



**A Proposal to Wootton Bassett and Cricklade Area Board for funding to help support development and piloting of an innovative parish planning project for the community area**

**Introduction**

Community First welcomes the development that parish based community led plans (parish plans) have been proposed as the preferred way forward for community planning in Wootton Bassett and Cricklade community area.

Community First presents here the background to our involvement in parish planning in Wiltshire, outlines some of the current challenges in supporting production of new parish plans and proposes a new model to pilot in Wootton Bassett and Cricklade community area that would test and develop new ways of supporting parish plans whilst making efficient use of limited resources and, if successful, leave a legacy model for other areas of Wiltshire to replicate.

## **Background**

Community First is an independent charity based in Devizes working across a range of projects in Wiltshire & Swindon to ensure that local communities are sustainable and continue to thrive. Our funding comes from a wide range of sources including national and local government, grant making trusts and foundations, private sponsorship and local fundraising.

Community First is part of the national Rural Community Action Network (RCAN) coordinated by our national organisation ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England).

Our current range of projects include community transport, village halls advice service, financial inclusion, young carers support, youth club development, Plain Action, Local Councils Advice, rural enterprise support, community development, LINK schemes, Good Neighbour programme etc.

RCAN network members have a long history of providing support to rural communities in particular, and this work has been funded from central government as part of rural policy delivery through a range of national agreements following publication of the Rural White Paper in 2000. Parish based community led plans were a cornerstone of the programme, and along with other RCAN network members Community First was involved at the outset in the promotion, development and support of parish plans.

Community First, in common with other members of the RCAN network is currently delivering support for parish based community led planning as part of a 3 year service level agreement with DEFRA that finishes at the end of March 2011.

ACRE is actively negotiating with DEFRA for a follow on agreement to assist with the coalition's governments objectives under the Big Society agenda. Indications are that parish based community led planning is viewed as a key tool for underpinning development of this new agenda.

News about the outcome of these discussions is promising but we still are awaiting further details about new contract and these should be known in early March 2011.

Community First remains a strong advocate for parish based community led plans as we recognise that they are the cornerstone of community activity and engagement.

Parish plans mobilise community volunteers to work in partnership with their parish council to identify community concerns and formulate an action plan that will be the basis of a parish work programme over 5-10 years. Many of the projects identified will be implemented by the community themselves, whilst other projects with the support of the parish council will require involvement of external agencies to move them forward. This model fits well with the ideas behind the 'Big Society' as well as the Area Board arrangements for allocating resources now in place in Wiltshire.

## **Current support available for parish planning**

Support for production of parish plans is undertaken as part of our Community Development work. Currently this support is delivered to individual towns and parishes by the Community Development Manager who has undertaken this role since 2001.

Support is available for all stages from first discussion of the idea at a parish council meeting through to final publication of the plan and beyond- a process that is likely to take at least 18 months to 2 years as it is entirely community led and dependent on a small group of volunteers.

Our parish plan support service provides:

- promotion
- information
- support and facilitation at public meetings
- budget and project planning guidance
- training sessions
- mentoring and ongoing support of steering groups.
- resources and handouts
- national Community Led Planning Toolkit
- advice about consultation and questionnaires
- review and comment of draft questionnaires and plans
- guidance about best practice in action planning and bridging with local partners
- strategic work with local partners
- impact surveys of parish plans

Community First also operates the Parish Plan Grant Scheme that provides grants of up to £500 to assist with the costs of producing a parish plan. This scheme is using up funds recycled from previous funding programmes and is likely to be depleted by end 2011/12 if parish planning continues at current levels.

Through this support we have helped 34 parishes complete their parish plan project and are currently assisting most of the 28 parishes that have a parish plan in preparation. This represents coverage of approximately 23% across the sub-region although distribution is patchy due to local circumstances.

In this final year of the current funding agreement we have continued to respond to requests from communities to support the initiation of new parish plans but we have not undertaken any promotional work until we know the situation with future funding.

Although we have taken steps to ensure that staff resources will continue to be available to support current parish plan commitments, capacity to support many new parish plans at this time is limited until we know that follow on funding has been secured.

However the current uncertainties also provides an opportunity to use remaining resources in a creative way for the short term benefit of parish planning in Wootton Bassett and Cricklade Community Area and hopefully long term for other community areas in Wiltshire. This opportunity is the subject of this proposal.

### **Current parish planning activity in Wootton Bassett and Cricklade community area**

There are 13 towns and parishes of the community area and from our knowledge parish and town plan activity is:

Lydiard Millicent                      currently updating a parish plan from 2005

Cricklade	starting a town plan, steering group formed
Broad Town	nearing completion of parish plan
Purton	newly interested in undertaking a parish plan

## The Proposal

**Community First invites Wootton Bassett and Cricklade Area Board to commit funding of £15,200 which would be given as direct grant funding to Parish and Town Councils to enable them to undertake parish and town plans.** This would be matched with £13,325 of funding available at Community First as we would make available some of the remaining resources under the RCAN DEFRA funded work as well as re-allocating some of the Parish Plan Grant Scheme funds specifically to the project.

Jointly this funding would enable the undertaking of an innovative project to develop new models of supporting parish planning.

Proposed funding for the project:

**Area Board funds (2011-12)      £15,200**  
*(To be given by the Area Board as grants directly to town and parish councils to undertake parish planning –see Appendix 1)*

Community First funds	
Parish plan grant funds	£8000
Defra funding	£5325
<b>Total</b>	<b>£28,525</b>

## The Wootton Bassett and Cricklade Parish and Town Planning Project:

Parish Plan support work is normally delivered on a 'parish by parish' basis with only ad hoc contact between active parish plan groups and very little sharing of resources or pooling of expertise. This is intensive in support time and leads to pockets of experience in parish planning that stops at parish boundaries.

This project would aim to co-ordinate parish planning activity across the community area whilst also respecting the diversity of the 12 towns and parishes within it so that their different support needs can be accommodated.

The project would be promoted to the communities across the community area to invite their involvement. The project would take an action research approach which would work to develop the means for all towns and parishes to be involved in a way that benefits them, but that also engages them to share resources, support each other and build skills and confidence in parish planning. Once the parish and towns are completed a legacy of skills, experience and tested methods would remain which can be drawn on for the future- both within the Wootton Bassett and Cricklade community area and in other community areas in Wiltshire.

The project would be undertaken by promoting the benefits of undertaking parish and town plans across the community area as a more or less concurrent exercise, so that there will be new possibilities created for joint support and training, pooling of expertise and sharing of resources and learning.

Key features to develop in the project will be:

- ‘clustering’ – groups of parishes working together, or larger communities helping smaller ones
- linkage between groups utilising ‘digital tools’ where appropriate
- joint working
- drawing on the knowledge of those that have already been involved/ are involved in parish planning (if they are willing to do so)
- cascade training to new groups of volunteers
- sharing of expertise, templates, resources, volunteers with specialist skills
- incentives for volunteers/communities to be involved in cascading learning or sharing of skills
- opportunities for regular networking, training, support surgeries
- tiered grants based on population size
- Community First providing specialist training, ‘surgeries’, and facilitation/co-ordination, grant making.

### Timescales

Timescales	Funding available	Activity supported
Jan –March 2011	Defra funding available for Community First officer time	Support time and early event costs to promote and start work (up to 21 days)
April 2011- March 2012	Area Board funding  Community First PP grant funds	Grants to towns and parishes, as per Appendix 1  Use to fund support time (cluster support, training, mentoring, specialist guidance) £6000= up to 24 days
April 2012 – approx June 2012	CF grant funds used for staff support OR possibly DEFRA follow on funding	Finishing off project- £2000= up to 8 days

The outcome from this project would be a new model of supporting parish plans which would be piloted within Wootton Bassett and Cricklade community area, and if found to be successful, could then form the basis of a model of support as a legacy that other community areas could replicate.

As the approach taken will be to develop and test new ways of working it is not possible to provide more detail of project development at this stage, but Community First would be very pleased to discuss the new ideas contained in this proposal.

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18 January 2011

## Appendix 1

### Grants to towns and parishes could be based on population:

Population (figures to be updated)	Grant funding allocation
0-250	£200
251-500	£500
501- 1000	£1000
1001-2500	£1500
2500- 5000	£2000
5000 -10000	£3000
10000 +	£4000

### Grant scheme for towns and parishes (provisional, for further discussion and confirmation)

Town/parish	Population (2001)	Proposed grant	Grant to provide skill sharing with others
Wootton Bassett	11043	4000	
Marston Maisey	172	200	
Latton	429	500	
Cricklade	4132	2000	
Lydiard Millicent	1598	1500	300
Lydiard Tregoze	460	500	
Tockenham	220	200	
Lyneham	5319	3000	
Clyffe Pypard	283	500	
Broad Town	594	*	300
Purton	3934	2000	
Braydon	49	200	

**Total 15,200**

\* Broad Town has already secured grants funds from previous funding programme.