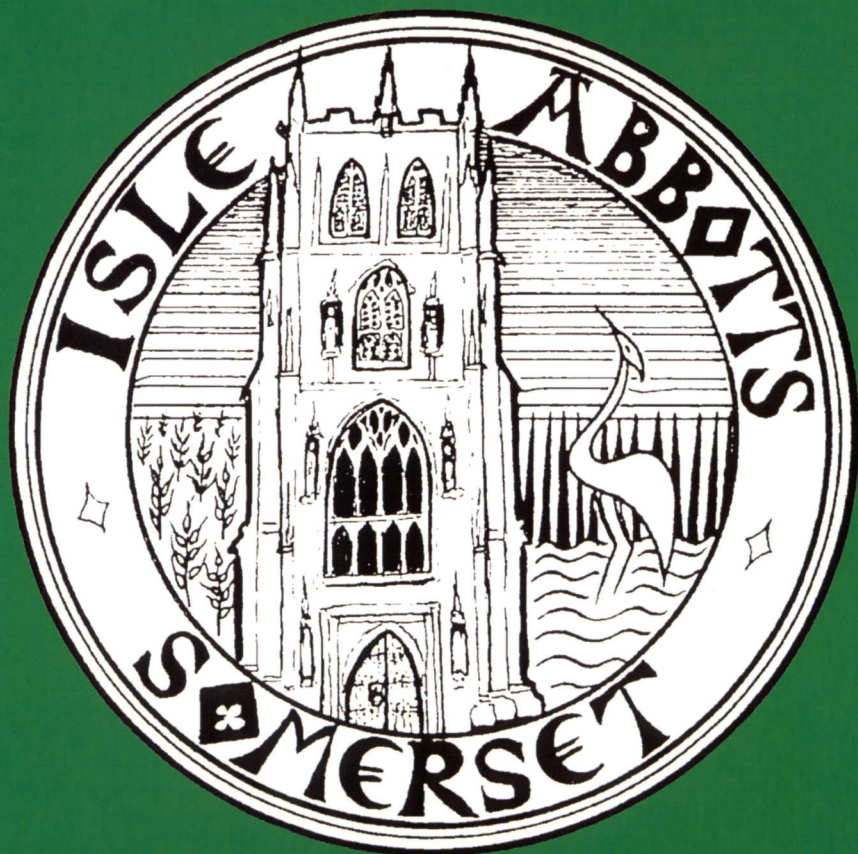


ISLE ABBOTTS VILLAGE PLAN



What is a Village Plan?

Village plans are a government initiative stemming from the Countryside Agency's "Vital Villages" initiative. Although not a compulsory exercise, Isle Abbots, together with many other villages, took advantage of funding offered by the government to produce a plan that is a vision of how residents would like their village to be.

The government has made it clear that these plans will strengthen applications for grants and other funding and they are also intended to have a significant influence on local government plans for the wider area.

However, as always, our own actions have a major impact on life in our community and achieving many of the priorities set out in this booklet will be down to us – individually or in groups – taking the initiative.

Most residents will recall the launch of the Isle Abbots Village plan at a meeting in January 2005 and taking part in the subsequent survey that was completed by an amazing 97% of households.

This document sets out ten themes, which were highlighted by the questionnaire results, and the action points that we have identified. Towards the back of the document are the results of the survey on which the themes and action points are based. Fully detailed survey results are available on our village website: isle-abbotts.org.uk which also gives up to date information on village events, together with a variety of other local information.

This plan document, together with its visions and objectives, has now been completed, but the actions needed still lie before us!



Village Plan launch 2005.

ISLE ABBOTTS VILLAGE PLAN

What are we going to do?

The following pages set out the 10 themes, which form the background and action points resulting from the consultation process and subsequent survey responses from the villagers of Isle Abbots.

- **Our Vision:** Where we want to be in 5 years time.
- **Our Objectives:** The aims that are vital to achieving our vision.
- **Our Actions:** What are we going to do?

We believe that this Plan addresses the needs of the local community and pledge our support to make it happen.

A. H. Habberfield

ANTHONY HABBERFIELD
Chairman of Parish Council

Martin Rickitt

MARTIN RICKITT
Village Plan Co-ordinator



Many people have played a part in making this plan happen.

The steering group and survey team included:

Geoff Colenso, Peter Cottell, Elaine Guest, Peter Herbert, Mark Humphry, David Jay, Andrew Medcalf, Martin Rickitt (co-ordinator).

Alan Woodward analysed the results and organised the themes.

David Bradshaw laid out the pages and took most of the photographs.

Patricia Bowerman designed the layout and organised the printing.

Derold Page designed and painted the Millennium Map and the scroll from this has been adapted for the back page.

Sue Gatcombe designed the Isle Abbotts crest.

Gerard Tucker and Becky Dandridge at South Somerset District Council offered advice and help.

The Countryside Agency gave financial support.

The people of Isle Abbotts supported the events, took time to complete their questionnaires and made helpful suggestions.

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Theme 1: Leisure and Amenities

Our Vision:

"Isle Abbotts has a thriving leisure and cultural environment which is accessible to all, and a programme of continuous improvement in community, leisure, sporting, artistic, and information facilities that promote community development".

Objective 1

To fully exploit all opportunities to improve access to sports and leisure facilities for the residents of Isle Abbotts.

Objective 2

To refurbish the Jubilee Hall.

Objective 3

To improve access to and use of the Mobile Library Service.

Actions:

- Look at opportunities to increase access to sports and leisure facilities by linking with other local villages where there are opportunities for joint participation.
- Pursue external funding streams to raise money to restore and upgrade the Jubilee Hall with provision of refreshment, toilet facilities, and a disabled access point.
- Promote awareness within the village of the mobile library service. Ascertain if the service can provide flexible visiting times so that more villagers can benefit.



The library should be better publicised.

Theme 2: Communication in Isle Abbotts

Our Vision:

"People in Isle Abbotts are encouraged to participate in making decisions which affect them and their community. They are well informed about the activities of the Parish Council and are apprised of social activities".

Objective 1

To promote the use of the village web-site. Communicate all events by e-mail to supplement existing methods of communication.

Objective 2

To promote and encourage take up of the Parish Magazine.

Objective 3

To improve the profile of the Parish Councillors.

Objective 4

To encourage participation amongst residents in decision-making that affects the community and local planning.

Actions:

- Obtain e-mail address details of all residents with this facility and set up a distribution list.
- Contact all residents who do not currently subscribe to the Parish Magazine to encourage take up.
- Publish names of Parish Councillors with photographs, together with contact numbers, and distribute to all homes in Isle Abbotts.
- Publish dates of all Parish Council meetings 12 months in advance and communicate to all residents.



The notice board is still well-used.

Theme 3: Community Safety

Our Vision:

"Isle Abbots is a community in which its residents feel safe to live and where local prevention measures ensure that crime, vandalism and anti-social behaviour are kept as low as possible".

Objective 1:

To reduce crime, and fear of crime in Isle Abbots.

Objective 2:

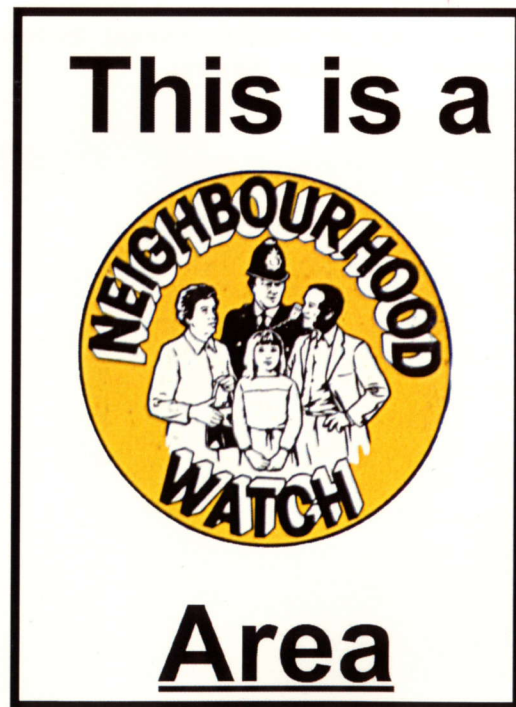
To ensure the level of Policing is adequate to meet local needs.

Objective 3:

To revitalize the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme and provide full area cover for every household.

Actions:

- Encourage all crimes to be reported to the Police so these are logged with a crime number.
- Lobby for a regular police presence and community police surgery on a regular basis so that a dialogue is established with residents.
- Solicit volunteers to manage and operate an effective neighbourhood watch scheme with links to the local police.



Theme 4: Health, Social Needs, and Access to Services

Our Vision:

"Isle Abbots is a community which fully recognises its health and social needs, and that provides and constantly seeks to improve access to services, ensuring that no one is excluded through age, disability, social or cultural barriers."

Objective 1:

To improve access to health and social services and to ensure that all public buildings provide adequate access for use by those with disabilities.

Action:

- Improve disabled access to the Village Hall.



Delivering Easter Communion to the housebound.



Improved disable access to the village hall.

Theme 5: Public Transport

Our Vision:

"Isle Abbotts is a community in which all residents have easy access to transport within the local area and a greater awareness and use of public and community transport facilities".

Objective 1:

To influence Somerset County Council's Local Transport Plan.

Objective 2:

Promote and improve public transport facilities as a viable means of alternative travel to the private car.

Actions

- Liaise with public transport operators and Somerset County Council to improve timing and regularity of bus services to Taunton, Ilminster, and surrounding towns so that residents have a viable alternative to using their own cars.
- Lobby public transport operators and Somerset County Council to ensure access for those with disabilities is improved.
- To encourage car sharing by residents to reduce costs and environmental impact on the community.



The weekly bus to Ilminster.

Theme 6: Cars & Traffic

Our Vision:

"Isle Abbotts has safe, well signed and maintained roads, and where drivers and other road users are encouraged to comply with traffic regulations for the benefit of the whole community".

Objective 1:

To improve the maintenance of verges and drains within and on the approach roads to Isle Abbotts with the object of improving safety and minimise the risk of flooding.

Objective 2:

To ensure that traffic regulations are carefully obeyed specifically related to parking and access.

Objective 3:

To introduce a 30MPH speed limit within and on the approach roads to Isle Abbotts with appropriate traffic calming measures.

Actions:

- Liaise with South Somerset District Council to ensure verge and drain clearance is undertaken on at least an annual basis.
- Communicate with residents regarding safe parking and compliance with traffic regulations to improve safety and large vehicle access.
- Investigate feasibility of introducing traffic calming and speed restriction measures with Somerset County Council.
- Investigate appropriate signing to keep HGV's from straying into the village.



The state of the roads is a recurring problem.

Theme 7: Housing

Our Vision:

"Isle Abbotts retains and promotes its unique 'village' character, with no large scale housing developments. This continues to be enhanced by the existence of a conservation area at the heart of the village. Isle Abbotts recognises the potential for limited growth in in-fill dwellings and very small developments which will not impact on the aforementioned village character.

Objective 1:

To ensure that all villagers are fully informed of any future plans through the use of open meetings and other village communication routes. Bearing in mind that 47% of villagers did not express support for future village development.

Objective 2:

To conduct a housing needs survey to establish the actual need, together with a study of the available spaces for new housing.

Objective 3:

To address concerns about future developments putting a strain on local facilities to the appropriate organisations and agencies.

Actions:

- Establish a housing needs working group. (December 2007)
- Examine existing housing and planning policies, and review current Local Plan. (February 2008)
- Conduct a housing survey. (September 2008)
- Present a Village Design Statement to the village outlining future proposals for approval. (December 2008)



The village's character must be maintained.

Theme 8: Environment & Countryside

Our Vision:

"Isle Abbotts is a community which is proud of its heritage, respects its environment, works to sustain its resources and seeks to continuously improve its rural landscape for the enjoyment of residents and visitors alike".

Objective 1:

To improve the quality and signing of public footpaths.

Objective 2:

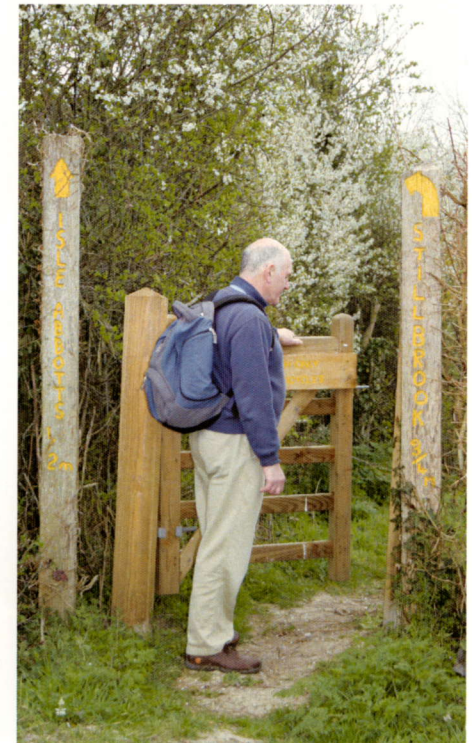
To provide better waste recycling facilities, including door-to-door collection of cardboard and plastics.

Objective 3:

To reduce the impact of all pollution particularly noise from over flying of the village by aircraft from RNAS Yeovilton.

Action:

- Produce a local footpath map and leaflets of available walks together with improved footpath signing.
- Lobby South Somerset District Council to introduce weekly collection of cardboard and plastic as part of their recycling programme.
- Form an Action Group to identify and record over flying of the village and make representation/ liaison with RNAS Yeovilton on a regular basis to reduce the impact of noise pollution for the people of Isle Abbotts.
- Coordinate the above activities with other local villages to maximise impact and influence flying activities.



Village footpaths are well used but not always well signposted.

Theme 9: Young People

Our Vision:

"Isle Abbots is a community which values, supports and cares for its children and young people, who have local access to a full range of formal and informal recreational facilities which enable them to meet, play, socialise and learn safely, and which promotes their social inclusion and wellbeing".

Objective 1:

To establish a recreational area within Isle Abbots for the use of adults, young people and children.

Actions:

- Identify potential land within Isle Abbots, which could be used for sports and recreational purposes.
- Approach landowners to ascertain availability of suitable land areas.
- Seek advice from local authorities regarding grant and or funding provision and planning requirements.



Young folk entertaining at a village event.

Theme 10: Life Long Learning

Our Vision:

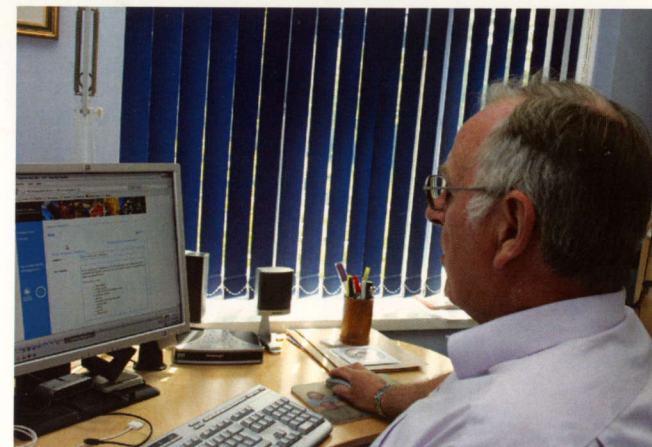
"All people within the community of Isle Abbots have equal access to education, learning and training opportunities that reflect the local environment, cultural and employment requirements to ensure they reach their full potential".

Objective 1:

To improve communication about available courses, classes and activities that are available in the local and wider community.

Action:

- Provide better access to information on existing learning provision by establishing a village link to local colleges including web-based hyperlinks.

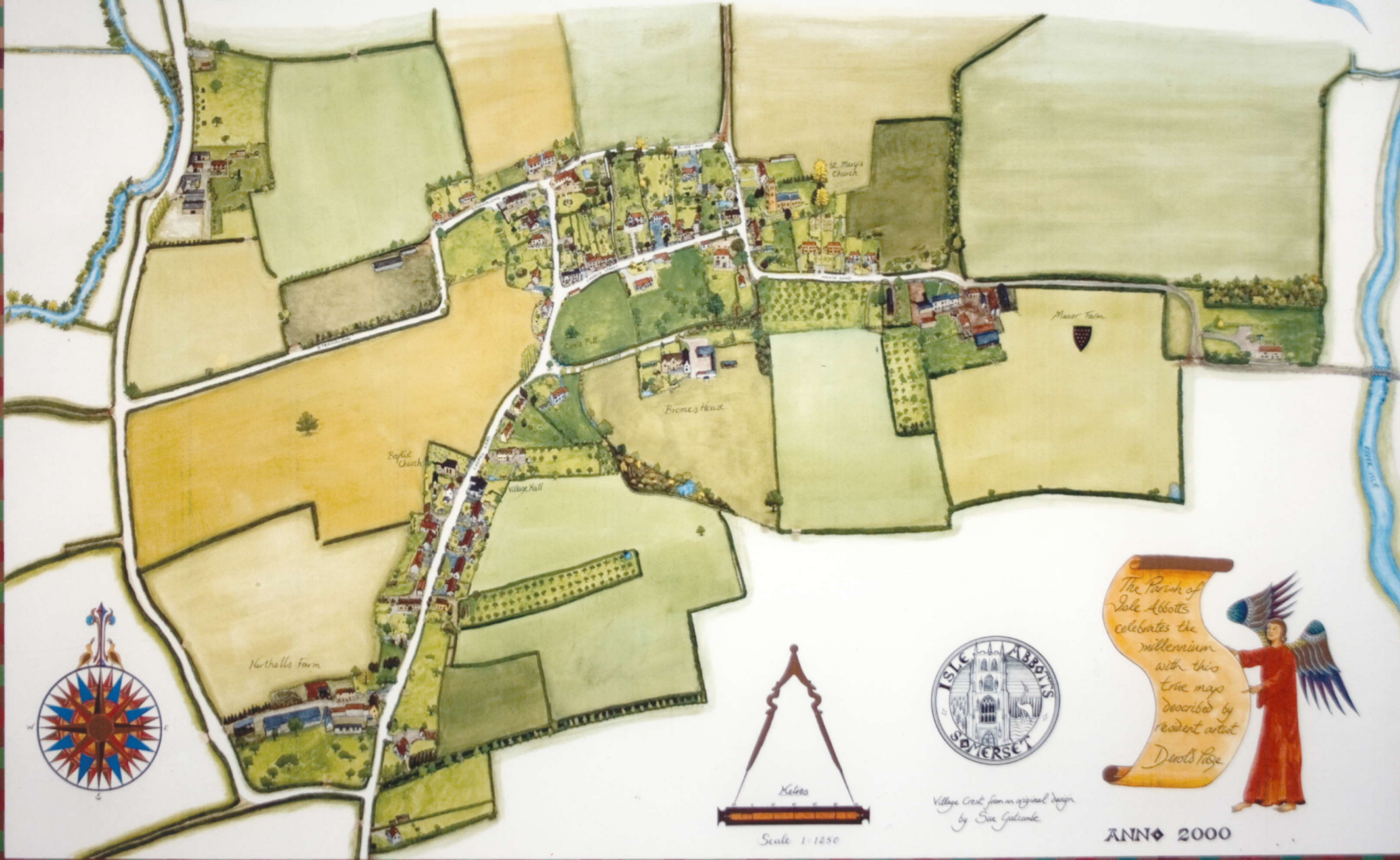


The village web site being updated.



The village choir performing at Stourhead.

ISLE ABBOTTS SOMERSET



Scale 1:1250



Village Crest from an original design
by Sue Galvin



ANN 2000

Isle Abbotts Survey Results and Analysis

The results of this survey were used to formulate the Village Plan. They are based on an analysis of the questionnaires completed in the Spring of 2006. The detailed results are available on the Village website isle-abbotts.org.uk.

Part One - About our Households

68 out of a potential 70 households took part in completing the Isle Abbotts Survey (97% return).

25% of these households are single occupancy.

85% of properties in Isle Abbotts are lived in by owner occupiers.

56% of people indicated that they moved to Isle Abbotts because of its attractive location and perceived quality of life offered within the community. Only 11% of people had always lived here.

Virtually all households had one or more cars with the overwhelming majority having access to two or more vehicles.

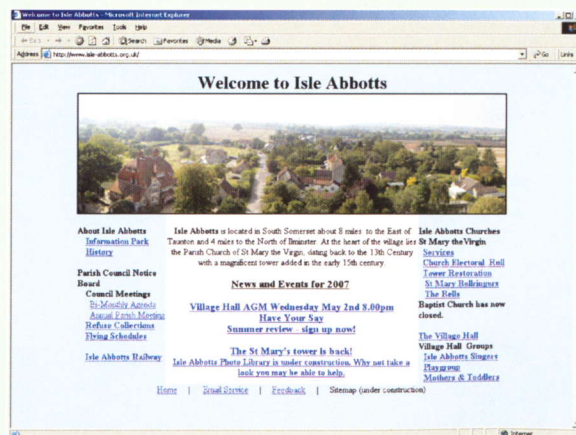
73% of households used oil as their main form of heating. 61% of these households indicated they would be interested in a bulk buying scheme.

All households reported having a telephone, mains water and electricity. 6% of households indicated they were not connected to mains drainage.

28% of households indicated that they would like mains gas were it available.

4% of households said their properties suffered from regular (external) or occasional flooding.

70% of households had internet access and an e-mail address. Of these 56% were connected via Broadband.



Part Two - About You

Leisure and amenities

36% of people who responded felt that access to sports and leisure facilities in Isle Abbotts was inadequate.

58% of people indicated that they participated in some form of pursuit within the village e.g. Bell Ringing, Singing Group, Church or Village hall.

54% of respondents indicated that the current village hall is adequate for the needs of the village.

75% of people indicated that the church was important to the community even though 51% of those supporting this notion were not involved with the church.

54% of those who responded indicated that they were in favour of restoring and upgrading the Jubilee Hall with the provision of a refreshment facility, a toilet and disabled access.

Only 11% of respondents claimed to use the mobile library service. 15% of people said they were unaware of the service and a further 20% of people said they did not use it because of inconvenient times.



Church festivals still attract good congregations.



Village Hall events are an important feature of village life.

Communication in Isle Abbotts

80% of people in Isle Abbotts indicated that they were either well or reasonably well informed about what was going on. This was achieved by a combination of notice boards, Parish Magazine, and word of mouth.

43% of people indicated they would like a village website with communication of events by e-mail.

57% of people subscribe to the Parish Magazine.

65% of people said they would like to receive the Parish magazine.

57% of people indicated that they knew who their Parish Councillors were.

39% of people indicated they knew when Parish Council meetings were held.

27% of people indicated that they had attended a Parish Council meeting.

81% of those people who had raised concerns through the Parish council felt that those concerns had been dealt with adequately.

Community Safety

Various concerns were expressed by people ranging from theft, vandalism, traffic speed and car crime. Responses averaged 3.37 per household. In reality examples given suggest people's perceptions are far worse than reality e.g.

94% of people said they felt quite safe in Isle Abbotts.

88% of people indicated that they would prefer not to have street lighting.

32% of people not already members of a neighbourhood watch scheme indicated that they would like to join such a scheme.

23% of people indicated that they had been a victim of crime although of these only 3% said that they had bothered to report it. These crimes were listed as breaking into sheds to thefts from cars.

48% of people perceived that police coverage in Isle Abbotts was poor. 16% of people thought police coverage was reasonable. No one thought it was good.

There was a mixed reaction from people when asked if there was a need for a neighbourhood watch scheme in the village partially stemming from confusion about whether there is actually anything in place formally now. 45% of people were either in favour or wanted more information, 12% of people said no, and 43% of people in equal measure stated no opinion or didn't respond.

Health, Social Needs, Access to Services

10% of people in Isle Abbotts said that they had either a health problem or disability that affected their day to day living. An equal number of people claimed to suffer some difficulty in accessing services in terms of transport availability. 4% of this group specifically mentioned difficulties in accessing dental care and domestic help and these probably mirror national trends.

9% of those who responded said they regularly used some form of assistance to aid mobility such as walking sticks, walking frames, or a wheelchair. Four people said that they acted as informal carers for those with disabilities and said that they received insufficient support in their role (possible reference to Social Services?).

Access to facilities in the village were generally considered to be good notwithstanding that 3% of people suggested access to the Village Hall could be improved (disabled ramp?).

The vast majority of people were happy with the village facilities and wanted things kept as they are.

Public Transport

For 90% of people within Isle Abbotts the car was the main source of transport. Only 4 people said they used the bus service. None used the bus service as their regular mode of travel and 92% of people said they never used the bus service. Of those that did use the bus service most rated the service as poor, costly and with inadequate frequency of service. Those with disabilities thought disabled access to the buses was poor.

Comments from people suggested that they did not use public transport (buses) from the village because bus times did not fit in with work and college hours (students) and when used for shopping did not provide for adequate turnaround times.

It was also mentioned that apart from main centres the public transport system did not provide adequate access to other local towns and villages.

Cars & Traffic

With regard to road conditions in Isle Abbots 43% of people said they were good or reasonable whilst 43% thought the roads were bad or poor. 14% of people did not respond.

There was a broad consensus that more regular maintenance by Somerset County Council in terms of pot hole filling, verge maintenance and drain clearance, would help considerably to reduce the risk of accidents and winter flooding.

74% of car owners said they parked their vehicles off road with 16% of other owners not responding. 10% of people said they parked on the road which invited some criticism from other users particularly about parking in the vicinity of the village hall and where width restrictions made it difficult for farm machinery.

Overwhelmingly (80%), people in the village favoured improvement measures to effect some form of control over traffic movement in the village and approach roads.

These included an official 30mph speed limit, improved road markings, speed bumps and width restrictions to slow vehicles and weight restrictions on some roads to prevent damage to sub-structure and verges. This latter comment may have applied to Steamalong and large articulated lorries accessing the chicken farm, which has now closed.

Housing

People were asked their views on whether further housing should be permitted within the village. 53% of respondents wanted some form of development whilst 8% expressed no opinion. Of the remainder 15% did not respond. Only 24% of people said they did not favour any more housing development.

Of those that favoured further development 42% suggest that any new homes should be at affordable prices for sale or rent while 30% said there should be no restriction. 28% of people expressed no view.

Most people favoured in-fill development or limited development as against large scale housing development which could not be supported by the present village infrastructure.



Barn conversion at Northall's Farm

Environment & Countryside

Footpath usage was good. 65% of people claimed to use the local footpaths and of these 85% were regular users. 23% of people said they rarely used the village footpaths and 12% of people did not respond.

Suggestions for improving footpaths ranged from local signs and maps (44%), better maintenance (14%), gates rather than styles (14%), and more suitability for the disabled (9%). Of the remainder (19%) no response was given. A small number of people suggested that access to the countryside could be better, although since the survey was completed the majority of footpath styles have been replaced with gates.

The majority of people were very positive about the footpath network and several praised local farmers for their work in helping to maintain them.



Tuesday is recycling day.

Under recycling there was no response from 31% of people in terms of what should be encouraged. Of those that did respond 66% of people suggested the village should have its own bottle/paper/glass/clothing bank. 12% of people felt that there was also a need for cardboard and plastic recycling.

On broader environmental issues the largest number of complaints (28%) concerned helicopter noise and night flying over the village caused by the close proximity of Merryfield. This was followed by fly-tipping and the sometimes perceived slow response time of the Council to clear such rubbish (18%). Other issues included smell pollution (11%) (Chicken farm which has now closed) and a suggestion that overhead power cables (16%) should be routed underground.



An all too familiar visitor to the village!

Young People

With regard to improving facilities for young people in the village there was no response from 64% of those surveyed.

Of activities that were undertaken these appeared evenly spread amongst age groups and relied heavily on parents transporting children to external venues e.g. football and music.

A number of suggestions were made to provide facilities such as a hard area for football/ basketball, off road biking, skateboarding and table tennis etc.

58% of adults were in favour of establishing a village recreational area for use by themselves and children, were land to become available.



Children from the village playgroup at Isle Abbots Station.



Duck race on the River Isle.

Life Long Learning

91% of parents said that playgroup provision in the area was adequate.

In terms of adult education provision, of those that responded to the survey 54% of people expressed no view either way. 27% said provision was poor and 19% said provision was good.

A full range of interests and hobbies were given (18 different subjects) covering adult learning with most people favouring evening attendance (52%). There was a broad consensus that in relocating to Isle Abbots there would be some restrictions on services provision and availability but that community life was probably more important.



The church bells were restored for the millenium and are now rung regularly.

The playgroup meets in the Village Hall.

St. Mary's - Our Village Church. Most (75%) residents thought the church important to the community and in March 2006 work started on a £130,000 restoration project for the 15th century tower, which was finally completed in early 2007. Below are a few pictures showing the work in progress and opposite is a view of the tower following restoration.



For a detailed look at the restoration please visit
http://www.isle-abbotts.org.uk/church/tower_detail.html.

*The Village
Plan Committee
wish to extend
their thanks to all
those villagers who
took the time to
complete the surveys
which have enabled
them to produce the
Isle Abbots
Village Plan..*

