

West Felton Parish Plan 2013 to 2014 – Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Household Questionnaire:

GENERAL - Relevant to: – WFPC; Shropshire Council (SC)

1. A total of 184 responses were received to the residents' questionnaire giving an overall response rate of 30.6 % with 53% female, the largest age groups represented are those aged 65-75, 36-49 and 50-59.
2. In total 403 persons represented including all householders.
3. All villages and hamlets were represented except Aston Moor, with a relatively high proportion of Grimpo residents.
4. West Felton Parish's strengths are associated with the natural environment and the people living there.
5. By far the most comments about dislikes within the parish were related to traffic and parking.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY - Relevant to: – SC; BT

6. From one hundred and eighty responses, one hundred and sixty three (90%) indicated there is access to the internet. The remaining 10% (18 responses) said that the household does not have internet access.
7. 81% of respondents indicate a wish for superfast broadband.

LEISURE – Relevant to: – Village Hall committee.

8. For other clubs/societies wanted in the parish, bowling or short mat bowling were the most popular suggestions, followed by 'other forms of exercise and sport.' Other clubs receiving one or two mentions were: a youth club, social / dinner or breakfast club, training courses, arts and crafts, drama and dance.
9. 98% of people stated they were regular readers of the 'Round and About West Felton Parish Magazine.

ENERGY AND RECYCLING – Relevant to: – WFPC and SC

10. The most popular 'green' schemes if grants were available were improved recycling facilities and solar roof panels. – **POTENTIAL ACTION – Presentations at Village Hall via WFPC and SC.**
11. The most unpopular were community or domestic wind turbines.
12. Many people indicated a lack of knowledge about 'ground-source heat pumps' and 'air-source heat pumps.' – **POTENTIAL ACTION – Presentations at Village Hall via WFPC and SC.**
13. On renewable energy, the most unpopular commercial units were: Wind Farms, Shale gas fracking units, individual wind turbines and fields covered by solar panels. Despite considerable further unpopularity, generally the most acceptable were anaerobic digesters followed by aerobic digesters.

MAJOR LIKES AND DISLIKES - Relevant to: – SC

14. All elements of the parish's natural environment proved popular.
15. The most unpopular elements of parish life indicated were: 'development', 'dog fouling', 'fly-tipping' and 'speeding'. Further comments referred to size and frequency of traffic, particularly when there is a diversion from the A5 in operation. One comment mentioned smoke from garden fires and two referred to parking issues. – **ACTION – Rnd & About article.**

EMPLOYMENT - **Relevant to: – SC**

16. There were 21 people, (13.5% of respondents) working from home and 6, (5% of respondents) considering so doing in the future. –Broadband and mobile phone communications, with associated connection speed issues were considered most important for people considering setting up a business.
17. 76% of respondents consider it important to improve employment opportunities in the parish.
18. The top 8 employment opportunities considered most important for the parish were, Light industry, Horticulture, Health Centre, Farming and Agricultural Services, Chemist, Barber/Hairdresser, Dentist, Forestry and Hardware/Household Store.
19. Respondents voted strongly for industries generating large amounts of traffic to be located away from narrow access roads and that heavy industry should be located away from residential areas.
20. Potential increases in traffic, parking issues and associated needs for new buildings were the major concerns for respondents considering the possibilities of new employment opportunities.

TOURISM - **Relevant to: – SC; Tourism Board**

21. 69% of respondents considered the development of tourism a worthwhile consideration for the parish's future.
22. The 3 most popular tourism related existing parish assets needing development were considered to be: The Area's history; the network of Footpaths and the canal.
23. For future tourism potential to be developed, new/improved B&B venues and small campsites were the most popular with respondents.
24. The top 3 information improvements to encourage tourism were: Information leaflets about walking/cycling routes; making information available at local shops/tourism centres; website and links.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT - **Relevant to: – WFPC; SC; Shrops Wildlife Trust (SWT)**

25. Respondents suggested that the following were most important to them for community to get involved in maintaining: Hedgerow maintenance; Access to and maintenance of footpaths; Producing footpath maps; Planting more trees; Improving the castle-mound; Upkeep of litter/dog-mess bins and offering needy people a lift somewhere.
26. Of total respondents, about 1 in 4, (38 people) have offered themselves for voluntary work. Their top voluntary work offers were towards: Giving needy people a lift somewhere; Neighbourhood Watch; Helping with activities for older people; Planting more trees; Improving the castle-mound; Helping with activities for younger people and Producing footpath maps. *These type of work offered by each of the volunteers needs to be established by further contact as the questionnaire responses were separated from the names put forward, to protect anonymity.*

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - **Relevant to: – WFPC & SC**

27. On Planning and Development; 89% of respondents considered that the Parish Council were correct in opting for 'Open Countryside' status within the SAMDev Local Development Plan for Shropshire process.

28. Of the 11% who disagreed, a considerable majority were in favour of the 'Community Cluster' option, rather than 'Community Hub.'
29. The 11% group considered that the housing types to be encouraged in the parish were, in order of preference; 3 bedroom houses (13 for, 2 against), bungalows (10 for, 4 against); 1-2 bedroom houses (9 for, 3 against); Sheltered housing/supported living (6 for, 5 against); 4-5 bedroom houses (1 for, 7 against).
30. Of 175 respondents, 19 people were hoping to buy an affordable house in West Felton in the next 5 years, the vast majority preferring West Felton village for its location.
31. Of these, 11 gave a preference for a 3 bedroom house; 7 for a 1-2 bedroom house; 2 for bungalows and 1 for a 4-5 bedroom house. *Some respondents opted for more than one choice.*
32. There was limited knowledge about the availability of rental accommodation within the parish. Of those expressing a knowledgeable view for different housing types, a majority of 36 against 19 thought there were not enough sheltered/supported living houses for rent; a majority of 34 against 28 for 1-2 bedroom houses, a majority of 33 against 24 for bungalows. For the remaining housing types the majority was in favour of there already being enough, with, for 3 bedroom houses, 28 against 23 - and for 4-5 bedroom houses, 29 against 10.
33. There were 10 respondents who were trying to rent a house in the parish now, with 9 suggesting they would be hoping to in the next 5 years.
34. All the current open spaces in the parish were considered important by respondents. There was a 62% vote in favour of having more open spaces for the future.

TRANSPORT - Relevant to: – SC – 'Arriva'; 'Tannat Valley'; 'Qube'; SUSTRANS

35. The most popular available public transport services for respondents were the '70' bus service, followed closely by the train service from Gobowen.
36. The most popular destinations for local services were:

Service	1 st choice	2 nd choice	Service	1 st choice	2 nd choice
Doctor	Oswestry	Other	Supermarket	Oswestry	Shrewsbury
Dentist	Oswestry	Shrewsbury	Shopping	Oswestry	Shrewsbury
Hospital.	Shrewsbury	Gobowen	Restaurant	Oswestry	Shrewsbury
Gymnasium	Oswestry	Other	Pub	W Felton	Oswestry
Library	Oswestry	W Felton (mobile)	Other Social	Shrewsbury	Oswestry
Post Office	W Felton	Oswestry	Education	Oswestry	W Felton
Work	Shrewsbury	Other	-	-	-

37. The Car is by far the most used mode of transport.
38. Oswestry is by far the most desired destination for those without personal transport. Shrewsbury is the major other significant destination of choice.
39. Most respondents (71%) thought there was sufficient information locally available about local public transport services. Of those 29% who did not, their major suggestions for improvements were: Informative schedules provided in the 'Round and About' magazine; outside West Felton Stores; outside the village Hall and at the local bus stops.
40. About 30% of respondents used the Arriva '70' bus service daily or several times a week. Of these a high majority used it between 10am and 4pm, perhaps reflecting the age-group of respondents with access to the free permits during this period.
41. Most of those responding said the bus was half-full or less than half-full when they used it.

42. Just over half of respondents did not want extended bus timings or routes. However, 45% request an extended time bus schedule. The significantly highest number of such requests were for weekday and Saturday evening buses, with an improved Sunday daytime schedule.
43. 37% of respondents use a bicycle regularly. *This perhaps is reflective of the age-group profile of respondents.*
44. The most popular suggestions for improving cycling uptake by more people were:
- A dedicated cycle-route to Oswestry
 - Improved cycle-route signage
 - More information availability of local cycle routes
 - Cycle racks at key locations
45. The top 3 discouraging issues for cyclists are: Speeding motorists; large tractors and HGVs taking up excessive road-space and pot-holes in the road.
46. Gobowen, then Shrewsbury were by far the top locations locally for catching trains.
47. There is a potential limited uptake for additional train-users from the parish if a direct bus service was available from West Felton to Gobowen station.
- 48.** There was considerable support shown to increase train usage by having a national train service available from Oswestry; subsidised fares and better car parking facilities at local stations. – **ACTION: - Inform Cambrian Heritage Railway (CHR).**
49. There were 179 respondents. Most (160) respondents had 1 or 2 cars within their household. Slightly more had 2 than one. Seven of the respondents has no car and 22 had more than 2 in the household.
50. Of the 111 respondents, 75% had at least 1 person in the household who used a car to commute to work. The modal distance travelled to work each week is about 100 miles.
51. Those who work from home indicate travelling to work appointments between 50-100miles per week.

SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE - Relevant to: – WFPC & SC

52. The top 5 potential project areas to improve life for people in the village were considered to be help for:
- Improvements for the elderly
 - Improvements for young people
 - Improving the natural environment
 - Improvements for people with disabilities
 - People without access to cars
53. To the question: If you had a magic wand and could change just one thing for the better in West Felton Parish, what would it be? Well over one hundred comments were received. The main 4 areas suggested were:

Area for improvement	Number of comments
Transport, Traffic and Speeding	26
Pub/ Restaurant Facilities	25
Restrict Development	19
Develop a Parish Centre	10

54. To the question: If you only had £1,000 what one thing would you change, the biggest group of comments related to 'village maintenance' including several about flowers, bulbs and hanging baskets but also includes those on benches and general tidying up of the village. The other large group of comments relates to 'speeding'. The 'parking' comments focussed particularly around the village centre.

CONCLUSIONS - Relevant to: – WFPC; SC; SUSTRANS; Bus companies

The questionnaire sought to find out what people value and dislike about life in the parish of West Felton. Some of the suggestions raised by local people indicate there are some 'quick wins' that could be achieved, such as:

- Investigation of a bowling green facility
- Improving or extending local recycling facilities
- Addressing dog fouling concerns
- Addressing speeding concerns
- Providing more information about local transport options

Other more long term improvements which the results showed support for are:

- Investigate further bus connections and a national rail service from Oswestry
- Investigating a dedicated cycle route to Oswestry
- Investigating a 'Village Centre' with facilities

Respondents state that they particularly value the rural, countryside aspect of the parish and with nearly half of respondents being retired; it is perhaps not surprising that the increase in size and volume of traffic and parking facilities are amongst the biggest concerns should local employment opportunities be increased.

Similar responses were received in the 'Planning' section with the majority of respondents agreeing with the current SAMDev designation of 'Open Countryside'. There is only a small call for new housing (rented, affordable, owned or otherwise).

As with many issues affecting a whole community, some will agree, some will disagree. Hopefully the data in this report identifies those areas over which there is a slight difference of opinion and which would warrant further investigation with additional consultation, whilst also highlighting areas that have general community support/agreement.

YOUTH QUESTIONNAIRE

GENERAL

55. About 110 questionnaires were delivered to local schools for completion by West Felton students aged between 11 and 17 years. Of these only 20, (12 female, 8 male) were completed, despite an incentive offer of an activity voucher (for West Felton parish based leisure activities) worth £5-£80, depending on the activity chosen. The cost of each voucher to the Parish Plan group was fixed at £5. *Thanks are due to all the participating activity providers. These were: Paddle Sports, Academy Skate Park, Sky Dive, Hover Days, Archery at Rednal, Segway at Rednal, Paint Ball, Karting and Laser Quest.*

LOCAL ENVIRONMENT – Relevant to:- WFPC; SC; WF CoE Primary School

56. The young people particularly value the relaxed, friendly and countryside environment of the parish. They value the school, shop and playground facilities and particularly the carnival. With only one 'vote' each, the young people did not rate the local employment opportunities, leisure or community activities.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY - Relevant to: – SC; BT; ICT cos.

57. From the responses it appears that the young people in the parish find poor broadband and poor mobile phone signal an issue. More than half ticked that there is no local cinema. Similar to the resident's survey, the young people indicate there is an issue with speeding traffic.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - Relevant to – SC Planning Authority

58. The majority felt that the number of houses is about right.

LEISURE - Relevant to: – WFPC & Shropshire Council

59. There was a fairly even split of opinions on whether or not more activities were needed in the parish.

60. Of those replying that more were needed, the choices given were:

Better Park	Rock climbing	Youth clubs	Sport	Outdoor Adventure
1	2	2	4	1

TRANSPORT - Relevant to:- WFPC; SC; CHR; 'Arriva'; 'Tannat Valley'; SWT; Sustrans

1. There was considerable support for a regular bus link to Bachurch (where most young people go for secondary education). There were also calls for links to Gobowen railway station, Shrewsbury (Battlefield) and a smaller number for Ellesmere.
2. The vast majority use the bus to get to their place of education.
3. Of the 20 respondents, 7 used their cycles once a week or more.
4. There were 8 who said they would use a cycle-path to Oswestry.
5. There were 60% requesting a cycle-rack at the West Felton Stores.
6. Many were aware of parking congestion issues in West Felton and congestion at West Felton Stores being the place where this is considered to be most relevant; followed by the school, then the Village Hall.

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT – Relevant to:- WFPC; SC; Local Colleges

7. Further education and better job prospects elsewhere were considered the major reasons for young people to leave West Felton.

REQUESTS FOR IMPROVEMENTS - Relevant to:- WFPC; SC; Local Bus Companies

8. Given a magic wand to improve parish life produced the variety of answers listed below.
 - A skate park. A cycling route into Oswestry
 - Cheaper prices at the village shop
 - More woodland areas and nature walks
 - Cinema
 - No more building
 - The litter around the park and village

- More schools eg secondary school; make the village bigger
- More local jobs available.
- Bus route to Baschurch
- Make the play area bigger
- I would make the play area bigger for all ages of children
- More developed village, eg more facilities
- Too much speeding in the area! Put speed cameras into place.
- More things to do for people my age
- More shops
- More carnivals/fetes etc
- Better surfaced and cleaner pavements
- The Broadband
- Have a pub in the village that was family friendly and did meals.

9. Additional comments included were as follows:

- Add a local swimming pool in WF
- Make more parking for the shop and primary school
- There is not a lot to do for teenagers
- Need more community events
- Definitely needs better buses. Especially to Ellesmere/Gobowen
- More things to do for younger people. Other than that it is a good village
- Overgrown hedges along pavements
- Bike racks by shop/centre of village would be well used

10. Some of the suggestions raised indicate there are some 'quick or medium term wins' that could be achieved, such as:

- ✓ Installing bike racks
- ✓ Investigating a solution to the parking issues raised
- ✓ Addressing speeding concerns
- ✓ Investigating more services and facilities aimed at young people
- ✓ Investigating further bus connections

POD VOTING AT WEST FELTON CoE PRIMARY SCHOOL

'Pod voting' is the use electronic voting devices to collect immediate quantitative feedback on a variety of multiple choice questions similar to that used in 'Ask the Audience' in Who wants to be a millionaire?

Results have been collected from years 3, 4, 5 and 6 in November 2013.

LEISURE - Relevant to: – WFPC; SC; SWT; Canal & River Trust (CRT); SUSTRANS

11. The main playground in West Felton is popular with the vast majority of children.
12. The 'Whispering Oaks' playground was far less used and less popular. *It is of course much smaller and with fewer play facilities.*
13. The leisure activities available at Rednal were known to 33% of children.

14. 77% were aware of and used Oswestry library.
15. There was a fairly even split between those using the local field footpaths and those not. Slightly more did not. However, a majority (62%) did use the canal towpath for walks.
16. The ability to observe wildlife was by far their most popular reason for using the towpath.
17. Most (87%) felt safe when walking in West Felton and 89% felt safe when travelling to and from school.
18. However, 75% were aware of problems with parking congestion around the school.
19. A great majority name cars or vans as their main method of transport.
20. There were 80% who said they used their bikes in the area they live.
21. For a cycle path to Oswestry, 34% said they would use it, 66% would not.
22. The vast majority were in favour of a cycle rack at West Felton Stores.
23. Most, (75%) had the bus service available to them, where they live, though only 11% said they use it.
24. However, a larger number (31%) use the bus to go to Shrewsbury.
25. There was a fairly even split between those wanting to stay in West Felton when they grow up and those wanting to be elsewhere.
26. Peace and quiet, the school and the friendly local people were the main 3 reasons given for liking this parish.
27. The least liked things (in order) about life in the parish were: Dog Mess on pavements; Speeding traffic; Bad car parking; Litter; Large vehicles filling the road.
28. There was a strong majority preference for a BMX track for improving the parish, though a higher number opted for 'something else'.
29. Although the latter, 'something else,' was not specified, some ideas can be gleaned from the table below of their suggestions to improve life in West Felton parish.

Group A ideas: Jensen, Sarah, Sophie	Group B ideas: Madison F, Madison K, Cameron, Robin, Molly	Group C ideas: Olivia, Morgan, Nell, Naomi, Gemma
Youth club for 10-14 yrs	Better bus service- in evening & use double decker at peak times	More park equipment- old part needs upgrade, bright paint etc
Italian restaurant	Boat rides on canal- like Llanymynech	Pots of flowers- outdoors
Another couple of clubs- Girls Guides	Maps of all the good walks- leaflets at shop. Road signs overgrown	More benches
Floating restaurant	Girl Guides	Bus stops upgrade
Tennis courts	Parking improvements	More car parks
Marked football pitch	Better hours at shop/Post Office (more post office days), longer evening hours in summer	Tidy up Remembrance monument
Lake for fishing	Community café-village centre day time	Take away shop
Viewing point- near canal, castle	Garage- fuel	Age Concern - community links with youth
Mechanics/ garage	Multi use games area	More bins (litter and dog mess) - Put on map

Expand village shop		More money for community projects – e.g. caring circles
Activity centre with crafts & different activities – rooms for games etc		Fine people for not picking up after their dogs
		Map of West Felton Parish at shop
Football or Tennis or Rugby	Brown signs to advertise activities in WF	Nature walk on map

BUSINESS QUESTIONNAIRE

GENERAL - Relevant to: – WFPC; Shropshire Council; Local Colleges; ICT providers; BT

30. Of a recognised 112 operating businesses within the parish, 33 (just under 30%) responded to the parish plan questionnaire.
31. Most responding local businesses are small employing 1-4 employees.
32. About 60% were operating at full capacity, the remainder had further available capacity.

RECRUITMENT - Relevant to: – WFPC; Shropshire Council; Local Colleges

33. The declared number of staff recruited during the last 12 months by responding companies was 26.
34. There were 30% of companies expecting to recruit more staff over the next 12 months.
35. 58% of companies felt able to recruit the right type of staff locally. Exceptions were:
 - trained nurses
 - Qualified pool/spa technicians
 - Graphic designers
 - Telecoms experts – wiring/installation
 - Website developers
 - Traditional building repairers
 - Old paint & metal work skills
 - Quality office/administration staff have been difficult to find.
 - Farm workers
36. 38% of firms would welcome the availability of more training course. The types of training needed were:
 - ✓ Spraying, chain sawing etc.
 - ✓ Use of traditional material and techniques in building renovation/repairs.
 - ✓ Customer Service management.
 - ✓ Local area wood work/forestry.
 - ✓ Electrical work specific to petrol stations.
 - ✓ Old paint and metal work skills.
 - ✓ Specialist software courses.
37. 62% of companies were unfamiliar with apprentice programmes.

SALES

38. 8 (24%) companies said that they sell/provide goods/services overseas. The remainder generally concentrate on more local markets.

GRANTS, ICT, STAFF ISSUES AND DEVELOPMENT – **Relevant to:- Shropshire Council**

39. 70% of companies sought information on business related grants.
40. 60% of businesses sought networking ties with other businesses within their sector or from wider fields.
41. 73% believed superfast broadband availability would improve their business.
42. 33% of companies would appreciate childcare facilities for staff.
43. A number of companies had sought recent advice from a variety of sources such as Bank Managers, Accountants, NFU, Tax Office and Business Advice Centres relating to Employment Law. Comments were also made that businesses faced too much red tape.
44. There was a lack of knowledge generally about local business support agencies and organisations.

LOCAL ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES - **Relevant to:- WFPC; Shropshire Council; Local Bus Cos.**

45. The top 3 listed advantages of the West Felton location were:
 - Good networking and support from the local community.
 - The pleasant and quiet atmosphere of a rural environment
 - Near and easy access to the national road network via the A5.
46. The 2 major disadvantages listed were **poor broadband speeds** and the local **mobile phone signal**.
47. Transport related problems were generally few. The major problems were:
 - Access issues for large vehicles on small local lanes
 - Dusty/muddy local roads
 - The lack of a bus service to the Rednal industrial estate.

CRIME

48. Although some crime occurred it was not considered any major problem for companies.

GENERAL COMMENTS - **Relevant to:- WFPC; Shropshire Council**

49. There were objections to the proliferation of housing development in West Felton, causing increasing transportation difficulties.
50. Wishes were expressed for contacts who are knowledgeable of West Felton Businesses and Council facilities.

CLUBS AND SOCIETIES - **Relevant to: – WFPC; Shropshire Council**

51. Two comments were relevant to all the societies:
 - More members would be welcome to enable them all to flourish and continue.
 - Parking provision would be most welcome for the Village Hall, Chapel and School

ENVIRONMENT - Relevant to: – WFPC; Shropshire Council; English Heritage; SWT; Natural England; Canal and River Trust; Ramblers' Association.

HISTORIC FEATURES (EH)

- 52. Review the current Listed Buildings list
- 53. Consider if other any historic sites require protection
- 54. Develop a community project around a historic site

RIGHTS OF WAY (RA)

- 55. Assess current footpath accessibility.
- 56. Clear footpath routes of vegetation and encourage local landowners to clear routes through crops.
- 57. Carry out repairs to existing stiles and install kissing gates to improve access to all.
- 58. Develop a circular walk and local route maps.

NATURAL LANDSCAPE (SWT, NE)

- 59. Discover and collect information about West Felton Parish's natural assets
- 60. Protect & manage the natural assets
- 61. Create & expand these natural assets

SSSI MANAGEMENT (Around Montgomery Canal) (C&RT)

- 62. Help with the management of new off channel reserves
- 63. Volunteers to assist with clearance of invasive plant species and scrub
- 64. Additional signage along the canal.

WILDLIFE AND BIODIVERSITY (SWT)

- 65. Carry out a habitat mapping exercise
- 66. Review current habitat management best practice
- 67. Build effective relationships with local landowners to promote / enhance the local environment
- 68. Develop a habitat management plan
- 69. Protect and expand current habitats including 'Wildlife Corridors & Stepping Stones'

ACTIONS BY WFPC AND SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL:

1. *To ensure that all above named relevant bodies are informed about those matters above relevant to their organisations.*
2. *To negotiate action plans, where possible, report back through WFPC and West Felton Parish Plan Steering Group and to monitor progress.*

ACTIONS BY WFPP STEERING GROUP:

To monitor progress of all ensuing Parish Plan action plans.