



THE COMMUNITY VOICE – Graveney and Goodnestone

Who are 'Community Voice'?

Community Voice are a group of likeminded locals who got together in late 2022 because they were interested in ensuring that the villages and local communities received benefits from the solar park developer, Quinbrook, to compensate for the enormous impact of the new development on their environment. It is great to see that Quinbrook has already given support to the Solar Cycleway project, beginning with the commissioning of a feasibility study by Sustrans, due to be published late March 2023.

But what more could more be done for the villages of Goodnestone and Graveney in particular? Quinbrook stated that they have committed to supporting 'community enhancements' in their recent newsletter, so the Community Voice group were interested in finding out what enhancements other people in the villages would like to see. They approached the parish council who were supportive of the concept of a) getting enhancements, and b) gaining insights from the community – giving them a voice.

Our Objectives

We want to ensure that the community have an input into any potential enhancements as a result of the solar park development.

Whilst we understand that the government legislation does not require the developer to automatically give back to the community, we will be neighbours for the next 40 years and believe the developer wants to 'do the right thing' to support local people, given that the impact on the local community is going to be substantial.

We want to play a role in discussions with the developer to ensure the voice of the community is represented at those meetings. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to get enhancements for our villages and wider communities which must be embraced wholeheartedly.

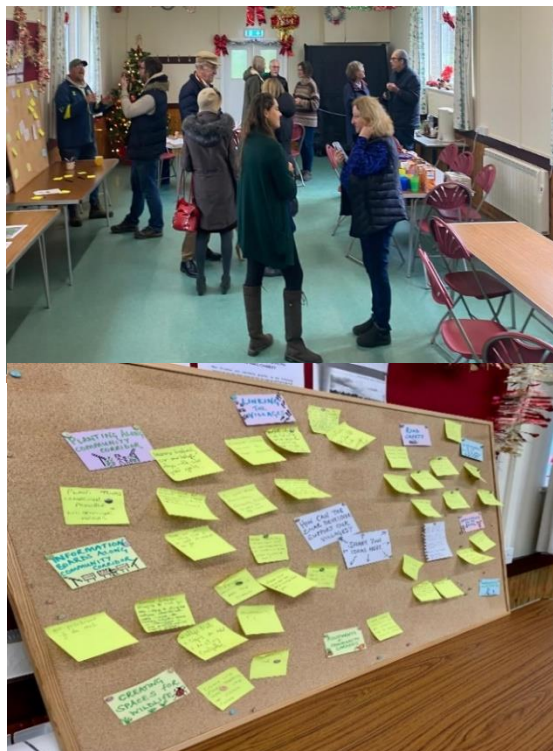
Drop-in session – January 2023

In January 2023 a drop-in session was held at Graveney Village Hall, where local people were invited to come and discuss what they would like to see and have a chat with tea and cake. Around 100 people took the invitation up and came to add their post it notes to the board, while those who could not attend made comments on the village Facebook page and sent emails.

Aims of this document:

The aim of this document is to:

- a) Summarise the community responses, picking out areas of greatest interest
- b) Put forward suggestions for how the community's wishes could be achieved, categorising them according to cost and complexity.



WHAT WE HEARD - Top five themes arising

Five coherent themes emerged from the community suggestions:

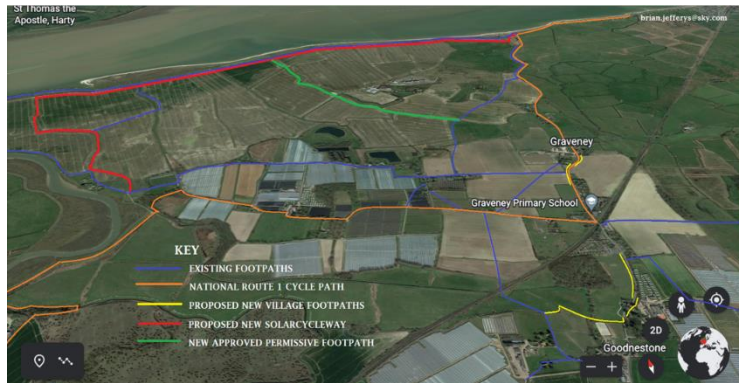
1. Connecting the villages for walking and cycling
2. Making the roads safer
3. Increasing biodiversity and connecting community with nature
4. Developing the village hall and green
5. Increasing use of renewable energy

Two important points can be made about these five themes.

- They overlap and complement each other. For example, being able to enjoy a safe walk or cycle to the village hall would build a sense of community, leading to a greater desire to take part in community events. Conversely, a thriving and attractive village hall would encourage people to walk and cycle within the village rather than getting into cars to travel elsewhere. Furthermore, a community garden and hedgerows along the pathways would not only increase biodiversity, but also encourage the community to enjoy and engage with it.
- All five would increase sustainability in the villages, in different ways. They could therefore play well with Quinbrook's positive climate, environmental, social and governance goals.

Theme 1 - Paths and Cycleways

There was a clear desire by many to see a footpath to join the two villages of Graveney and Goodnestone in order to achieve a combined community feel rather than the two distinctly separate villages as they seem now.



For example, there are children living in Goodnestone that cannot walk to the school in Graveney because the walking options are not safe or viable. The pub is also in Graveney as is the village hall which cannot be accessed easily by foot from Goodnestone. This category also includes improvements to current footpaths as well as broader community benefits including links to Faversham and beyond i.e. the Solar Cycleway which links to the National Cycle Route 1.

These things are highly desirable and also in the 'complex' category but should be explored further as this may be a once only opportunity to achieve such a monumental difference to the two villages and broader communities.

Below are some possible options for how we might achieve a more joined up village, and a further feasibility study needs to be undertaken. But we know most of the landownership and have had some very high-level conversations so do not believe this is a non-starter. Adrian Berendt is working on the 'Towns to Parishes' initiative for Faversham Town Council and is also very keen on this as an addition to other plans he is working on as part of that initiative. He has met with members of the Parish Council to discuss further and has written a paper which has been shared with the Parish Council (provided in a separate document).

We need to be realistic in our approach to this and the first step is to get designated rights of way set up. Based on discussions with Kate Beswick (KCC Rights of Way Officer) it is down to the Parish Council in the first instance to approach the landowners to discuss the mutual benefits of achieving such footpaths. If Kent Highways need to be involved, then Kate can facilitate those discussions.

This initiative is not connected solely to the Solar Park developer but we would encourage the developer to see the benefits and to support by funding fencing, hedgerow planting etc. That would be extremely helpful. This footpath would go some way to mitigate the safety of pedestrians on what has already become a much busier road with construction traffic.

A Staged Approach to Implementation

Based on discussions with Kate Beswick (KCC Rights of Way Officer), the swiftest route to getting these footpaths in place is to leave the issue of surfacing the paths until after the footpaths have been established. This is because hard surfacing will require involvement of the Highways department and is highly likely to throw up hurdles that will slow down the process considerably. Although hard surfacing should be the long-term intention, it should not distract from the primary aim of enabling people to walk safely through and between the villages. The suggested process is:

- 1) Ask permission from landowners
- 2) If permission obtained, apply for designated or permissive footpath status
- 3) Once status obtained, remove and re-erect fences/plant hedging to create space for footpaths next to the road
- 4) At a later date, the issue of surfacing to be dealt with

Proposed Path Section 1 - Langdon Farm to The Four Horseshoes footpath

This path is crucial in the safe linking of the two villages. There are two sections to this footpath. The first runs parallel to Head Hill from Langdon Manor Farm to the Four Horseshoes Park, the objective here being to see whether the landowner would be prepared to allow access over a 2.5m strip of land. The second goes away from the road and links to the existing footpath (ZR492) that comes out on the Lane in Goodnestone, where we would also seek access over a 2.5m strip of land for a footpath. The reason that we can't continue along the road is that there are residential properties without the opportunity to carve enough space to continue the roadside path.

The pathway would run past the village sign and build on the great work done by the Parish Council here to bring the villages together and provide a centerpiece. We believe that continuing with Cleft Chestnut fencing like that which has been put up outside the Four Horseshoes Park would add to the aesthetics of the village. This type of fencing is locally available, durable and attractive.

We know there are children from Goodnestone who do not attend Graveney School because they cannot safely walk to the school and this would support the school in becoming a true community school which can take all children from the villages. This path would also allow access to the Four Horseshoes pub to those in Goodnestone, allowing that to become a community hub also.

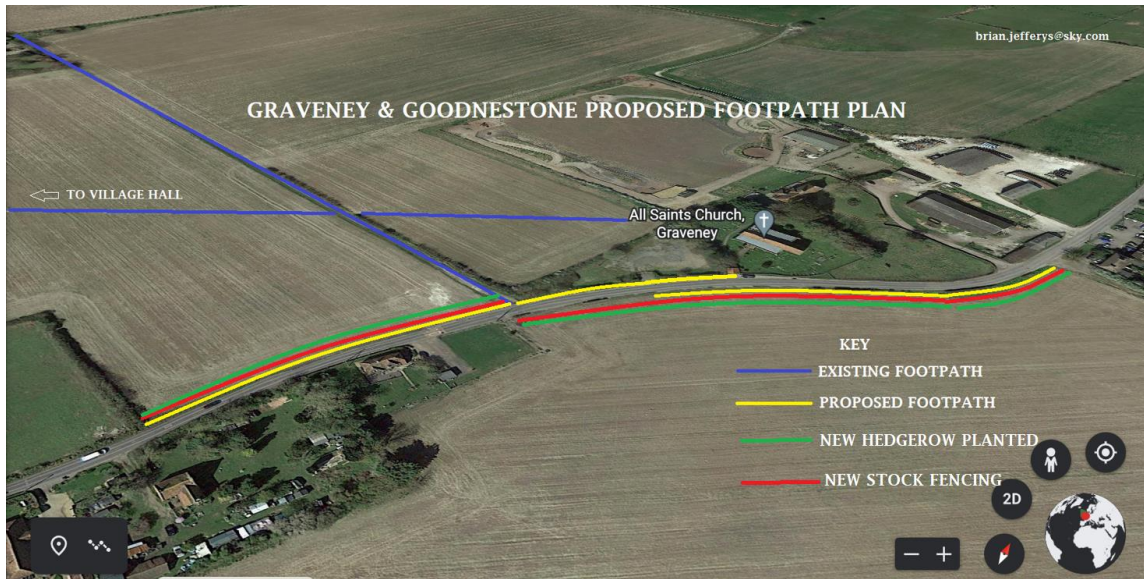


The table below sets out roughly what we believe might be necessary by way of materials and potential suppliers but this is in no way a complete list and a feasibility study would determine the full scope. Also set out below are the next steps for the Parish Council to take this forward.

MATERIAL	QUANTITY	APPROXIMATE COST	SUPPLIER
CHESTNUT STAKES	300M	300 X £4.10 = £1230	TATE FENCING
HIGH TENSILE STOCK FENCING 100M	3	3 X £212.93 = £639	TATE FENCING
HIGH TENSILE WIRE 410M	1	1 X £88 = £88	TATE FENCING
NATIVE HEDGEROW	650M	TBC	WOODLAND TRUST?
CLEFT CHESTNUT FENCE BAY 2.74M 2 RAIL	440M	160 X £56 = £8960	TATE FENCING
PROPOSED NEXT STEPS	PARISH COUNCIL TO MAKE CONTACT WITH THE LANDOWNER. TO CONTACT THE WOODLAND TRUST REGARDING SUBSIDISED HEDGEROW PLANTING		

Proposed Path Section 2 - Graveney Church Roadside Footpath

This section would connect the edge of Graveney village on the Seasalter side to All Saints Church and on to All Saints View. The objective here is also to see whether the landowner would be prepared to allow access over a 2.5m strip of land parallel with the Seasalter Road. The distance is approximately 330 meters, with stock fencing. Hedgerow would also be planted continuing the nature corridor as well.



The table below sets out roughly what we believe might be necessary by way of materials and potential suppliers but this is in no way a complete list and a feasibility study would determine the full scope. Also set out below are the next steps for the Parish Council to take this forward.

MATERIAL	QUANTITY	APPROXIMATE COST	SUPPLIER
CHESTNUT STAKES.	330M	330 X £4.10 = £1353	TATE FENCING
HIGH TENSILE STOCK FENCING 100M.	4	4 X £212.93 = £852	TATE FENCING
HIGH TENSILE WIRE 410M	1	1 X £88 = £88	TATE FENCING
NATIVE HEDGEROW	330M	TBC	WOODLAND TRUST?
PROPOSED NEXT STEPS	PARISH COUNCIL TO MAKE CONTACT WITH THE LANDOWNER. THE PARISH COUNCIL MAY ALSO HAVE AN UNDERSTANDING IF THERE ARE ANY OTHER LANDOWNERS THAT NEED TO BE INVOLVED. TO CONTACT THE WOODLAND TRUST REGARDING SUBSIDISED HEDGEROW PLANTING		

Theme 2 - Road Safety Measures

Following the Traffic Management Plan and the sheer volume of feedback that was given by locals via the planning process, this was understandably high on people's agendas. Things that came up were signage on the narrow roads and mirrors on already tricky junctions such as Sandbanks Lane etc.

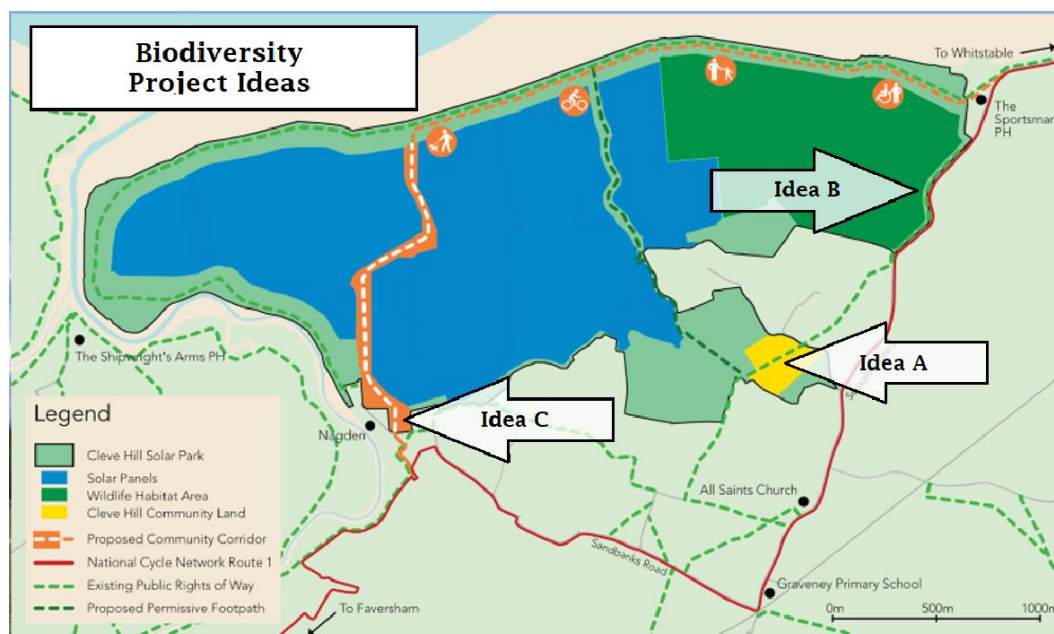
Some of these are 'low hanging fruit' and may already be required by the DCO (e.g. better safety signage), but traffic calming measures that the Parish Council has tried to get in place could fall under this category.

The full comments can be found in the separate document provided and we would suggest that the Parish Council take these to the regular traffic management meetings with the developer. And in addition, take other suggestions such as the question of mirrors on the two junctions within the two villages (Sandbanks Lane and Goodnestone Lane) forward with the relevant authorities.

Theme 3 – Increasing Biodiversity & Connecting Community with Nature

The feedback here covered planting trees, wildflower area, hedgerows and fencing, improvements to school car park area, information boards, sculptures, a community allotment, and making use of the areas on the solar park site which will not have solar panels on.

Here we have outlined five areas around the villages and the solar park site, where biodiversity and community connection with the natural landscape could be enhanced. Community involvement in designing, creating and maintaining these areas will be central to their success.



Project Idea A - The Cleve Hill Public Footpath Enhancements

The area in yellow on the map was offered to the community by the original developer, with the suggestion that it could be used as a community orchard. This idea was dismissed, partly because the area is only accessible on foot across fields, therefore unsuitable for a community space that can include everyone.

However, as a public footpath runs through this area, the land either side of this path would be a good opportunity for enhancements, such as planting, chestnut fencing, history boards, information boards and seating that takes in the views.

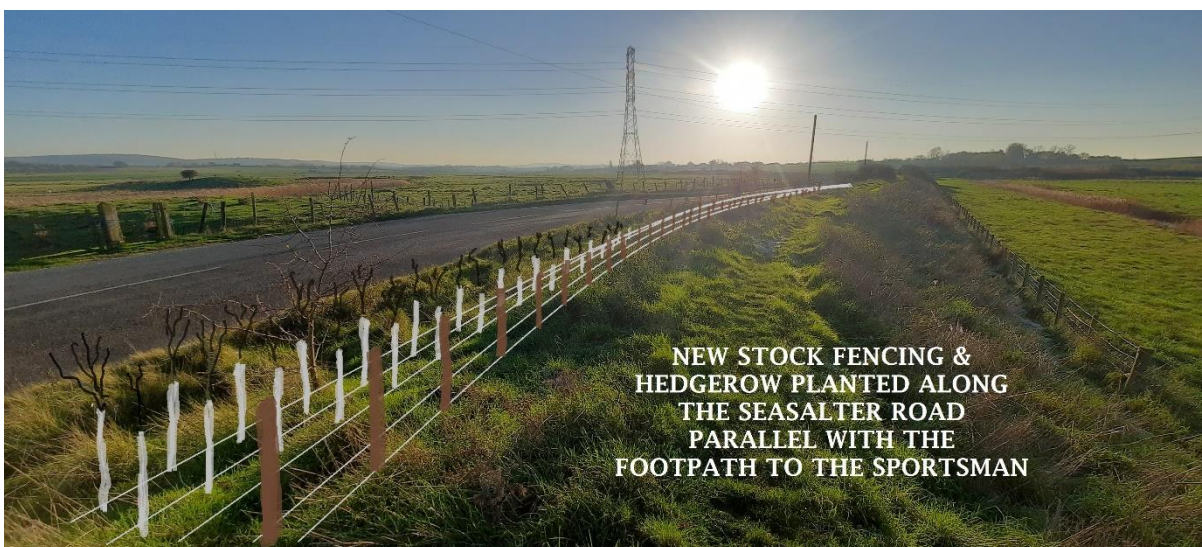
The illustration below gives a rough idea as to how the Cleve Hill site, which will not have solar panels on, could be enhanced for the benefit of the community. This area also links into the new permissive footpath which was included in the developer's application and is part of the design, providing circular walking route options. We would like to ensure people have access to this area for their enjoyment and it would also create a wildlife corridor linking up to existing hedgerows around the site. The creation of biodiverse areas and the addition of information boards or sculptures would help create a unique walking experience through this wildlife corridor.



MATERIAL	QUANTITY	APPROXIMATE COST	SUPPLIER
CHESTNUT STAKES.	300M	300 X £4.10 = £1230	TATE FENCING
HIGH TENSILE STOCK FENCING 100M.	3	3 X £212.93 = £639	TATE FENCING
HIGH TENSILE WIRE 410M	1	£88	TATE FENCING
NATIVE HEDGEROW	300M	TBC	WOODLAND TRUST?
OTHER PLANTING (WILDFLOWERS ETC.)		TBC	
BENCHES		TBC	
INFORMATION BOARDS		TBC	
RUBBISH BINS/DOG POO BINS		TBC	
Proposed Next Steps	BECAUSE THIS AREA IS WITHIN THE SITE UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE SOLAR PARK DEVELOPER, A FEASIBILITY DISCUSSION SHOULD BE TAKEN FORWARD WITH THE DEVELOPER IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE LANDOWNER		

Project Idea B – Enhancements to Footpath Between the Solar Farm entrance and The Sportsman Pub

This area could really be enhanced with stock fencing and a new hedgerow following the footpath (ZR692). This would not only make it more aesthetically pleasing, but also create a fantastic nature corridor.



MATERIAL	QUANTITY	APPROXIMATE COST	SUPPLIER
CHESTNUT STAKES.	650M	650 X £4.10 = £2665	TATE FENCING
HIGH TENSILE STOCK FENCING 100M.	7	7 X £212.93 = £1491	TATE FENCING
HIGH TENSILE WIRE 410M	2	2 X £88 = £176	TATE FENCING
NATIVE HEDGEROW	650M	?	WOODLAND TRUST?
Proposed Next Steps	WE BELIEVE THIS AREA IS WITHIN THE SITE UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE SOLAR PARK DEVELOPER AND THEREFORE DISCUSSION SHOULD BE TAKEN FORWARD WITH THE DEVELOPER IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE LANDOWNER		

Project Idea C – Enhancements to the Nagden Footpath/Cycleway down to Sea Wall

Building on the work being done to look into the feasibility of the solar cycleway, in addition to the existing footpath a new footpath/cycleway could be routed on the eastern side of the horse paddock linking back to the footpath just north of Nagden barn (ZR485). This opens up a potential area covering approximately 10 acres of land that could be enhanced, providing additional biodiversity, with a route for walkers and cyclists which takes them right up to the sea wall. This area can be enhanced with a touch of imagination and community involvement. The area could include information boards about the solar project itself and local history and could also house art sculptures celebrating biodiversity and science, which would give a uniqueness to the route. It could be designed with a huge emphasis on a natural wildlife corridor which works in harmony with walkers and cyclists.



MATERIAL	QUANTITY	APPROXIMATE COST	SUPPLIER
NATIVE TREES/HEDGEROW	TBC	TBC	WOODLAND TRUST?
OTHER PLANTING (WILDFLOWERS ETC.)		TBC	
BENCHES		TBC	
INFORMATION BOARDS		TBC	
ART SCULPTURES		TBC	
RUBBISH BINS/DOG POO BINS		TBC	
Proposed Next Steps	BECAUSE THIS AREA IS WITHIN THE SITE UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE SOLAR PARK DEVELOPER DISCUSSION SHOULD BE TAKEN FORWARD WITH THE DEVELOPER IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE LANDOWNER		

Project Idea D - Enhancements to the entrance of the school carpark

This area outside the school car park was mentioned by several residents as an area for planting. We understand that the parish council has already begun enhancement work on this area – here is an artists' impression of how it may look with the addition of a cleft chestnut fencing, bench and tree planting.



MATERIAL	QUANTITY	APPROXIMATE COST	SUPPLIER
CLEFT CHESNUT RENCING	TBC	TBC	
FRUIT TREES		TBC	
BENCH		TBC	
INFORMATION BOARD?		TBC	
Proposed Next Steps	WE BELIEVE THERE ARE ALREADY PLANS VIA THE PARISH COUNCIL FOR THIS AREA WHICH COULD BE FURTHER DEVELOPED		

Project Idea E - Community Allotment

The idea of a community allotment was put forward and this would be an excellent way of increasing biodiversity in a way that would be greatly beneficial to the community. The similar idea was suggested for the village green. Here we have suggested another possible site, if landowner permission was given. This artists' impression is on the corner of the land next to the Four Horseshoes Park, and would so link in with the proposed footpath linking the villages of Graveney and Goodnestone.



MATERIAL	QUANTITY	APPROXIMATE COST	SUPPLIER
CLEFT CHESNUT RENCING BENCH INFORMATION BOARD?	TBC	TBC TBC TBC	
Proposed Next Steps	VALIDATE INTEREST IN THIS FROM THE VILLAGES (WOULD THERE BE ENOUGH PEOPLE TO TAKE ON AN ALLOTMENT AND BE INVOLVED?). IF SO, CONTACT THE LAND OWNER TO DISCUSS PERMISSION FURTHER		

Artistic and Educational Embellishments

Outdoor pathway sculptures

Outdoor sculptures break up the landscape along the path, giving more interest for users, which would otherwise be high fencing surrounding solar panels. It is also a natural link to the creativity of the Kent Creative Coast and supports tourism in the area.



Information boards – Local History, Local Wildlife, Solar Energy

We are surrounded by an abundance of fantastic local history, from the last battle of the Sportsman, the flood of 1953 and the Nagden bump for example but also broader local history. It would be amazing for visitors to the local area and those walking the footpaths through the Solar Park to be able to read about these events creating an attractive tourism opportunity. This is a unique opportunity to share these stories and add interest for walkers and visitors to the area.



Involving children from local schools would spark their imaginations through working with the developer to design information boards that tell the stories of this great bit of land, how the landscape is managed, and the science of the projects is a great way to engage locals.



We have developed relationships with local schools who value the benefits of what we are trying to achieve for the next generation and everyone. It would be great for example if we could have a competition for the design of history boards or art installations where we could offer e.g. an electric bike/scooter as a prize funded by the developer in keeping with their green credentials.

Theme 4 - Village Hall & Green

Community Responses

The fourth major theme emerging from the community responses was a desire for a place for the community to come together - expressions such as 'community hub' and 'village green' were used. There were many specific ideas given for additions to the village hall and activities that might take place there. Some of the ideas are more feasible than others and could be investigated in more detail to determine their costs and benefits. These would build on the great work that the village hall Trustee's have already done to make improvements, and would potentially fast track any further redevelopment and would have the addition advantage of galvanising the community in the process.

The suggestions from residents for improved facilities at the village hall included:

- Cafe
- More outdoor play equipment
- Picnic benches
- Solar panels
- Electric car charging points
- Stage/lighting etc
- Disabled toilet (ladies)
- Defibrillator
- More parking
- Community garden
- Rabbit proof fencing
- Loop system for deaf and hard of hearing

There were some ideas for community facilities/activities that were not specifically tied to the village hall, such as a fete, a fish and chip van/shop, a pop-up shop, a skate park, a public lake and a rock climbing wall.

How could the community's wishes be realised?

The community's suggestions are wide-ranging in terms of the cost, complexity and community involvement required to implement them. At the easy end of the scale are discreet items such as picnic benches or a defibrillator. Then there are more costly and potentially complex items such as solar panels and improved disabled toilets. Still further, some suggestions call for much more ambitious and visionary changes: if we were to create the sort of thriving community hub where fetes can be held, where there can be a café, theatre productions and a community garden, then a much more modern and well-equipped building would be needed, with a long-term plan for running and maintaining it in place.

Outlined below are some potential ways that the community's ideas could be implemented, categorised according to their cost, complexity and time frame. Many items would require feasibility investigation as a first step.

Higher cost/complexity

- Brand new village hall and facilities (on same site or new) - state of the art eco-building (e.g. max energy efficiency, built with sustainable materials, own renewable energy source)
- Extension to current village hall (could include larger main hall; side rooms for meetings/changing rooms; new toilets with improved disabled access/ baby-changing, a large store room, a cafe/larger kitchen with indoor and outdoor hatch, bigger (movable) stage, outside toilets etc)
- Extend car park
- Refurbishment (renew decor and furniture, insulation, double glazing, new flooring)

Lower cost/complexity

- Covered patio (bifold doors from main hall)
- Community garden
- Planted areas
- Install solar panels
- Install electric car-charging points
- More children's play equipment outside (climbing wall?)
- Benches - for sitting/picnics

Ongoing funding

For many of these ideas to be sustainable, particularly the most expensive and those that require a lot of community involvement, there would need to be a plan in place for how they would be managed and how income and community involvement could be generated. For a fixed period the developer could fund paid employees to fulfil these roles until the hall became self-sustaining (e.g. through event hire and fundraising activities).

- Fixed-term funding for a community development officer to turn the hall into a thriving, self-sustaining centre of the community
- Fixed term funding for caretaker and maintenance costs

In addition, perhaps the developer would like to fund this idea that several people mentioned:

- Funded annual fete at village hall for lifetime of the solar park



Bifold doors onto a covered patio would create a pleasant and useful link between indoor and outdoor spaces.



With the right decor and facilities the hall could become a popular venue for weddings and parties - providing income and a place for villagers to hold their own events



Rock Village Hall in Kidderminster is a model sustainable building with features including ground source heat pump, roof rainwater collection for toilets and recycled building materials

Proposed Next Steps	Further discussion and more feasibility research
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Theme 5 - Solar Panels, Electric Car Charging Points and Subsidised Electricity

The fifth theme that emerged links into the business of the solar park development itself, as a provider of renewable energy.

Solar panels – There were numerous suggestions for solar panels to be provided, in particular to our community buildings, such as the school, church and village hall. All Saints Church have sent a detailed letter outlining their need for a green energy solution such as solar panels for their building (see copy of letter attached in Appendix 1).

Electric car charging points – Similarly, funding for e-charging points was suggested for our community spaces.

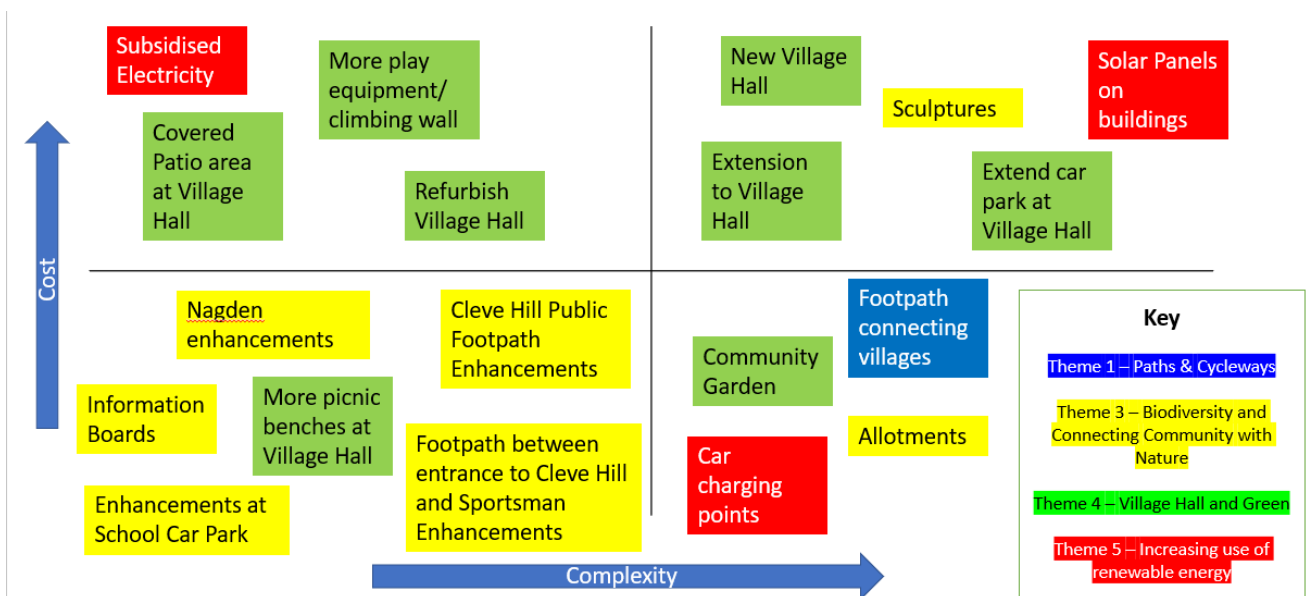
Subsidised electricity – This was suggested a number of times and of course would be of greatly appreciated by many villagers at this time of high energy costs and soaring household bills.

Again, more investigation is needed into feasibility.

Proposed Next Steps	Further discussion and more feasibility research
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Conclusion

The matrix below summarises some of the ideas across the key themes identified, by ‘Cost’ and ‘Complexity’, to assist the Community Voice working group and Parish Council when reviewing them. We can identify those in the lower cost and complexity bracket which can be relatively easily realised, as well as focus on those in the more complex or expensive box, but which will have a greater impact on our communities.



Once preferences have been made as to what combination of things might be taken forward to discussions with the developer, a further consideration needs to be made as to how these enhancements will be supported for the duration of the life of the solar park.

We have identified a number of projects, which with the creation of a community trust, could be managed by the community for the community. This includes the footpath joining the two villages, the community corridor spaces around the solar park, the allotment and the village hall enhancements. We see one of the biggest challenges is ongoing funding and support. By creating a trust this will secure the legacy for the duration of the solar park's existence and beyond.

We see the need for some paid roles in order to be able to realise the community enhancements and to secure their future. This includes those roles detailed in the village hall section above (a community development officer and a caretaker) plus a community warden that looks after a degree of maintenance and manages the community corridor sites. These roles would also be pivotal in co-ordinating volunteers from the villages and local area to assist in realising the true community value that these projects could bring. These should be funded by the developer for the duration of the solar park.

The Community Trust overview of involvement, contributions and donations include:

- An initial six figure sum donated by the developer, we could also look to match fund with support from local/national trusts and charities
- Payment of salaries for specified roles associated with the village hall and community corridor
- A bursary contribution for a student in the village to study at university each year
- A yearly contribution linked to profit from the company to the Trust
- A board of trustees would be set up from across the community