

Sid Vale Neighbourhood Plan – Business and Special Interest Groups Survey.

Summary of Questions 14 – 23 on Survey Monkey and the offline version.

Please see Notes on Restrictions of Use, Page 7.

14. Why did you establish your Group in the Sid Valley?

The Vision Group was formed from the volunteers who put their names forward after the 2005 STC's Annual Town Meeting, at which Rev Handel Bennett, chair of the SVA, had spoken of the need for a 'Vision for Sidmouth'.

<https://www.visionforsidmouth.org/about.aspx>

This collaboration of community leaders then developed a process to create "Our Vision for Sidmouth":

- > "To cherish the heritage of our Regency Resort and the surrounding coast and countryside; to seek to improve amenities and facilities appropriate for residents and visitors in the 21st Century; to encourage a vibrant economy; and to commend our vision to the Local Development Framework."

<https://www.visionforsidmouth.org/about/mission.aspx>

This was initially supported and the process endorsed by STC, and the result was the VGS 2006 'Vision for Sidmouth' document. <https://www.visionforsidmouth.org/co-ordination/original-vision-group-report.aspx>

However, this was not adopted by the authorities and subsequent efforts from 2010 to convert the Vision document into a 'town plan' were not taken forward.

<http://futuresforumvgs.blogspot.co.uk/2014/06/the-vision-group-for-sidmouth-short.html>

Nevertheless, the VGS Futures Forum did convene meetings on the nascent Neighbourhood Planning process.

<https://www.visionforsidmouth.org/calendar/2012/september/futures-forum.aspx>

Meanwhile, the VGS took on "Transition Town" status in 2008.

<https://www.visionforsidmouth.org/news/2008/september/transition-town.aspx>

There was a perceived need for environmental and sustainability issues to be addressed in our local neighbourhood, such as:

- > transport and cycling; aiming to make the Sid Valley self-sustaining in energy; and retaining the character of Sidmouth while developing it sensitively.

<https://www.visionforsidmouth.org/co-ordination/sustainable-sidmouth.aspx> and

<https://www.visionforsidmouth.org/media/93498/vgs-futures-forum-2015-report.pdf>

Today, the VGS is a voluntary, cooperative, unincorporated, not-for-profit, secular, non-party association.

- > The aim of VGS is to enable informed debate and to incubate and develop exemplary projects.
- > The core purpose of VGS is to encourage the civil parish of Sidmouth to make the transition towards local resilience as a future-focussed community.
- > The primary challenges recognised by VGS are global climate change and the reduced availability of fossil fuels.
- > VGS is committed to participative decision-making and social inclusion.

https://www.visionforsidmouth.org/media/11829/vgs_agm_2011_robert_crick.pdf

15. What are the advantages of the Sid Valley (Salcombe Regis, Sidbury, Sidford, Sidmouth) as a location for Group?

COMMUNITY:

We find that Sidmouth has a strong sense of community:

- > It is a cohesive community which comes together on major issues, eg Knowle.
<https://saveoursidmouth.com/>
- > There is a wide range of active groups and members – with over 400 clubs and associations. (The Library has a list available on enquiry to new residents and visitors; as does the STC website.) <http://www.visitsidmouth.co.uk/sidmouth-events/what-s-on-this-week-in-sidmouth>
- > The Vison Group is itself staffed by volunteers who are passionate about the Sid Valley.
- > The community is balanced – in the sense that the town has people who wish to cherish our heritage but equally wish to make progress in the interests of younger generation – evidence the Science Festival with care for the town demonstrated by press coverage and letters. <http://www.viewnews.co.uk/science-week-bigger-ever/>
- > It has a highly-educated community – with the ability to deliver the Science Festival with volunteers; a high level of support for the NLO; knowledgeable staff at the SVA Museum; etc. <http://www.sidvaleassociation.org.uk/museum>
- > There are strong links to the international community – through tourism, the Sea Fest, Folk Week, St John's School, the International School, etc.
http://www.sidmouthherald.co.uk/news/global_interest_in_competition_to_re_imagine_sidmouth_1_4470705
- > The community is relatively prosperous: Sidmouth is one of the few seaside towns that remains so, thanks to the above aspects and higher quality tourist venues, hotels, B&Bs etc; independent shops, good schools and good quality medical facilities currently, including the hospital and two doctors' surgeries, all contribute.
<http://www.westernmorningnews.co.uk/devon-cornwall-hailed-best-places-live-despite/story-25747461-detail/story.html> but <http://www.sidvalleyfoodbank.org.uk/>
- > Unusually for a small town, it has been left a legacy of over £3.2m (the KOF at the SVA) – used by 'deserving causes' such as the popular sports clubs.
<http://www.sidvaleassociation.org.uk/keith-owen-fund>
- > Whilst the VGS deals with Sid Valley issues, we are aware of other similar initiatives – notably the Transition Town movement which is based in Devon.
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2013/jun/15/transition-towns-way-forward>

SKILLS SET:

The Sid Valley has a population with a wide range of skills and experience which can be used to further our aims in many different areas.

It can offer a pool of expertise from the Met Office, the University, retirees from all backgrounds, senior management with international backgrounds, professionals including scientists, engineers, and architects, those in health-care, etc.

<http://www.devon.gov.uk/sidmouthbaselineprofile.pdf>

ENVIRONMENT:

The area's beautiful environment should be protected – which is being promoted through work done by the likes of the SVA, SidEnergy, Sidmouth in Bloom, Friends of the Bays, the Arboretum, the National Trust – as well as the local authorities.

<http://eastdevon.gov.uk/visit/east-devon-events/>

The Sid Valley already has a good natural environment but we must safeguard and improve our biodiversity. Protect our wild areas and encourage propagation and planting of local forms of wild plants. We should not be contaminating our local plant genes with similar species that will hybridise or overcome our local forms (eg mass planting of ornamental daffodils to the disadvantage of local wild forms).

<https://www.visionforsidmouth.org/biodiversity-group.aspx> and
<http://futuresforumvgs.blogspot.co.uk/2013/11/biodiversity-in-sidmouth-beach-garden.html>

Looking to the future, the area offers the potential for wind-power generation on land and out to sea (there have been planning applications); hydroelectric on the Sid has been explored; and the sea is a potential source of energy-production – as part of the beach-management programme which is well-advanced and will happen.

<http://futuresforumvgs.blogspot.co.uk/search/label/energy>

CENTRALITY:

The Sid Valley is at the centre in many aspects:

- > Sidmouth is the chosen place for the Folk Festival, now over 50 years old; other festivals are being established, including the five-year-old Science Festival; the repertory theatre season (one of the few remaining in the country) at the Manor Pavilion attracts a very wide audience from Sidmouth and beyond; all these annual events are recognized nationally. <http://www.manorpavilion.com/>
 - > The Norman Lockyer Observatory is a nationally-renown institution.
<http://normanlockyer.com/>
 - > Communication networks are good, with access to Exeter, potential sea-links along the coast, excellent bus links (to Lyme, Taunton; through Exeter to Plymouth and beyond); two hours to Paddington via Exeter by train.
<http://www.somersetlive.co.uk/jurassic-coast-bus-service-sea-step-closer/story-16022030-detail/story.html>
 - > The seafront is unique to the Devon coast, with its Esplanade hotels adding to the visibility and attractiveness for regular visitors to Sidmouth.
<http://devonshiremagazine.co.uk/how-sidmouth-inspired-betjeman-to-poetry/>
 - > Indeed, it is a very attractive place to live:
<https://www.theguardian.com/money/2014/oct/10/lets-move-to-sidmouth-devon>
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16. Are there limitations and/ or constraints facing your Group in the Sid Valley? If so, how might they be resolved?

DEMOGRAPHICS:

The high age profile can lead to age bias and lack of balanced representation in the needs of the town. <http://sidmouth-town.localstats.co.uk/census-demographics/england/south-west/east-devon/sidmouth-town> and <http://futuresforumvgs.blogspot.co.uk/2013/08/east-devons-population.html>

Sometimes getting our message across to the older members can be an issue.

There is a lack of young people because of the lack of affordable homes; these housing problems are exacerbated by second home ownership; with possible resolution through STC decisions and the NP.

<http://futuresforumvgs.blogspot.co.uk/2014/10/without-urgent-investment-in-coastal.html>

Engaging young working people who are time-poor is difficult – the attendance profile of VGS meetings, the attendance of the Science Festival, other ‘community’ events.

Although the population is slightly older than average for a small town, this should not be seen as a constraint; the elderly population is balanced by a large school population and ‘working families’.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/audio/geography/pdf/ageing_population_s.pdf and

http://www.sidmouthherald.co.uk/news/ticking_time_bomb_as_sidmouth_gets_older_1_4542170

COMMUNITY:

The constraints on our activities are dictated by the involvement of the whole community.

Groups like ours would benefit from a community hub encouraging the sharing of ideas and resources in the Valley. <http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/sidmouth-drill-hall-hub>

We are dependent on the support and resources provided by the local politicians and would welcome further interaction with our local representatives.

<https://futuresforumvgs.blogspot.co.uk/2015/04/hustings-in-sidmouth-town-council.html>

The community is diverse politically, socially and economically – and this affects attitudes and approaches; for example, the considerable ‘constraint’ of climate change sceptics is balanced by a broader awareness of the issues.

<https://www.visionforsidmouth.org/news/2015/november/climate-change-sidmouths-climate-conversation.aspx>

PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT:

There is a serious lack of safe pedestrian areas in the centre of town, limiting community and social interaction – see VGS group surveys of 2005 and 2010.

<https://www.visionforsidmouth.org/transport.aspx> and

<http://futuresforumvgs.blogspot.co.uk/2013/09/traffic-management-plan-for-sidmouth.html>

Possible resolution would be a formal traffic survey and subsequent intervention to manage town traffic flows. <http://futuresforumvgs.blogspot.co.uk/2015/11/traffic-management-plan-for-sidmouth-we.html>

The backward-looking, unimaginative planning departments at the District and County Councils are blockages to taking visionary approaches forward – for example in P&R and Port Royal. <https://www.visionforsidmouth.org/news/2008/november/port->

[royal.aspx](https://www.visionforsidmouth.org/futures/port-royal/sidmouth-residents-ideas-for-port-royal.aspx) and <https://www.visionforsidmouth.org/futures/port-royal/sidmouth-residents-ideas-for-port-royal.aspx>

There is limited space for expansion of a seaside town with steep hills on all sides; and intractable traffic congestion issues hinders further 'development', especially at Sidford but also in routes coming through the Valley and into town.

<https://www.visionforsidmouth.org/futures/housing/persimmon,-sidmouth-and-promoting-well-designed-housing-that-is-sustainable-and-provides-much-needed-new-housing.aspx>

The AONB should be adhered to more rigorously; and without exception!

<http://futuresforumvgs.blogspot.co.uk/2014/09/persimmon-sidmouth-and-greenfield-sites.html>

There are limits to the expansion of the Alexandra Industrial Estate; and yet there are under-utilized employment land areas and examples of B2 land-use provision being turned over to residential. <http://futuresforumvgs.blogspot.co.uk/2014/03/the-future-of-alexandria-road.html> and

<http://futuresforumvgs.blogspot.co.uk/2016/02/sidford-business-park-and-alexandria-rd.html>

17. In your view, what improvements/developments might enhance the economic and social environment for business in general in the Sid Valley in the next 15 years?

The VGS seeks to ensure economic resilience and development for sustainability of the Valley in the following areas:

BUSINESS SUCCESS:

Build upon the success of its businesses – including the hotels, the international language school, the arts facilities (including the theatre).

http://futuresforumvgs.blogspot.co.uk/2014/06/looking-to-future-of-south-west-seaside_24.html

Encourage small business to set up and consolidate – for example, small start-up units at Port Royal. <http://futuresforumvgs.blogspot.co.uk/2013/04/plans-for-port-royal-part-three.html>

Enable small satellite centres to flourish – at Woolbrook (baker's/butcher's); on Temple St – through traffic-calming, car-parking, better signage.

http://www.sidmouthherald.co.uk/news/temple_street_of_old_recalled_1_4450590

Discourage the 'doughnut effect' of hollowing out the town centre through out-of-town development and retail parks.

<https://www.visionforsidmouth.org/media/65397/representation-to-local-plan-final-version-vgs-14jan13.pdf>

Review tax arrangements to ensure all local businesses are not being disadvantaged by tax benefits gained by larger national or international business.

<http://futuresforumvgs.blogspot.co.uk/2016/08/a-solution-to-our-housing-problems-land.html> and

<http://futuresforumvgs.blogspot.co.uk/2016/01/corporation-tax-small-towns-and-small.html>

Provide affordable housing to encourage more working residents and thereby provide employees for local business whilst discouraging inward commuting.

<http://futuresforumvgs.blogspot.co.uk/2015/05/toxteth-and-turner-it-has-taken-turner.html>

Ensure major planning changes and improvements benefit the community and the future of the town. <https://futuresforumvgs.blogspot.co.uk/2016/05/we-need-more-balanced-community-sid.html?m=0>

TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT:

Introduce proper P&R facilities, together with an enhanced hopper bus.

<http://futuresforumvgs.blogspot.co.uk/2015/07/is-it-park-change-or-park-ride.html>

Avoid more in-coming commuter traffic.

<http://futuresforumvgs.blogspot.co.uk/2013/09/development-for-sustainability-futures.html>

Make the town and Valley more attractive for residents and visitors by reducing the traffic and providing better facilities for cycling/walking; thereby enhancing the shopping and tourism experience.

http://www.sustrans.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/files/publications/Feniton_Sidmouth_Feasibility_Study_Draft.pdf

The local shops and cafes etc are significant parts of the business community. They depend on visitors from the surrounding area and all over the UK.

<http://www.extension.umn.edu/community/news/tourism-assets.html>

There must therefore be good transport links without spoiling the local environment.

This means an efficient and inexpensive bus network and park and ride facilities. In particular a seven- day a week bus service is essential.

<http://futuresforumvgs.blogspot.co.uk/2016/10/green-transport-is-healthy-for-you.html>

TOURISM:

Improve Port Royal – making it more attractive for tourists.

<http://futuresforumvgs.blogspot.co.uk/2013/04/plans-for-port-royal-part-four.html>

Develop a tourist strategy for the town that embraces all aspects of the Sid Vale tourist industry. <http://futuresforumvgs.blogspot.co.uk/2016/03/sidmouth-sense-of-place.html>

ENVIRONMENT:

Improve recycling facilities for food waste – eg, a biodigester – and green waste – with communal composting. <http://futuresforumvgs.blogspot.co.uk/2015/03/otter-rotters-moving-on-and-moving-in.html> and

<http://futuresforumvgs.blogspot.co.uk/2016/07/going-off-grid.html>

Provide more allotments to encourage local growing of vegetables.

<http://futuresforumvgs.blogspot.co.uk/2014/02/allotments-in-east-devon.html>

18. What opportunities for increasing economic or social viability and prosperity do you see for your Group in the Sid Valley in the next fifteen years?

The Vision Group aims to provide a forum for those wishing to discuss the fundamental issues which will affect the Valley in the future. <https://www.visionforsidmouth.org/>
We continue to engage with local authorities and residents on issues such as healthcare provision, environment, planning, economy, transport, education, housing, culture, waste management, energy provision, continuing to work towards the vision of the founding group. <https://www.visionforsidmouth.org/co-ordination/original-vision-group-report.aspx> and <https://www.visionforsidmouth.org/co-ordination/sustainable-sidmouth.aspx>

SERVICES > Protect the local hospital and town surgery
> Protect the 5-18 provision of education in the town

HERITAGE/CULTURE > Cherish the heritage of the town
> Protect the cultural diversity in the valley
> Encourage Science Festival
> Festivals are growing: entertainment, arts facilities for all ages;
> Develop venues (eg: Bradford-on-Avon is used by Radio 3)
[http://www.wiltshiretimes.co.uk/news/14500670.Bradford on Avon s Climate Aid folk festival a resounding success/?ref=mrb&lp=14](http://www.wiltshiretimes.co.uk/news/14500670.Bradford_on_Avon_s_Climate_Aid_folk_festival_a_resounding_success/?ref=mrb&lp=14)

COMMUNITY > Community resilience resulting from greater social interaction, involvement and interest in Town affairs
> Establish a wider range of festivals catering for all parts of the community – festival town as part of tourist strategy

ENVIRONMENT > Enhance the local environment (green spaces, trees, plantings, traffic free zones, protecting the beach areas)
> Encourage the authorities to recycle cardboard
> Encourage sustainable local energy
> Development of new projects eg sustainable energy practices (eg reduction of fuel demand through insulation or renewable energy)
<http://futuresforumvgs.blogspot.co.uk/2015/10/plans-for-port-royal-ideas-for-mixed.html>
> Better protection for our environment eg dark skies status, bio diversity (beach garden), beach management, more electric charging points

FOOD > Cherish the local agriculture and fishing industries
> Encourage Farmers Market and Repeat Food Festival (make annual) Highlight local food and brings local producers in reducing food miles.

PLANNING > Enhance local controls and enforcement over planning decisions (eg. the Knowle, Sidford business park, local housing for young families...)
> Completion and adoption of Neighbourhood plan

TRANSPORT & TRAFFIC > Resolve the traffic issues caused by deliveries to local businesses and providing out of town parking with Park and Ride, Park and Ride, Park and Boris Bike, park and 'electric bike'

- > Encourage the use of electric vehicles in the town and a car club; a dial-a-car or car share service; a bike-share service

HOUSING > Ensure provision of affordable environmentally sustainable housing for all ages <http://futuresforumvgs.blogspot.co.uk/2013/06/east-devon-and-affordable-housing.html>

- > Encourage mixed housing, to provide for lower-income families – who will work in care homes/health, hotels/catering

YOUTH/DEMOGRAPHICS > Educate young people to respect their local environment and join efforts to maintain or improve

- > More Involvement of the community particularly younger people
 - > Ensure proper drop-in centres for young people, which come and go
 - > Attract more professionals and not only retirees
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20. This section is for you to provide comment on the topic(s) you selected in Question 19. For example, in what way the issue is important for your or Group, what concerns you have, and what opportunities you see.

The Vision Group exists to support the maintenance and enhancement of a successful community; and as an independent body aiming to give a voice to the views of the community, all the topics should be achieved – but without detriment to the environment.

These topics were included as part of the original remit when the Vision Group was set up in 2005: and this is reflected in the Vision report from 2006.

Over the past ten years, the VGS has concerned itself with the above through public meetings, reports, engagement with the authorities/experts and research.

21. Are there any topics not listed in Question 19 that you would like to see included?

The Vision Group and its on-line Futures Forum covers a very wide area of topics which are of interest: <http://futuresforumvgs.blogspot.co.uk/>

Some specific topics collected during a recent workshop included:

THE SEAFRONT:

Beach Management Plan – including coastal erosion, protection of Pennington Point

Flora and Fauna of the beach – the established beach garden

Encouragement of water-sports etc; allowing street vendors on the Esplanade to service young families on the beach; more toilets for the beach

The Eastern section of the seafront needs careful and sensitive development

Sea defences need to be improved in view of rising sea levels caused by climate change

ENVIRONMENT:

Allotments: need to find more land

Local food production (Fresh & Green)

Seed bank

Less wastage of apples, local fruit

CULTURE/HERITAGE:

A local icon

A regional branch of a national institution (Science Museum, Tate)

23. This section is for you to provide comment on the topic(s) you selected in Question 22. For example, in what way the issue is important for your Group, what concerns you have, and what opportunities you see.

There has been general misunderstanding of the ranking system in Question 22.

Nevertheless, it is agreed that All the above (except the second perhaps) are of great importance – and there are considerable dangers with the ‘wrong’ sort of development.

NOTES:

Traffic management is very important to the Vision Group – and to local business, the tourist industry, and to local residents.

The Knowle and Sidford developments are detrimental to the local environment. Knowle development will have a detrimental effect on local employment: it will not produce affordable local housing. Sidford may add local employment, but should not happen as it is on a floodplain and will create further traffic problems.

Port Royal needs improving but must be done sympathetically and in keeping with the town; facilities need to be improved for residents and visitors; not expensive flats or a hotel.

Beach Management is about defence against climate change.

It is important that the resolution of these issues is managed in a transparent manner allowing our local representatives ie Town Councillors to decide on the direction of the town consistent with the wishes of the community.

We feel that successful resolution will enable Sidmouth to thrive as a town and a resilient community
