

MUNCASTER PARISH PLAN



September 2007

Foreword

Fellow Parishioners,

The Muncaster Parish Plan was made possible by funding from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) through Voluntary Action Cumbria (VAC) and the willingness, dedication and commitment of members of the Parish Council to take on the task of producing it.

So what is the Parish Plan and what is its purpose?

- Make known those issues that affect our community
- Identify and prioritise key issues within our community
- Produce an action plan to promote the changes that the community wants to see at local, district and county levels.

Quite simply the plan gives everyone in our community an opportunity and a feel for what you the Parishioner wants.

This process started by members of the Parish Council approaching all the groups and businesses within the Parish to ascertain specific ideas and questions that they wished to have included within the questionnaire. This proved to be a worth while exercise and gave us a real feel for how the plan would be shaped and received. Once the questionnaire was formulated, distributed to you and returned a long data-input process ensued and enabled us to extrapolate the information contained within.

This document is a summary of the information gathered and the proposed actions to be taken. Details of the questionnaire responses and analysis of the data are available upon request to the Parish Clerk.

The results of those processes are contained within this Plan and I commend it to you; after all it is YOUR plan and as such is owned by the Parish.

The Action Plan shall be reviewed regularly (at least annually) and updated if there is any significant change. Progress will be reported in the Parish Council Newsletter. This ensures that the Plan remains a living document.

I would like to take the opportunity to express my thanks to all those who have contributed to the production of the Parish Plan and the Action Plan contained in this publication.

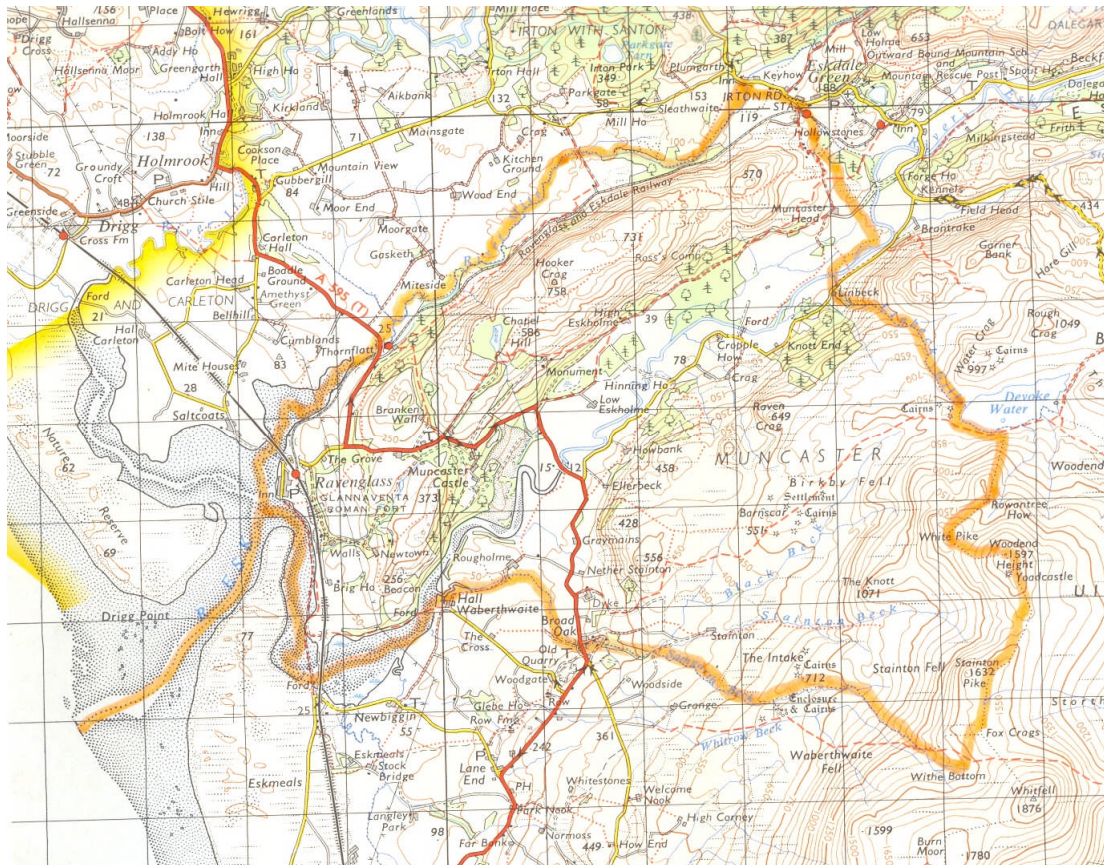
Steve Hallett

Chairman Muncaster Parish Council

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Map of Muncaster Parish:



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MUNCASTER PARISH OVERVIEW



Muncaster Parish, comprising the village of Ravenglass, the main centre of population, and its surrounding rural housing and farmsteads, is on the Western Seaboard of and wholly within the Lake District National Park (LDNP). Ravenglass is sited on a peninsular in the estuarial confluence of the rivers Esk, Mite and Irt, a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under European Union legislation regarding the mobile dune environment and special biodiversity.

History

The Parish of Muncaster is historically an agricultural area centred on the Muncaster Estate. The 800th anniversary of the Market Charter, awarded by King John, will be celebrated in 2008. In recent times the area has come to depend more on tourism and employment offered by industry and commerce.

The area has a stable community; much of the population has resided in the area for more than 10 years. Many properties in the Parish date from the 19th and early 20th centuries, although some have a considerably longer history. Part of Ravenglass is a designated conservation area. There is a small estate of newer housing which was built in the 1980s. The Parish is comprised of a mix of privately owned main residence, second and holiday homes plus private and housing association properties for rent.

Services

Ravenglass has one public house and two hotels with public bars. There are several guest houses and bed and breakfast establishments in Muncaster Parish.

There is a Post Office and General Store, a gift shop in the village and another at the Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway (R&ER) station.

Muncaster Parish enjoys various social activities including:

- Women's Institute (WI)
- Mothers Union
- Keep Fit
- Monday Club
- Computer Club
- Music and drama presentations (amateur and professional)

Muncaster Parish Hall, the base for many of these activities, maintains itself financially through individual contributions, hire fees and community activities. Ravenglass has established a Twinning Association linked with Hollókő in Hungary.

Transport

Ravenglass Village has a railway station with trains running to Carlisle in the north and Barrow, Lancaster and Preston in the South. There are no train services after early evening and there is no Sunday service.

A bus service operates through Muncaster Parish daily between Whitehaven and Muncaster Castle. The bus also provides a replacement for the Sunday trains when the service runs South to Barrow. These services are augmented by the Muncaster Microbus which caters for regular shopping trips to Seascale and Whitehaven and other services by arrangement with parishioners.

Anyone wanting to reach Eskdale is able to do so using the R&ER which runs a daily service March to the end of October and some winter periods; otherwise, an alternative form of transport has to be used.

Young People

Muncaster Parish does not have a school, as both Ravenglass and Muncaster schools closed many years ago. Neither are there pre-school facilities. Local children attend either Waberthwaite or Eskdale primary and either Millom or Egremont secondary schools. There is formal representation from Muncaster Parish on Waberthwaite School Governors. Private

education, at primary and secondary level, is available at Gosforth and St Bees. This means that Muncaster Parish children contend with road journeys of up to 15 miles each way which can be hazardous, particularly in winter, prolonged school days and have limited access to out-of-school activities. There are no youth clubs in Muncaster Parish.

Health Care

There is no doctor's surgery in Muncaster Parish. The nearest GP practice is in Seascale which has a satellite Surgery in Bootle. Prescription medicines are dispensed from both surgeries. The nearest General Hospital is in Whitehaven and there is a cottage Hospital in Millom. The nearest pharmacy is located in Seascale. There is a voluntary local team of trained First Response personnel available in case of medical emergency.

The nearest dental practices are in Millom, Seascale, Egremont and Whitehaven. At present, there are no dentists in Cumbria registering new NHS patients. There is a dental access centre in Egremont which offers emergency NHS treatment for those who are not registered with a dentist.

Parishioners who have mobility problems or who do not have the use of a car may experience problems accessing health care.

Tourism

Muncaster Castle and Gardens, home to the World Owl Trust, and the R&ER are nationally and internationally known attractions. Ravenglass is the only coastal village in the LDNP and the Parish has a history going back to Roman times comprising the site of a Roman fort and surviving remains of a Roman bath house. These features, along with the natural beauty of the local countryside, make the Parish a considerable tourist draw offering quiet attractions and enjoyment for locals and visitors. Because of this, the Parish has issues with the management of current tourism and the planning of future development. There are specific problems not shared by other areas within the LDNP.

Local Authorities

Muncaster Parish is in the Copeland administrative district and services to the area are provided by either Copeland Borough Council or Cumbria County Council. The Planning Authority is part of the LDNPA which also has a significant role in the administration of facilities in the Parish (specifically the Ravenglass Village car park area and public toilets). This division of responsibilities has an impact on the management and planning of the Parish's affairs. The LDNPA has a policy of approving housing development only where there is a proven affordable housing need.

The Parish boundaries of Eskdale and Muncaster are being reviewed at present with the anticipated transfer of Parishioners living in the Eskdale Green area to Eskdale Parish.

BACKGROUND

In early 2006 the Parish Council took the lead in applying for funding (available from DEFRA through VAC) for the Parish Plan.

Although led by the Parish Council, the development of this plan has also involved most local groups and businesses including:

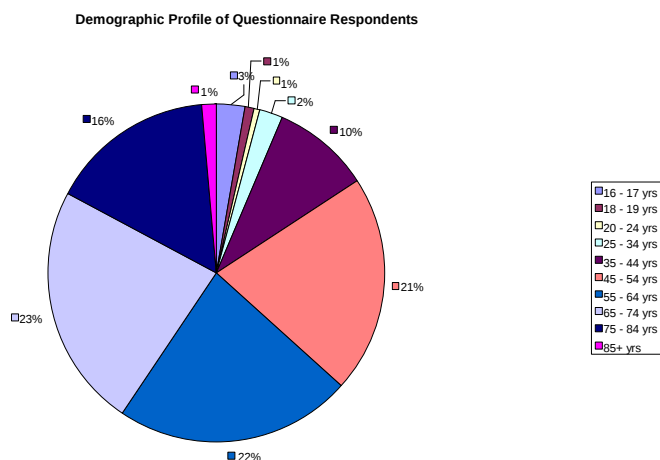
The Ravensglass Village Forum
The Monday Club
The W.I
St Michael's Church
The Charter Fair Committee
Muncaster Parish Hall Committee – registered charity
Muncaster Estate
R&ER
Keep-fit, Bonfire and Sailing Groups
Ravenglass Coastal Partnership
Local Hotels, Pubs and Guesthouses



Representatives from each of these groups were invited to attend an open meeting (which was also advertised to all in the Parish Magazine). At this meeting a working party of volunteers was assembled:

This Parish Plan is based on the results of a questionnaire completed by members of the community. The survey questionnaire was developed with support from VAC who supplied the computer analysis software¹. It combined non-optional questions recommended by the analysis software and questions relating to concerns raised specifically by the community. The questionnaire was circulated to all members of the Parish aged 13 years and above. A total of 275 Questionnaires were distributed and 146 responses received. The Households in the part of the Parish which is being re-allocated to Eskdale were not included.

The age range of those who responded is shown below. When compared to the age distribution of the parish population (2001 census) the response was greater from those aged 45 and above than from the younger age ranges. There was no discernable difference between the responses of those living in Ravensglass Village and those throughout the rest of the Parish. The opinions of the younger members of the community differed from the more mature population particularly in regard to the lack of facilities for them.



¹ Compass Community Profiling Software, Leeds Metropolitan University, Govt. Policy Dept.

SUMMARY OF THE RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The following is a brief summary of the responses to the questionnaire upon which the Action Plan is based. Details of the responses and analysis of the data are available upon request to the Parish Clerk.

Concerns raised by the WI and other groups elicited high responses. These included:

- Dog fouling
- Better lighting from Wells Cottages up to and including the Village Hall
- Clear direction signs on and improvement to the public toilets
- Restriction on parking to enable better access to the Village Green
- 20mph zone in Ravenglass
- Improvements to the Village Green e.g. consistency in seats and better flower containers.



The question requested by the Village Hall Committee also elicited a very high response rate. A significant number of respondents wanted films to be shown, more dances, plays, shows and various evening classes. A suggestion for computer classes was made; these are now being provided in the Old Dairy at Muncaster Castle.

Housing

The great majority did not consider that housing development was needed in the Parish.

Environment

Most respondents felt that they were partly responsible for maintenance of the environment with many being willing to take part in community initiatives to clean the area. A high proportion of the community takes an active role in sorting for recycling and would use a skip for garden waste.

A lot of respondents were concerned about sea defences, in particular the serious erosion to the Roman fort on the estuary side of the railway. Many supported creation of a raised walkway to allow access at most times to Walls Bridge from the end of the main street.

Serious concern regarding the reliability of the water supply to Ravenglass village was expressed. A new water main has now been laid.

Roads

A high proportion of respondents considered the condition of the roads good or adequate although the majority of respondents expressed concern regarding road safety on the A595 and highlighted particular problem areas along it throughout the Parish and problem areas within Ravenglass village. Traffic traveling too fast was considered a major problem by a majority of Parishioners.

Community / Social Contact

Regarding facilities for children and young people, the majority of those who completed the questionnaire either did not respond or did not know whether there were sufficient, appropriate, activities. Of those that did respond, a large proportion considered that facilities for under-18s were inadequate.

The great majority felt that local schools and the post office are vital to the local community.

Police and Crime Prevention

Crime was not seen as a major problem in the area and respondents were generally satisfied with the service provided by the Police (except a general comment that it would be nice to see them sometimes). A significant majority of respondents was not aware that a neighbourhood watch scheme exists; the majority is willing to join.

Health and Social Services

Few people had used social services in the 12 months before the survey but those who had were very satisfied with the services, as they were with the doctors, however there was concern over dentists and, from older people, concern about accessibility and lack of convenient public transport.

Business

Whilst respondents recognised the need for businesses to provide local employment it was generally felt that such businesses should be appropriate, in type and scale, to fit in with the existing character of the area.

Public Transport

The Microbus provides a valuable service to the community. Whilst the Public Transport service was considered essential concerns were expressed regarding frequency and convenience.

Tourism

A majority of Parishioners was of the opinion that tourism was vital and that some measured expansion was feasible if it was very carefully controlled.

With regard to the LDNPA, respondents felt that the Authority did not always reflect local concerns. Management of the Authority includes local representatives and every effort should be made to ensure that Muncaster continues to be well represented.

ACTION PLAN

This section sets out actions to address the concerns raised in the Parish. The actions are set out under the same headings as the questions. Where a concern has been raised under more than one heading the action will be set out under the most appropriate heading. Not all headings will have actions assigned to them.

The aim is that the community takes ownership of the issues; makes appropriate representations and acts positively in an effort to address those concerns whilst not adversely affecting the Heritage of the area.

As stated by the Chairman of the Parish Council in the Foreword, the Plan is a living document with an ongoing remit. It will be reviewed regularly (at least annually) and, if circumstances change due to outside influences or actions we have already taken, the plan may be updated or new actions added. Progress against this Action Plan will be reported in the Parish Council Newsletter.

The Parish Council will coordinate the Action Plan and, being the local statutory body, will liaise with the appropriate authorities as necessary. The party with "ownership" of the action will be identified in each section (identified in bold type) along with a list of other parties that may have a role in the development of any action required.

Under timescales, generally, "short" means within 3 months; "medium" means within 12 months; "long" means within 5yrs and "on-going" means the action will continue until such time as circumstances change to make it no longer necessary.

ACTION PLAN		
Action	Partners	Timescale
HOUSING		
Vision: New housing development or substantial proposed changes to existing housing is in keeping with the needs and heritage of the Parish.		
The LDNPA will be made aware that the overwhelming majority of respondents do not consider housing development necessary in the Parish.	Parish Council LDNPA	Short
The Parish Council will review planning applications against local needs and heritage and comment as appropriate through the existing planning process.	Parish Council LDNPA	On-going
Ravenglass Conservation Area will be the subject of an Appraisal and a Management Plan	LDNPA Conservation Area Residents Ravenglass Village Forum Parish Council	Medium
ENVIRONMENT		
Vision: Visually attractive, clean and tidy public areas throughout the Parish		
Implement Quality Control monitoring of public toilets, waste bins, grass cutting etc. by nominated local residents with defined, agreed, reporting routes to the appropriate authorities.	Parish Council Ravenglass Village Forum LDNPA Copeland Borough Council District Councillor Highways Agency/Capita Symonds	Medium
Dog Fouling:		
Local supply points for "clean-up bags" will be established.	Ravenglass Village Forum Copeland Borough Council Ravenglass Post Office Ravenglass Caravan Site	Short
Village Improvements:		
Support suitable, sustainable, local improvement initiatives	Parish Council Ravenglass Village Forum	On-going
Introduce regular "litter picking" patrols.	Ravenglass Village Forum	Short
Waste:		
Promote, support and facilitate environmentally friendly initiatives for waste disposal.	Parish Council Copeland Borough Council LDNPA District Councillor Ravenglass Village Forum	On-going
Seek to ensure that the local authority policy not to introduce "wheelie bins" or to reduce the weekly service remains the case.	Parish Council Ravenglass Village Forum Copeland Borough Council District Councillor	On-going
Seek to reduce "commercial" abuse of recycling area.	Parish Council Copeland Borough Council Local Businesses LDNPA	Medium
Sea Defences:		
Review sea defences for Ravenglass estuary, identify relevant "owners" and implement planned maintenance programme.	Ravenglass Coastal Partnership Parish Council Environment Agency LDNPA Copeland Borough Council Network Rail United Utilities Natural England DEFRA	Long

ACTION PLAN		
Action	Partners	Timescale
Investigate feasibility of and, if possible, implement a walkway from Main Street to Walls bridge under railway.	Ravenglass Coastal Partnership Environment Agency Parish Council LDNPA Copeland Borough Council	Long
ROADS		
Vision: Parish roads are as safe as possible for all users.		
Review road safety throughout the Parish and draw up recommendations for appropriate improvements.	Parish Council Cumbria Constabulary Cumbria County Council	Medium
Monitor road safety schemes elsewhere and feed recommendations into the review.	Parish Council Highways Agency/Capita Symonds Cumbria Constabulary Cumbria County Council	Medium
SPECIFIC SAFETY SCHEMES to be pursued.		
20mph zone in Ravenglass	Parish Council District Councillor Cumbria County Council	Medium
Speed restrictions on A595 around Muncaster Castle car-park and entrance.	Parish Council District Councillor Cumbria County Council	Long
Measures (e.g. traffic lights) at Muncaster bridge on A595.	Parish Council District Councillor Cumbria County Council	Medium
Pedestrian safety scheme between Wells Cottages and the Church Room.	Parish Council Ravenglass Village Forum Cumbria County Council	Medium
Pre-planned diversion system in case of A595 closure	Parish Council Cumbria Constabulary District Councillor	Medium
Additional, suitable, lighting to be installed where necessary.	Parish Council Ravenglass Village Forum Cumbria County Council Copeland Borough Council District Councillor	Medium
The procedure for street light replacement will be promulgated	Parish Council Ravenglass Village Forum Copeland Homes	Short
The LDNPA will be made aware that the great majority of the Parish wish to see the Ravenglass car-park remain free to users.	Parish Council LDNPA	Short
COMMUNITY / SOCIAL CONTACT		
Vision: Effective structures in the community to help implement the Parish Plan and support Parish Council business.		
The different roles of the Parish Council and Ravenglass Village Forum will be promulgated	Parish Council Ravenglass Village Forum	Short
The profile of the Parish Council will be raised	Parish Council	Short
Parish web-site will be developed.	Ravenglass Village Forum Parish Council Muncaster Estate	Medium
Promote "Ravenglass 2008" coordination of events to mark 800yrs of Charter and Muncaster Castle	Charter Fair Committee Ravenglass Village Forum Parish Council Muncaster Estate Muncaster Parish Hall Committee	Medium
Establish support network for voluntary community	Parish Council	On-going

ACTION PLAN		
Action	Partners	Timescale
groups to facilitate grants and share expertise.	Ravenglass Village Forum VAC Parish Hall Committee Other local groups as appropriate	
Promote local representation on the LDNPA.	Parish Council LDNPA District Councillor	On-going
Maintain and improve play areas	Parish Council	On-going
Support viable initiatives for young people.	Parish Council Ravenglass Village Forum	On-going
POLICE and CRIME PREVENTION		
Vision: A safe and crime free environment for all.		
Liaise with Cumbria Constabulary to develop a community crime action plan.	Parish Council Cumbria Constabulary Ravenglass Village Forum Neighbourhood Watch	Short
The Neighbourhood Watch Scheme will be advanced	Neighbourhood Watch	Short
HEALTH and SOCIAL SERVICES		
Vision: Improved access for all to a full range of health and social services facilities		
Oppose further centralisation or contraction of services.	Parish Council Cumbria County Council	On-going
Promote and encourage community transport to access social, health and welfare facilities.	Microbus	On-going
BUSINESS		
Vision: A range of suitable, sustainable and environmentally friendly local businesses providing employment for parish residents.		
Set up a working group to explore potential types of small businesses and operators and possible locations.	Parish Council Local Businesses LDPNA Copeland Council	Medium
Facilitate grants and other opportunities for the small business sector.	Parish Council Copeland Council	On-going
Representations will be made to ensure that a Post Office counter service is maintained in Ravenglass.	Parish Council Ravenglass Village Forum	On-going
PUBLIC TRANSPORT		
Vision: Public transport services appropriate to the needs of residents and visitors.		
Monitor and work with appropriate bodies to seek enhanced transport links.	Parish Council Copeland Rail Users Group District Councillor	On-going
Actively support the Copeland Rail Users Group through Parish Council representative.	Parish Council	On-going
TOURISM		
Vision: Suitable, sustainable tourism of international quality.		
Actively pursue and monitor involvement in Hadrian's Wall Initiative and Hadrian's Cycleway.	Parish Council Ravenglass Village Forum Muncaster Estates Hadrian's Wall Initiative Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway	On-going