

Background

Peak Forest Parish Council was approached in 2001 by Tracy Critchlow, the Village Agent for Peak Forest, to explain the Village Agent scheme and to ask for permission to undertake work within Peak Forest to develop a Village Plan. Permission was readily given and the Village Agent made contact with the existing Village Management Committee. This was a village group which had been formed a few years previously to take part in the Peak District National Park Authority's 'Discovering Villages' scheme. The work which had been previously undertaken was used as the basis for the new Village Plan scheme and additional consultation was undertaken by the Village Agent to create a holistic plan for Peak Forest.

The information gathered from the Discovering Villages survey was used as a starting point for further consultation to ensure that the Village Plan for Peak Forest was comprehensive in scope and personal in its approach. The survey included questions on housing, health and social services, employment, education, local countryside and environment, retail services and facilities, information and communication. The survey was completed by a large proportion of the population and identified some priorities for action. Further work was needed to clarify and prioritise these issues and include other issues not identified in the original survey.

The aim was to involve a wide proportion of the population in the Village Plan process so that it represented a broad cross-section of the community. Rather than using a questionnaire (which may discourage some people from contributing), it was decided to consult people by visiting and talking to them at their regular meeting places in order to seek their views and opinions. All local community groups and committees were contacted directly to raise awareness of the Village Plan and to ascertain the issues that people were concerned about.

Having gained an understanding of the ideas and concerns of the people, Focus Groups were then established to research the identified topics and to document information for inclusion in the draft plan. The draft plan was presented to the people of Peak Forest, for their approval, at an open meeting. A final plan was then drawn up which identifies projects for potential development. People were kept informed of the process through regular articles in the parish newsletter.

The Village Management Committee worked closely with the Derbyshire Rural Community Council and had the support of a Village Agent and a fieldworker to help develop the process.

The following organisations were involved in the preparation and planning process: the Reading Room Committee, the local Church Council, Peak Forest Primary School, Peak Forest Playgroup and the local Womens Institute who were consulted on their priorities for the plan. They were updated regularly.

The Village Management Committee will work closely with the Parish Council in the development of any projects arising from the Plan. The Local Authorities (Derbyshire County Council, High Peak Borough Council, the Peak District National Park Authority and the Primary Care Trust) will be included in their discussions.

