



Local Trust | Big Local

Par Bay Local Partnership

OUR VISION AND PLAN



In its guidance to local areas, the Local Trust requested that during the period of 'Getting People Involved 2' (GPI2), a statement be prepared, reflecting the ambitions and aspirations of residents of the area.

In recent years, a number of soundings have been taken of local views and ambitions. These have included preparations for the publication of 'Which Way for the Clay?', the St Blaise Town Plan and (still underway) a revision of the Par and Tywardreath Parish Plan. These exercises have involved questionnaires and a number of consultation events of various types. We are unable now to be precise about the number of people who offered their views on these occasions, but it was certainly several hundred – if not a thousand or more. We have made full use of the results of these exercises, but have also undertaken ambitious soundings of our own.

Conspicuous among these were the 'Meet the Funders' event held in September 2011 (involving many organisations which spend money in the area and some 90 local residents) and the 'Big Ideas Bus', which toured Tywardreath, Par and St Blazey in October 2011 gathering 321 contributions from the local communities. Our emerging findings were tested by our presence at the Big Jubilee Lunch events held in Par and St Blazey in June 2012 attended by 500 and 120 people respectively, and by the participatory 'Big Giveaway' event at the end of July 2012, where £6000 was awarded to eight local 'quick win' projects in accordance with the votes cast by 50 attendees from eight community organisations and members of the local community.

These events have, from the start, achieved a good degree of local publicity, through the local newspapers, community newsletters such as PL24 and the St Blaise Town Council Newsletter, and posters, etc. The Par Community Association website has for many months had a page devoted to our activities.

All of this activity provides us with reassurance that, though there will inevitably be some whom we have still

to work to reach, our ideas and activities have been broadcast to a substantial part of our community.

As a result of this work, we have felt confident in preparing the following statement of vision, which we believe enjoys widespread support from our local community. As with all exercises of this nature, it is unlikely that everyone would endorse it fully. But we are convinced that it represents the views and ambitions of a broad cross section of our community, and that virtually everyone will find in it at least some points with which they would agree.

As will become apparent, we have throughout been guided by the objectives set down by the Big Lottery Fund, that the money allocated for our area should result in a community that is:

- better able to identify local needs and take action in response to them
- provide residents with increased skills and confidence so that they can continue to identify and respond to local needs in the future
- result in communities that make a difference to the needs they prioritise
- leave our residents feeling that their area is an even better place to live.

THE BACKGROUND

The three parts of this Big Local area, St Blaise, Par and Tywardreath, are contiguous and share a number of common features. They are, however, three quite distinct settlements, with some very clear differences – of outlook as well as of economic and social structure.

The whole area falls within the lowest 10% nationally when it comes to housing conditions. One part of the area – St Blazey West – is particularly disadvantaged in this regard, coming 74th worst (out of 32,482) in the country.

The main employer in the region has for many years been the clay industry. This sector is, however, in rapid decline. Large numbers of jobs have been shed, with few alternative sources of large-scale employment (the notable exception being the Eden Project) coming forward to replace them. The proportion of people in the area who are unemployed or on very low incomes is substantially higher than the Cornwall or national averages.

This may be one reason why the current rate of population growth (according to the latest – pre-2011 census – figures) is significantly lower than the average for Cornwall. This phenomenon is particularly marked in Tywardreath, Par, St Blazey Gate and Biscovey, which are either just maintaining their populations or have declining populations. The population of Tywardreath and Par tends to be older than that of St Blaise.

Against this somewhat bleak background, it ought to be a source of pride to residents of the area that, with one exception (St Blazey Gate and Biscovey), the crime rate is broadly on a par with the rest of the county. Furthermore, despite the difficulties of life, there remains a strong sense of community in the area. People value their friends, their families and the area in which they live. They are well aware of the negatives, but can also clearly see the positives. And it is the latter on which they choose to focus. This provides an encouraging foundation for developments designed to help change the area from one where people live - to one where people **choose** to live.

It is perhaps unsurprising that the general consensus drawn from the various consultations so far undertaken is that the primary needs of the area focus on economic regeneration and improved housing. A third area, which is also very important to the resident population, is that of environmental protection and improvement, and the development of recreational facilities for the benefit of us all – but especially of our young people.

In the following pages, we have sought to develop and give substance to these ideas, in ways that our fellow residents can endorse. We have done so under six broad headings, though we are conscious that there are some aspects that do not fit easily under these, and that many more are cross-cutting. The headings we have chosen are: Jobs and Income, Housing, Health, Environment, Youth and Family and Recreation and Culture.

THE VISION

Jobs and Income

It is difficult to imagine a sustained improvement in any of the other areas we have identified in the absence of an amelioration of the current extremely difficult economic and employment situation in Par, Tywardreath and St Blazey. We recognise that to a very large extent we, like everyone else, remain prey to the vagaries of the national and international economic climate. We nevertheless see a local improvement as a *sine qua non*. We have therefore sought to identify ways in which Big Local money might be put to effective use.

With this in mind, we propose to encourage the development of projects that will:

- Improve the economic base of the area;
- Support established local businesses, since these have already demonstrated a commitment to our area;
- Encourage the creation of new jobs and businesses;
- Do the above in ways that help encourage and support local investment and reinvestment.

Housing

Though a million pounds is a good deal of money, we must acknowledge that even a sum such as this, spread over a ten year period, if invested in property would have a very modest impact on the current shortage of affordable local housing. Nor, in our view, ought it to be the job of the Big Local to take on this role. It is the responsibility of others, including central and regional government and housing associations to find solutions to these problems. Our involvement needs to be innovative rather than over-ambitious. We can nevertheless help make a difference, *inter alia* by encouraging the development of projects that will:

- Empower local individuals and residents' groups effectively to impress upon the authorities their housing concerns and ambitions;
- Help efforts to improve the quality of the existing housing stock;
- Work for the reduction of fuel poverty;

- And do all of these, to the extent possible, in ways that can help regenerate money both within the local community and back to the Big Local for recycling.

Health

Our area is disadvantaged in many respects relating to health. Average life expectancy, for example is substantially lower than that even for neighbouring areas. St Blazey has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Cornwall. Partly because some parts of the area have higher than average numbers of retired people, there are also particular stresses on the health service. And poverty plays its part in exacerbating problems concerning healthy diet and (access to) exercise. In terms of the provision of health facilities, we have two (excellent) GP surgeries in our area, but no NHS dentist. Both doctors' surgeries are geographically distant from some quite heavily populated parts of our area

Our nearest NHS Accident and Emergency Department is at Treliske Hospital on the far outskirts of Truro; some 45 minutes away – on a good day. Ambulance and Paramedic services, with the (daytime) air ambulance service, help balance what would otherwise be a worrying situation. There are (daytime) minor injury units at St Austell and Fowey (each about 5 miles distant).

Against this background, we propose to support projects that will:

- Help local people to ensure that their voices are heard in discussions about the provision of local health services;
- Help overcome any difficulties over access to health services because of age, disability or lack of transport;
- Encourage activities that can lead to improved health and healthier diets
- Encourage a generally more rewarding and contented life for those who might seek this.

The Environment

We have the good fortune to live in one of Britain's most attractive counties. We have a large, sandy beach, some sizeable green spaces and enjoy some picturesque views. Our industrial heritage has had the effect of hiding these benefits to some extent from

visitors, who have chosen instead to visit parts of the county more frequently associated with tourism.

The changing nature of our local economy, the continued expansion and success of the Eden Project, the imminent development at Carlyon Bay (some of which falls within our area) and the proposed development of Par Docks into a marina with related facilities all provide us with an opportunity to enhance our existing environment and to create new facilities for our own use, and for visitors.

While we do have many attractive areas, there remain some that would benefit from a facelift. We would therefore be keen to support:

- Schemes designed to improve the tidiness, cleanliness and general uplift of common areas throughout our designated region;
- Schemes to create new, sustainable, common green spaces;
- Projects designed to make our common areas accessible to all;
- And to do these things in ways that make them as sustainable and energy efficient as possible and that further strengthen the sense of community ownership and pride in their heritage.

Youth and Family

It is, of course, a truism that our youth are our future. But we should nevertheless be failing in our responsibilities if in preparing our vision statement we should overlook this fact, or pay it no more than lip service. Notwithstanding the economic and social disadvantages in our area, we are blessed with many young people who are articulate, positive, ambitious and have a sense of community. Many of them are, as would be expected, well supported by other members of their families.

We will address the opportunities available to them for recreation under that heading. Under this heading, it is possibly sufficient to record our determination to support:

- Proposals that enable the voice of our young people to be heard clearly in the development of all projects supported by our Big Local project;

- Projects where young people are encouraged and enabled to take the lead, with support from others as necessary – but not imposed;
- Proposals which help develop inter-generational contact and understanding.

Recreation

An informal audit of the recreational facilities in our area shows that there exists already a remarkable variety of these: from football and cricket clubs to good athletics facilities, youth clubs, community centres and a number of specialist groups and organisations. Our fellow residents, however, retain a strong appetite for more, and for the improvement and extension of many existing facilities.

While many think in terms of sporting or social activities, there is also a demand for more in the way of what might broadly be termed cultural facilities: more community or seasonal events, the development/creation of facilities such as local radio services, the better to inform local residents and to keep them in touch with one another and with events and activities available to them.

The potential scope for project funding here is virtually infinite. We would propose, however, to concentrate support for:

- The development of projects to enhance and expand existing successful facilities;
- Projects that will not demand an undue level of expensive maintenance and running costs;
- Innovative projects to bring the communities together across the generations;
- Projects that might secure additional funding from other sources;
- Projects designed to increase awareness of the existing local heritage;
- Projects that inform and enthuse, as well as those that stimulate mental and physical fitness.

The annex to this paper contains an illustrative selection of more detailed ideas for projects. These have arisen largely from our consultations to date. We are confident that other, no less worthy ideas will emerge as this ten-year project proceeds.

ROLLING UP OUR SLEEVES – THE PLAN

The First Year

The ideas in the foregoing section and the more detailed thoughts in the annex provide an exciting, enticing, menu (which could absorb many times the amount of funding actually available). We are much encouraged by the ingenuity of our community, and keen to see as many projects as possible brought to reality as quickly as possible.

But we are also conscious that as we work to do so, we could induce a sort of child-in-a-sweetshop syndrome, whereby it becomes difficult-to-impossible to make choices. As risky as this sort of inertia might be, it might be at least as counter-productive to opt for too ambitious an initial stage of action.

We are therefore resolved to begin with measured but significant steps that we hope will at the same time lay the groundwork for maximising the longevity of this project, help realise some of our more fundamental objectives, and encourage a strengthened sense of self confidence among our community, that will in turn encourage the production of still more innovative and well-supported projects.

At this stage, therefore, we intend to work on three levels simultaneously.

Our initial experience with small scale participatory budgeting events has been wholly positive. Very modest amounts of money have made a significant difference to a number of local groups. At the same time, the process has resulted in a feeling among those who participated that it was their own voices that mattered. Furthermore, the nature of the process provided opportunities for cross-fertilisation of ideas that few had originally anticipated. We envisage a continuing role for events of this nature – possibly for the entire life of the Big Local project. We therefore intend to hold further small-scale participatory budgeting events: probably two per year, with a total budget of up to £20,000 per annum.

Building on this base, we also propose to encourage (and if necessary assist with the development of) proposals for two or three more substantial projects during the first year of our programme. We will give preference to projects likely to help produce jobs and income or to improve the look of our area, since we see these as key early steps for our community. But we would not exclude well-designed and convincing projects covering some of

the other priority areas we have described. In year one of our project, we would anticipate devoting some £30,000 to these.

And at the same time, we wish to address some of the cross-cutting issues that we believe can help make an important beginning to a newly-energised local area. With this in mind, we intend to focus our efforts on securing comprehensive feasibility studies on the possibilities of creating a community hub building and of an ambitious community growing space/garden/farm facility.

- There is a strong local view that an innovative and flexible community hub building, which could not only provide a focal point for community services, but also an opportunity to assist efforts at providing training and employment support to our community, ought to be a priority. Any project of this nature, on the scale currently being considered, would consume (in its early stages at least) a large part of our Big Local funds, and it is likely that supplementary funding from other sources will need to be secured to complement our own. We share the view that a community hub building could play an invaluable role in helping equip our community for the future. But given the scale of the ambition, we believe that it is essential to satisfy ourselves that the strength of the ambition can be matched by an equally robust feasibility and business case before we commit substantial funds.
- A second cross-cutting project that we believe has the potential to make an important contribution to our objectives would be the establishment of a sizeable community garden or farm. This could help bring the community together in a cooperative venture, provide opportunities to improve health, employment, and recreation – as well as reducing the cost of living of those involved, and providing income that could be recycled into further projects. But here too, we would wish to reassure ourselves that the potential has a realistic possibility of becoming a successful reality.

We would envisage commissioning a single feasibility study to cover both projects – not least because of the obvious advantage if we were able to see them co-located. We would not expect the sort of professional help that we require to come cheaply. We would therefore propose to earmark up to £50,000 for this work.

Infrastructure

In order to achieve the first year objectives described above, we foresee a need for some relatively substantial infrastructure: much of it likely to be required only in the shorter term.

We consider it essential to build upon the achievements of GPIs 1 and 2, by encouraging still wider participation from within our community. There are a number of complementary ways in which we propose to work towards this. First, we propose to appoint a number of part-time community champions, to work in the various parts of our area to explain what we are doing and ways in which individuals can become involved. In parallel, we wish to secure the services of a number of young entrepreneurs, whom we can pay to provide specific services relating to increasing interest and participation by our young people.

Fortuitously, we also have an opportunity to acquire – for a year – a shop space almost adjacent to the local supermarket which is used by probably 90% of our residents. By sharing this with those developing the St Blaise Neighbourhood Plan, we could make good use of display materials etc, further driving home to our community the ways in which we hope to see our neighbourhood developing. By having a suitably knowledgeable advisor in the shop, we could further assist people to come forward with, and to develop, their ideas for projects.

In addition to these activities, we anticipate that at some stage during the year it would be right to hold a large-scale event to bring what we are doing to the fore. This could be a key step in efforts to involve other potential funders – private and public sector – in what we are doing, and encouraging them to provide additional funding.

Furthermore, while we are comfortable with a public participation approach to the smaller projects, we might need something more detailed when it comes to projects worth several thousand pounds. It might therefore be necessary to seek professional support from those with experience and expertise in the assessment and administration of grants and loans. We are fortunate enough to have a number of such bodies in Cornwall, including the Cornwall Community Foundation and the Cornwall Community Bank (our local credit union). But their assistance will come at a price.

This will be a relatively expensive set of infrastructural arrangements. But we believe that £50,000 or less, spent carefully

now and amortized over ten years, will prove to be exceptional value for money.

Future Years

We do not find it easy at this stage to forecast likely expenditure patterns for year two and beyond. Much will depend on the outcome of our year one plans. A positive feasibility study for a neighbourhood hub and community farm might result in a heavy year two and three draw down, with the expectation that these projects might in the medium term begin giving a return that could be recycled. On the other hand, a conclusion that the two projects should not go ahead in the early years of the Big Local, might result in a more modest demand in years two and three, until momentum builds.

We recognise that this sort of prevarication does not help those charged with managing the funds. But we consider it futile to pretend that we can offer a clear steer beyond year one when, for the moment, this is beyond us.

*Par Bay Local Partnership**A Tentative Plan – Ideas from the Grassroots*

The ideas discussed below have emerged largely as a result of our various consultations. As such, they have by definition received the support of at least some of the residents of our area. We use them to illustrate the sort of things we have had in mind in our narratives above. Their presence here does not necessarily indicate our support for them – we attach importance to our remaining as neutral as possible, so that we do not create the impression of being a controlling cabal: this is the last thing we would wish to become. We are conscious that not all sections of our community have so far been consulted as fully as we would like, and that new projects, at least as deserving as some of those below, are likely to emerge over time

Jobs and Income

- There is potential for the creation of a business ideas forum: not just another talking shop, but an opportunity for local companies to learn what services, goods etc might be available to them on their own doorsteps, and to encourage collaboration between local companies on existing or future work;
- A directory of local business might, with judicious publicity, provide new opportunities for existing companies – and help keep local money within the local economy;
- There could be scope to assist young people either to gain some work experience, or to develop their portfolios in cooperation with local companies;
- We would like to see a project developed that could provide assistance – both practical and other – to those coming forward with new ideas;
- We believe that our area has at least its fair share of budding entrepreneurs of all ages; we wish to see proposals for innovative and flexible projects that will encourage and support them.

Housing

- We would like to support a comprehensive, broad-based forum of tenants, owners and aspiring owners, that could effectively broadcast to councils, central government and others the concerns and wishes of all sectors of our population with regard to housing: standards, costs, situations, second homes etc;
- We would wish to support initiatives designed to facilitate community buying incentives for fuel;
- We see scope for the provision of soft loans for the purchase/updating of central heating (wherever possible using local suppliers);
- We would also like to see projects seeking to exploit green energy opportunities – and greener housing options more generally

Health

- Assist the creation/strengthening of local health promotion or partnership fora that might ensure the views of residents are taken into account, and also help spread information on how to improve health;
- Support projects to improve access to medical and dental facilities (eg research into need for expanded or new facilities, community bus services etc);
- Support projects likely to promote healthy activity and eating (eg allotments, community gardens, nutrition awareness, improved access to facilities such as Par Beach);
- To do none of the above in ways that enable central/local government or other statutory bodies to evade their own responsibilities in this field: rather to seek to help keep them up to the mark;

The Environment

- Support local projects to establish green businesses (either those seeking to maximise recycling etc, or those wishing themselves to become more environmentally friendly, or both);
- Support projects designed to expand the use of environmentally friendly heating/power generation/ water recycling etc;
- Support projects for the enhancement of our town and villages ('clean-up', 'in bloom', 'keep the area tidy' and the like);

- Support projects for the creation of allotments, community gardens and other common green spaces;
- Support the creation of eg green gyms, picnic areas, nature trails, cycle paths etc in new and existing public spaces;
- And in all the above, support the creation of suitable accompanying infrastructure (disabled access, public facilities, litter bins, dog bins, CCTV where appropriate, etc).

Young People and Families

- Promote projects designed to give young people a greater voice in their affairs (Young Advisors, youth fora, etc);
- Encourage young people to take the lead in developing plans for aspects of the Big Local programme (eg website development etc);
- Consult young people on what they would wish to see in (and on ways in which they might contribute to) broader parts of the plan (eg allotments, community gardens, development of green gyms);
- Encourage people of all ages to participate in initiatives such as timelines, and the development of community events such as organised parties or picnics, the better to foster intergenerational understanding.

Recreation

- Encourage the optimum use of existing facilities;
- Support the revivification or expansion of existing facilities, as these already have a track record against which to be judged;
- Support proposals for new facilities (a youth cafe?, Big Local radio station?), where there is evidence of demand and the prospect of them becoming independently sustainable;
- Support proposals from cultural and other groups that can help generate a greater awareness of our area, and a pride in it;
- Support projects from existing successful events (eg Par Carnival, St Blaise Feast Week, Timelines) designed to expand their activities and meet the objectives above.

Cross-Cutting Considerations and Opportunities

- To give maximum benefit to the area, projects should wherever possible make full use of existing or new local businesses, facilities, skills expertise and knowledge, etc;
- Projects which can demonstrate that they are likely to be self-sustaining, and are likely to generate the maximum possible community involvement and support, would have an advantage;
- To gain as much as possible from the Big Local £1million, projects which enable the recycling of funds (eg by using loans rather than grants) would provide greater mileage;
- Projects that could demonstrate the prospect of match funding would similarly have advantage;

- *We should be on the lookout for opportunities to support community get togethers (particularly those likely to have inter-generational appeal)*
- *We should consider the acquisition of a 'Big Local' building, which could house common community facilities (Community café, library, computer facilities, meeting rooms, facilities for new businesses, educational facilities, exhibitions, etc).*
- *Similarly, a Community Bus Service might enable easier access to medical facilities, and also to recreational and other facilities.*

But nothing we support should enable authorities or others to evade their statutory or other responsibilities to our community. Nor should we seek to replicate facilities that can and should be provided from other sources.