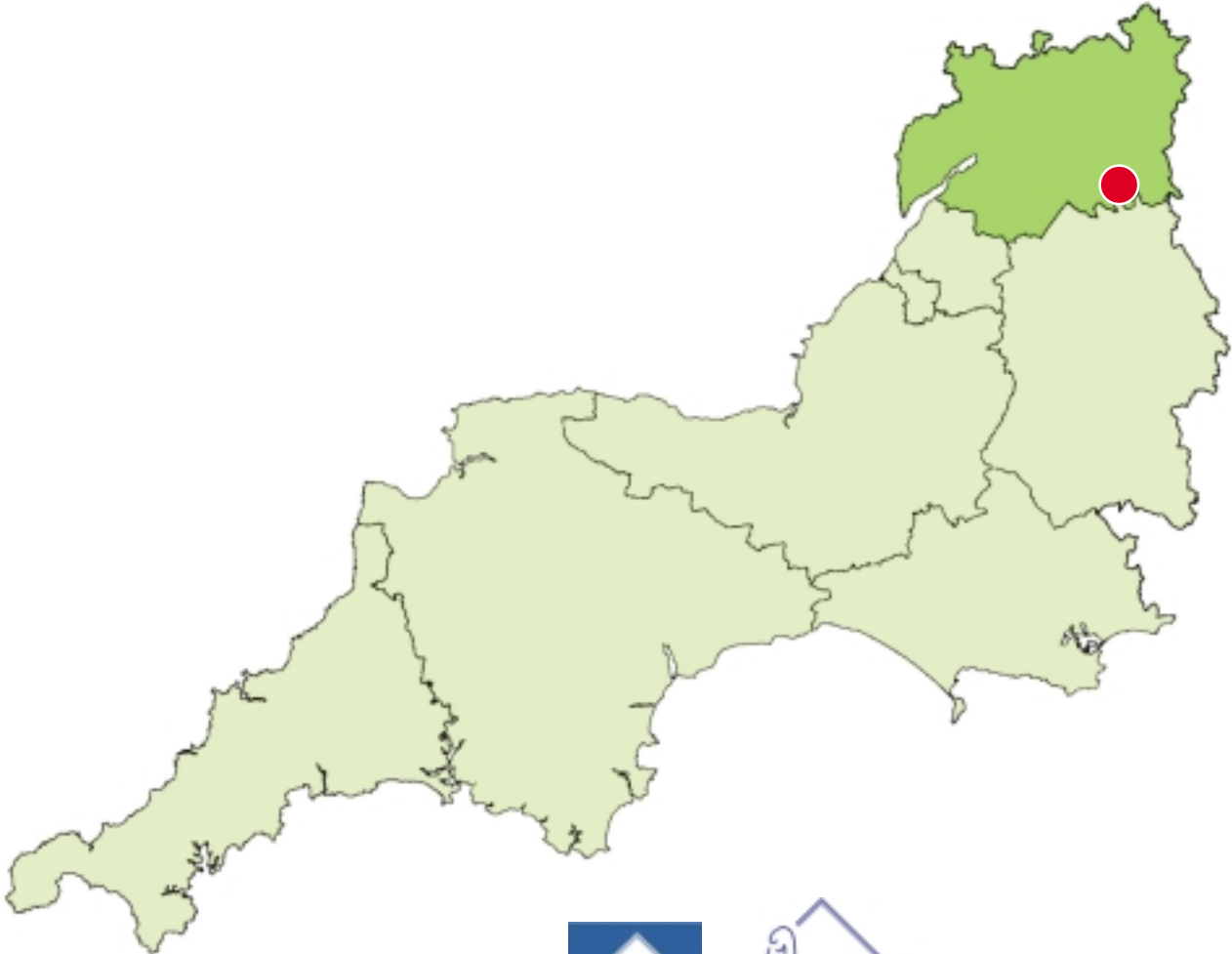


South Cerney Community Plan

Completion Date: 2005



Compiled by Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC)
In partnership with the South West Acre Network (SWAN)

South Cerney Parish Plan Case Study

Interviewees

Mike Stuart
Parish Council
Representative

Background

South Cerney is a village and civil parish in the Cotswold district of Gloucestershire, a few miles south of Cirencester and close to the border with Wiltshire. It has a population of 3,074 according to the 2001 census. It was founded in 999 and celebrated its 1000 year anniversary in 1999. The village of South Cerney lies within The Cotswold Water Park, an area made up of over 130 lakes, mostly formed by gravel extraction. Thousands of years ago an ice sheet that covered the Midlands began to melt, turning into rivers. These rivers and streams took with them sand and gravel, depositing them up to 20 feet thick in places.

These sand and gravel deposits lay relatively undisturbed until people began to excavate these resources in the early 1920s. As a result the area was left scarred with huge hollows and pits. Water began to naturally fill these pits, turning them into freshwater lakes, and the area now known as the Cotswold Water Park was born. Over recent years these lakes have increasingly become popular places where anglers can fish, water skiers and jet skiers can ski, sailors can sail their yachts and walkers can enjoy miles of countryside walks. Holiday villages and holiday homes and housing developments such as those found at the Watermark Club and the Lower Mill Estate have sprung up around some of the lakes offering a range of differing accommodation in the area.

As a result of this explosion of activity over recent years, the local villages have become more popular and South Cerney especially has thrived. It was a pretty enough village in its own right, but has always been in the shadows of its more famous neighbour, *Cirencester*.

The South Cerney church contains a beautiful carved wooden head and foot of Christ, taken from a crucifix in Compostela, dating from the 12th Century. At the end of Silver Street in South Cerney is St. Edwards College, founded by Anne Edwards in 1834 (the primary school in South Cerney is called Anne Edwards School) to house the widows of clergymen. And in nearby Station Road, an attractive row of gabled cottages dates from the 16th and 17th Centuries. The remains of some of the old railway line can also be found in this area of the village.

All in all, South Cerney is an area to watch. Residents and visitors have seen its popularity and nearby facilities increase greatly over recent years but South Cerney itself still has the charm of a Cotswold village. Industrial areas have sprung up on the outskirts of South Cerney, bringing even more requirements for housing and a large estate was built on the land sold by Aggregate Industries some years ago. Also with the ever increasing interest and demand for 'leisure

pursuits' being as strong as ever, it seems that the area will continue to grow in popularity for many years to come.

What is a Community-Led Plan

A Parish & Community-Led Plan is a document which sets out a vision for a community future based on sound local research looking at social, environmental and economic life. It celebrates positive features and activities, highlights community needs and contains a detailed action plan to help the community meet those needs. Parish & Community-Led Plans are produced by and for communities, based on a detailed survey and consultation process which involves the whole community, prompts action and influences others. Good Parish & Community-Led Plans use the Parish & Community-Led Planning Toolkit framework, are supported by external facilitators and can demonstrate a robust evaluation process that ensures their quality.

The Process

Between 1997 and 1999, a comprehensive 100 page Village Appraisal was compiled by South Cerney Parish Council and the South Cerney Trust. It was completed and published in 1999 which coincided with the celebration of the millennium of the granting of the Royal Charter in 999AD.

In 2005 the Parish Council, working in partnership with GRCC, decided the village should produce a new Parish Plan because most of the projects listed in the Village Appraisal of 1999 had been achieved. The decision was taken at an early stage that the new document would not focus on changing physical aspects of the village or change the make-up of the community. Instead the plan would be focussed on progression. The lead group was the Parish Council, but great care was taken to involve as many people and organisations as possible to ensure that a truly representative result was achieved. An open day was held at the village hall and all residents were invited. There was also an emphasis on getting the younger members of the community to attend because 20% of the village population is under the age of 20. The format of the open day was that all who attended were given the opportunity to write down on large pieces of paper their concerns about the village and its services. Around 15 pieces of A1 sized paper were filled with concerns, issues and observations. These were all broken down under different general headings; for example, transport, youth services and village cleanliness. Using these headings, and with the help of a GRCC Rural Adviser, South Cerney drafted an action plan. The draft action plan was distributed with the Cerney News, which is delivered free of charge to all 1,500 dwellings in the parish, and residents were given the opportunity to make comment and suggest amendments. There was a good response from residents and using all the feedback the final document including an action plan was completed and printed in 2006. The completed plan was delivered free to every house. In addition,

copies were made available at the local post office and the local press advertised the Parish Plan. It was the intention that the Plan should be flexible and extra items could be added after the launch if this was considered necessary. Two such requirements have been adopted.

What are your achievements as a community to date, as a result of the Community-Led Plan?

Flooding & sewerage

- The Environment Agency has installed a flood monitoring station on the River Churn.
- Gloucestershire County Council have completed a CCTV survey of main storm water drainage pipes running through the village and have cleared major obstructions found in them.
- Thames Water, following pressure from the Parish, District and County Councils, ably supported by the local MP, Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown, have almost completed installing a new pumping sewer pipe to the treatment works at a cost of in excess of £5 million. These works followed some six major incidents in which the old mains pipe fractured and raw sewage flooded areas of the village.
- During the deluge in January 2008, members of the Parish Council physically installed 6 x twelve metre long 300mm drainage pipes to alleviate the risk of flooding in Robert Franklin Way.
- There is ongoing partnership work with Cotswold District Council and Gloucestershire County Council in respect of a Flood Emergency Action Plan.

Dog mess

- The Parish Council has paid for the installation of an additional three dog mess bins, and Cotswold District Council empty them.

Promote healthier routes to school

- Following requests to install a pedestrian crossing, surveys were carried out which concluded that it would be equally safe and more economically viable to provide a crossing patrol officer. Gloucestershire County Council now pay for a Lollipop person to help the children cross the road safely.
- The primary school is investigating the possibility of creating a walking bus or a similar scheme in the village.

Continue to support and provide sporting activities for young and older people

- Summer activities at Upper Up playing field will be provided by Cotswold District Council using finances from the Big Lottery grant via Cotswold Play Partnership which is funding new Play Ranger schemes starting summer 08. Similar schemes to be provided by Gloucestershire County Council Youth Services.
- There are four T'ai Chi classes established in the village catering for different ability groups.
- Singing for Fun (predominantly over 55 age group) meet weekly for singing and socialising. Had first concert in April 2008.
- The Parish Council is supporting the local football club in their attempts to rebuild the

pavilion and to develop their youth teams.

- The Parish Council is supporting the local cricket club in the development of their youth teams.

- There are plans to install a multi-use games area (MUGA) with adjacent Youth Shelter at the playing fields using £12,000 secured from the landfill trust and £5,000 from the Big Lottery.

Provide information about health services/ events to residents and hold information days for older people

- A lot of work is being done by the United Church, being driven by an enthusiastic progressive team. There is a "Sit, Knit and Natter" afternoon and an old fashioned games afternoon.

Roads & pavements

- Speed limits on Cirencester Road reduced and extended
- Vehicle Activated Signs installed at three stations in the village
- Continual monitoring of problems (including condition of roads and pavements) by members of the community including the Disabled Access Group

Cycle paths

- Negotiations with owners of land and Gloucestershire County Council ongoing regarding a cycle path to Cirencester.
- Plan/design of bridge at end of Upper Up to BSC7 submitted to Gloucestershire County Council Dept. of Public Rights of Way, and Environment Agency.
- On completion of sewer works, Thames Water is to provide extension of existing cycle path to the western boundary.

Roadside footpaths

- Booklet of village walks in research stage. Some walks documented. CWP/South Cerney Trust booklet first edition printed.

Street lighting

- Additional lighting installed in Broadway Lane.
- Parish Council have worked with Gloucestershire County Council Street Lighting department on scheme to reduce lighting between midnight and 5.30am to save energy.

Play/sport opportunities for children

- A grassed area in Jubilee Gardens has been purchased and is now in the ownership of the community.
- Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) will be installed by mid summer 2008. Funding organised and equipment ordered. The plans incorporate an adjacent youth centre at the playing fields.

Involve youngsters more in village activities

- Youth Parish Council established and working well for over two years.
- County Council Youth Services and Young Gloucestershire have set up various schemes with village youth including a weekly meeting at the primary school.

Support playgroup committee in their building project

- New building was completed in time for new term in September 2006.

Monitoring and improving environment – Upper Up Park

- Working in partnership with Cotswold Water Parks Society, a new hedge was planted as part of a biodiversity scheme using money from the 106 Agreement via Cotswold District Council.
- 'Memorial' trees were planted over four winters throughout the park. 30-40 have been planted so far.

- A large, picturesque pond has been created, which is much appreciated by wildlife and people of all ages. The soil from this pond was used to build a mountain bike track in another part of the park.

How has the South Cerney Parish Plan helped you to engage with your local authority about services your community needs?

Through partnership working, with agencies such as Cotswold District Council (CDC), Gloucestershire County Council, Highways Agency, Environment Agency and the Police, South Cerney Parish Council now knows who to contact to address specific issues in the parish. These 'hotlines' to specific organisations or councils allow for the most efficient working. Through the Parish Plan South Cerney have been introduced to Claire Dowan, a CDC Youth Development Officer, who has helped to drive forward many of the actions aimed at providing services for younger people in the community, including the setting up of the Youth Parish Council, South Cerney Parish Plan has formed the evidence of need when they have applied for any support from agencies to complete any actions.

What other projects have you got planned for the future?

Flooding

- Environment Agency is beginning work in September 2008 to repair the eroding river banks at Bow Wow.

Revisiting the Parish Plan

- It is intended that the Parish Plan will be reviewed and revised every five years. The next review will begin in 2010 and it is hoped that further partnership working will lead to new people being involved.

Have the actions from the Plan brought any funding into the community e.g. lottery grants, trusts, Village of the Year etc.

- £5,000 has been secured from the Big Lottery via Cotswold District Council Play Partnership.
- £500 was secured from Cotswold District Council's Section 106 money (from the development of the Four Pillars Hotel). The money was used for planting a new hedgerow at the playing fields.
- £12,000 has been secured from the Landfill Trust and this will be used to build to Multi Use Games Area (MUGA).
- Funding was secured from Gloucestershire County Council to pay for the appointment of a Lollipop person.
- There is a possibility of £2,000 from Cotswold District Council to provide flood alleviating pipe-works

How are you keeping the process alive and advising progress to the community?

- In the committee room at the village hall there is an 'action tracker' displayed on the wall which details all the actions from the plan. This is updated regularly as actions are completed or have progressed.
- At Parish Council meetings, because the Parish Plan forms the main plan of activity for the council, there is often a 'Parish Plan update' agenda item.

- On South Cerney website (www.southcerney.com) there are electronic copies of both the 1999 Village Appraisal and the 2005 Parish Plan, with an updated action plan.

- An update of actions is also included in the Cerney News which is delivered to every household.

How has this benefited the community?

Through 'joined up' thinking and partnership working, the South Cerney Parish Plan has created a great deal of community spirit in the parish. There is a sense of completeness, and the number of projects that promote social inclusion means that all residents are given the opportunity to engage with and participate in completing the actions. Mike Stuart, Parish Council Chairman for South Cerney, believes that as a community the parish is experiencing a prolonged peak in enthusiasm, which is visible in the high levels of participation, especially from residents aged 35-45 years. The establishment of a Youth Parish Council has also created the opportunity for another avenue of work in another generation. When the plan was being put together in 2005, it was agreed to review and revise it every five years. The next review will take place in 2010. It will be interesting to see if new people come forward to be a part of the new Parish Plan. There is interest from many organisations within the Parish, including the churches. All this, and with village sports clubs expanding their youth work, the future would appear very bright for South Cerney.

What lessons have you learned?

- Do not be discouraged if only a small number of people get involved directly in creating the plan. Those who do get involved will be enthusiastic, and as the plan progresses, more people will have the opportunity to get involved at a later stage.
- Be realistic when creating your action plan. If other residents are able to see actions being delivered and completed it will be a motivating factor in getting others involved.

How does the Action Plan link into the Parish Council's future business planning?

South Cerney Parish Plan is the main plan of activity for the Parish Council. Money is allocated from the Parish Council annual precept to complete actions. The Parish Council also endeavours to raise money through applications to sources such as the Big Lottery as well as from the annual precept.

One piece of advice for others?

Undertake and complete a Parish & Community-Led Plan, and stick to the actions of the plan as it is the basis to your community. However, it is important to leave room for additional projects and allow time for review.

Quote

on the Community-Led Planning Process

"It is important to remember that villages are not buildings, they are people."

Mike Stuart,
South Cerney
Parish Council