



# **Flax Bourton Community Consultation Report**

**Collaboration  
between the Flax  
Bourton Village Hub  
and Flax Bourton  
Parish Council**

**November 2022**

# 4 Stages of consultation

## 1

Interviews (by phone, by Zoom/Teams and in person) with key stakeholders and individuals around the village and area (April-May 2022)

## 2

Consultation stall at the community event, 4th June at Flax Bourton Village Hub

## 3

Household survey - online & on paper (27th June-17th July)

## 4

Collation & analysis of responses, presentation of fundings, recommendations and ideas for next steps



# 1 Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder interviews took place across a range of media – online, telephone and in person meetings – between April and May 2022

The main themes emerging from a series of in-depth conversations with a range of village and service provider stakeholders[i] are:

- A sense of a disconnected village that lacks a coherent, commonly acknowledged centre
- Connection comes through activities and the different “hubs’ around the area – church, Village Hall/Hub, Cricket Club, etc – but no one of them provides a centre for the whole community and there is a lack of coordination between them
- Poorer families are more isolated and disconnected within the village
- Children and young people – particularly teenagers – need things to do, places to meet
- The main A370 road has a huge image on virtually all aspects of the village – whilst it is valued for giving quick and easy access to Bristol (mainly) – it divides north from south, imposes conflict between pedestrians and cars, and impacts on environmental quality and safety
- There is no village shop or café – although the lack of shop was mentioned more frequently
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- There are concerns about how villagers and stakeholders are communicated with about what happens in the village
- There is tension between the Parish Council and Village Hub Trustees/Ops Group which has come more to the fore over the funding allocated from the UK Community Renewal Fund (via North Somerset Council and West of England Rural Network (WERN))
- There are concerns about the potential impact of volume house building in nearby Backwell
- There are concerns about the on-going impact of Covid-19 and lockdowns on mental health, confidence and isolation

# 2 Consultation Stall

Another of the UK Community Renewal Funded project was a community festival which was held at the Village Hub and neighbouring sports field on Saturday 4th June 2022. This was an ideal opportunity to canvas opinion about the village and its needs. We provided large maps of the village and the wider area for orientation, together with a message board for issues, ideas and suggestions. Village hub trustees and Parish Councillors were on hand to facilitate conversation and explain the process.

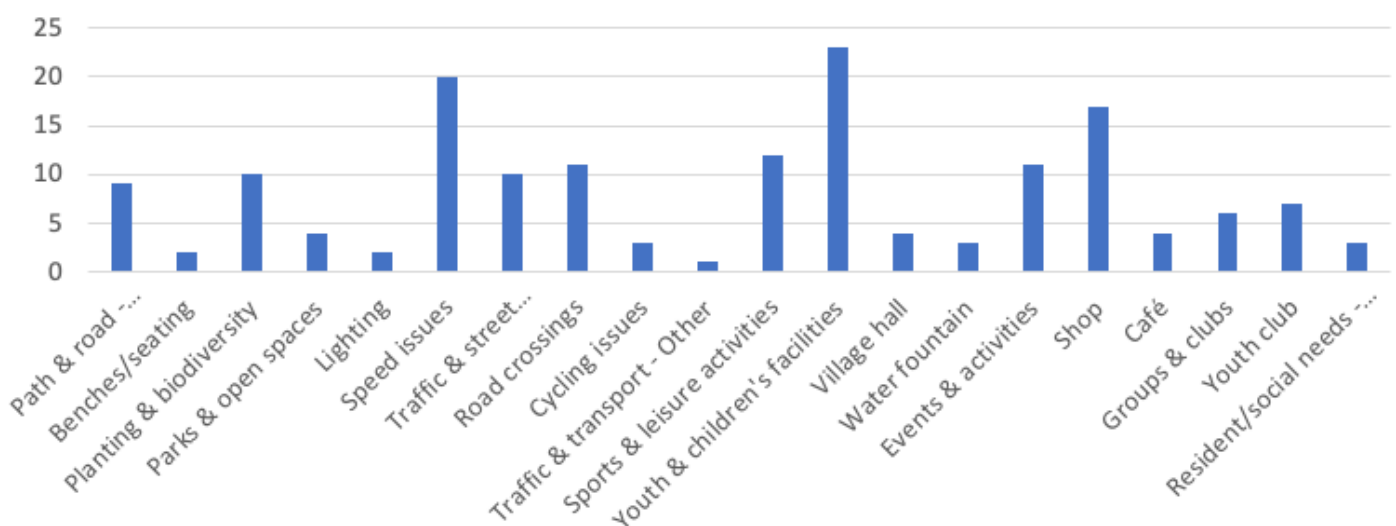
Visitors were invited to jot down their thoughts on coloured Post-it notes about the natural environment, traffic & transport, community facilities, and social/resident needs. Instructions for participation were simple:

1. Look at the maps think about where you are and all facilities available in the village & wider area
2. Put a sticky dot on the street where you live
3. Use the coloured post-it notes to tell us what you think the village needs.
4. Use the exercise book to tell us more (if needed) and give your contact details if you want to know more and join in

There was no limit on the number of suggestions individuals could make, and adults and children participated equally. The Post-It notes were collated, grouped and analysed after the event.

Overall, there were 162 suggestions from at least 79 households.

Community Festival consultation stall, 4th June 2022 - total responses



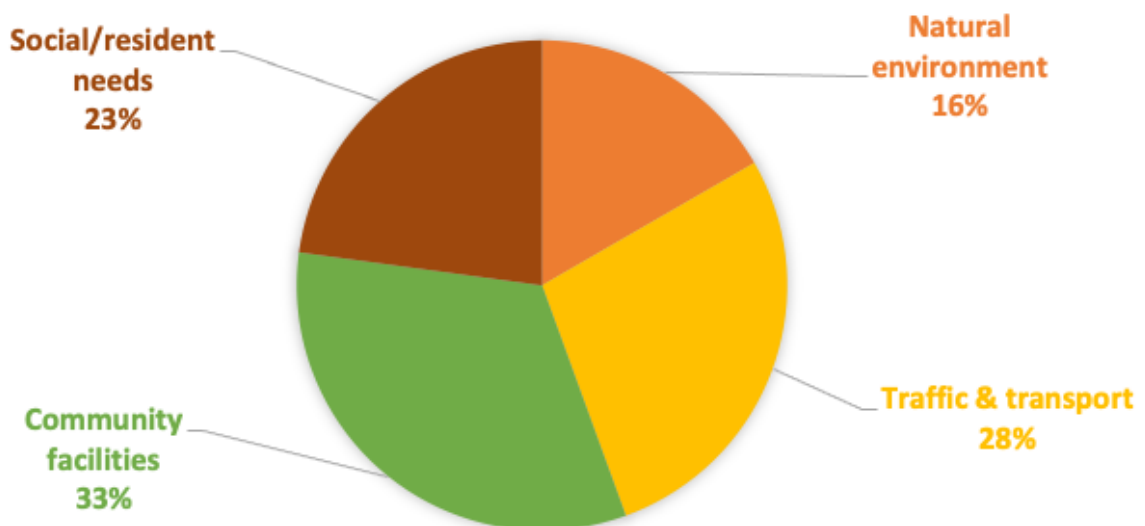
Whilst issues relating to the dominance of the A370 through the village was important, a greater proportion of suggestions related to community facilities:

The main themes and priorities arising suggested that:

- Traffic is an important issue – particularly speeds along the A370 and Clevedon Road, and the need for more safe crossing points
- Associated with the above was a concern about overgrown hedges inhibiting paths and pavements
- Children want more to do in the village – there were lots of votes for a skate park and other sports and leisure facilities

- People want a local shop and café
- Both children and adults want more things to do locally – with ideas such as more clubs and groups, places to sit and meet, and events such as a Hog Roast that was a feature of the Community Festival

### % RESPONSE BY CATEGORY



# 3 Household Survey

The largest element of the community consultation was a household survey which drew on themes emerging from the previous stages and aimed to capture a broad spread of opinion about the village, its community, and its facilities.

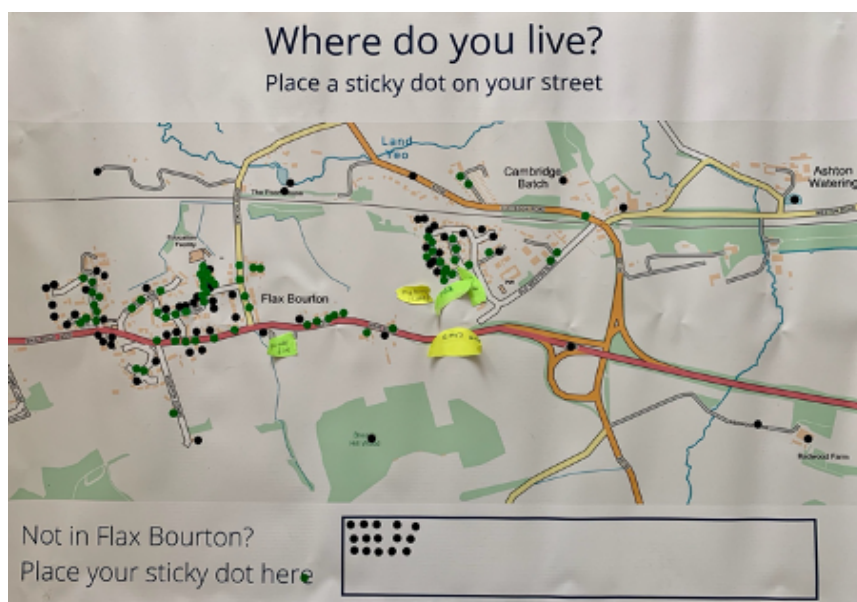
The survey was available online (Survey Monkey) and a paper version was distributed to every household. The survey was live for three weeks from mid-June to mid-July 2022.

The survey questions covered a range of community and village issues, with sections on:

- Demographics – about the respondents
- About living in Flax Bourton and its community facilities
- Village communications
- Flax Bourton Village Hub
- Flax Bourton Parish Council

There were 66 responses to the household survey – 48 online and 17 on paper.

- The age of respondents ranged from 15 – 85 with a mean (average) age of 53
- Just under two-thirds of respondents were female (58%)
- Around 2/3 respondents live in households of three or more people
- The majority of respondents are working – with most working either at home or in Bristol. Just under a quarter (23%) are retired
- 95% respondents have access to a car
- Only 1 respondent reported having a disability that affects their ability access services and facilities



Approximate location of respondents – black dots represent visitors at the consultation stall on 4th June, green dots represent street addresses of respondents to the online household survey.

# 4 Discussion

## Village life

There is great commonality about what people like about living in Flax Bourton which mainly centre on its rural character, quietness and access to the countryside, its proximity to Bristol, a good community spirit, and a good school.

*Flax Bourton is a green, lush enclave not far from Bristol. The people are warm and welcoming, and it feels like a safe haven*

*How Green it is and it's proximity to the centre and to getting out into full countryside as well/roads to get the coast. Sense of community.*

*Community spirit. Lovely people. Close proximity to Bristol. Wonderful school. Walks. Pubs. So much!*

*Village operates on personal kindness, contacts & connections*

The largest number of dislikes about the village focus on this impact of the busy A370 – speeding, noise, pollution, safety issues. There is a little more diversity about the other things people dislike. Some people feel the village doesn't have enough community spirit, that it is too "cliquey" or there are too many "nimby" attitudes. They don't like the lack of a defined centre or local shop.

*The very busy, dangerous main road. Flax also lacks a general store within walking*

*distance, and has no real, functioning social hub.*

*There is no centre. Unless you have children or go to church hard to find a sense of community. I was only invited to the shire WhatsApp following a random chat with a mum in the park. Would be nice if there was more of a pull and chance to meet people.*

There were comments about the village being too spread out, activities being too centred at the Farleigh Green end of the village – and issues of access from one end of the village to the other. Respondents acknowledge that life in the village is more difficult without a car and there were comments about safe and accessible routes around the village.

*I am not aware of any amenities/facilities which I can safely use - eg., the bus stops are impossible to walk to safely and cycling out of [...] where I live, is extremely dangerous.*

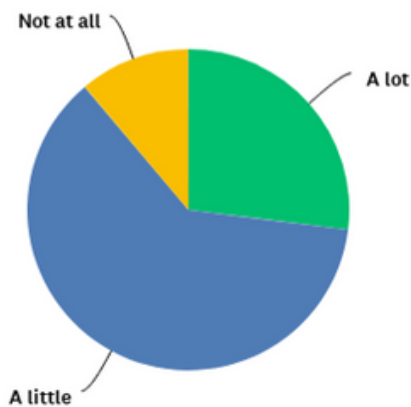
*I think unless you have a connection with the primary school it is easy to feel isolated from community*

Comments notwithstanding, no one reported not knowing anyone in the village and 40% feel they know people a lot.

## Community facilities

When discussing community facilities, the majority of respondents (60%) feel that they have some of the facilities they want and need. When asked to name other community facilities they use, most respondents named the cycle path and local footpaths as those they most frequently use.

Q11 - To what extent does Flax Bourton have the amenities/facilities that you need to live comfortably?



We asked about the distance residents travel to access common household and leisure tasks:

- Over 93% respondents travel more than 3 miles for shopping
- 75% travel over 5 miles to go out in the evening
- However, accessing social groups or hobbies is more local with around 40% traveling 3 miles or less

There appears to be a trade-off between access to the countryside and access to convenient community facilities and local amenities such as shops, cafes, public transport, etc. The majority of residents can mitigate this trade-off by working at home, accessing delivery services and using their cars for their day-to-day needs and can afford to do so.

## Community priorities

Whilst most respondents agreed that Flax Bourton is a pleasant and friendly place to live, all three consultation methods used highlighted that are three priorities to improving the quality of life in the village:

### Traffic & transport

Mitigating and minimising the impact of the main A370 through the village – such as traffic calming to reduce speeds, improving safety both across and along the road, and reducing noise and pollution.

Grouped together respondents clearly expressed their desire to deal with speed, safety, noise and pollution and not just on Main Road/A370 but also on side roads such as Station Road and Clevedon Road, and to mitigate the nuisance caused by the quarry just to the west of the village.

The other most commonly expressed concern is about pedestrian safety both along and across the main road but also along local footpaths. People want to see more action to keep paths and pavements clear of overgrown vegetation and parked cars. They see the A370 as a barrier through the village and want to see safer crossing points.

*Difficulty in safely crossing Main Road 4 times a day to get to/from school.*

*Speeding. Lack of awareness by motorists passing through of villagers' needs.*

*Overgrown hedges and bramble branches on narrow pavements alongside Main Road.*

*The main road acts like a block between the sides of the village - both physically, but also in terms of some attitudes of some residents.*



*The pavement is narrow and the road busy around corners and I feel unsafe for me and my son.*

### **A local shop and/or a café**

The second biggest priority for residents – expressed both at the community consultation stall and the household survey – is a local shop. Only three respondents reported traveling a mile or less for grocery shopping. The nearest shop to the east end of the village is Gatcombe Farm Shop – mentioned by a small number of respondents. A significant minority of respondents mentioned ordering groceries online and receiving home delivery. A local shop was the second most frequently mentioned community need expressed after the main road.

*Flax could do with a shop / Café [...] Otherwise everything is a drive away.*

Whilst a shop was the more frequently expressed desire, it was often mentioned in conjunction with a café for the area alongside suggestions for more places to meet. There were numerous suggestions for a shop and/or café run and/or owned by the local community. The Village Hub/Hall was cited as an appropriate location for such a facility. People also wished that the Jubilee Inn was better integrated into the village.

*A small community shop that you could walk to would make all the difference. A pub shop tie up like Barrow would be great & help the pub.*

*Needs a decent pub and a shop - possibly both at the same time?*

### **More facilities and activities for children and young people, particularly tweens and teens (roughly ages 8-16)**

Respondents to all three components of the community consultation cited activities and facilities for children and young people as a priority. This ranged from the interviews with members of the Village Hub committee and other stakeholders, to the numerous children making suggestions at the Community Festival Stall, to respondents to the online household survey. There was some demand for additional activities for young children and parents of toddlers but the majority of suggestions was for more activities and facilities for older children – the concern being to give them local activities, facilities and somewhere safe to go/hang out.

The children participating at the consultation stall at the Community Festival were full of ideas!

- Skate park/ pump track = 14
- Youth club/ hut = 7
- Playground improvements = 5
- Table tennis = 4
- Escape rooms = 4
- Mini golf = 3
- Hog roast = 3
- Water fountain = 3
- Horse riding = 2
- Hockey = 2
- Basket ball hoops = 2
- Sound insulation in Village Hall = 2

There were similar ideas emerging from the household survey:

*The kids park is good, though we don't use it any more. Something like more 'teenager' type activities (like ping pong tables) would be great. There are a lot of*

*kids who will be moving into their teenager years in the next year or two. Is it worth bringing back the youth club?*

*Outdoor facilities for teenagers and tween's. Pump track. Skate park. Picnic benches. More seating a wooden covered structure to act like permanent gazebo or similar space. Extension play park. Concrete Ping pong table.*

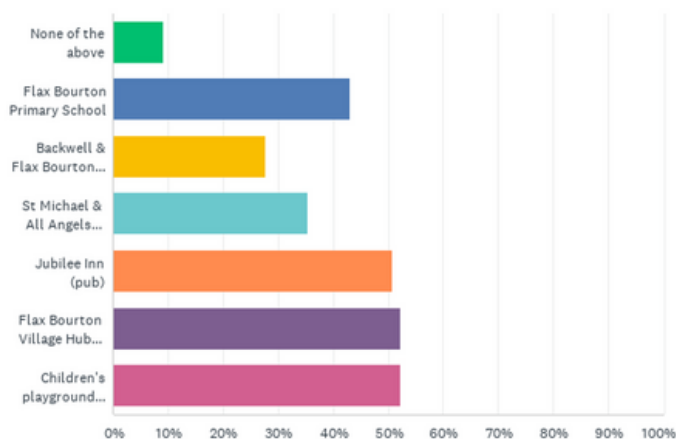
*Acknowledging the younger community and provision of outdoor facilities would be great.*

*There are lots of kids and I think we should focus effort on providing recreation facilities for them.*

**Q19 - What, in your view, would be your top three priorities for improving Flax Bourton?**



**Q12 - Village facilities - do you or members of your household use the following facilities in Flax Bourton?**



## Flax Bourton Village Hub

Over 60% of respondents to the household survey use or have used the village hall - Hub - building. Although some of those who reported not using the building also reported that they used it as a polling station.

Most cite children's parties and community events as the reason for going there. Social support and civic responsibilities – such as voting, Pilates, and the toddler group – are also reasons to attend.

Whilst the majority of responses suggest the Hub is accessible by car and/or cycling, respondents noted that it is not in the centre of the village, that it can be harder to access from the western end of the village, and that walking to it can be challenging.

*It isn't easily accessible from Station Rd end for people who are unable to walk long distances plus cycle path can be dangerous due to inconsiderate cyclists. Main Rd pavement from the old part of village is narrow and dangerous especially for the elderly, people with children and wheelchair users.*

*It's not central. Walking to it on main road is unpleasant & feels dangerous so I drive which defeats the object of a local venue.*

The look and feel of the building are also challenging. Nearly 60% respondents felt that it was not welcoming or only a little welcoming. Respondents feel that it lacks character, that it is bare, and that it needs refurbishment. People also mentioned the uncomfortable chairs. One respondent suggested a PA system would be useful.

When asked what improvements to the building are needed, the two main priorities were a bigger kitchen and accessible toilets.

When asked what would encourage people to use the building more and what the building needs, the answers fell into two main groups:

### 1) Building and environment

- Improvements to the outside space e.g. picnic tables, outside seating, maintenance of the field
- External access to the toilets
- Environmental/sustainability improvements e.g solar energy, electric car charging points
- Improvements to the parking facilities – for cars and bicycles – including managing parking on the surrounding streets

### 2) Activities and accessibility

- Community events and social groups, with numerous suggestions for regular classes and clubs, and one-off or occasional community events
- Clubs and activities for teenagers
- Community café
- Awareness raising and better communications/advertising of what's on
- Facilitating greater inclusivity

*A cafe & a shop. It would then become a "hub" maybe and not a "hall"*

When asked what would encourage them to use the building more, most people cited more community events, classes, clubs and activities. A number of responses suggest that there is a gap in usage of the building after toddler groups and children's parties at the younger end of the spectrum and the occasional community and/or civic events.

There were a lot of creative ideas for activities to take place there which are summarised here:

### Q22 - What other activities would you like to see at the Flax Bourton Village Hub?

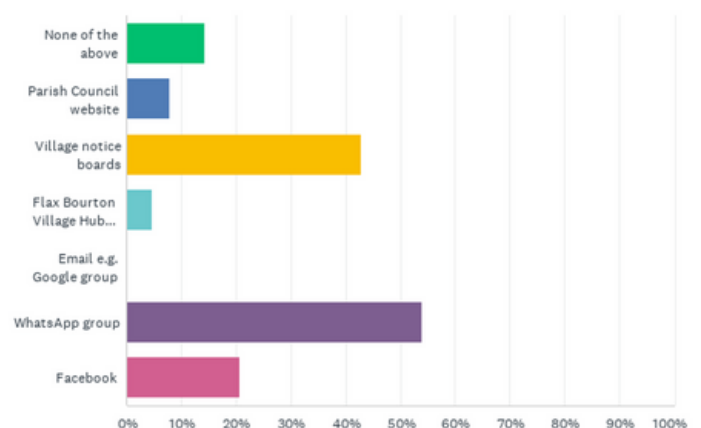
club market evening events groups Art classes Community  
cafe fitness classes dance

## Village Communications

A key concern of both the Flax Bourton Parish Council and the trustees of Flax Bourton Village Hub has been how to ensure that residents of the village have information about what is going on in the village and about what matters to them. The household survey asked about how they currently receive information and about how they would prefer to receive such information [ii].

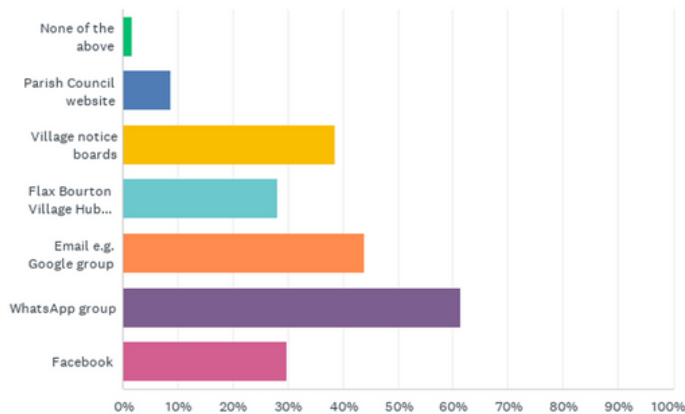
Currently the majority of respondents use WhatsApp for village communications, with the village notice boards and Facebook being other but less frequently mentioned methods. Other methods include the church parish magazine and word of mouth, but a minority of respondents (7 out of 48) reported not using any.

### Q29 - How do you normally find out about village issues, events and activities in Flax Bourton? (select as many as apply)



Responses to the follow up question of how people would prefer to receive information suggests a multi-method approach for receiving information with some mediums reinforcing others. WhatsApp is popular across the age groups, but email groups (such as Google Groups) are primarily supported by people over 45. Interestingly, people across the age groups also support using village notice boards.

Q30 - How would you prefer to find out about village issues, events and activities in Flax Bourton? (select as many as apply)



## Getting Involved

Flax Bourton Village Hub trustees and members of Flax Bourton Parish Council are both interested in promoting voluntary activity and getting local residents more involved in what happens in the village and how decisions are made. The household survey asked about awareness of local decision-making bodies and willingness to participate.

The majority of respondents (around 87%) are aware of Flax Bourton Parish Council and around a third of them had attended a meeting. Comments referencing the Parish Council throughout the survey suggest a need to reflect the demographics of the village and to be less bureaucratic in decision-making.

*I worry the parish council is not diverse in terms of coverage of ages, as in the younger side of the community, and thus needs of younger folk and those with small children don't have as loud a voice in any future changes.*

*[Attended a PC meeting] For a funding request for the youth group. [...] Made it very difficult and seemed unsupportive in our application.*

Around 12% respondents would like more information about participating in the Parish Council and 16% were interested in supporting and/or volunteering with the Village Hub (a registered Charitable Incorporated Organisation).

# 5 Bringing it all together

In summary and as discussed earlier, the main concerns of the village centre on the impact of the main road, limited local shopping and/or café facilities, and the provision of things to do for older children and young people.

## Messages for Flax Bourton Village Hub

For the Flax Bourton Village Hub, the community's main priorities centre on expanding the range of community activities taking place rather than physical alterations. The range and imagination of ideas put forward suggest the Hub has a role to play in enhancing and developing the community around it.

Q27 - What would make you want to use/go to Flax Bourton Village Hub more?

cafe wanted social hub community facilities activities better  
events evenings classes maybe club welcoming interest

## Messages for Flax Bourton Parish Council

The Parish Council has a role to play and democratic mandate in communicating local concerns and suggestions to other decision-making arenas in North Somerset. It can act as the voice of the concerns about the environment and about facilities for the local community.

*Flax Bourton is a small village well served with its Hub and its Parish Council ... We should celebrate what is already achieved by the tireless volunteers on the council, hub, church and school. We should be encouraging future volunteers & involvement to secure the future not simply offering more facilities which soak up a small reservoir of willing helpers.*

## And finally

Throughout the consultation process, there have been concerns raised about the impact of potential housing development both in the village and in nearby Backwell. There are views on both sides of the argument for and against development. People value the countryside feel quietness and community of Flax Bourton and some would resist development in this Green Belt location. Others are concerned about the viability of adding community facilities – such as a village shop and/or café – without additional people to make them economically viable. There are also concerns raised about the long-term viability of the village with an aging population and once the current children and young people grow up and move away.

*At present we have a community full of young families but within 20 years many children will move out potentially leaving a sizeable ageing population in the village. With very few houses in the local*

*area to downsize to they are likely to remain, I hope the needs of this ageing population will be taken into consideration as well as the needs of families.*

*It is a lovely place to live but as it expands could do with a few more facilities.*

Emma Collier  
Chora Consulting Ltd

[i] Interviews with: Dick Whittington, WERN; Claire Merrick, FB Village Hub Ops Group; Terry Williamson, FB Village Hub – Chair of Trustees; Geoff Coombes, FB Parish Council, Chair; Mark O’Connor, FB Village Hub Ops Group; Sue Stone, VANS, Rachel Wooster, FB Village Hub Ops Group/Hall hirer; Vicky Fraser, FB Primary School, Business Development Manager; Jane Bennet, FB Primary School, Head Teacher; James Harris, Vicar, St Michaels & All Angels CE Church; David Lloyd, Backwell & FB Cricket Club; Hazel Payne, Chief Executive, Tyntesfield Medical Group; Clare Anderson, FB Parish Council; Tina Huckle-Mills, WERN Village Agent & Tea & Tech Coordinator; Lyndsay Newman, WERN Village Agent

[ii] Respondents were able to select as many answers as apply and to add any other methods they use

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