

The Environment

What would improve the Villages' environment and appearance?

The responses to the consultation indicated that the majority of those living in both Seavington St Michael and Seavington St Mary felt that they benefited from a good village environment. The responses also indicated that the villagers place a strong emphasis on respect for the countryside and conservation.

Specific environmental issues raised in the Village Plan questionnaire were subsequently discussed at the public consultation days. The findings are outlined as follows:

Flowers and Shrubs

There was great support (85% in the questionnaire) for the provision of more flowers and shrubs to enhance the overall appearance of the Seavingtons. The possible future provision of gateways/entrance signs to the Villages was discussed and it was felt that this, combined with judicious planting, would add to the attraction of the Villages and could also act as a timely reminder to reduce traffic speed when entering the Villages.

In addition, in order to encourage personal pride in the appearance of the Villages, it was suggested that an annual gardening competition could be held with awards for best hanging basket, best display/new garden etc. The possibility of entering the Villages into a local/countrywide village competition was also raised.

Since the villages have a strong Gardening Club the Village Plan Action Group proposes to invite the Gardening Club to make proposals for a three year rolling programme together with estimates of initial and recurring costs.

Trees

75% of the questionnaire respondents indicated that more trees should be planted. In parallel with the consultative process the village Tree Wardens have produced a report which highlights the need to "maintain a rich landscape benefiting from trees, shrubs, wildflowers and wildlife, which increases the conservation value of the environment, making it a sought after and healthier place for humans to live."

The report identifies areas of prime importance for the immediate and long-term future, together with planting opportunities in the Seavingtons and a list of recommendations in respect of tree and shrub species planting. The Tree Wardens are invited to make detailed proposals for implementation over the next two years and to include both initial and recurring cost estimates.

The Tree Wardens' report is to be given to the appropriate organisations and individuals as an approved Annex to this Village Plan.

Benches and Seats

The provision of further outdoor seating in the Seavingtons received support from 62% of those who took part in the consultation. Accordingly it is proposed that the Seavington Playing Field Association and Tree Wardens work together to make realistically costed proposals for suitable sites and type of seating.

Village Entrances

“An entrance to a village is always welcoming – it’s like a light in the night at your front door.” - Extract from one resident’s response to the Seavingtons’ Village Plan Questionnaire.

The majority of those who responded to the questionnaire, together with those who attended the public consultation days, indicated that the approaches to the Villages should be improved with obvious village entrances. These were seen as both environmental and road safety features. It was also felt that the entrances/signs should be co-located with traffic pinch points, if possible, in order to encourage the reduction of traffic speed through the Seavingtons – see previous section of this Plan. The Parish Council has already taken the initiative by inviting villagers to submit ideas and plans for locations of any village entrances.

Litter

A substantial majority of respondents to the questionnaire wanted a reduction in litter; during the open days it emerged that one major concern centred on litter around the Millennium Hall.

It is proposed that the Parish Council consider establishing regular litter picking sessions in the Villages and / or encourage the “adoption” of sections of roads by neighbourhoods to keep them free from litter.

Dog Fouling

There was a strong response (84%) in favour of action to reduce dog fouling, particularly on the playing field. Both responses to the questionnaire and the public consultation process identified the need for more dog litterbins around the villages.

It is proposed that the Seavington Playing Field Association review the dog-fouling problem on the playing field and implement rules and remedies and that the Parish Council provide more dog litterbins in the Seavingtons.

Off Street Parking

The consultation showed a substantial majority of residents who wanted more off-street parking. A number of problem areas were identified including the car parking area opposite The Volunteer, School Lane and the Millennium Hall. The latter was seen as the area of greatest concern, particularly when there was a large function and parking spilled over onto the roadside verges.

It was felt that better use could be made of the overspill car park at the eastern end of the playing field and a number of suggestions were made on how the situation could be improved eg a footpath from the overspill car park to the hall with the provision of low level lighting to encourage its use during the hours of darkness.

The Parish Council is well aware of the general parking issue and will continue to pursue improvement. The SPFA is asked to review the problems at the Millennium Hall and take steps to facilitate use of the existing overflow car park.

Highways

Responsibility for maintenance and repair of the roads, lanes and verges in and around the villages lies with the Somerset County Council Highways Services Division, much of the work being contracted out to W S Atkins. Certain minor works, within 30 mph areas, such as road sweeping, removal of fallen trees and dead animals is the responsibility of the District Council. The Parish Council has negotiated and established a formal link to the Highways Services Division with a specific nominated member responsible for the interface.

During the period covered by the Village Plan consultation there were concerns that the Highway Services Division was compromising road safety through delaying and restricting maintenance work to save money, particularly on control of verge vegetation. It is thus considered vital that the villages' interests in this area continue to be protected by maintaining and developing the Parish Council's influence through the link and focus with the Highway Services Division.

Footpaths

"We enjoy walking around the village and surrounding countryside and have appreciated new signs marking the footpaths." Extract from one resident's response to the Seavingtons' Village Plan Questionnaire.

Whilst the questionnaire showed that 81% of the respondents were satisfied with access to the countryside, there were a significant number of comments (particularly at the public consultation days) about the need for improved maintenance of footpaths and the replacement of some stiles by kissing gates to encourage impaired mobility and older users.

It is proposed that the Parish Council press for an improved standard of maintenance of footpaths and arrange for the provision of some kissing gates; the role and duties of the villages' new Lengthsman should be included in this brief. Alongside this, existing occasional voluntary working parties should be asked to form a more permanent team under the Parish Paths Stewardship Scheme run by South Somerset District Council.

Proposals

No	Proposal	Proposed Actionee
C 1	Consider annual gardening competition and entry into regional or national competition	Gardening Club
C 2	Make proposals for a three year rolling programme of flower and shrub planting schemes with cost estimates which include recurring costs.	Gardening Club
C 3	The Tree Wardens to make detailed planting proposals for implementation over the next two years including both initial and recurring cost estimates.	Tree Wardens
C 4	The Tree Wardens' report to be issued to appropriate organisations as an approved Annex to Village Plan	Parish Council
C 5	Seavington Playing Field Association and Tree Wardens to work together to make realistically costed proposals for suitable sites of further public seating	Tree Wardens & Gardening Club
C 6	Continue to work for provision of Village Entrances and traffic pinch points (correlate with proposal B 9)	Parish Council
C 7	Establish litter picking sessions and encourage "adoption" of streets by neighbours	Parish Council & PCSG
C 8	Review dog fouling problem on the playing field and implement rules and remedies	SPFA
C 9	Provide further dog litter bins throughout both villages	Parish Council
C 10	Continue to work towards improved off-street parking	Parish Council
C 11	Review parking arrangements at Millennium Hall and facilitate use of existing overflow arrangements.	SPFA
C 12	Maintain and develop the Parish Council's link and influence with the Highways Services Division of the Somerset County Council	Parish Council
C 13	Press for improved footpath maintenance, consider the role of the Lengthsman and replace some stiles with kissing gates	Parish Council
C 14	Encourage members of occasional working parties to form a permanent team under the Parish Paths Stewardship Scheme	Parish Council & PCSG
C 15	Continue to develop and maintain link with Highway Services Division and maintain pressure for continuing and improved maintenance of local highways	Parish Council