

ROBESTON WATHEN



ACTION PLAN



CYNGOR CEFN GWLAD CYMRU
COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES

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ROBESTON WATHEN ACTION PLAN

Prepared by

THE ROBESTON WATHEN COMMUNITY

In conjunction with



AND

THE PRINCE'S TRUST CYMRU

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This Action Plan was agreed at a Public Meeting held on 2nd April 2005, following the circulation of the Draft Action Plan to all households in the community.

INTRODUCTION AND WAY FORWARD

The intention of this Action Plan for Robeston Wathen is to describe proposals identified by local people for implementation over the next few years. The overall objective is to improve the quality of life in the community by enhancing the appearance of the area, by improving the economy, including tourism and agriculture, and strengthening and diversifying its attractions for all residents and visitors.

The various contributors to the Action Plan realise that progress can best be achieved through discussion and partnership as many of the proposals involve different land or property ownerships, separate interests and different sources of funding. Although some of the proposals are relatively small scale, they are likely to be of substantial benefit to significant groups within the resident population. In other instances the changes suggested are of a larger scale and may have major impact on a wider range of interests.

It is hoped that the projects described in this report will be achieved as quickly as practical with the various partners working in unison with local people to design, fund and implement them.

BACKGROUND TO THE ACTION PLAN

The Robeston Wathen Village Association was established in 1989 to try to improve the social, economic, cultural and environmental well-being of the community. In 1990 a Community Appraisal was carried out and the first community Action Plan was produced as a result of this.

A number of specific projects were identified and achievements have included:

- Periodic speed enforcements
- Lime Kiln Walk established
- Church Yard Bench
- New businesses established
- Property upgrade / renovation
- Renovation of the Old School Room.

In November 2004 community representatives discussed with PLANED (SPARC's successor) proposals to prepare a new Community Action Plan. Community Workshops were held during November and December and the results of these Exercises have formed the basis for the first draft of the Action Plan.

HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY

Background

Robeston Wathen is situated on the main A40 trunk road, between Camarthen (20 miles) and Haverfordwest (10 miles). It is a small community comprising 68 houses, a garage/shop, two public houses and various other local businesses.

History

A hill fort called Castle Rath, whose remains stand on the bank of the Eastern Cleddau is probably the earliest occupation of the area. It consists of an outward curving rampart some 320ft in length. The southern half of the bank is well preserved. The entrance is 12ft wide.

The earliest recorded date of the village is 1282, when Robert VIII paid a yearly rent assize of £4.6s, the services of the men of the village was worth 4s 8d per year, the collected rents 12d, and tolls 6d per year. The addition of 'Wathen' to the village title was first recorded in 1364 in the accounts of the Slebech Estate, when William Smyth and Thomas Brian Robeston were named as Reeves.

The oldest building in the village is the Church, which dates back to the 12th Century, although only the tower now belongs to that earlier church. The present building was most probably built on the old foundations. In 1875 a faculty was granted to restore the church. The tower was vaulted with chambers, where in troubled times the women and children could be hidden together with any treasure while the men fought with crossbows from the battlements above. It was also one of a chain of signal posts from which flares and bonfires could be lit to spread the alarm.

The date the Manor House was originally built is unknown although it is known that the Wathen family lived there prior to 1485 (the Battle of Bosworth). They had originally come over with the Plantagenets from Flanders and were engaged in the woollen industry. Mr Bateman, a Haverfordwest businessman, extensively rebuilt the house in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In 1866 the Rev George Clark, the Archdeacon of St. Davids, bought the house for his private use for which he paid £3,200. He also carried out some major alterations to the building. His eldest daughter,

Emily, married Hastings Hughes of Tenby who was the brother of Tom Hughes who wrote 'Tom Brown's Schooldays'.

In 1786 an Act of Enclosure was granted when about 50 acres of waste ground called Robeston Grove was enclosed. The school was started by the Rev. George Clark in about 1867 when about 90 children from the village and the outlying areas attended. A new school was built in 1870. The school closed in 1971 and following recent renovation is now much used as a village hall.

The village was virtually self-supporting, as the 1841 census reveals, listing the following trades: knitters, carpenter, stone mason, gatekeeper, cooper, grazier, road labourers as well as farmers, agricultural labourers and servants.

Many of the houses were built from stone from the local quarry including Robeston Farm, the School and Cott's Farm during the late 19th Century.

Local inns mentioned were: The Bush Inn, The Greyhound and The Bridge End. In 1861 there were 92 inhabited and 7 uninhabited houses with a total population of 362 persons. There was also a Turnpike and a Toll collector.

The shop was originally at Harkett's Farm, it was then moved to Dyram House, the Lower Gatehouse and then back to Dyram House where it was carried on with a rabbit and poultry business by Mr and Mrs Charles Parry. Today the local businesses include farming, guest houses, public houses, Dyram Service Station, Bank Farm Trailers and Narberth Sand & Gravel.



ACTION PLAN PROPOSALS

The production of an Action Plan will give the area an agreed programme for community development, both in terms of improvements to the infrastructure and to the social life of its residents.

Community

A. Community Facilities and Services

Commentary

In 2000 PLANED's predecessor, SPARC, was asked to help facilitate several public meetings to discuss the future of the Old School Room, the community's only meeting place. The Church authorities wanted to put it up for sale but the community was determined to save the building and pledged to support its ongoing development. SPARC helped the Village Association to re-form and provided a grant to improve the building and bring it back into working order, having negotiated a 21 year lease with the Church authorities.

In 2002 The Old School Room was extensively renovated and developed into a much welcomed village hall. A wide variety of groups and associations use the hall including the Village Association, W.I, along with leisure and recreation clubs. The visioning exercise identified a desire to improve the community facilities and services.

There is a need for local inhabitants to have access to leisure and learning within the community with local provision enhancing community participation. At present the nearest provision is in the town of Narberth and the village of Llawhaden. Many new activities have been suggested including courses, events, selling local produce and a youth club. These proposals together with those put forward through Leisure, Recreation and Events, aim to reintroduce some of the community activities that bring people together.

Proposals

- Further enhancement of the School Room to include accessible toilets.
- Work with relevant organisations in Narberth to extend their activities to Robeston Wathen Village Hall, therefore increasing the current usage of the hall.
- Increase the number of parking spaces for the village hall
- There is interest in investigating the feasibility of purchasing Robeston House Hotel for future use as a community leisure facility – it is currently privately owned.
- Assess the potential of providing a central village public house

B. Leisure and Recreation

Commentary

The local environment lends itself to recreations such as angling and walking, and the river near Llawhaden attracts many fishermen. There is interest in establishing a club for young anglers, which would also include a training element.

There is an increasing demand for a wider range of sporting and recreation facilities in the community as well as a need for additional equipment to run various classes. Such facilities would be combined with youth provision and serve to widen opportunities for them and other age groups in the community.

Proposals

- Establish an Angling Club – for young people very interested but want to encourage new members at all levels of ability.
- Support youth activities for the village.
- Seek to provide more sports facilities and leisure activities e.g. play area, local walks, keep fit classes.
- Explore the possibility of the development of a children's play and recreation area (look to obtain suitable area of land).
- Organise Guided Community Walks, returning to the village hall for lunch.

Events

Commentary

There is a great sense of community spirit and a will to develop some themed events, focusing on special qualities of the area. Just as Llandissilio is proud of Waldo Williams, Robeston Wathen would like to tell the story of Walford Davies, a famous 20th century composer with local links who married a local girl and composed the RAF Regimental March 'Blaze Away'. An annual event in his honour, were among suggestions put forward. This would involve making contact with the RAF and pursuing the potential for national links.

A number of other events such as quiz nights and seasonal activities, were suggested which might bring the community together and provide enjoyment to local people and visitors.

Proposals:

- Organise Quiz Nights in the Old School Room.
- Support group activities for the village eg Art & Craft, Drama group, Dance classes, and social evenings
- Publicise events in a Village Events Calendar – include Christmas activities, social evenings, trips, plays, musical events etc



Environment & Enhancement

Commentary

There is a strong emphasis on the need to preserve and enhance the natural environment in the area. Walking, cycling and riding are identified as activities that need improved facilities and access. There is a need to clear and upgrade and maintain footpaths as well as improving sign posting on the walks and trails around the community.

The community also felt that there should be a series of walks promoted within and through the village. These would include the Lime Kiln walk, Castle Rath walk and may incorporate historical learning through interpretation and encourage healthy living.

Residents have shown in the past that they are prepared to get involved in village improvement schemes. There may be small groups within the community with specific interests and this enthusiasm could be used to benefit specific environmental projects for all ages. There is a desire to have training and advice to support such activities.

Proposals

- Install informative signposting and way marking of paths.
- Continue to open up, maintain and improve the local rights of way and permissive route network (bridleways and footpaths). Wherever practical, all rights of way should be access friendly and have gates rather than stiles. Wheelchair accessible routes to be created wherever practical and appropriate.
- Establish small-medium circular walks, in liaison with farmers and landowners, as currently most footpaths are linear.
- Create a strategy to address the maintenance of public rights of way that have been neglected and need attention and include the proposed routes
- Increase the opportunities for outdoor recreation and health improvement by-
 - Restoration of the Lime Kiln and maintain footpath
 - Developing nature trails through the village and surrounding area
 - Construct a cycle path / bridleway to allow safe access to Caneston Woods
- Youth to be engaged in the regeneration of the village for example by painting the bus stop
- Look to plant daffodil bulbs at the entrance to the village

Heritage

Commentary

There is a strong appreciation for the culture and heritage of the community and its historic buildings. A local history leaflet has been produced to highlight the importance of these buildings, with an introduction to the history of the area. This leaflet could be further enhanced to include new history walks and interpretation boards within the village.

Proposals

- Establish organised local nature and history walks to include both the Lime Kiln and Castle Rath walks.
- Install interpretation boards highlighting the local history within the village.
- Establish a local History Group. The History group to meet on a regular basis and invite other relevant organisations as appropriate e.g. Cambria Archaeology, Narberth Museum Bookshop, other History Groups etc
- Research and interpret the story of Walford Davies and develop themed event



Tourism, Business & Employment

Commentary

Residents are employed in a range of jobs in agriculture, construction, tourism, engineering, administration and retailing. They would like to encourage more opportunities for local employment.

Proposals

- Introduction of Craft and Artisan Workshop events in Old School Room.
- Explore the feasibility of developing a community Farm Shop.
- Encourage the selling local craft / produce.
- Encourage further development of B & B or hostel accommodation to accommodate people on holidays or short breaks. A higher proportion would occur out of peak season if eco tourism were promoted.
- Liaise with existing managers of all local businesses in the development of facilities and accommodation to meet the needs of walkers and cyclists and other visitors who participate in eco tourism.
- Explore appropriate parking for coaches.

Youth

Commentary

Young people are keen to be involved in village life and several participated in the visioning workshops. They were keen to paint the local bus stop, following the Narberth example. The idea would be to seek help with designing it and to encourage a sense of ownership, which would discourage vandalism.

A 'place which belongs to children' was identified as an important proposal. This would be a play area but with sufficient equipment to attract a range of ages. A site has been identified and local volunteers have offered help with fund raising, design etc. There is considerable enthusiasm and support for the project.

Proposals

- Encourage young people to be involved in the design and painting of the bus stop.
- Explore the re-establishment of a community Youth club

- Youth to assist in looking to provide a community play area, developed as a safe place for young people to congregate and play
- Explore the potential for a Skate Park within the community area
- Explore the possibility of setting up a local Brownies pack
- Establishment and development of children's youth work.
- Opportunities to include the Church

Highways and Transport

Commentary

The busy A40 road passes through the middle of the village, effectively dividing the community. This, along with the road safety and pollution aspects, has long been a cause for concern.

A By-pass Group was formed at the time of the previous Robeston Wathen Action Plan. It represented the views of the majority of the community. This group continues to lobby the relevant authorities and agencies to ensure the momentum is maintained.

Any proposals affecting highways and traffic must be progressed in conjunction with the County Council as the Highway Authority and other relevant agencies. A route for a single carriageway bypass has been identified but it is not being progressed because of issues around the dualling of the A40.

Proposals

- Request that PCC improve the appearance of highway verges and hedgerows through litter collection and mowing where necessary.
- Request that PCC improve visibility and therefore safety around the A40 junction with Narberth.
- Look into the potential for increasing the amount and accessibility of parking within the village, including space for coaches.
- Encourage Dyfed Powys Police to enforce existing speed regulations.
- Work with the Highways Authority to develop sustainable transport (actions which would encourage people to walk, cycle or take public transport rather than depend on the private car). Specific examples which would be in the interests of pedestrian safety and the general village setting, could include –

- Cycle path / bridleway to Caneston Woods avoiding the A40
- Footpaths incorporating safety rails to enable residents to access public houses
- Cycle path / footpath to nearby town of Narberth

IMPLEMENTATION / ACTIVITY GROUPS

In order that the Action Plan can be progressed effectively it is proposed to form special interest Working Groups within the Community Forum. The Groups would, in consultation with the relevant providers, for example the Highway Authority or the Environment Agency, concentrate on preparing more detailed action programmes giving priority and focus to those proposals which are capable of early implementation.

The Groups could be centred on:

- Community facilities, activities and services.
- Leisure, Recreation and Events
- Environment (including rights of way, waste and recycling), heritage, business and tourism

It is important that the Groups would:

- Work within the agreed Action Plan and with the Community Forum,
- Work with existing groups and organisations,
- Take account of youth needs and ensure involvement,
- Meet on a regular basis,
- Keep the broader community informed of progress.

OPPORTUNITIES

Community Facilities & Services

Footpath to the pub

Small-medium circular walks (most footpaths seem to go in 1 direction)

Walks returning to the hall for lunch (ploughman's)

Footpath and bridleways to Narberth & Canaston

Walks that have been neglected need attention also new ones looked at

Cycle path

Extend Narberth activities to Robeston Wathen Village Hall

Purchase of Robeston House hotel for community leisure facility

More low key things in school other things already exist in Narberth

More parking spaces for village hall

Make much more use of village hall x 2

Disabled toilet in hall, also ladies and gents' toilets

A social evening where everyone could meet

Village pub

Leisure & Recreation

Orienteering routes

Draughts club

Art & craft classes in hall x 4

Kick boxing club x 2

Clubs to suit all ages in Robeston Hall

Keep fit classes x 4

Games club x 2

Pool

Football club x 2

Drawing club

Drama group x 2

Dance classes x 2

Gymnastics

Model classes

Karaoke club x 2

Netball

Swimming club

Rounders

Sports facilities, eg: tennis, squash, football

Teamwork games

Cooking

Group activities
Whist drive x 2
Get involved in motorcycle sport
Cricket club
Boxing club
Anglers club

Events

Quiz nights x 2
Music events, hall and church
Community Christmas party, New Years party x 2
Ladies evening e.g. another body shop night
Organised disco x 3
Lots of trips x 2
Church as a venue for concerts
Plays x 2

Heritage

History group

Youth

Youth club x 4
Skating Park
Brownies
Play area x 4
Church would assist in children's youth work
Children help to make park
Something for the young people x 2
Establishment of a safe place for young people to congregate
and play x2

Local Products, Employment & Tourism

Farm/local produce/arts/crafts shop/centre (at the hall
monthly)
Farm shop
Cyber café
Start up Business Park

Environment & Enhancement

Gardening club allotments
Clear up Lime kiln walk x 2
An area of conservation, flower beds, borders etc
Young ones to do a tidy up around the village
Painting bus stop
Paint property frontage