

Corpusty

&

Saxthorpe

Community Plan

**THE CORPUSTY AND SAXTHORPE
COMMUNITY PLAN**

FEBRUARY 2012

Corpusty & Saxthorpe

Community Plan

Questionnaire



**IF WE DO NOTHING ABOUT PLANNING OUR FUTURE,
THE OUTSIDE WORLD WILL COME TO THE VILLAGE
AND MAY “DEVELOP” IT IN WAYS WE DO NOT LIKE OR
WANT.**

**Why should Corpusty & Saxthorpe have a plan?
Is it just something a group of people in the village decided to do?**

**If we don’t make a plan, others from outside the community will
make their own plans and these will affect us whether we like it or
not.**

The village, through the Parish Council, decided to make this plan.

So, it is better to be a few steps ahead and make our own plan.

That is what this is – OUR plan.

Some say: “I don’t like change, best to leave well alone!”

ONE THING IS CERTAIN, THINGS WILL CHANGE.

THIS PLAN REPORTS WHAT PEOPLE SAID THEY WANT

**IT SUGGESTS SOME WAYS TO GO ABOUT MAKING SURE THE
COMMUNITY TAKES CHARGE OF ITS OWN FUTURE IN WAYS
THAT IT WANTS.**

**IN MEMORY OF ROGER ASKHAM WHO CONTRIBUTED A GREAT
DEAL TO THIS PLAN**

THE SURVEY RESULTS

Response rate

The main source of information for this report is a village survey. In addition to the village survey, we also consulted with a range of local groups and institutions as well as obtaining ideas from younger people and from the children in the school.

The main survey took place over three weeks in July/August 2010. Every household in the village received a questionnaire. There are 308 households. Of these ten are known to be holiday lets. Therefore we could have expected returned questionnaires from 298 households.

We received 176 questionnaires of which 166 were usable – the others were largely left blank and therefore did not contain any information that could be processed. Thus, the effective return rate – if we exclude the holiday lets – is $176/298 = 59.06$ per cent. This is a good rate of return for such a survey. We do not know how the remaining 41 per cent of households would have responded but have to assume that the information we do have is representative of the community as a whole.

Bias and representativeness

It is of course entirely possible that the non-responding 41% are entirely different from the responding 59 per cent. It is possible that some of the following were *over-represented* among those who did not respond: households where all were very old people; households where people were prevented from responding through disability; households where people were not comfortable with a long and complicated document; households where people take the attitude “there’s no point in doing this, nothing can ever be changed”; younger households where work and child care do not allow people time to sit down and fill in a survey questionnaire.

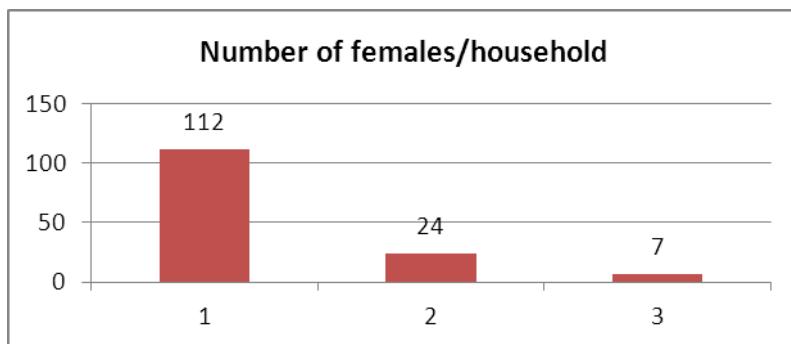
While the possibility that these were the non-respondent should *colour* your reading of what follows it is not a reason to dismiss the findings as in any way invalid. The way we conducted the survey was as rigorous as was possible within the resources we had available to us.

Population structure: how many men and how many women and how old are we?

Respondent households with at least 1 female = 143

Total number of females = 181

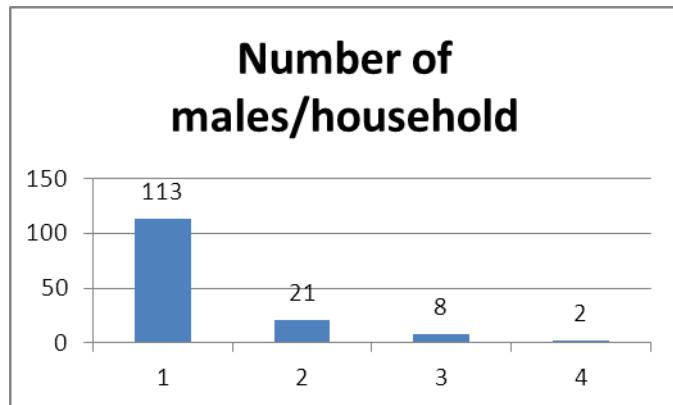
Mean number of females/household = 1.3



Respondent households with at least 1 male = 144

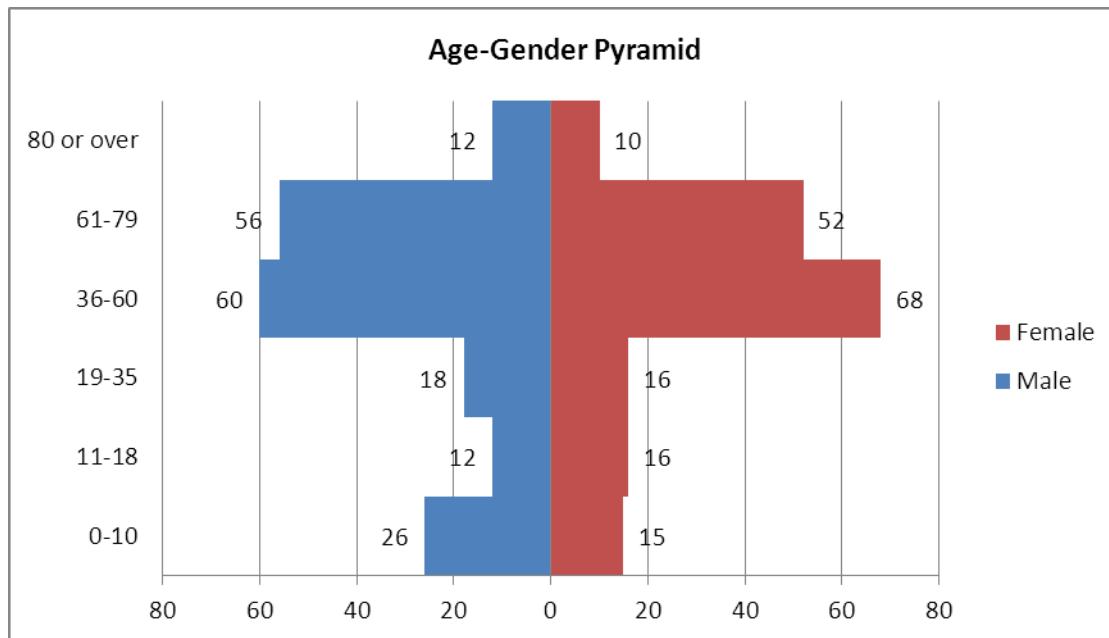
Total number of males = 187

Mean number of males per household = 1.3



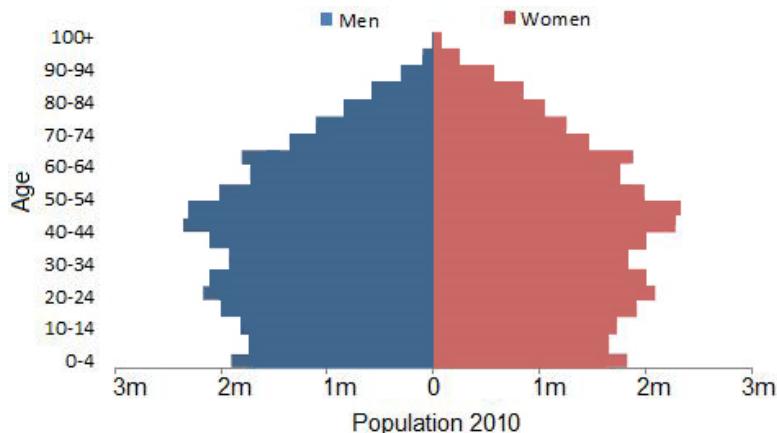
So, we can see that in the survey, there are more males than females in the village, a ratio of 187:181 = 50.8 per cent men and 49.2 per cent women. This is very slightly atypical of the population of the UK where there are usually more women than men.

We can also see that with regard to the age and sex structure of the village, *the population is ageing*. The left hand vertical axis shows age groups and the bottom horizontal axis shows the numbers of people in each age group:



Because of the way the question about age was asked, the results slightly overestimate the older age groups. But in general the information is good enough for us to see that the community's population structure is unbalanced. This information could be important for community planning purposes. For example, there are rather few people in the 19-35 age group and relatively few children – and of these there are markedly more boys than girls.

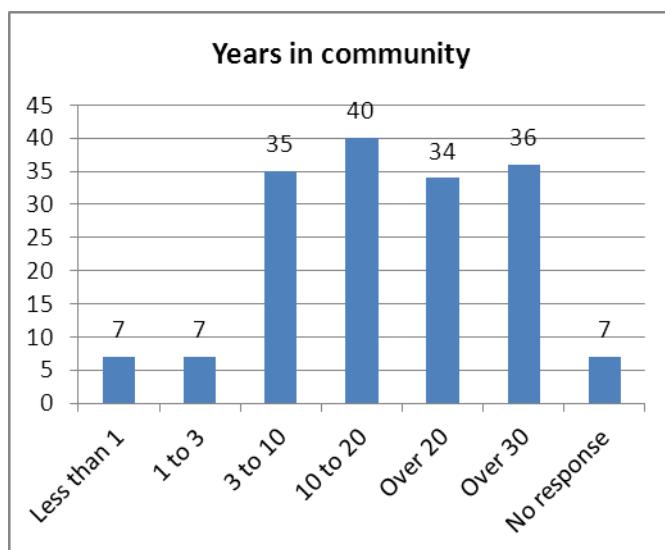
To get an idea of just how unbalanced is the population structure, we can look at the age/sex structure of Corpusty & Saxthorpe in comparison with that of the UK as a whole in 2010 which is the next diagram.



This age/sex pyramid for the UK as a whole shows numbers of people along the bottom and age groups up the left hand side. Compare this with the age/sex structure of Corpusty & Saxthorpe.

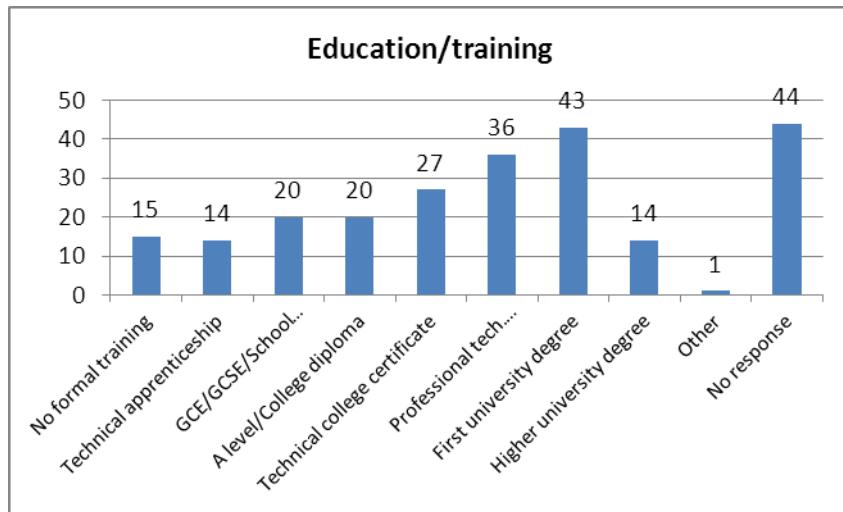
Is it a village of “incomers” or of “long term residents”?

It is interesting to see how long people have lived in the community. We asked: “For how many years has the person in your household who has lived longest in this community been resident here?” and the answer is that the 66.2 per cent of the households have somebody who has lived in Corpusty and Saxthorpe for more than 10 years and 21.6 per cent of households have somebody who has lived here for over 30 years. 29.5 per cent of households have lived in the community for 10 years or less.

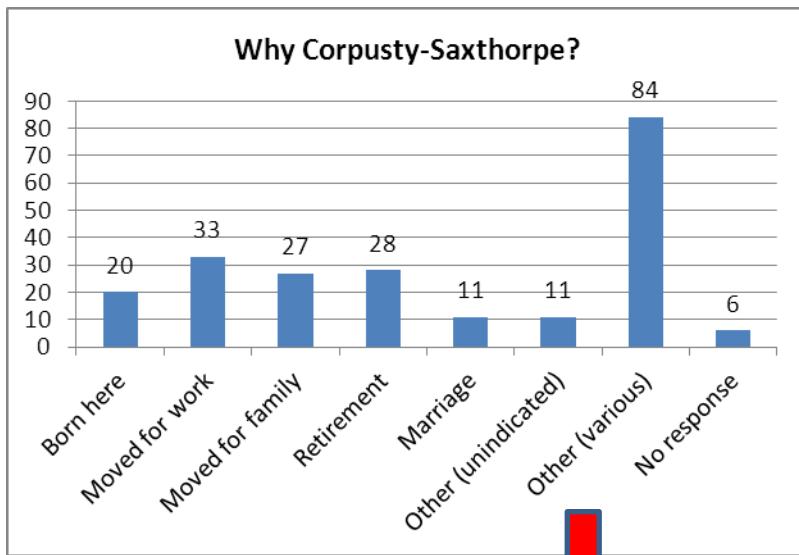


What are our educational backgrounds?

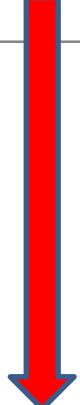
This question was important because it tells us something about the economic base of the village, what skills people have and what this could mean for how the village develops in the future. 26.5 per cent of households did not respond to this question. This non response may suggest that a particular group or groups were reluctant to complete the question and that therefore overall the information we have may *overestimate or underestimate* educational levels in the village population. However, the following table tells us that there is a good spread of education and training in the community, meaning that we have lots of resources and capabilities to take forward the things we may decide to do as part of planning for the future.

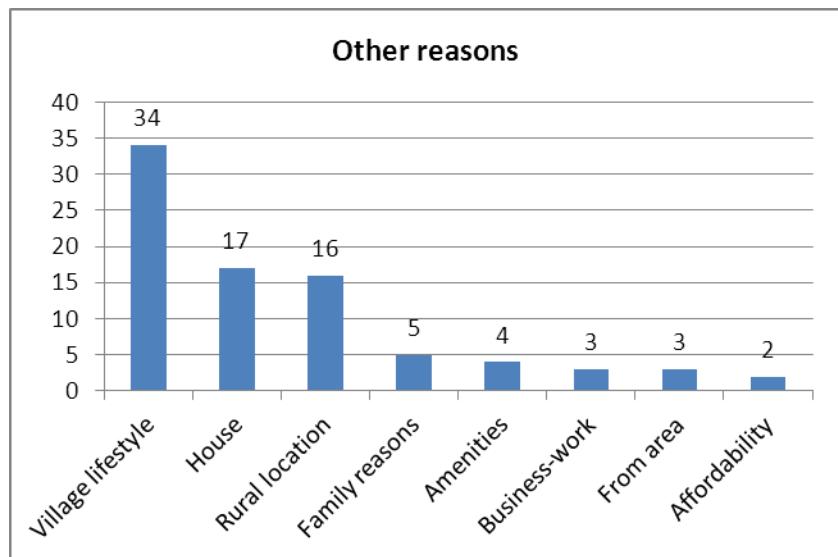


Why did people come to live in Corpusty and Saxthorpe?

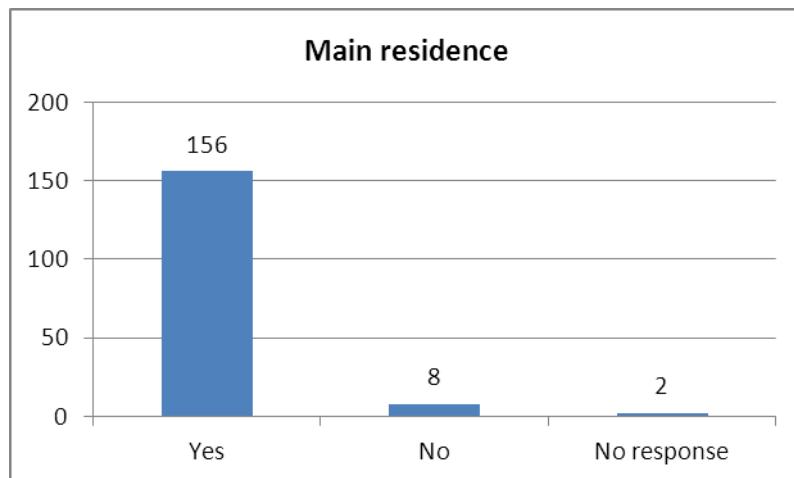


Other reasons for coming to Corpusty and Saxthorpe:





Predictably, but also *from a planning perspective VERY significantly*, 30 per cent of people chose to live in Corpusty & Saxthorpe because of the village life style and the rural location. And most people who live here live in their main residence. Only a small number, 4.8 per cent, of people in the village who responded to the survey are living in a secondary residence. This is rather lower than the percentage of second homes as a percentage of total housing stock in North Norfolk generally which is just over 9 per cent¹.

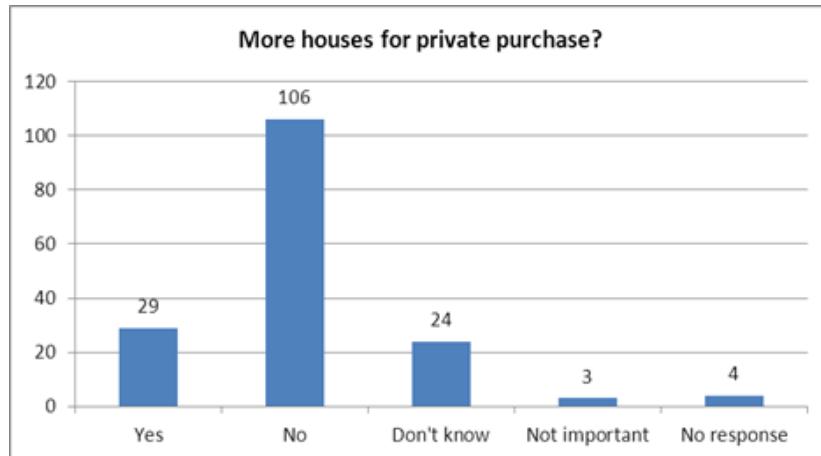


And we are indeed a nation (or in this case, a village) of property owners? In this community, just under 80 per cent of people own their own homes. However, people are very strongly against the construction of any further private homes for sale in the village, as is apparent from the next diagram where almost 68 per cent of households think that we should not build more private houses in the village. This is a significant finding of the study as it is contrary to planning decisions made in 2010 by North Norfolk District Council². Here is an example of where the notion of local people having their views heard and

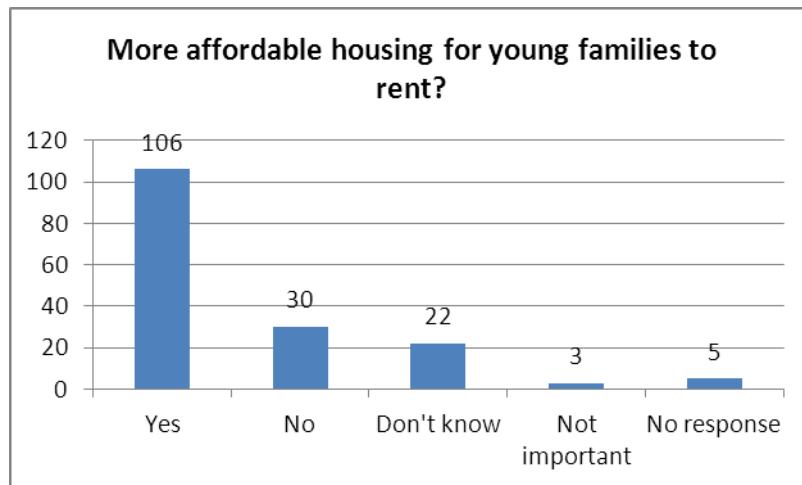
¹ Michael Oxley, Tim Brown, Ros Lishman, Richard Turkington, Rapid Evidence Assessment of the Research Literature on the Purchase and Use of Second Homes, Centre for Comparative Housing Research Leicester Business School, De Montfort University, The Gateway, Leicester, LE1 9BH, 2006.

² http://www.northnorfolk.org/ldf/1272_1283.asp

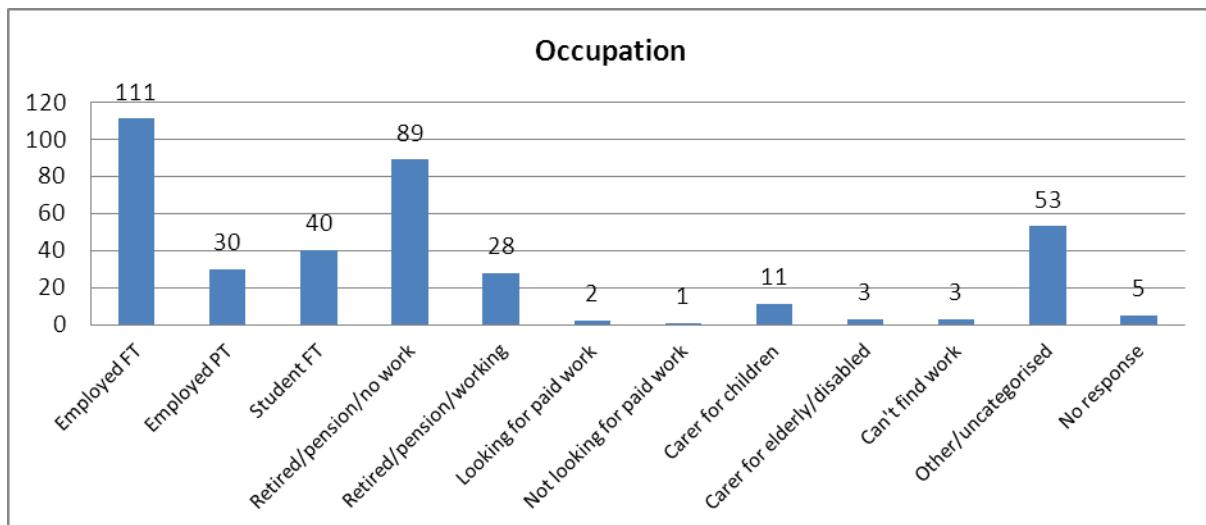
more important attended to is shown to be little more than a “notion”. This continuing local issue has so far not been an example of local people “turning Government on its head”.



The other side of the coin is that people do think that the village needs to have more affordable housing for rent. In fact almost 64 per cent of households say that the village should have more affordable housing available for rent. 78% of households would like sheltered housing for the elderly of the village, so people are thinking about the future needs of an ageing population.



What do people do?



This diagram is interesting because of the 376 people from 166 households for whom we have information, a lot of people (141) are working full or part time, and 117 people are retired. This means that 37.5 per cent of these people are working, 31.1 per cent are retired and we don't know about 14 per cent of the people. However, once again, this information provides evidence that the village is an ageing village.

Of those people who said where they work, almost 32% work at home, in the community or within 5 miles of the village, which shows there are jobs locally. As you might expect, a lot of people - 44% -work in Norwich or more than 10 miles away from the village.

The motor-car is dominant – without it we could not live here

Seventy six per cent of respondents use cars or vans to travel to work, 91% travel to the doctor this way and 90% use their motor to go shopping.

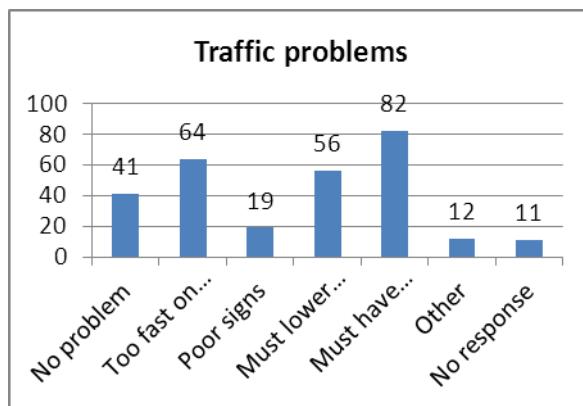
Going to school is different; of the respondents who take children to school 42% walk, 22% go by bike and 20% travel by car. However, the school draws children from a wider area beyond the immediate boundaries of the village.

All secondary pupils have the option to travel by bus but we have no data on how they actually get to school although observation of the number of children waiting for and arriving from the morning and afternoon buses suggests that they are well-used.

Overall, of all journeys by anybody from the village to any destination, 86% are by car. The bus accounts for less than 5% and almost 10% of us walk. 14% of respondents regularly use the bus – 3.5% of workers, 16% of school children, 3.6% who visit the doctor and 3.4% of us who shop. When asked how bus service provision might be improved, 43% of households said they did not use the buses, 31% said they would use them if there were more, 12% wanted more daytime buses and 9% of households wanted more evening/night services to and from Norwich. 36% of households wanted more daytime services to Aylsham and 22% wanted more to Norwich and Holt. 46% of respondent households have 2 cars. Given the heavy dependence on the car, it is surprising that 79% of households had no interest in a car-sharing scheme. A small but significant 8% of households reported they have difficulty in leaving the village but we did not ask people what these difficulties were. They may be elderly and/or infirm and they may be people who depend on others to help them for hospital visits, shopping and other essential journeys.

Traffic and Parking

We depend on the motor car, but of course the motor car can be a problem. A very large majority of households feel that there is a problem with speeding traffic on the B1149 and within the village. While 25 per cent of households do not think there are any traffic problems, the reported traffic problems (household could give more than one answer to this question so this diagram does not add up to 166) revolve largely around the *speed of traffic* on the B1149 and within the village. A very large proportion of households, 65.5 per cent, want to see marked pedestrian areas near the school.



We are definitely on the fence about parking. As many people said there is a problem as those that said there is not. And there was little or no agreement as to where the problems are and the numbers of people who are concerned about parking are relatively small – the largest group was 23 per cent of households who think there is a traffic problem in the Street, but large number of households, 53 per cent, did not respond to this question at all – perhaps because they do not live near the centre of the village.

What Amenities Do We Use and Want?

The village shop/post office is the most used facility followed by recycling bins. When asked what *additional* amenities were needed 56% did not respond and 23% wanted more games and sports facilities or more community events. 39% had no suggestion of ways to pay for extra amenities, 33% thought that we should pay as we use and 21% thought we should apply for grants and awards.

79% of Spar shop users only make small, weekly purchases. 39% of respondents do their main food shopping in Aylsham, 20% go to Holt and fewer to Fakenham and Norwich. Only 4% of households do their main food shopping at Spar in the village and a similar number of households do their main food shopping through the internet – this despite the fact that over 71 per cent of households have access to the internet at home and most find the connection satisfactory.

66% of us regularly use the Post Office, 15.6% regularly use the pub and 6% regularly go to the church. When asked about the relative importance of things – 'very', 'quite' and 'not at all' - 25% of households thought maintaining street lights was very important and 39% thought it was not important. Corpusty and Saxthorpe have more street lights than any other village in Norfolk and they are a major cost to the parish, and thus to us all through the precept we pay. Village meetings identified that light pollution is a live issue in the community.

On other things, 29.5% thought more recycling was “very important” and 16% thought it “not important”, 40% thought more dog bins very important and 14.5% thought these not important; 45% want marked footways near the school, 23% do not; 46% think more facilities for ‘seniors’ are quite important, 19% think not; 32.5% think more pre-school provision to be quite important, 29.5% think not; 28% think out of school childcare quite important, 35% think not; 38% think leisure facilities for teenagers to be very important, 16% think not; 29% think a multi-sports area is very important, 19% think not; and 47% quite want opportunities for adult learning while 15.6% do not. These divisions reflect the differing needs of different kinds of households and point to the need in any community plan to take account of and cater for the differing needs of different types of household, older and younger, those with children and those without. They also give an indication of the possible demand for provision of some services privately - for example child care and adult learning opportunities.

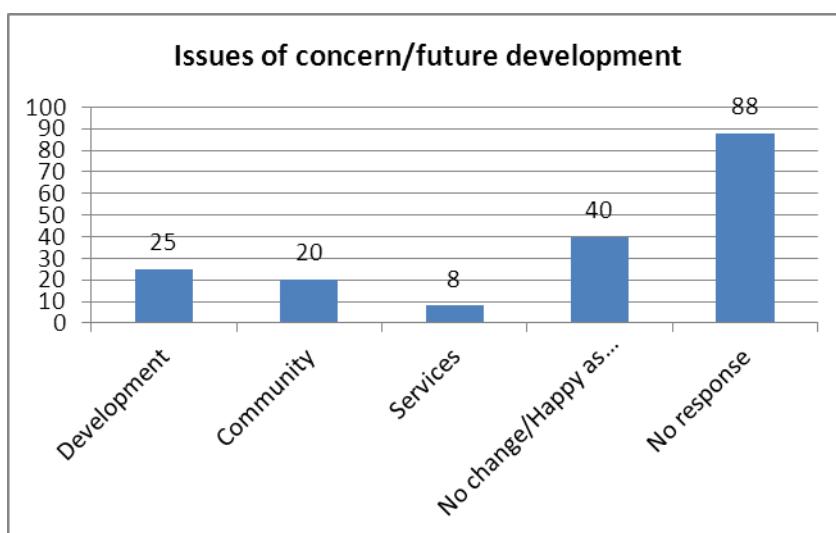
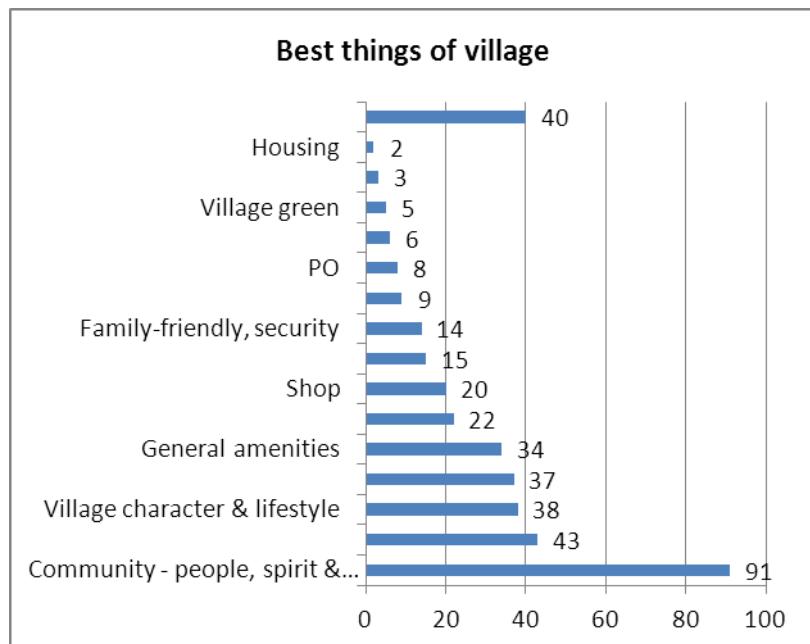
The local environment and being involved

93% of respondents want footpaths kept open and well signed. 55% would like to know more about what local farmers and landowners are doing with the land around the village. 79% would like to buy and use more local products and services, only 6% said no. 56.6% would like a local source of energy.

It is interesting that 52% would not like to be involved in running community amenities and functions while only 14% of households said they would. In this connection, 62% of responding households have never attended a Parish Council meeting while half the households can name some of the council members and therefore know to who they could speak if they want to influence what happens in the community.

Looking to the future and reflecting on the present

Thirty per cent of households came to live in the village because they wanted a rural/village lifestyle. If we add to those the people who name their house as the reason they live in the community, then fully 40 per cent of people appreciate the rural/village lifestyle as something they like and want to keep. Indeed, almost 55 per cent of households think the best thing about the village is the community spirit and local identity. While 53 per cent of responding households did not answer the question about what things they were concerned about in relation to the future development of the village, of those who did respond to the question, 24 per cent said they were happy with things as they are and did not want any change. And to this end, when asked about their hopes for the future, while the large majority of responding households did not answer this question, almost 28 per cent of households wanted to see greater local control over planning and development in the future than is currently the case.



What the survey tells us about the village and the implications for making a community plan

1. The village is ageing
2. As people become older they may have to sell their houses to downsize and/or pay for care
3. Although house prices go up and down in the short term, in the longer term house prices do not fall dramatically. Therefore younger people wanting to stay in the community or move into it will either have to be able to afford the houses being sold by older people or find locally available homes to rent.
4. These basic demographic and market processes are the underlying driving forces within which we will have to plan the near and longer term future.
5. These processes which are internal to the village have to be planned for and dealt with in relation to broader forces – national and regional government policy, the global financial situation, environmental changes.

6. It is certain that change is inevitable and this plan could and should enable us to steer a course between having it imposed upon us from outside and getting the best for all of us who live in this little corner of Norfolk.

PLANNING OUR FUTURE

The Steering Committee concluded that there are five categories under which most responses from the questionnaire and meetings can be gathered:

1. Transport
2. Housing
3. Local economy
4. Environment
5. Community facilities

Almost all the specific concerns raised will be found within these categories.

During September 2011, two widely advertised public meetings took place at the Village Centre. At these meetings people worked in groups, matching the five categories and adhering to the survey results, to develop ideas for thinking about the future of the community.

Each of the working groups took on the responsibility for developing a series of projects, to match community concerns and interests, and tried to arrive at a list divided into short, medium and long term projects – short term being things which we could reasonably hope to achieve within 6 months to a year, medium term being things we could hope to achieve in a year to two years, and long term being projects which were likely to take up to five years or even a little more.

Following are the conclusions of each group's deliberations. Some are more detailed than others; some have a long view and others, necessarily, a shorter view.

This is the most democratic way to distil the findings of the questionnaire into our parish plan. These are our pointers to the future.

The plan will be lodged with the Parish Council who will then know what we are thinking and expecting.

Each household in the community will have a copy of the plan and can know what to expect and what to campaign for if promises are not fulfilled or objectives not realised.

Local time and energy will be needed. If residents are not willing to spend time lobbying and enthusing others, then little will happen.

Your steering committee has facilitated the plan but its members cannot, alone, implement the plan.

The community needs many more of us to volunteer time, expertise and commitment.

If you believe you can offer help under the five categories, or in any other way, please approach the Parish Council.

1. Transport

Project	Short term	Medium term	Long term
Speed Reduction: Briston Road, Heydon Road, Irmingland Road, the bypass and the road through the village.	Paint large circles on the road surface with the speed limit in the centre on all the areas mentioned. Also investigate the possibility of speed limit reductions - PC is already doing the latter. Lobby District and County councillors; consider taking direct action if goal of speed reduction is not completed within our time horizon.	If it is possible reduce the speed limits, then have the bypass limit reduced from 50mph to 40mph and through the village from 30mph to 20 mph; Lobby County Council and Norman Lamb in relation to national government policy to reduce local speed limits.	Change the shape of the road at the north end of the village, between the junction of the Holt and Briston Roads and the Bypass roundabout. Explore the idea of mini roundabouts or maybe a chicane system to reduce the width of the road so as to slow traffic.
Pedestrian areas in the village	Throughout the village paint critical areas with chevrons along the side of the road to designate a pedestrian lane. As this will be on the same level as the road surface it can be used by cars when no pedestrians are there. This would have the effect of highlighting to motorists that they are sharing the space with pedestrian.		
Parking	The group could not make any suggestions for improving parking around the village. The survey shows that people have divided views about this and there is no space that we could take to create more car parking. We would not want to encroach onto the Village Green. It is possible that the cars parked along the road down The Street in Corpusty actually reduce traffic speed. Also if the public transport, car sharing and car pool ideas were to be effective, then traffic might be reduced.		
Car Sharing	When the website comes online it can be used for establishing a car sharing scheme for those who want one.		
Car Pooling	Explore joining the scheme which has been established in Reepham.		
Pedestrian area around the school	This has been taken on by the Parish Council. Put up signs on the road near the Village Green saying: 'Children at Play'.		

2. Housing

Project	Short term	Medium term	Long term
Establish Planning Group	Recruit group to manage this project over the long term.		
Affordable Housing for the Young	<p>Find out what type of schemes could be developed and how they might be funded.</p> <p>Contact Housing Associations and other relevant bodies to find out the administrative and financial options for developing such schemes.</p> <p>Identify existing empty or under-used properties for possible acquisition by local Housing Trust with a view to them being made available to rent.</p> <p>Assemble information, rent levels and publicise on website.</p>		
Sheltered Housing for Older People	<p>Find out what types of schemes could be developed and how they might be funded.</p> <p>Contact Housing Associations and other relevant bodies to find out the administrative and financial options for developing such schemes.</p>		
Explore possibility of establishing a Local Housing endowment fund	<p>Explore experiences of similar local initiatives.</p> <p>Assemble a list of potential donors.</p> <p>Explore modalities for setting up a Local Housing Trust.</p>	<p>Ask local solicitors to ask clients to consider the Local Trust as a potential beneficiary from local wills.</p>	
Oppose development of new housing estates on the Adam's Lane site and encourage reversion to dispersed development of new housing on alternative site in the village	Parish Council to explore re-opening the issue with North Norfolk District Council.		

3. Environment

Project	Short term	Medium term	Long term
Form Local Power Committee	Recruit knowledgeable people who are prepared to be committed and active and charge Parish Council members to take this on.		Consult with Power Companies and local and national Government Agencies. Ensure that Power Companies, District and County Councils confer with the Parish Council re any planned developments.
Community Wind Generation	Collect information and identify possible sites, checking with North Walsham re their experience.	Ascertain community response to the principle and sites. Develop plans, identify funding streams, and identify how scheme payments and sharing would work.	Consult with Power Companies and local and national Government Agencies. Ensure that Power Companies, District and County Councils confer with the Parish Council re any planned developments.
Water/River Power	Discuss with Anglian Water, people with properties adjacent to rivers, explore alternative schemes and possibilities. Check with Itteringham re their experiences.	Ascertain community response to the principle and sites. Develop plans, identify funding streams, and identify how scheme payments and sharing would work.	Consult with Power Companies and local and national Government Agencies. Ensure that Power Companies, District and County Councils confer with the Parish Council re any planned developments.
Solar and other power sources	Explore energy sources such as digesters. Explore PV cells as a whole for the village. Look at the economies of combining roof rental and individual installations and approach an installer to do a village scheme. Review PV cell option in light of revised incentive structure.	Ascertain community response to the principle and sites. Develop plans, identify funding streams, and identify how scheme payments and sharing would work.	Consult with Power Companies and local and national Government Agencies. Ensure that Power Companies, District and County Councils confer with the Parish Council re any planned developments.
Retrofit old properties to be more sustainable	Identify grants/support available for different groups of people e.g. older people, people with low incomes. Identify the types of possible intervention. Publicize availability of grants, etc. on village website and offer advice.	Develop a range of schemes suitable for different types of funding. Ascertain how people might be interested in each different package of measures. Discuss feasibility with local tradesmen and possible suppliers. See if such packages and skills already exist in the village and can be copied/built upon.	Begin to implement retrofitting packages.

4. Community Facilities

Project	Short term	Medium term	Long term
Present Facilities	Events/organisations/facilities which mostly already exist but which could be enhanced or boosted very cheaply and simply.	Events/organisations/facilities, which will take a little more money, effort and time.	Organisations/facilities, which will take a lot more money, effort and time.
Older Residents	Church events Village Hall Committee events (Autumn Fair etc.). LinC. Village Hall Lunches. Litter Pick. Establish management structure and long-term management facilities.	Sunday Club. Outings. All Weather Multi-use Sports Pitch.	
Families	Church Events (Holiday Club, etc.). Bonfire Night Celebrations. Village Hall Committee events (Autumn Fair etc.). Cycle Ride. LinC. Gardening Club. Choir. Litter Pick.	Drama Events. Film Club. Sports Coaching Sessions. LETS scheme (as from Norwich City Football Club).	Skate Park. Formal Sports Club catering for all sports.
Young Residents	Village Hall Committee events (Autumn Fair etc.). Youth Club. Brownies. Cycle Ride. Choir. Litter Pick.	Improvements to Playground. Scouts and Cubs. Sports Coaching Sessions. Cycle Training.	Formal Sports Club catering for all sports

5. Local Economy

Project	Short term	Medium term	Long term
Village Website	Develop website with members of the Parish Council (this is already in hand).	Have a working website within 12 months. Make arrangements for updating, maintenance and advertising.	Ensure regular updating and maintenance.
Make register of known local skills, businesses, etc. to be used for enabling local cooperation and synergies	Identify people to do this and compile initial register.	Register available on website within 12 months.	
Improved broadband – Infinity?	Identify what is available and how much it will cost and how many people want it.	If enough people want it, then move forward process with view to improve service within 12 months. Parish Council to move for political pressure to get this.	
Future Planning	Identify what other communities have done to stimulate local economic activity and employment. Produce a report of ideas.		
Skills Mentoring/adult education in the Village	Identify the present skills already present in the village and the people who would be willing to participate in running sessions for people.		
Help with Homework.	Clarify funding and clearance issues for people wanting to offer help.		
Install wifi and Broadband in Village Hall	Look into all the options, costs and providers. Once one is agreed; have equipment installed.		

HOW AND WHY THIS PLAN CAME INTO EXISTENCE

The origin of Community Plans

Origins: At the National Level

Here is some background about the origins of Community Plans at the national level. You will see that there have been many changes of direction and organisation.

The idea of Community Plans originates from a government agency, the Countryside Agency. This agency developed a programme called Vital Villages in 2001. The idea was that village or community plans could address any social, economic or environmental issues in their area, providing an opportunity for communities to take a holistic view of their locality, local services and the needs and wishes of the community. At that time, the Countryside Agency awarded grants to small rural communities to encourage them to:

- identify and act to meet local needs;
- help meet their needs for local service provisions in ways that suit local circumstances;
- enable small rural communities, and wider partnerships to implement local solutions to meet their local transport needs.

Following a review of several Government organisations involved in rural policy and delivery, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 merged those parts of the Countryside Agency charged with environmental activity with English Nature and parts of the Rural Development Service to form Natural England. The socio-economic functions of the Agency were merged with the Regional Development Agencies. The remaining part of the Countryside Agency, largely research and policy functions, became the Commission for Rural Communities. This was established as a division of the Countryside Agency on 1 April 2005, and became a “non-departmental public body” on 1 October 2006, following the enactment of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. On 29 June 2010 the present government abolished the Commission.

However...all of the above is history and is of little interest other than as background showing that for the last ten years of so, governments of different hues have all been concerned to encourage local communities to take more control over their lives - or at least they have as long as local goals do not conflict with national goals. Today, the best way to understand the community plan idea is to think of it as a way for a community to think collectively about its future and how to act to preserve and take forward local interests.

Inasmuch as what we do locally has to be connected with and is more likely to be successful if it relates to national policy and strategy, we could say that today the community plan is part of the present government's idea of a Big Society. According to Department of Communities and Local Government³, the Big Society is “the Government's vision of a society where individuals and communities have more power and responsibility, and use it to create better neighbourhoods and local services.” In particular local communities are supposed to be central to the “Department's work in housing, planning,

³ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/communities/bigsociety/>

regeneration and local government.” To this end, “the Minister for Decentralisation... set out three actions for the Big Society to flourish:

- the right to know
- the right to challenge and
- turning Government on its head”.

And so, this document should be seen as a part of the process for Saxthorpe and Corpusty to do those things so that the interests of the community can be taken forward. In doing these things, we are clear that a community plan and community action is not and should never be a substitute for services at risk from cuts in public expenditure. It is about harnessing the positive will and energy of local people to lead and deliver on their community's aspirations. These can range from more affordable housing to fighting to secure amenities the local community wants or looking at very local problems such as traffic, road gritting and dog fouling.

Origins: the Role of ACRE:

ACRE stands for ‘Action with Communities in Rural England’. It is a charity mainly funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

They are a Company Limited by Guarantee and a Registered Charity and are the national body of the Rural Community Action Network (RCAN), which provides ‘comprehensive support and advocacy to help rural communities take action for themselves to achieve a vibrant and sustainable future’.

The Norfolk Rural Communities Council is a member of ACRE and they have supported us through our plan building process. They have already supported several hundred Norfolk parishes to produce their own plans.

In July 2010 ACRE issued a ‘policy position paper’ called ‘implementing the Big Society’.

ACRE’s vision is that: ‘rural communities will increasingly take a leading role in ensuring the social, environmental and economic well being of all their residents. They will do this in a way that provides for the present generation and also plans for future needs and future challenges’.

ACRE also say that the ‘Rural Big Society’ is already ‘well developed’, and suggest that ‘new government policies can offer opportunities to strengthen local action within communities by building on what already works well. This can help manage the inevitable reduction in public service expenditure, whilst bolstering the vibrancy and sustainability of rural communities’.

The government’s idea of ‘Big Society’ seems to be centred on proposed changes to the planning laws. These proposals have been widely discussed and are currently vigorously challenged by many including the National Trust and CPRE. The main objection seems to be the perceived increased vulnerability to speculative development encouraged by local authorities that stand to benefit fiscally from approval of the developer’s plans.

Origins: in the local community

The Parish Council is the lowest level of elected representation in the UK’s system of government. In the summer of 2009, the council resolved to follow up on a proposal by Aubrey Poberefsky that it should start to develop a community plan. Norfolk Rural Community Council provided a small grant of £1000

to cover some of the costs of the process. A well-attended public meeting was held in November 2009 and some initial ideas were gathered and discussed and there was community wide support to take the idea further. A steering committee was established from volunteers in the village. This committee was chaired by Aubrey Poberefsky and has overseen the whole planning process over the following two years.

Throughout the period since 2009, updates about the planning process have appeared in the parish newsletter and also on notice boards around the village and in the Spar shop. In all there have been five village public meetings to discuss progress and gather ideas, most recently in September 2011 when groups worked hard over two meetings on developing planning responses to the information collected in the Village Survey in summer 2010.

So, this report is the output of two years' work, a lot of community discussion both at formal meetings and also of course in numerous informal meetings in the street, in people's homes, in the pub, the shop and elsewhere. It is the best account we currently have about what "the village" "wants"; it is the result of a resolution of the village's elected Parish Council; it is now up to us to take it forward and hopefully improve amenities and the environment of our local community.

This plan is not something produced by "them" for "us". It has been produced by "us" for "us".

Things we have already done

Some of the findings from the Village Survey were so clear the Parish Council has already acted upon the finding. Examples of these are:

1. Arrangements for better road gritting in the village in very cold weather; the community now owns its own gritter and has a store of salt and grit. Recent snowy weather showed this was a wise move as roads were gritted from our own resources!
2. Endeavouring to get reduced traffic speed on the B1149 and within the village – meetings with District and County Councillors and police and highway authorities. The Parish Council is now in direct communication with the Chief Constable and the County Council.
3. Representation at the Public Enquiry in relation to the Local Development Framework and alternative sites for new housing in the village.
4. Development of a village website – to increase available information, help people find out what is going on, tell people about local facilities, enable more effective networking for development of local businesses – and whatever else people might want to do through the internet. This will go online in the coming months.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CORPUSTY & SAXTHORPE

Saxthorpe and Corpusty were established long before the Norman Conquest. The mound on which Corpusty Church stands and the ford near the mill may well pre-date the arrival of the Romans. There is no shortage of solid evidence to explain how the two villages have changed and grown over the centuries.

From the twentieth century perhaps the most striking physical feature is the link road constructed in 2001, which took most of the through traffic out of the centre of the village. A century earlier construction of the railway transformed the life of the inhabitants. The building of the embankments and the bridges – using mostly picks, spades and barrows - must have seemed an amazing feat. When the line opened in 1883 it became possible to travel relatively cheaply to Yarmouth and Norwich in one direction and to the Midlands in the other. The railway brought desperately needed employment for local people and the opportunity to look for jobs hundreds of miles away. It closed in 1959.

Then there are the pubs. The Duke was originally owned by Steward and Paterson of Norwich, before being taken over by Watneys. The Castle, now a private house on The Street, Saxthorpe, was where, early

in the twentieth century, the village brass band practised and the Football Club changed before games. The Horseshoes Inn stood at the end of The Street, Corpusty. The inhabitants of Little London did not have to walk that far, because the Wheatsheaf was on their side of the village.



The tangible, physical remains from much earlier in the history of the two villages are also there to see. There has been a

church on the present site in Saxthorpe for a thousand years. Bits of the walls and windows of the eleventh century building were retained as the church was gradually enlarged. When the compilers of the Domesday Book came in 1085 to make their survey for William the Conqueror, they recorded a mill on the river Bure and a local population of largely agricultural workers, most of them called ‘villeins’ or ‘serfs’. Their cottages were probably strung out along the road linking the two villages.

The oval raised site on which Corpusty church now stands is likely to be very ancient. There was originally a smaller, lower church, which was enlarged in height in the 14th century when the windows were inserted.



No archaeological evidence has been found to suggest that there was ever a settlement near the church. There was, however, a track or way, which ran directly from the church to the present village. The church has now been repaired with funding from the Lottery, English Heritage and the Norfolk Churches Trust. It will in future be possible to use this prominent building for community activities.

What these artefacts do not tell us is what life was like for those living in the two villages a hundred, two hundred or nine hundred years ago. That is a matter of conjecture. It would be possible to write scores of different histories. Some might be to do with grinding poverty and exploitation. Others might be pretty and sentimental, as in most television programmes about country life. There would be elements of truth in these different interpretations.

Certainly the two villages were close-knit communities a hundred years ago, with everyone knowing each other and devising their own entertainment. The pictures in Janet Wilson's invaluable and evocative *The Heritage of Corpusty and Saxthorpe* (1991) suggest that much enjoyment was had on special occasions. There was the annual Sports Day and Carnival, which included a procession through the village with elaborately decorated horses, bicycles and prams, and the children in fancy dress. A photograph of about 1880 shows the 'Club Feast', in a marquee and with rows of men sitting at long trestle tables. The Club met once a month in the Duke's Head and provided help to members in times of need. The subscription to join was 5 shillings, with a weekly contribution of 3 shillings and 6 pence. The Club would pay for a doctor to visit a member and would ensure a decent funeral. Perhaps there is an echo of the Club in the monthly subscription lottery among parents with children at the school.



The Corpusty and Saxthorpe Brass Band had their own uniforms and instruments, performing in competitions as far away as Cambridge. There was Maypole dancing on the village green and a May Queen. The annual bonfire to mark Guy Fawke night was revived in about 1890 and continues and flourishes.

What is not recorded in photographs is the poverty of most of the villagers and the experience of extreme hardship. Saxthorpe and Corpusty were extremely poor villages, even by the standards of rural Norfolk. Part of the reason for this is that they were not typical estate villages. They seem to have attracted families who had not found employment on the bordering estates of Blickling, Mannington, Wolterton and Barningham. The Heydon estate owned a few of the houses in the village and most of the farms were tenanted. As a result, the men of Saxthorpe and Corpusty had to find work where they could, accepting wages that during the long agricultural depressions were as likely to fall as to rise. At times there was no work at all.

The two villages were extremely vulnerable to the economic consequences of steadily declining wheat prices, from the 1870s until the First World War. During the second half of the nineteenth century most of the large Norfolk estates experienced a fall in the value of their rents. Taxation increased, with death duties introduced on agricultural land in 1894, until by 1946 they had reached a level of 75% of total land value. There was a brief recovery in agricultural incomes during the First World War because wheat imports declined, but then the depression returned with a vengeance in the 1920s and 30s. Between the Wars many owners of estates found that it was impossible to let their farms to local people. Sometimes the land went to families like the Mitchells, who came down from Scotland and had the energy and resourcefulness to make the farms pay.

As common land around the villages was gradually enclosed it became more and more difficult for the poorer families to feed themselves. In 1923 the Farm Workers Union called a strike, because wages had been cut from 40 shillings a week, to 30 shillings and then to 25 shillings for a 50 hour week. Almost all the agricultural workers in Saxthorpe and Corpusty stopped work. At least one local farmer threatened his workers with a shotgun when they marched on his property.

When Jack Last took over the mill in 1948, the foreman of the threshing gang, Jack Bush, told him that between the wars he had been asked by the men working under him to request an extra 3 pence a week in wages. As a result he was immediately sacked. Families such as his had to eat sparrow pie in times of particular hardship.

The harshness of life in the villages may explain why so many men went off to fight early in the First War. Earning the ‘King’s Shilling’ must have seemed a family duty to some of those who enlisted. As one recruit from Corpusty remarked, ‘I couldn’t imagine that anything was worse than working on the land here’. But he was wrong. He survived Passchendaele, returned to Corpusty and never left the village again. The thirty-eight men listed on the memorial in the church did not return, an appalling tragedy in a community of less than six hundred. The sole officer listed is Maurice Walker, the only son of the Rector, which is some indication of the social composition of the villages.

The employment provided by local businesses was vitally important to several families. An iron foundry and engineering works was set up in 1800 by Thomas Hase and continued trading until the 1960s. In its heyday it employed as many as twenty men. The Mineral Water Factory on the Street, Corpusty, was run by the Pinchen family, and employed around fifteen men and women. It was started in 1864 and closed in 1962. James Pinchen was also a warden of Corpusty church.

Because the village was not controlled by one of the large estates, its population could grow steadily throughout the twentieth century, local people helping each other to build houses for those with young families. Both Corpusty and Saxthorpe seem to have been independent-minded, which may be part of the reason why Nonconformity was so strong in the villages. Permission for a meeting house for Protestant Dissenters in Saxthorpe was first granted in 1754. The Methodist Chapel on the Norwich Road was built in 1859, enlarged in 1911 and celebrated its centenary with a tea party in the garden.

A reading room was set up in the 1890s by the Rev’d J.D.Walker. Books were available from the lending library, which was housed in the Rectory. There were instances of girls in the village achieving a place at Fakenham Grammar School, but not being able to take it up because their parents could not afford the uniform.

The second half of the twentieth century saw a steady increase in the relative prosperity of most of those living in the village. The population continues to grow, and the village has retained its school, shop and pub. Its wildlife has been surveyed and recorded since 1971, showing that otters are once again securely established in the river Bure and there are over one hundred sites where Harvest Mice, until recently a declining species, are now breeding.

Perhaps the earlier hardships of so many of the inhabitants of the twin villages have encouraged a sense of mutual dependence and community spirit that continues to serve the village well.

Merlin Waterson

THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

I have recorded and surveyed the flora and fauna in and around Corpusty and Saxthorpe since 1971. I have also maintained a yearly diary in which I have kept extensive notes.

The countryside around the villages is undulating and is intensively farmed but at the same time it has a wide variety of wildlife habitats. The River Bure winds its way through the villages, which sit in the wide river valley it has carved out over the millennia, hence the sandy soils. The river course is bordered by alder carrs, overgrown meadows and good grazing meadows. The river varies in composition and depth along its course. Many of the bends have



in the past been cut through to increase the rate of flow along the main watercourse and to reduce flooding. Many of these bends are now damp sites that over time have become alder carrs. Eight other watercourses flow in to the Bure creating a good network of waterways around the villages. Kingfishers may be seen in this area and there is evidence of otters and mink under the bridges and elsewhere. While you may catch sight of water vole, the moorhen population has declined in recent years.

The Bure is bordered by a variety of meadows some of which are grazed by cattle and some by horses, and their differing grazing habits provide different environments for plants and invertebrates. These meadows are sometimes drained by ditches in which a frog population seems to survive.



Many of the overgrown meadows, last used 90 years ago, near the Briston road and towards Edgefield, are now bog, alder carr, reed and fen and support colonies of the rare Alternate Leaved Golden Saxifrage. A recent avian newcomer to this area and indeed to the UK is the Little Egret.

Verges vary from upright shady banks to extensive verges widened during World War II to allow access to a local aerodrome at Matlaske and more recently for road improvements – for example along the B1149. The Matlaske road nature reserve (Roadside Nature Reserve number RNR63 – just before Mossimere turnoff) has Long Stalked Cranesbill (*Geranium Columbinum*) and the one near Corpusty Church (RNR 46) has the Sheepsbit (*Jasione montana*) –



both of these plants have been present since the initial survey in 1971. On one sandy bank near Adams Lane and also on the Haydon road there are extensive patches of the liverwort, *Reboulia Hemisphaerica* and this is now more widespread.

Many arable fields are cultivated in the autumn for winter cereals but some fields are left to stubble for spring sown cereals, potatoes and sugar beet. Many farmers are now in government schemes and leave a six metre grass strip around the edge of the field for conservation purposes. This helps the English partridge and also some rare arable weeds, which can be found between the furrows and the grass strip. Many cover crops are put in for pheasants. These cover crops usually consist of a mix of sunflower, millet and maize. Such areas attract flocks of small birds during the autumn and winter. Maize is also grown as a silage crop and many stubble fields are under-sown with stubble turnip – a welcome later feed for flocks of sheep.

Although some have been removed over the last 50 years, there remains a network of hedges. Some of these date back to the period of Enclosure when common land was taken into private ownership. I have checked over a hundred of these hedges but they seem to contain very few species of trees and bushes as hedges from the Enclosure period tend to be more uniform.

No large areas of heathland remain but isolated patches of ling and bell heather can be found – mainly along the old railway track. Since the railway closed in the 1960s, some of the track and embankment have been incorporated into adjoining farmland. The remaining cuttings and embankments and associated plants – for example gorse – and many trees provide a secluded area for wildlife.

In the past there were sand and gravel excavations mainly used for road surfacing. The many small pits, which were hand dug over eighty years ago, have now been filled and levelled. The largest of these pits, which was last used in the 1950s, still exists today and is on the Heydon Road used by the rifle club. Here the perimeter hedge has a very good covering of trees and shrubs and because the flora has changed little over the years it is a good place for butterflies. The Old Lime Kiln on the Norwich Road was last used in 1958 and has two very large ponds and two smaller ones. This was an original site for the Great Crested Newt – which is also to be found at some other sites in the area. A number of other ponds exist in the area but despite this the toad population has decreased in recent years.



There are three mixed woodland areas and these are mainly on sandy soil. Mixed deciduous planting and a few replacement conifers have replaced areas replanted with conifers in the 1940s. Damage to crops by the large local deer (Red, Roe, Muntjac and Chinese Water) population is a problem.

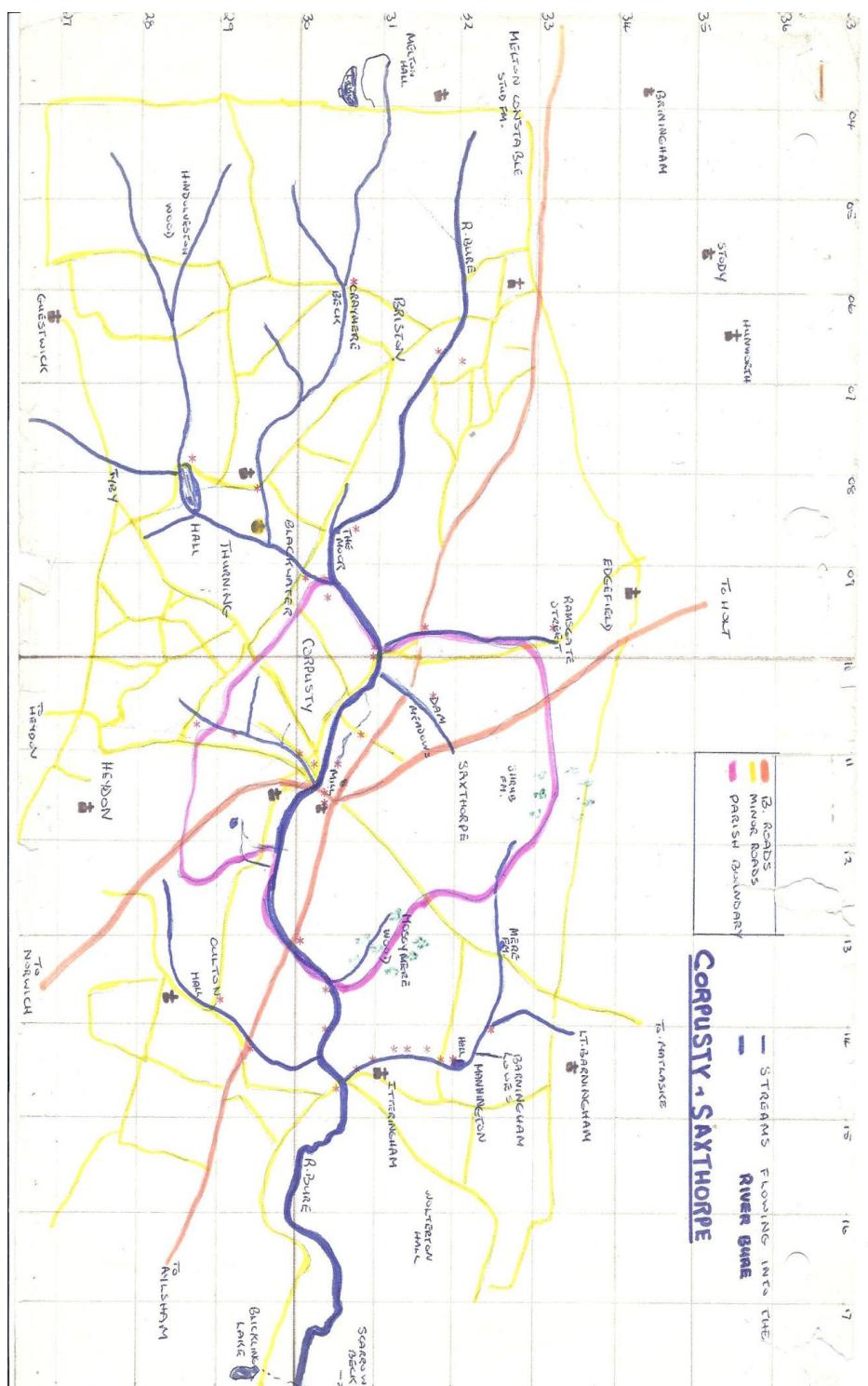
The two churchyards have a wide variety of plants and a lot of butterflies are to be seen.

The B1149 bypass was completed in 2001 and although the area along its routes does not have abundant wildflowers, there are lots of hedgerows, copses, grass verges and the drainage lagoon. Harvest mice have been found at a number of places and the whole area is a good site for butterflies.

With the large number of gardens there are lots of butterflies and these together with the farmed and wild land near the village means that there are lots of birds, moths, butterflies, dragonflies, hedgehogs, hares, toads, woodlice, snails and other minibeasts plus the not so welcome moles, rabbits and of course ... rats!

Anne Brewster

The Watershed of the River Bure around Corpusty & Saxthorpe, Anne Brewster



THANKS

This report is the work of many people in the villages of Corpusty and Saxthorpe and they have given their efforts over a period of more than two years. First of all, the Parish Council had the foresight to visualise and commission the work. Second Norfolk Rural Community Council provided funds, which paid part of the costs, and we are very grateful for advice and assistance to Peter Smith and Janice Howell.

The Steering Committee benefited from the active participation of its Chairman, Aubrey Poberefsky who brought his years of skill and experience as a County and District Councillor to the project, as well as having the idea for a plan in the first place. The other members of the committee worked hard and provided advice, ideas and skills. They are: the late Roger Askham, Tony Barnett, Jo Boxall, Noel Elms, Jacquie Salter, Robert Smith and (before he left the village to live in Norwich), Ethan Stewart.

The survey was a major undertaking and could not have been done without some hard work and time consuming input as questionnaire distributors and/or data coders from: Robert Smith, Kirsty Cotgrove, Shirley Pigeon, Aubrey Poberefsky, Rafael Barnett-Knights, Noel Elms, Chris Powell, Mike Powell, John Sanderson, Peter Johnson, Cameron Sinclair. And a special thank you to Peter and Val Johnson at the Spar shop who let us use their notice board and gave us space for various boxes in which people could put their survey forms or other bits of information. Particular thank you to Luis Sfeir-Younis who did the main data analysis, and to some others at the London School of Economics, particularly Azusa Sato.

In addition to all of the people named above, the numerous members of the community who came to the various public meetings and shared their ideas and feelings also made a difference and a contribution.



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Imagery Date: 6/12/2009

52°49'36.71"N 1°08'04.39"E elev 34 m

Google earth

Eye alt 1.05 km