Parish and some of the main findings are given below.

- **The people who live in the village**

The majority of people living in the Parish regard the rural environment as the most important feature of the Parish followed by the location and the community spirit. 79% of people who responded think it is important to record special features of Silkstone Parish. 81% of those who responded thought it is very important to retain green and open spaces. Small industrial developments were strongly opposed by 75% of those responding to the questionnaire.

The greater majority of the respondents show that only 2 people live in their household followed by 4 people within the household. The majority of homes within the Parish own 2 cars and 83% of those who responded use a car as their main form of transport, 11% use a bus, only 2% of the people questioned use the train.

The majority of people surveyed, who shop in the Parish do so for last minute items. A large number of people will shop in the parish for social contact and to support local businesses.

- **Information technology**

66% of those questioned felt that an Internet Café within the Parish was not important. 18% of those questioned use the Parish Website for information and only 7% of people regarded IT training as very important.

- **Young and Not so Young**

Nearly all the young people who responded to the survey thought Silkstone was a pleasant place to live, 80% of 16 – 17 year olds thought that a local job notice board would be useful. Young people generally feel safe in the village and they also reported having no problems getting to Sheffield or to Barnsley.

However, individual comments made by respondents suggest that some perceive the current facilities for children as 'adequate' and more effort is needed for the younger end of the Parish. At the opposite end of the age scale it was felt by a lot of respondents that not enough is done for the older people in the Parish.

- **Services and the Environment**

The majority of people felt it was most important to ensure the survival of the local post offices. Play areas also came out as being very important and needing greater involvement by the Parish Council.

Most people were strongly in favour of keeping a rural environment within the Parish. Woodland, dry-stone walling, meadows and green fields, lakes ponds and streams and wild life all received high percentages of importance. It was felt that the Parish Council must remain vigilant in opposing any plans for further development within the Parish.

- **Community Safety**

Whilst the majority of people feel safe living in Silkstone, more people than expected reported they had been affected by crime. Surprisingly 28% of respondents reported that burglaries to their properties had not been reported to the police. Most people stated that anti-social behaviour was of the greatest concern. Overall people were happy with the police response times when called. Almost half of the people questioned stated they would be happy to join a Neighbourhood Watch scheme.