



# Enhancing Community Facilities in Bidford on Avon

## A consultation

Produced by WCAVA in  
collaboration with Escape Arts and  
Grapevine Coventry and  
Warwickshire



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## Background

Stratford-on-Avon District Council resolved that the Bidford-on Avon (Bidford) Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) 2011-31 was 'made' on July 2017; it is now formally part of the District Council's development plan and will be used to assist in making decisions on planning applications within the plan area. Section 6 of the Bidford NDP focuses on 'Neighbourhood Amenities'. The Plan recognises that "Existing community facilities play an important role in maintaining a strong and vibrant community"... "proposals which enhance and improve existing community facilities, will continue to be encouraged where they represent sustainable development".

Feedback from Bidford residents, as part of the consultation process for the Plan, highlighted the need for improvements to the health centre, the village hall and indoor sports facility. The Plan noted that general population increase and a specific increase in older age groups have placed considerable strain on health care provision within the Neighbourhood Area. 74% of residents expressed the view that they would like to see an upgraded village hall and indoor sports facility in Bidford.

The community run library was acknowledged as an important community resource. It was also noted that there is potential to expand the primary school. The Plan observed that Secondary school pupils attend schools outside Bidford in Alcester, Stratford upon Avon and Chipping Camden which raises difficulties in young people accessing some 'after school' activities.

Since the NDP was produced there has been a significant focus nationally on the importance of the role of the community in health and wellbeing. 'Health Matters: Community Centred approaches for health and wellbeing' produced by Public Health England in February 2018 illustrates how "community life, social connections and having a role in local decisions all have a vital contribution to make to health and wellbeing. They build control and resilience, help buffer against disease and influence health-related behaviour and management of long-term conditions". Public Health England and the Campaign to end loneliness make use of statistics to show the impact of loneliness, for example, loneliness increases the likelihood of premature mortality by 26% (Holt- Lunstad) and social isolation and loneliness are associated with a 30% increased risk of heart disease and stroke (Val Torta et al 2016).

Conversely, people who are more socially connected are healthier and live longer. Taking part in community life can be empowering and create a sense of purpose. An 'asset based approach', which celebrates the resources and facilities within a community that can contribute to positive health and well being, has become more popular. Internationally, a study of more than 800 people, who were followed for the first six years after they retired by researchers at the University of Queensland, found that being a member of a club of any kind is associated with an increase in reported

quality of life. The Copenhagen City Heart Study by US researchers who followed more than 8,000 people in Denmark for a period of 25 years found that being a member of a tennis club was particularly beneficial; it conferred almost an extra 10 years of life, compared with people who did not exercise.

Community groups and activities in Bidford are a vital resource. Community library volunteers describe testimonies to the 'Knit and Natter' group, predominantly for 50 to 80 year olds, as being a *"life saver for some individuals"*. A young person from the Youth Club said *"If it wasn't for the youth club staff I wouldn't leave my house. I would just stay in doing nothing"*.

The place based needs assessment for Alcester, Bidford, Henley and Studley as part of the Warwickshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) has just been completed by Warwickshire County Council's (WCC) Insight Service.

<http://hwb.warwickshire.gov.uk/jsna-place-based-approach/>

The JSNA for the area identifies the current and future health and wellbeing needs of the local population. This intelligence will be used to establish a shared evidence based consensus on the key local priorities across health and social care. Relevant key recommendations arising from the JSNA include:

- Increase opportunities for social connections across all age groups, particularly for those with limited access to transport or where a lack of community venues may limit opportunities for social contact.
- Increase the range of opportunities for physical activity including safe walking and cycling routes, use of parks and green spaces and community-based activities, including provision that will appeal to young people, men, and older people.

## Bidford Parish Council Brief

In May 2018, the Bidford Parish Council (BPC) Amenities Working Group produced a briefing note and discussion document which was closely aligned to the NDP. There was recognition that there is a significant gap between the needs of young people and the community as a whole, and that whilst Bidford has a wealth of existing clubs and organisations BPC would like to build on this and increase the knowledge and use of these services.

The focus of the discussion document was not just on the potential rebuild or refurbishment of the Youth Centre but also on the issue of how BPC could actively promote youth and community services, raise awareness of and accessibility to those services and encourage coordination between all those who currently provide them. The discussion document also included a proposal for a Youth and Community leader who would extend the Youth Centre services, facilitate the engagement of young people in as wide a range of available activities as possible and foster the engagement and education of the wider community in working effectively together. The discussion document was approved by the BPC.

The BPC brief required a wide consultation process on how community facilities in Bidford could be enhanced and included three main areas:

- Identification of the gaps in community facilities including barriers to access and an understanding of needs and aspirations
- Increased understanding of how existing links between organisations could be strengthened in order to improve coordination between current activities
- To survey opinion on the potential re-development of the Youth Centre

BPC was particularly interested in seeking feedback from young people and existing clubs and organisations.

## Methodology

The approach to this consultation was to use the skills and engagement expertise of three charities to ensure the consultation was broad, involved young people and used a variety of mechanisms to collect quantitative and qualitative data, including an interactive 'Ideas Factory'.

[Warwickshire Community and Voluntary Action \(WCAVA\)](#) has led the consultation process, working with delivery partners Escape Arts and Grapevine Coventry and Warwickshire. The delivery partners selected to work alongside WCAVA hold the Quality for Health Accreditation which allows commonality of practice aligned to WCAVA.

WCAVA (<http://www.wcava.org.uk>) is the countywide infrastructure organisation for Warwickshire, providing vital support to the volunteers, groups, organisations, enterprises and charities (the Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise Sector - VCSE) who are working to strengthen all of our communities across the county.

WCAVA's main support services include helping organisations with funding, organisational development and the recruitment of volunteers. WCAVA is the link between the VCSE and strategic partners such as the local authority and Public Health. WCAVA also has a role in bringing organisations together to collaborate in response to community need.

[Escape Arts](http://www.escapearts.org.uk) (<http://www.escapearts.org.uk>) is a Charitable Company based in Stratford upon Avon supporting a diverse programme of creative and heritage led health and wellbeing workshops for people of all ages both in Stratford on Avon District and across Warwickshire. Their work aims to address isolation and inspire strong, vibrant and happy communities, improving the quality of life for all involved. Escape Arts has a track record of detached youth work and working with people who have not had an opportunity to engage or access local activities.

[Grapevine Coventry and Warwickshire](http://www.grapevinecovandwarks.org/about-grapevine) (<http://www.grapevinecovandwarks.org/about-grapevine>)

Is a Charitable Company based in Coventry which helps all kinds of people experiencing isolation, poverty and disadvantage to build better lives.

They offer practical guidance, advocacy and support centred on the person, helping them to get the hope, insight and supportive relationships they need to take control, turn their lives around and realise their potential.

Using practical tools and training Grapevine also help people build their collective power to tackle the problems they're facing. Grapevine helps spark and sustain movements for change and has successfully used Ideas Factories. Recent Ideas factories include 'Coventry Youth Activists', 'Connecting for good' – 'Sparking a move against isolation' and 'Compassionate Communities for end of life'.

## WCAVA

After initial scoping meetings with BPC, WCAVA focused on one to one interviews with organisations in the village with a responsibility for a community building and community organisations providing activities in Bidford. WCAVA also interviewed Prospects who work with young people who are not in education, employment and training (NEET), predominantly boys aged 16-18, to ensure there was feedback about young people who are less likely to access activities in the village.

Interviews were semi structured around BPC consultation areas – current activities being offered, the demographic of people taking up activities, ways of improving engagement and strengthening links between organisations, and for views on the future of the Youth Centre including whether the recruitment of a Youth and Community worker would help with the development of the Centre and help to increase connectivity across groups. Other areas that naturally came up as part of the conversations were the challenges and ideas about enhancing community facilities.

WCAVA released several surveys; a survey was designed for community organisations and one for residents. The original residents' survey was revised based on BPC feedback, so there are two versions with some overlapping questions and some distinctive questions. Surveys were promoted extensively by the Clerk at BPC, through key community organisations such as the community library and via the WCC Community Development worker who recently completed extensive mapping of activities and organisations within Bidford Parish. She also visited key organisations within the village to enable people to complete hard copies of the surveys. Bidford Primary School kindly offered to distribute a hard copy survey designed for parents and their families, through the pupils' book bags.

Survey questions replicated some of the questions used within the stakeholder interviews; specific questions were targeted to residents about their use of facilities, and community organisations were asked about their support needs.

Escape Arts worked with participants at the Youth Centre over a four week period to gain an understanding of the provision they already access and what they would like to change or like to see in the future. Young people were also asked about their views on the potential development of the Youth Centre. Escape Arts used creative activities such as mind mapping ideas and radio production software to encourage young people to share their views.

Escape Arts also spoke with young leaders from the Youth Centre to get their opinions on provision in Bidford they feel should be improved and detached consultation took place with young people from Alcester Academy, as they were getting off their buses from school.

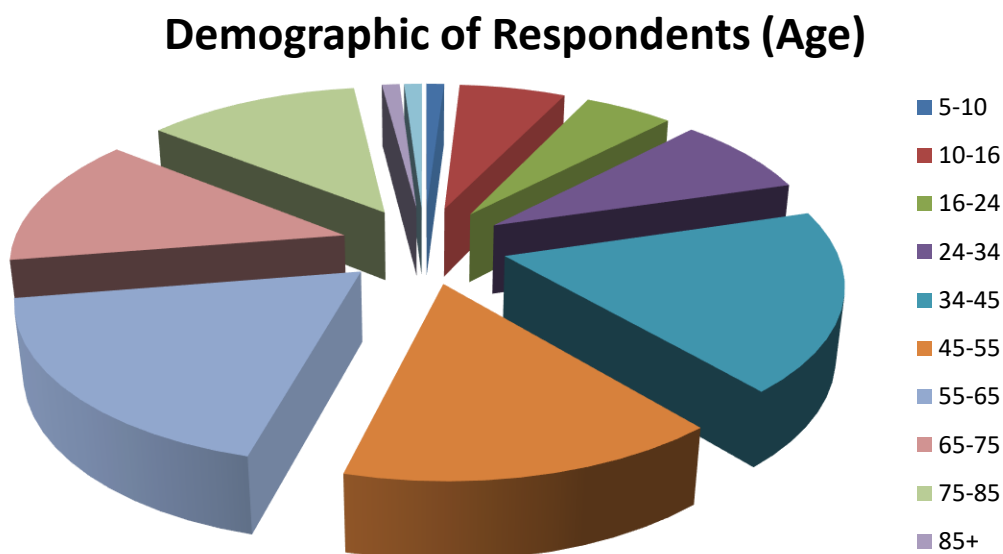
## Grapevine Coventry and Warwickshire

A planning meeting took place with representatives of BPC to discuss the aims, format and publicity for the Ideas Factory which was promoted in January. An Ideas Factory provided a forum for the sharing of perspective and an opportunity to make links between organisations and identify joint activities and initiatives. Care was taken to include representation across stakeholders through personal invitations to interviewees and a wider invite to Bidford residents. Grapevine Coventry and Warwickshire provided advice about the format and outcomes of an 'Ideas Factory' (See YouTube link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vxejkap3Kro> ) One of the important elements of an Ideas Factory is to promulgate solution based ideas to challenges and to build momentum and commitment to the changes that are needed.

## Responses

12 interviews took place either face to face or over the telephone with Bidford Youth Centre, Bidford Community Library, St Laurence's Church Hall, Bidford Tennis Club, Crawford Memorial Hall, The Barn, Broom Village Hall, Bidford Health Centre, Bidford Fire Station, Bidford Area Community Choir, Bidford Canoe Club and Prospects. The organisations that responded to the stakeholder survey were Bidford Colts FC, Bidford Banners, Crawford Memorial Hall and Social Centre, St John Ambulance Bidford on Avon, Bidford and District History Society and Bidford Dementia Cafe:

98 residents responded to the surveys; 60 responded to the first version and 38 to the second version. Residents from the age categories ranging from 5 to 85 + responded but completed surveys were predominantly from residents aged 35-65. 19% of respondents were below 34 in age, 53% 35-65 and 27% 65-85 with 1% preferring not to say





Thirty parents/families responded to the school survey; responses came from parents from reception to year 6 but the majority of responses were from Year 3, Year 4 and reception.

Escape Arts worked with approximately 20/25 young people at each of their four sessions at the Youth Centre. The predominant age of attendees at the Youth Centre is age 11. Escape Arts spoke with four young leaders from the Youth Centre about provision for young people aged 13 and over. They also spoke with four groups of students from Alcester Academy aged between 12 and 15.

38 people attended the Ideas Factory representing Bidford Community Library, Broom Village Hall, Crawford Memorial Hall, Mobile Disco, Home Farm Trust, Bidford Youth Centre, Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Services, Bidford Tennis Club, Bidford Area Community Choir, Bidford Canoe Club, Pilates' class teacher from the village, 8 residents including a parent of a primary school child, two young people who use the Youth Centre attended and a senior leader from the Centre. 6 members of BPC attended and representatives from Escape Arts, Grapevine Coventry and Warwickshire, WCAVA and WCC facilitated the group discussions.

The data from interviews, surveys and the Ideas Factory has been collated as part of this report to identify key themes and ideas. The following data is available to BPC but has not been included as part of the appendices: Collation of survey data, stand alone report from Escape Arts, radio podcasts with young people and collation of feedback from focus group discussion from the Ideas Factory. Any information which is not anonymous, such as interviews with organisations will be retained by WCAVA; quotations from interviews have been used in the body of the report to illustrate the main themes.

## Findings

A wealth of clubs and societies exist within Bidford. WCC mapping which took place in July 2018, in conjunction with BPC data for clubs, community buildings and societies identifies 38 separate groups. In addition there are other activities that run out of community buildings such as Broom Village Hall and St Laurence Church Hall which are often provided by people from outside of the village. Bidford Primary School offers a range of after school activities; for spring 2019 there are 9 activities, only two of which require payment, all others are run by teachers and are free. All of the free clubs are popular and usually full. The residents' survey identified a further 7 clubs/activities which people are accessing in Bidford.

There are a variety of community buildings, used by a diversity of groups, including village halls, church buildings, a community library, Youth Centre and designated sports' buildings for tennis, bowls and cricket. Crawford Memorial Hall and Broom Village hall are more or less full to capacity. Some community buildings have limited capacity, for example, St Laurence Church hall and there is potential for greater usage of the Youth Centre and the community room at the Fire Station. There are new building developments - Bright Star Nursery is in the process of building their premises off Waterloo Road and they will be providing room rental facilities. St Joseph Catholic Church is in the very early stages of a church rebuild and it is the intention to include facilities for rent to offer groups. The primary school may also want to rent out parts of its building.

When residents and parents were asked about the activities they and their families access they described a huge variety of clubs and societies. Bidford residents also described the well attended community events in the village: Bidford Bash, Bonfire Night, Christmas Lights, and Duck race and church/school fetes.

Only four people within the entire consultation said there were no gaps in community facilities. So, what are the perceived gaps?

### More access to physical activities

The residents' survey asked about any clubs/social activities people would like to attend. The greatest number of responses related to access to swimming and access to an indoor sports facility/community sports hall. There was an emphasis on the need for more physical activities. Residents also expressed an interest in the following, with those in bold mentioned by more than one person: **Yoga Tai Chi**, **cycling club**, **basket ball**, **pool**, dancing, taekwondo, badminton, running club, pickle ball, netball, hockey, rugby, line dancing, horse riding, exercise classes, Zumba, table tennis, Pilates and an adult canoe club.

Many of the aspirations for a re-developed Youth Centre also include a demand for increased access to sport/physical activities. This is included within the Youth Centre section of the report.

The Bidford Primary School survey shows that families are accessing a variety of activities after school. Activities that are most likely to be accessed in Bidford are after school clubs, football, dance classes and music lessons/singing. The most popular activities are swimming, football, uniformed groups, music lessons/singing and dance classes. Parents are taking their children out of the village for athletics (Stratford upon Avon), beavers (Salford Priors), cubs (Stratford upon Avon) rainbows (Salford Priors), gymnastics (Stratford upon Avon and Pathlow) judo (Redditch and Evesham) and swimming (Broom, Stratford upon Avon, Evesham and Welford).

Parents' identification of gaps in community facilities also includes physical/sports activity and their aspirations for a redeveloped Youth Centre include an emphasis on physical activity. Activities that parents would like to see running in Bidford, in order of preference and in bold for multiple responses include: **martial arts, a variety of dance classes, gymnastics, any sporting activity/club aimed at younger children, athletics, five a side/non club football, running club, soft play, climbing,** basket ball, outdoor activities, a kids' gym, gardening, self defence, table tennis, archery, shooting, squash, organised play time, cycling, and a skipping club.

Survey responses also highlighted the need for physical/sports activities for specific sections of the community. For example, there was a request for more girls' sport such as netball, and hockey and more opportunities for families to access sports activities together. Access for disabled people was highlighted as well as activity clubs for older residents.

The Escape consultation showed that one of the favourite aspects of Bidford for young people is that it is located close to nature and to the river. They suggested more outdoors activities such as forest school skills sessions. A couple of parents mentioned a desire for a bird watching or wildlife club for their children.

Interviewees and attendees at the Ideas Factory also highlighted cycle routes, multi-use tracks and parkour as potential positive assets for the community.

## Provision for young people

As the NDP makes clear, once young people travel out of the village to attend secondary school, it becomes more difficult for them to access village amenities. As one interviewee said

*“Young people are all at different places- Alcester, Stratford, Chipping Camden. It can be a sticking point- it's not so easy to have a community life”.*

The majority of young people that Escape Arts met with from the Junior Club at the Youth Centre are primary school aged children who only attend the Youth Centre and the Canoe Club in the summer. Others had attended brownies/guiding clubs,

along with after school clubs run by the school and two participants were also young carers attending a group in Stratford upon Avon. The young people attending secondary schools that Escape Arts met with as part of their detached youth work do not access any activities in Bidford. A couple of the young people have had counselling through their school and understand the importance of socialising but did not know about any Youth Club; others have attended 'The Barn' before but do not continue on a frequent basis. Participants also reported not really hanging out around Bidford due to it being winter and the lack of lighting at the skate park. Young people explained that there are often older teenagers hanging around there smoking and swearing which puts them off. Feedback from young people also suggests that the skate park equipment needs to be updated, utilising box jumps and spines which enable scootering. Interviewees and participants from the Ideas Factory also emphasised the importance of a safe space for younger people to congregate. There was some anecdotal information concerning anti-social behaviour relating to young people in Bidford. Warwickshire police say there are no concerns at present but issues in the past have taken place at the Church Yard off the High Street and in the park on St Laurence Way.

A community cafe was suggested at the Ideas Factory, which would provide a meeting place for young people and for mums during the day. Escape Arts found that young people really enjoyed having the youth cafe over the summer holidays, and particularly loved having an inside place to eat and hang out with friends where their parents know they are safe. Some young people expressed disappointment that the evening Youth Club closed over the summer- this identified a desire for additional holiday provision. The Ideas Factory identified a lack of a day to day meeting point for young people. Secondary school pupils involved in the Escape Arts consultation indicated that they would like a place to go to seek advice when needed. They wanted a place to call their own where they can catch up with friends in a warm and welcoming environment.

Provision in Bidford for teenagers has diminished over the last few years. The Senior Club at the Youth Centre which used to run on Monday evenings for young people aged 14+ has not run for the last two years because of a lack of leaders. There was a vibrant young Fire fighters unit based at Bidford Fire Station which was very well attended - activities included team building and camps, and participants went through work books and received certificates. Fire fighter units were disbanded in Warwickshire four years ago due to funding. Some Bidford community activities and buildings are more focused on an older or very young demographic. For example, Broom Village Hall, whilst it has no specific data on usage, describes its main demographic as female and aged 50 plus. Young leaders involved in the Escape Consultation felt there were limited opportunities for young people aged 13 plus within Bidford and said that this was partly due to the closure of the 'overs' youth group for young people aged 14 plus at the Youth Centre.

Young people's mental health was mentioned by several organisations as a concern, with one organisation having specific signposting routes to specialist organisations when young people's mental health issues are identified. The JSNA for the local area also raises concerns for the mental health of young people. The data highlights higher rates of self-harm admission for 10-24 year olds when compared to Warwickshire figures. School Health Needs Assessment data reveals that 74.9% of Year 9 children attending schools in the JSNA area admit to feeling anxious/worried/stressed or in a low mood.

Bidford and Alcester have one of the highest NEET rates in South Warwickshire and Prospects is hearing from parents of NEETS that there is a lot of 'hanging out' in Bidford of boys aged 16-18, because of the boredom element.

A common response when people were asked about gaps in community facilities was - 'There's nothing for young people'. There are activities in the village for young people, such as sports activities, but young people are not necessarily accessing them, which mirrors some national patterns and challenges. The community library adjusted its hours to close at 4.30 so young people could access the library when they return to Bidford from the school bus but this didn't seem to have an impact. A five year research study into public library use in the UK and Ireland published in a report 'Shining a light' compiled by the Carnegie UK Trust and IPSOS Mori shows that library usage in the 15 – 24 category is down in England from 55% in 2011 to 51% in 2016. However the Young People's library survey 2014 -17 shows that despite the wide range of activities competing for children's attention, reading for pleasure is still valued across all age ranges.

Bidford Tennis Club has identified a gap for teenagers at the club and there is currently no teenage section for girls at the club. In order to attract more young people, the tennis club have introduced free taster sessions on a Friday, open days and financial incentives but this hasn't been effective in bringing new young people into the club. Women in Sport and the Youth Sport Trust based on extensive survey data, have shown that girls aged 11 to 18 exercise less regularly and for less time than boys, which has led to 'This Girl Can' initiative.

Several years ago, St Laurence Church and Broom village hall also tried to engage with young people. Broom village hall were unable to offer young people what they wanted - primarily there was no storage facility in the hall for equipment. There is a sense of disappointment and lack of knowledge about how to engage with young people, for example

*"It's an area that's baffled us. Since we've opened, we've tried to include age groups across the board" and "from a health point of view it's difficult to engage with young people. We try to encourage them to use the health centre before they are critically ill".*

Organisations would like to do more with young people and there is an appetite to share good practice about engagement or to utilise the expertise of a youth and community worker.

In the course of the consultation, organisations where young people are actively involved were encouraged to share the reasons for their successes. Organisations that were mentioned were the Youth Centre, The Barn, Bidford Football Club, the Bidford Area community choir and the Crawford Memorial Hall.

Escape Arts found that young people engage well with youth club leaders at the Youth Centre and enjoy the trips and themed activities. Young people's comments included

*"I come to Youth Club every week to see my friends and have fun. I do something different every week, the youth club allows me to try new things, such as ice skating".*

*"I come to Youth Club to socialise with friends, have a good old chat, play some pool and go to the tuck shop".*

*"I have been coming to the Youth Club since last February. I started because I was lonely. When I started I only had my cousin to talk to but now I have friends, really really good friends".*

The young people who have progressed to become senior leaders feel privileged that they have had the opportunity and encouragement from the Duke of Edinburgh programme to start volunteering and appreciate the support from the Youth Club leaders.

*"Volunteering at the Youth Club is like reliving my childhood again. It was like I never left. It was amazing".*

The Youth Club leader commented on the relationship young people have with the building

*"Young people like the building because they don't have to worry about making a mess – it's friendly, colourful, informal and well loved. It's well used and well loved. It's comfy and relaxing like home. It's their space and they want to own it".*

Within 'The Barn' building there are distinctive spaces for different age groups - Pod (0-18 months), Launchpad (18 months – 4), Basecamp (4-9), Summit (9-11) and the Studio (11-18). Three part time staff are focused on engagement – Preschool, up to

11 and young people beyond 11. A team of volunteers also help to engage with families, mums and teenagers. There is an understanding and attentiveness to the different needs of specific age groups and this is reflected in the nature of activities organised for them. Staff members made reference to research 'Gen Z: Rethinking Culture' by Youth for Christ about young people's beliefs, behaviour and priorities as a means of improving their understanding of young people's needs.

Bidford Area Community Choir has attracted teenagers and young people and describes some of the reasons for its success as: free membership for teenagers, a choice around commitment to rehearsals by being part of the main or teen choir, a young person running the children's choir and an inclusive approach whereby people do not have to do auditions to become part of the choir. It is an example of people coming together across age ranges. A choir representative described the age mix:

*"There aren't many opportunities in Bidford for age groups to mix... Teenagers know older people by their first name – there are no barriers. It's nice for young people to have an appreciation of what it's like to be older and to give something back to the community and for older people. to have an appreciation that not all teenagers are bad. If it wasn't for the choir – their paths would not cross".*

According to its website, Bidford Juniors Football Club has more than 100 children playing organised football and others developing their interests and skills in the lower age groups. Children from reception to year 11 are involved in the club.

Crawford Memorial Hall is successful at attracting a wide demographic and attributes its success to its use of social media, particularly Facebook, its accessibility and the running of events which promotes the facility to new users.

## Barriers to accessing activities

When residents were asked about the barriers to accessing activities and clubs, the overriding reason was the lack of time. When specified, residents described work, family and child care responsibilities. Other respondents are working shifts. The NDP describes Bidford's transition "From being a relatively small community working locally, it has become a large village where over 75% of the working population commutes. From being a village with a cohesive community it has moved to one where a large proportion of the population come back home to eat and sleep". Many of the respondents within the consultation across all age groups referred to the changing identity of Bidford, the impact of reducing intimacy and sense of community. There were many references to Bidford being a dormitory village and comments about there being a divide between the old and new village. Organisations were mixed in their response. One organisation had leafleted every new home to improve engagement in activities; another organisation accepted the fact that the main priority for commuters would be to spend time with their families when returning from work.

The issue of membership as a barrier to people accessing clubs/activities was raised for people who are unable to make a regular commitment to an activity when work/family is the priority. For other people, activities were not run at convenient times for them.

The second biggest reason for not attending groups and activities is because people say they do not know what's available. There are many forms of communication about what's going on in Bidford. BPC offers the following to help members of the community know what is happening:

A Website <http://www.bidfordonavon-pc.gov.uk/events.htm> which is regularly updated and includes Forthcoming events, Local groups, and Local businesses and Social Media including Facebook and Twitter:

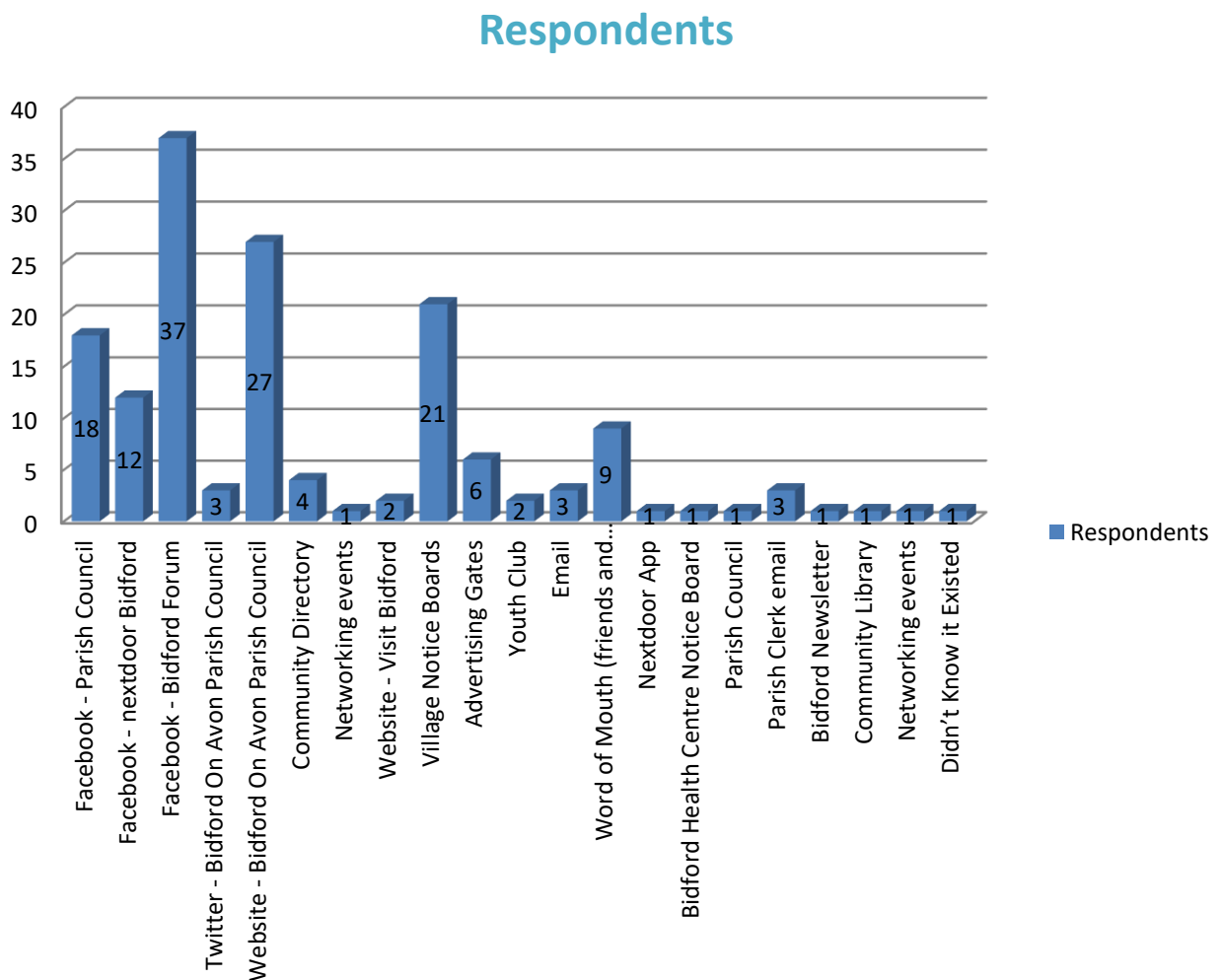
A BPC weekly information email gives details of events taking place during the forthcoming week as well as drawing attention to new notices such as newsletters, scams, road works etc.

The other communication mechanisms are a Nextdoor Bidford and Bidford Forum Facebook, Bidford Business Forum Facebook, a Visit Bidford website, the Big Paper which is delivered to people's homes, networking events, a community organisations get together organised by BPC, village notice boards, advertising gates, open days and word of mouth. A Community Directory has been produced in the past but is currently out of date. All organisations responding to the stakeholder survey welcomed the opportunity to be part of a directory of groups for local residents.

Respondents to the residents' surveys highlighted the following sources for accessing information. The most popular method of gaining information was from



the Bidford Forum Facebook page:



Communication was a theme that was picked up in the Ideas Factory across all four discussion groups. The challenge is how to spread the word about what's on in Bidford and reach people who are not currently accessing activities. Whilst there is a range of communication mechanisms, there is need for greater coordination between them, greater linkage between social media sites and appropriate use of media for specific age groups. There was an appeal for more communication about what is offered for young people using Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat.

The difficulty of accessing activities was also highlighted. Lack of disabled access was highlighted for some buildings such as the Youth Centre, and there were requests for more activities for disabled young people. Disability access also came up within the Ideas Factory discussions – lack of facilities for disabled people, wheelchair access issues, and the lack of a PHAB or Gateway Club. Other survey respondents mentioned their lack of mobility, and not being able to drive, so that they are dependent on lifts for accessing activity.

Prospects described the prohibitive costs of taking the bus to Stratford – Upon - Avon (£7.90 return) for young people who are NEET, to access activities there.

Ideas Factory participants described the lack of transport for young people with no private means. A couple of people mentioned the need for a footpath to access the Health Centre.

Other reasons for not accessing activities in order of the most mentioned with those in bold mentioned by several people were – **not finding anything that interests me or is suitable, nothing age appropriate, unappealing facilities, inconvenient timings of activities**, health/long term illness, not comfortable in the village, don't know many people, toiletries, I'd rather not, and not keen on villagers.

Responses from the Ideas Factory discussion groups reiterated the issue of safety in relation to young people accessing the skate park, football pitch and the Big Meadow. Attendees also raised the lack of volunteer capacity within the Youth Centre and the limitations of the Youth Centre in being able to attract young people and respond to their needs.

## Strengthening links between organisations

Some of the community organisations in Bidford are not aware of other groups and what they do. The majority of organisations interviewed would appreciate an updated 'Community Directory' and stronger links between community organisations; a very small minority wanted to focus purely on their own purpose or did not see any point in forcing a relationship between specific interest groups. Bidford Community library was seen as a significant resource for signposting residents to community activities.

One of the benefits of partnership working that was most mentioned was the usefulness of working together around common challenges such as young people's engagement, and sharing what works well. As one organization said

*"If there could be a sense of - we're all in this together, not them and us. To share what we're all doing and why, that would be hugely helpful. People who are doing well- talk to others".*

Other common challenges for groups are volunteer recruitment and retention.

Participants at the Ideas Factory also highlighted the need for better links between local and other services for young people such as sexual health and mental health and improved links with the secondary schools that young people are attending.

Whilst organisations can see the benefits of partnership working, there is also recognition that it can be difficult to find time for networking. Many of the volunteers who run buildings/clubs work full time and are in multiple volunteer roles. They are already overstretched. An example was provided of how a 'Sports and Youth Provision Forum' had been set up and had not worked because it was yet another meeting for busy people.

Interviewees from organisations could appreciate how a Youth and Community worker would not only be able to extend the Youth Club offer but also link organisations, support volunteer recruitment and celebration, take action on good ideas and initiatives, support community events and be a conduit with the school.

Some organisations are already working collaboratively and examples were provided. Bidford Youth Club works in conjunction with the Children's Kayak Charitable Trust; the Trust provides a bank of qualified volunteer instructors, takes responsibility for them and completes risk assessments and the Youth Club administers the bookings for the Canoe Club. The Tennis and Bowling club are linked through sporting challenges. Whilst the 'Churches Together' group has disbanded there are continued links between Bidford churches particularly around joint events.

Partnerships are constantly evolving – the Canoe Club and Bidford Fire Station are currently investigating collaborative working.

Another strong theme was the benefit of pooling resources around marketing and publicity and the co-ordination of sports event. Participants at the Ideas Factory described the importance of word of mouth promotion, for example, by having Pilates classes in the Youth Centre, footfall to the Youth Centre has increased. As a participant said *“If people come to one thing they can find out about other things”*.

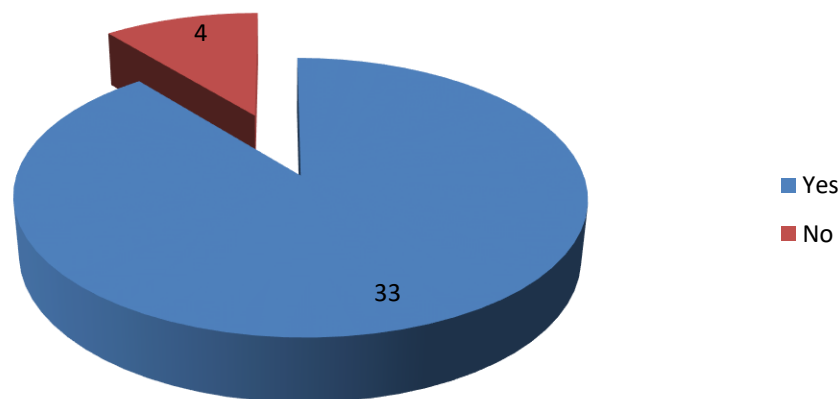
Community organisations saw the value of a variety of communication channels; survey respondents from the Stakeholder survey would most like to share information about community activities via web pages. There is more potential for community organisations to promote each others’ activities, particularly when there are spaces or availability.

The theme of communication was also a significant one for this discussion topic at the Ideas Factory. Improved communication links between groups was favoured with increased use of social media for volunteer recruitment, and appropriate social media for young people to be able to publicise youth activities.

## The future of the Youth Centre

The vast majority of people involved in the consultation see the value of the Youth Centre and would like to see the building replaced. The pie chart below is from the second version of the residents' survey.

### Would you like the current youth club building to be replaced?



The Youth Centre is well situated with a hard area for play and a greenway running down to the river which enables young people to access the river via the Canoe Club. However, there is very limited dedicated parking.

The current building has its limitations - it has a concrete slab wall structure and asbestos clad roofing. It's cold in the winter, has a very small kitchen, no private room for 1:1s, has no disabled access (a DIY ramp is used) and no accessible toilet. The outside area does not have adequate lighting and is not suitable for football or any other ball games due to the flooring and lack of protection on the windows.

The building is in need of refurbishment and the BPC discussion document suggests that even an ambitious refurbishment would not be a sound investment.

Young people involved in the Escape Consultation spoke highly of their village and the Youth Centre being an integral part of that. They all wanted to see improvements to the Youth Centre such as outdoor lighting, bigger kitchen facilities, better toilets and modern decor.

They enjoy the themed activities put on by the Youth Club but they would like to do more activities as a group. At the moment their kitchen is only big enough for one young person and member of staff. All the young people involved in discussions are keen to do more cooking activities and art. They also have an interest in doing outdoor activities such as forest schools. The outdoor space was identified as a

really important aspect, a place that could provide physical activity, for example, and good ball game facilities. A way of incorporating a climbing wall framework was popular as was a creative space such as an undercover den space and social space where barbecues could be held.

Some young people discussed the venue being two storeys to maximise floor space; everyone recognised the limitations of the current indoor floor space. If the space could be reconfigured, young people wanted more defined areas, for example, a greater defined chill out area, a game area, a creative space, IT space and quiet space. It was difficult for young people to envisage a future space, as what could realistically be done with the building and floor space is currently an unknown. There was clear recognition that the current space was limited and any opportunity to increase the space would be an asset. If this was not possible, other ideas were looked at for how design and decoration could help define the space.

The young leaders from the Youth Club all expressed the need for the Youth Centre to be improved in order for them to be able to provide better activities for the young people to develop their skills and explore interests. They focused on improving the Centre's outdoor space by improving lighting and cages around windows to enable them to play football and ball games outside. They liked the idea of an undercover space/veranda to have barbecues and to chill out if it's raining. They also liked the idea of the Youth Centre becoming a venue for music, sport and film nights. Discos were also a popular idea.

The Youth Centre leader, who has been in role as a volunteer for the last 35 year, describes the variety of young people who attend the Junior Youth Club and the current activities which young people enjoy: computers, games' consoles, table football, table tennis, pool, board games, and the outside areas and sports equipment. They also enjoy a wide range of activities and trips out such as paintballing. She emphasised the fact that in any re-development there needs to be facilities that attract young people and ownership by young people:

*"It's their space and they want to own it. In a new building there would need to be their own times and spaces. It's theirs and the facilities are available to others".*

The Canoe Club which currently uses the building and whose sessions are well attended require a separate entrance, showers, changing rooms and storage.

Whilst there is an understanding that a new building would have to be sustainable and be hired out during the day, there was strong feeling expressed through interviews and the Ideas Factory that the main focus of the building should continue to be focused on young people and that any development of the building should be owned and led by young people's views and ideas, summed up by the following quote:

*“Anything that can - needs to be done to hang onto that facility - it’s a desperately needed facility. There’s so little to do for kids of a certain age and it’s so hard to tap into that group. It needs to be purpose built so they feel it’s theirs and they can make it their own. It absolutely needs updating but it’s a fine line between a new build and making it... comfy - how young people want it. A dedicated Youth Centre is needed that hits that age groups which is clean and warm. We need to have a bigger vision for young people; there’s a lot of stuff for other age groups”.*

If the Centre is hired out during the day, people would generally prefer it being hired out for groups which are children, family and young people focused. Where possible, people would like it to be hired out to the local community rather than to commercial companies outside the village.

Parents and their families were asked what would be their priorities in a multipurpose centre where the youth club is based. General comments, in bold for multiple responses, included the importance of a new building having **kitchen/catering facilities, good toilets**, being centrally located, secure and well lit, and well equipped. Outdoor space and flexible space were pinpointed as desirable elements of a new building. Parents also mentioned a chill out zone.

Several parents mentioned the need for a meeting place for children at secondary school to be able to meet with friends when they come home from secondary school or to meet up with friends at weekends, for example on a Saturday afternoon. Other parents wanted more sessions for younger and primary school children. Several parents emphasised the need to include all age groups from little ones to teens. Parents expressed a need for sessions to take place during school holidays. Several parents expressed the potential for the new building to be used as a party venue.

Again there was an emphasis on physical activity – activity to get kids moving. There was a demand for a swimming pool and a multi- use indoor sports hall. The physical activities that were mentioned, in bold for multiple responses, were: **dancing, martial arts, indoor sports, basketball court, pool table**, athletic club, running club, jogging club, skipping club, fencing and a climbing wall.

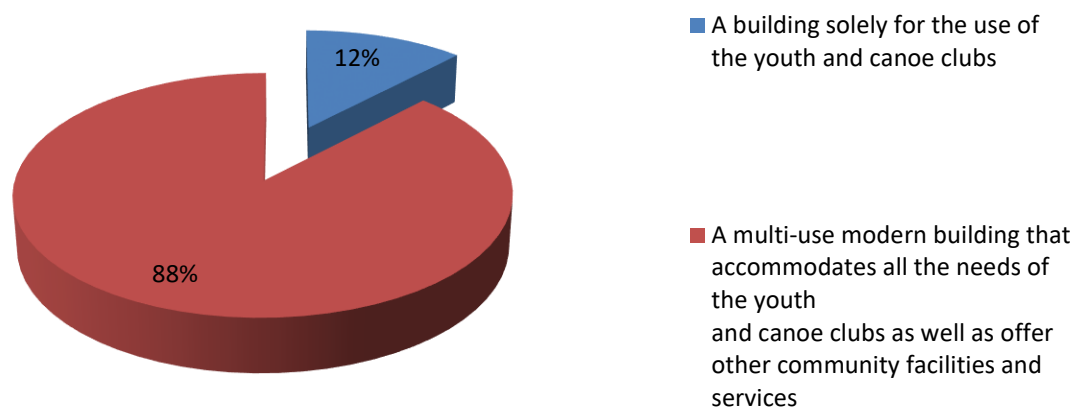
Other activities which were popular were arts and crafts activities. Parents also mentioned uniformed groups, a drama club, after school clubs, and science and engineering sessions. Activities which would build confidence, respect and discipline were referenced.

Parents’ aspirations include an activity programme for children and young people, supervised activities, a community cafe, and a safe bicycle route.

In the first version of the residents' survey when asked about what they would like to see as part of the new facilities at the proposed multi- purpose centre responses included continued feedback on the importance of physical activity. A significant proportion of the 60 respondents did want a swimming pool or indoor sports centre. The sports that were identified as being most popular were: **badminton**, and **table tennis**. Other physical activities that were referenced were (in bold for multiple response) Archery, **Astroturf multi use pitch**, baseball, basket ball, BMX track, **mini bowling**, canoeing, climbing, indoor football, **a gym** , netball courts, pool, rugby, skate park on the village side of the river, skittles, snooker and 4G surface.

In the second version survey for residents, they were asked about whether they would like the building to be solely used by young people and the canoe club versus a multi use modern building that accommodates the young people, canoe club as well as other community facilities. 88% of the 33 respondents said they would prefer the latter.

### What would you like to see the youth centre replaced with



One of the significant responses which was also echoed at the Ideas Factory, was for the Centre to include a community cafe and for a new building to encompass a community hub where groups can meet informally, which would also provide a drop in facility.

There was quite a lot of feedback about there being no need for another multi- purpose building as the village is already well supplied with multi- purpose buildings. Respondents emphasised how the building could be used to provide better facilities for young people, particularly teenagers, and be a place for them to hang out and play games. Reciprocal meetings with visiting youth groups was suggested, as was



a skills workshop where older people mix with younger people and both pass on skills. Several people suggested the venue being suitable for parties/sleepovers. One respondent referred to groups and events that might help young people with mental health problems – somewhere safe and comfortable for people to meet and share.

Other responses that were suggested included a book club, cinema, computers, discos, entertainment, Men's Shed group, Rainbows and U3A.

Disability access was raised as an issue. One survey respondent commented

*“Full accessibility and also a fully accessible changing places/bathroom for disabled people who deserve the same access to the centre as others and shouldn't need to go home to use appropriate toileting facilities. I think it would be good to have a couple of small rooms for 1:1 mentoring for young people and a sensory room for disabled children, young people and adults would be fantastic. The park is not good for disabled people so to have something designed for that purpose would be wonderful”.*

Some concern was expressed about a rebuild meaning increased costs for young people to access activities. One survey respondent commented

*“affordable space... that the Youth Club remains low cost and therefore accessible to all kids who may or may not be able to afford other often sports based clubs”.*

Feedback from the stakeholder survey also favoured the Centre remaining as a Youth Centre with flexible space for small room hire, a hall for activities and an outdoor all weather pitch and storage space.

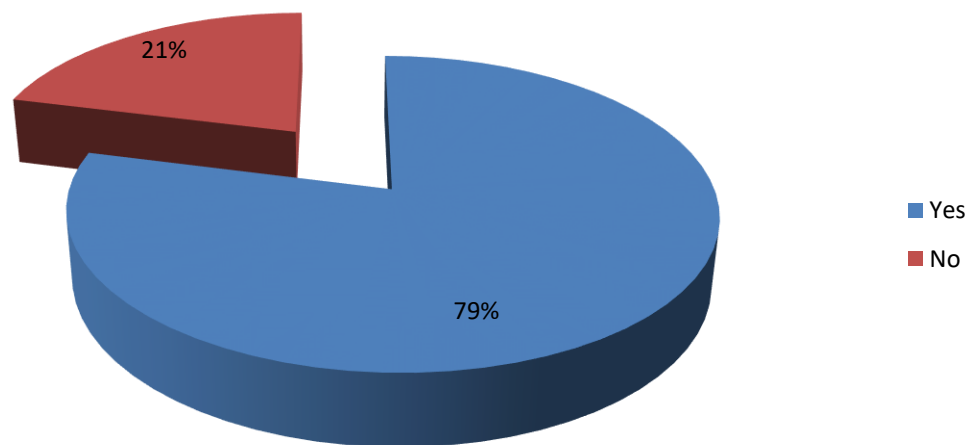
Ideas Factory feedback included the importance of increasing footfall, increased links with the outside area, developing the teenage offer, expanding support sessions including the provision of 1:1 space and offering an open door facility. Dedicated staffing was recognised as a necessity, with a double storey building offering more opportunity for the development of activities. There was also a request to look at other building options which could be more central and help attract more young people. The British Legion building and potential space available at the newly developed Catholic building and nursery were also mentioned as options to be considered.

There was some concern articulated that a new community building could have an impact on the Crawford Hall rental. Other community organisations were unable to say how a new community building would help them extend their activities/services.

## Role of the Youth and Community leader

The BPC discussion document proposes a Youth and Community Leader, who would extend the services of the Youth Centre and facilitate the engagement of young people in as wide a range of activities as possible. The residents' survey version 2 shows support for this- when asked if they thought a Youth and Community Worker would enhance the opportunities offered by the parish, 79% agreed.

### Do think a paid Youth and Community Worker will enhance the opportunities offered by the parish



Interviewees understand the time consuming nature of engagement and realise that a dedicated person is needed to develop Youth Centre services. There is no additional volunteer capacity. They also thought that a Youth and Community Leader could help community organisations with some of their challenges:

- Volunteer recruitment, retention and recognition
- Strengthen links between organisations
- Promote Bidford clubs/activities
- Support community events and help to coordinate community resources, for example, urns for tea making and help with event planning requirements such as risk assessments
- Be a conduit with the primary school to build connections with the school and avoid the situation of many organisations approaching the school separately
- Have a liaison role with the library
- Extend the community offer at the Fire Station

As one interviewee said

*“A Youth and Community leader would be hugely useful. Time and availability is the challenge for volunteers who work. To have someone who is dedicated to engagement. As volunteers we are very stretched”.*

Some concern was raised at the sustainability of the post, how to generate the revenue for the cost of an engagement worker, salary scales matching similar roles, whether a post would duplicate current provision and whether volunteers who had been doing similar work would feel offended by the creation of a new paid role. The engagement workers at ‘The Barn’ are focused on church based activities and the WCC Community Development worker does not have Bidford as one of her priority geographical areas.

## Ideas

During the course of the consultation a multitude of ideas have been suggested; some ideas that were concepts at the beginning of the consultation have already become reality, such as the Lego Clinic at the library. Below, ideas that have been suggested through surveys and interviews have been segmented into themes.

### Young People

- Running a young drivers' package which encourages young people to drive safely
- Involving youth focused organisations in a newly developed Youth Centre – music, arts, dancing, rock band and uniformed groups
- Community projects for young people with a team leader/mentor
- Greater engagement and involvement of young people in Bidford's community events
- Shared learning from other organisations about what works well with engaging young people
- Information section for young people on Bidford Health Centre's website – the Health Centre could be used as a point of reference for engagement with young people
- Carnegie shadowing (community library)
- Strengthening links with secondary schools
- Suggest one night per week/month for sports/activity groups to donate space to young people
- Youth Ambassadors to promote youth activities
- A Duke of Edinburgh scheme could be run from the Fire Station
- More detached work to reach and engage with young people who are hanging about in Bidford

### Youth Centre

- Involve businesses in the redevelopment of the Youth Centre (sponsorship and ongoing support)
- Look at other models for example Wallace House in Evesham where young people have played a significant role in fundraising for the development of the Youth Centre

### Communication

- Coordinating and pooling resources around marketing and promotion
- Using social media which will reach young people

- Using social media (Instagram and Snapchat) for young people to publicise youth activities
- Update Directory of organisations/activities
- Use of Mailchimp to publicise groups/activities
- Groups to promote themselves on Google my business
- Make links between external services for children and for young people
- Improved links between the various communication mechanisms
- Share stories about who accesses community activities
- Events calendar
- Links needed between social media sites- befriending each others' websites
- Central place for promotion

## Community

- Community open day/annual event
- More regular open days at the Fire Station
- Community cafe for young people and also for the wider community
- Recruiting volunteers via social media
- Community orchard and allotment
- Increase usage of community room at the Fire Station
- Volunteer community liaison officer

## Inclusion

- Increase access for disabled people
- Beat Loneliness project – for anyone who is lonely to come to a group for tea/coffee and meet with other for a chat – to play board games/cards
- More opportunities for different age groups to meet
- PHAB or Gateway Club
- Specialist support for older people (former Age UK bus)
- Accessible routes- wheelchair issues
- Transport – community provision bus to reduce costs

## Physical activity

- Regenerating the old railway line to link Bidford/Broom as a cycle/walk way/
- Cycle route/multi use track
- Parkour (indoor facility)
- Football pitch in village
- Pedestrian bridge to Big Meadow
- Free tasters for young people and other members of the community
- Making more use of the Big Meadow as an asset and space the community has in common

## Ideas Factory feedback

At the Ideas Factory, the four discussion groups were asked to identify three key ideas that they wanted to take forward; these are detailed below:

- Opportunities for cohesion between groups – with a role for the Fire Station
- Isolation and loneliness- including access to activities and transport issues- widening the Neighbourhood Watch remit was suggested
- Keeping dedicated youth provision with young people continuing to lead on the vision. The importance of young leaders was emphasised
- The vision for the Youth Centre is led by young people and they have more information about feasibility/budgets to enable them to understand the scope of a re-build and also whether there are any other building options to consider beyond the current Youth Centre
- Lack of ownership of young people of community facilities and addressing the situation of young people going out of the village for secondary school
- Young people's evenings at existing sports and social groups to expand access and break down barriers
- Increased access to outdoor activities a pedestrian bridge for the Big Meadow and community involvement in allotments
- Improved communication between groups and around the communication of what's going on in Bidford
- More coordinated information for an events calendar
- Improved use of social media including organisations befriending each other social media platforms. Greater coordination between the different communication forums
- Mailchimp was suggested as a mechanism for what's going on across the whole of the Parish with up to date information
- The need for a coordinating role for information and connectivity
- A centralised community hub for the whole parish

Pledges were made by individuals around improved communication particularly social media, increasing awareness of what's going on in Bidford, volunteering, potential to make more use of the community space at Bidford Fire Station, increased partnership working, visiting other community groups, skill sharing, and community orchard.

## Priorities

The data collected from interviews, surveys and the Ideas Factory shows the aspiration for a rebuild of the Youth Centre and for a Youth and Community Leader to develop youth services and have a wider engagement role. The data collected provides detailed information, from a variety of perspectives, about residents' vision for the Youth Centre and practical ideas about the role of a dedicated engagement lead. Feedback strongly suggests that the views from young people continue to inform decision making on the Youth Centre. Next steps are to look at feasibility and funding for a new build and the new role.

Responses from the consultation identified gaps in community provision for young people, particularly teenagers. A new Youth Centre will help to address this gap. Not all young people will want to attend a Youth Centre; a Youth and Engagement Leader will be able to identify other suitable activities for young people and help to integrate young people into existing activities.

Another clear priority was a desire across all age groups for increased access to physical and outdoor activity, with many ideas for activities being promulgated. BPC could

- Investigate which of the activities that parents go out of the village for – could be replicated in the village
- Investigate the feasibility of providing any of the most popular physical activities within a new build or in existing community buildings
- Consider more activities for young people which utilise the Big Meadow such as forest school skills sessions and social events

There have been some strong themes which have come through the consultation: communication, sense of community and access and inclusion. Some suggested actions relating to residents' and organisations' feedback are detailed below.

## Communication

Whilst there are a range of communication mechanisms in use, a lack of communication is still considered to be a major barrier to accessing activities

- Update the Community Directory
- Greater coordination of information about what's going on in Bidford on a weekly/monthly basis
- Continuing to use a variety of communication mechanisms and driving information to the places which people most commonly use
- Improved linkage between organisations' social media platforms
- Greater use of social media used by young people to promote activities and to encourage young people to publicise youth activities

## Sense of community

A concern about the changing nature of the community has been expressed across all age groups and observations made about the lack of opportunity to mix with different age groups or with people from different parts of the community. There are examples of where this is working well such as the Bidford Area Community Choir.

- Key organisations such as the Fire Station and Community Library are both interested in increased community engagement and intergenerational projects. As organisations that work with all sections of the community and have community spaces, they may have a pivotal role in bringing different sections of the community together
- Greater integration of young people into existing activities. There was a suggestion for young people's evenings at existing sports and social group to expand access and break down barriers
- Community events which are extremely well attended and communal spaces like the Big Meadow may provide greater potential than is currently being realised, as a means of bringing people together
- A Community Cafe, suitable for all age groups, where groups and individuals have an informal space to meet is a popular proposition

## Access and inclusion

There are people who find it difficult to access activities due to lack of time, disability, mobility, transport or income.

- Options for people to have tasters and irregular attendance are all valued by people who lack time. Membership is seen as a barrier.
- Loneliness has been identified as an issue - with a suggestion that Neighbourhood Watch are ideally placed to identify people who are isolated and help connect them to suitable activities
- Options for community transport for access to activities could be explored further
- The safety of young people has been raised as a barrier to them accessing the skate park on the Big Meadow
- Disability access needs to be a priority in the development of buildings and activities
- Low cost options at the Youth Centre and for other activities encourage more people to attend

*Thanks go to all participants in the consultation who have shared a wealth of knowledge and ideas, in order to help enhance community facilities in Bidford.*

Jane Holdsworth and Tracy Southam February 2019