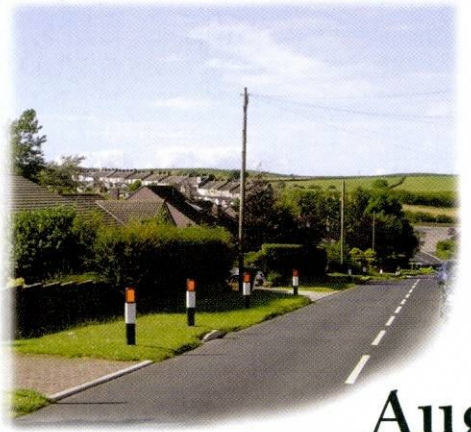
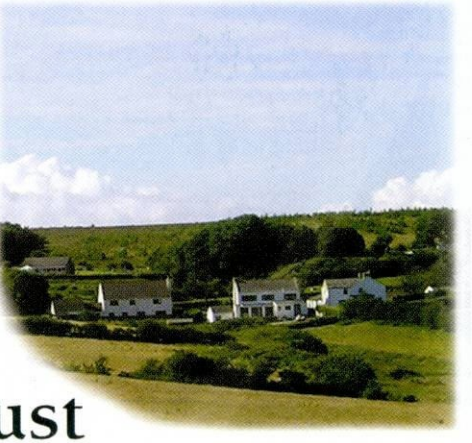
Weddicar
Parish Plan





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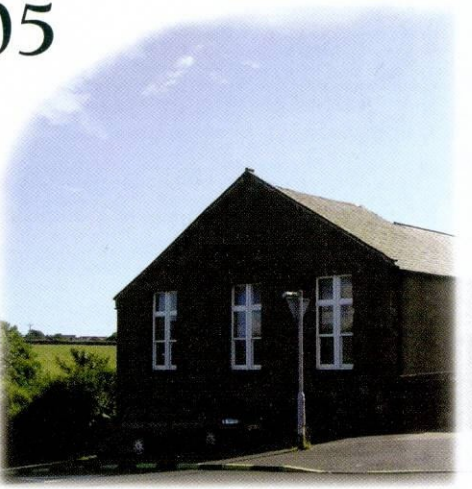


The Countryside Agency

Background

This plan provides an overview of Weddicar Parish and the issues identified by the community. It replaces the 5 year plan developed by the Weddicar Parish Council in 1999. An action plan has been developed which will form the priority areas to be addressed by the Parish Council over the next few years. The intention is to review the Plan on a regular basis and update as appropriate on a 5 yearly basis.

Overview of Weddicar Parish

Weddicar Parish lies between Whitehaven and Cleator Moor. It extends from Galemire to Whelpside and from Sneckyeat to Croft End Farm. The Parish is rural in character with a number of small hamlets which include Keekle, Padstow, Summergrove, Galemire and Goosebutts.

The environment across the parish consists of gentle rolling fields and woodland interspersed by the hamlets of Weddicar which generally are connected by minor roads with limited road side paths.

There are three public footpaths or bridleways in the Parish, running through open countryside, which have been maintained by the Parish Council with support in the past from Cumbria Council. One footpath starts at Keekle and its initial passage is through the Keekle Community Park.

Although the Parish covers a few square miles it only has a population of about 400 residents and limited facilities for the community. Whilst there are no shops there are two public houses, the Ewe and Lamb Inn at Padstow and the Keekle Inn.

Being primarily a rural Parish it is not surprising that Weddicar does have a close association with farming, although much of its roots around Keekle and Padstow developed from the local mining industry founded in the 19th century.

It was the mining industry that initiated the early major housing construction within Weddicar Parish around the mid 1850s with the terraces at Keekle and Padstow being built. The second major phase of housing has occurred since the 1970s with a number of individual dwellings being constructed in Padstow, Goosebutts, Whelpside and Summergrove. More recently over the past ten years there has been a significant expansion around Summergrove although sadly this has not coincided with an improvement in the infrastructure of the Parish.

North of Keekle there was a major opencast coal excavation which was particularly developed during the 1980s. This activity led to some contamination of the River Keekle during that period but the quality of the water has now returned to acceptable levels and fish and other aquatic species have returned to the river.

Being between the towns of Whitehaven and Cleator Moor Weddicar Parish does not enjoy its own extensive amenities. The B5295 Whitehaven to Cleator Moor road bisects the Parish and provides the only regular public transport route. Children within the Parish have to travel outside the area to go to school.

Despite the lack of amenities and infrastructure the community spirit in Weddicar Parish is good. There are a number of groups within the Parish covering a broad age range, a number which have been active for a several years and continue to flourish.

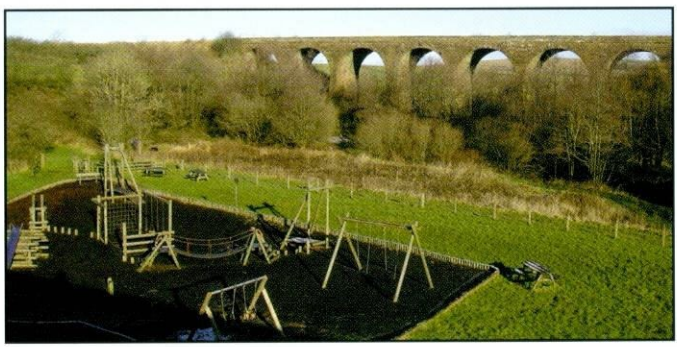
The Keekle Mission plays an important role within the Parish and is used by a number of groups for a range of activities including meetings of the Parish Council.

Community Groups

There is a thriving Women's Institute with about 20 members which meet regularly to discuss important topics and hold competitions. The group help to organise and run a Christmas party and summer outing for the senior citizens in the community both of which the Parish Council is pleased to support. The WI is very keen to welcome new attendees.

Since the Queen's Silver Jubilee there has been an annual and very successful sports day within the Parish. This involves not only sports races for children and adults but fancy dress, sideshows and refreshments. Events as successful as the Keekle and Padstow Sports do not happen without a significant commitment from a dedicated Committee who organise and run the day. Generally the Sports day is the first Saturday in June and starts of with a Carnival from Goosebutts.

Between the impressive Keekle viaduct and the Cleator Moor / Whitehaven road lies an area of about 5 acres. In 1991 a group of local volunteers decided to turn this area of then wasteland into an area that could be enjoyed by all the Community. The vision of the Group of seven turned into the Keekle Community Park a successful and well known local haven. The Keekle Community Park is now a registered charity that continues to be run by volunteers which includes five of the original group. The Park has at its centre an area where the Sports day is held as well as other events including the Keekle Duck Race. The Park also includes a children's playground, picnic tables and seats that allow all ages to enjoy the local environment. Through the middle of the Park the River Keekle flows bounded on both sides by a range of native trees many of which were planted by the Keekle Community Park Action Group. The Action Group is always pleased to receive help from volunteers on its work days and would be delighted if anyone would like to become more involved in the Park- either as a member of the committee or as a volunteer on workdays, to help to preserve the excellent heritage that is being created in the community.



More information on the Keekle Community Park and how to help can be obtained from Bryan Haslop on 01946 692563

Copeland Local Plan

The Copeland Borough Council Local Plan has a major influence on the future of the residents of Weddicar Parish in a number of areas. In the current draft Local Plan that was produced for consultation, initially in 2004 with a second version in 2005, there are a number of policies which will be beneficial to the Weddicar community and which the Parish Council supports. These include sustainability, housing and creating more employment in the area. The Local Plan suggests an expansion of the Westlakes Science Park which will help to create new employment which the Parish Council supports providing it does not encroach on the old established farms around Summergrove, Galemire and Sneckyeat.

Parish Plan Consultation Process

The first Parish Council 5 year plan was developed in 1999 and highlighted the main priorities as:

1. To develop and maintain an infrastructure that supported the safety of all the residents by providing adequate street lighting within the Parish and improving footpaths and in particular a new footpath between Galemire and the Ewe and Lamb Inn

2. To represent the views of parishioners at local, county and national level as appropriate on a wide range of issues including:
    - planning
    - law and order
    - roads, highways and footpaths
    - the local environment

3. To support the needs of individuals and groups within the Parish

In 2000, Cleator Moor was awarded SRB status, covering the Town and the four neighbouring parishes, including Weddicar. In March 2005 the SRB ended so it was important for the area to secure future funding based on local issues. Two of the parishes in the cluster had well developed parish plans, and a coordinated approach was made for the others to develop or update their own plans.

The Parish Plan process was carried out to review and update the existing 5 year plan. This process involved consultation with the residents of Weddicar to provide direct evidence from the local community of issues.

The Parish Council acted as the Steering Group in Weddicar to oversee the plan development. Cumbria County Council Neighbourhood Development Office, Groundwork and Voluntary Action Cumbria provided direct support in carrying out the consultation.

The consultation was carried out by a working group using Participatory Appraisal (PA), which is a community based approach to consultation that seeks to obtain the views and attitudes of local people with the aim of getting them involved in actions to improve their locality. The working group involved local volunteers and agencies seeking views in the local Pubs and through door to door interviews in the Parish to gather people's views. The first contact with local people was unprompted and allowed them to raise the most important issues; follow-up contact explored the issues in more detail and identified actions that could be taken to solve local problems.

Responses were obtained from about 30% of Weddicar residents.

Additional information and issues were obtained through dialogue with residents and groups in the parish directly with Parish Councillors.

Key outcomes/ issues

The main issues that people raised during PA were:

- Traffic and parking (major issue)
- Public transport
- Lack of youth facilities
- Dog fouling
- Lack of shops, business and amenities
- Litter/ poor environment

A summary of the issues is shown in the Appendix.

There were other issues that were identified resulting from a number of interactions with residents and groups following the publication of the draft Copeland Local Plan. There was concern over the potential to build additional housing between the hamlets of Summergrove, Goosebutts and Padstow, which would change the nature of the hamlets in this area. Whilst any development of Westlakes would increase the prospects for local employment a key issue raised was the potential for expansion beyond the current boundaries of Westlakes and in particular encroaching on farmland within the Weddicar Parish.

The nature of the countryside does bring some environmental issues for example overgrowing trees obscuring street lights around Summergrove or hedging encroaching upon the public footpaths around Keekle. General litter was an issue for some people although there is little graffiti or significant fly tipping. Dog fouling is viewed as an issue in some parts of the Parish along the roadside paths and within some of the grassed areas for example in the Keekle Community Park.

The consultation process clearly highlighted concerns over road traffic and the risk to the health and safety of the residents across the Parish. This is an issue that is shared by the Parish Council and over the past 5 or so years has been the number one priority for the Council. Although, with the exception of the B5295, most roads are designated as minor, the traffic flow at certain times can create a significant risk. In some parts of the Parish the minor routes are used as short cuts to avoid traffic congestion, for example down Whelpside avoiding the main road around Whitehaven School and the route along Keekle and Padstow is used by Sellafield traffic. The Parish Council has campaigned for a number of years to improve the safety around our roads. This has been successful in part with the introduction of a 30 mph speed limit along Keekle and up to Cleator Moor and the installation of a footpath from Padstow to Galemire crossroads. Sadly there have been a number of accidents in the Parish a particular black spot being the Galemire crossroads where fatalities have occurred in the past.

The consultation process highlights more needs to done to reduce the hazards and risks in the area including the introduction of traffic calming measures. Parking by the roadside in Padstow and Keekle increases further the risk from road traffic in these areas.

There were a number of issues raised about the infrastructure and amenities in the parish. One concern was the lack of a bus route to connect with the expanded hamlets of Summergrove and Goosebutts. The lack of youth facilities was viewed as an issue for several people although the lack of facilities for children was not highlighted as a concern.

Parish Council

The Weddicar Parish Council was formed in 1933 to help provide for the welfare of the community. There have been a number of dedicated Parish Councillors over the years with a number providing long service to the community. The current Parish Council has 4 councillors who have served for about 60 years between them. Being a Councillor can be very rewarding yet it has been difficult to attract people willing to stand for office. This is not a new phenomenon as in the past, to the current Parish Councillor's knowledge, there has only one occasion when nominations exceeded the number of posts and an election was held (1987). The Parish is currently one Councillor short and there is a general concern held within the Council that new blood is urgently required to provide sustainability of the Weddicar Parish Council. Without new interest from the Parish the Council has a bleak future. This is an issue that needs to be included in the Parish Plan to encourage future participation from the residents of the Parish.

Action Plan

Issue	Action	Priority	Timescale	Funding
Traffic & safety	1 Lobby for speeding restrictions and traffic calming measures with Cumbria Council 2 Work with Cumbria Police to carry out speed monitoring	High	Ongoing from previous 5 year plan 2006	Cumbria Council with contribution from Weddicar Parish Council
Infrastructure / housing developments	Provide response to Local Plan as additional input to Public Enquiry	High	August 2005	N/A
Environment/ pathways	Discussion with Cumbria Council about new pathways along road at Summergrove	Medium	2006	Weddicar Parish to fund up to 20% to gain approval
Public transport	1 Seek more in depth understanding of the need for transport in Summergrove area 2 If need apparent lobby for circular bus route stopping at Summergrove?	Low	2006 2006	N/A
Street lighting	Install lighting at Summergrove crossroads – liaise / campaign with Cumbria Council	Medium	2007 onward dependent on funds	Weddicar Parish to contribute up to 20%
Dog fouling/ Litter	Include the issue of dog fouling and litter in in circulars and in. Parish newsletter.	Medium	Start in 2005/6 but ongoing process	Weddicar Parish Council
Youth activities	1 Liaise with young persons in Parish to seek their views	Medium	2006 onwards	N/A

Action Plan

Issue	Action	Priority	Timescale	Funding
	2 Work with Copeland Council and the Keekle Mission to investigate options for locating youth activities in the Parish			
Lack of local amenities	1 Gain better understanding of requirements for local amenities 2 Based upon outcome from 1 develop plan	Low	2006 onwards	N/A
Parish Council	1 Produce circulars and seek greater involvement in the Parish Council from the residents 2 If 1 is unsuccessful seek discussion with Copeland Council about the future role of Weddicar Parish Council	High	2005 By 2006	N/A

This Action Plan covers a period of 5years and will be reviewed throughout that period. Actions are the responsibility of the Weddicar Parish Council

Progress against the Action Plan will be communicated to the Parish through a newsletter and views will be sought on outstanding new issues

Acknowledgments

Weddicar Parish Council would like to thank the Countryside Agency and Cumbria County Council for funding the production of the Parish Plan and the following for their assistance in developing the Parish Plan:
Cumbria County Council Neighbourhood Development Office
Voluntary Action Cumbria
Parishioners of Weddicar who provided views and input

In particular special thanks are given to Sarah Mitchell, Rural Development Officer, Voluntary Action Cumbria for her support, advice and encouragement in producing the plan

Appendix

Summary of responses from Consultation Process (Participatory Appraisal)

Issue	Total Number of people who raised this issue	Percentage of total (%)
Traffic and parking	45	52.3
Public transport	9	10.4
Lack of youth facilities	11	12.8
Youth as a problem	-	-
Children's facilities	-	-
Derelict buildings	2	2.3
Shops, businesses and amenities	7	8.1
Dog fouling	12	13.9
Litter / poor environment	8	9.3
Need more jobs	-	-
Housing	-	-
More police	1	1.1
Regeneration	-	-
Crime	2	2.3
Antisocial behaviour / vandalism	3	3.5
Elderly activities	-	-
Street lighting	-	-
Council Tax / public money	2	2.3
Positive comments	3	3.5
Refuse / recycling	-	-
Public safety	-	-
General Negative comments	-	-
Other	3	3.5

Ewe & Lamb
Padstow