

# Flax Bourton

## Community Consultation 2022

Flax Bourton Village Hub has benefited from inclusion in a programme to build on the outpouring of community support activity during the pandemic and to develop a network of “wellbeing hubs” around North Somerset. This work has been funded by the Government’s UK Community Renewal Fund and supported by North Somerset Council and West of England Rural Network.

Flax Bourton Village Hub and Flax Bourton Parish Council joined forces to ask the local community and village residents about their views on the village and how the Hub building in Farleigh Green could be better used.

### **What We Found**

#### **Village life**

Most residents are happy and settled in Flax Bourton and highly value the rural setting and its proximity to Bristol. They like the countryside character, a good community spirit and a good primary school. However, they also recognise the challenges of its setting – the impact of road traffic, lack of local services, and little for children and young people to do. There were comments about the village being too spread out, activities being centred at the Farleigh Green end of the village – and issues of access from one end of the village to the other.

#### **Community Facilities**

Most residents feel they have some of the facilities they need. There is a trade-off between access to the countryside and access to convenient community facilities and local amenities - such as shops, cafes, public transport – and most can mitigate this by working at home, accessing delivery services, and using their cars for their day-to-day needs.

The Flax Bourton Village Hub was built in the 1990s, but many people find it difficult to access, lacking in character, and in need of refurbishment and additional facilities. When asked what would encourage them to use the building more, most people cited more community events, classes, clubs and activities.

#### **Community 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.

WhatsApp is popular across the age groups, but email groups (such as Google Groups) are primarily supported by people over 45. Most people would prefer to receive information by multiple methods suggesting that each method reinforces the others. Interestingly, people across the age groups also support using village notice boards.

#### **Messages for Flax Bourton Village Hub Trustees & Flax Bourton Parish Council**

Residents’ priorities centre on expanding the range of community activities taking place at the Hub building 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. The Parish Council has a role to play and democratic mandate in communicating local concerns and suggestions about the environment and about facilities for the local community to other decision-making arenas in North Somerset.

# Community Priorities

## Traffic & transport

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. They want to see traffic calming to reduce speeds, improve safety, and a reduction in noise and pollution.

People also want to see more action to keep footpaths and pavements clear of overgrown vegetation and parked cars.

## A local shop and/or a café

The second biggest priority for residents is a local shop, and it was often mentioned in conjunction with a café for the area as a place to meet. The vast majority of residents travel more than 3 miles for their shopping and socialising, and there were numerous suggestions for a community-run or -owned local shop or café. The Village Hub building was suggested as an appropriate location.

## More facilities and activities for children and young people, particularly tweens and teens

Activities and facilities for children and young people are a priority for many people in the village. 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. Children participating at the consultation stall at the Community Festival were full of ideas! Skate Park, pump track, youth hut, playground improvements, basketball hoops to name but a few...

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The results have now been fed back to the Management Committee of the Hub and the Parish Council for their consideration. The challenge now is how the Village Hub can add value to the community and be a real “hub” and not just a “hall”.

Emma Collier, Chora Consulting Ltd  
November 2022

## Research and responses

The community consultation took place in four stages:

- In depth interviews by phone, by Zoom/Teams and in person with a range of village and service provider stakeholders (April-May 2022)
- Consultation stall at the Platinum Jubilee Community Festival, 4th June, at Flax Bourton Village Hub
- Household survey – online & on paper (27th June-17th July)
- Collation & analysis of responses

In total there were 162 suggestions from at least 79 households at the community consultation stall at the Platinum Jubilee Festival, and 66 responses to the household survey online and on paper.

These represent approximately one fifth of the village having had their say.

Mapping street addresses of respondents suggests they came from all parts of the village.