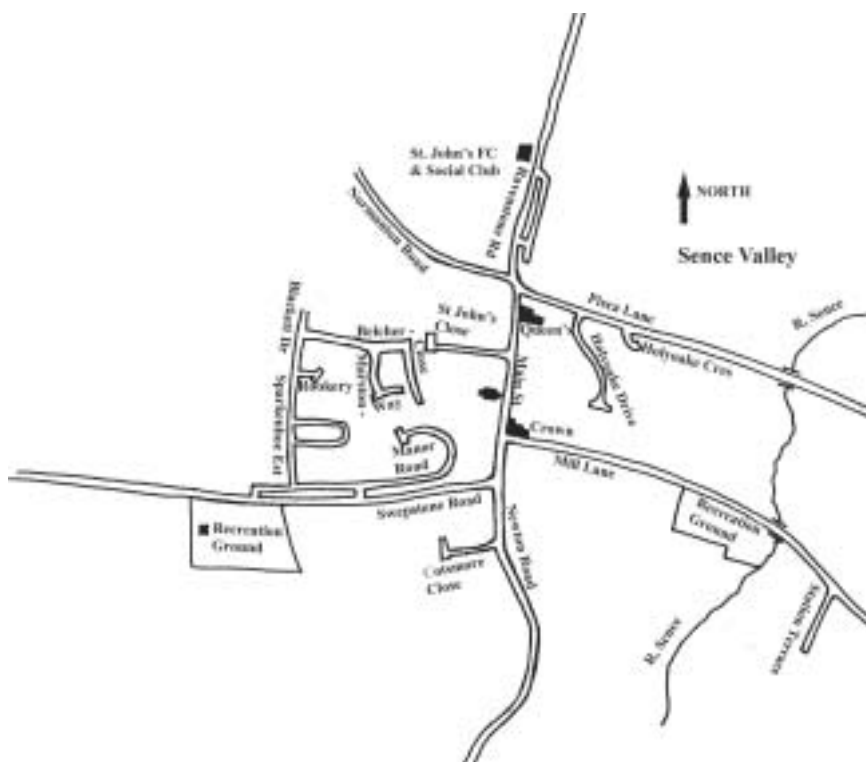


HEATHER PARISH PLAN



Report
February 2005



- Heather was known in the Domesday Book as Hadre. The name itself is probably derived from the heath land that was once known to exist. Several other villages in the area are similarly named, such as Donnington-le-Heath, Normanton-le-Heath and Bagington Heath. This probably explains the pronunciation of our village name.
- By 1564 20 families were living in Heather. In 1841 the population was 368 rising to 439 in 1871. The current population is 949
- Heather has a strong industrial heritage. The railway was opened in 1873 and the stationmaster's house still exists as a private residence. The Hastings of Ashby first mined coal commercially at Heather at the end of the 16th century. Open cast mining became part of the scenery in the mid-20th century. Coach-building and bricks are our other two main industries.
- Probably the most famous landmark in the village, the Church was first used by the Knights of St John. The first rector of Hethere (Heather) was Thomas 1220-1221. For over one hundred and twenty years from 1775, the name of four consecutive village rectors at Heather was Belcher.
- Heather's annual Scarecrow Festival along with the Heather Music Festival and Flower Festival, turn our parish into a hive of activity and fun in the last week in July.



The Steering Committee would like to thank the following for their contributions to this report:

- Front cover drawing Phil Wragg
- Heather scarecrow photo & map Di Everett
- Report illustrations The children of Heather Primary School



Foreword by David Taylor MP

Welcome to the Heather Parish Plan. As a lifetime resident of Heather and a parish councillor for 16 years, I am delighted to provide a foreword to this document, which is a snapshot in time of our community, set as it is in a region and area which are so rapidly being transformed environmentally, socially and economically.

Do you remember that village questionnaire which you returned a month or two ago? Well, it was an important part of the fact-finding work done by the team who have produced this parish plan. A plan which is both a mirror and a crystal ball.

A mirror, in that it reflects back how Heather residents see our key facilities and services, what the majority of people think is of the most importance, what distinctive features in our village are most valued and need to be preserved and (particularly) what villagers feel are the local problems that most need to be tackled.

A crystal ball, in that it points out ways in which Heather can be improved, with an action plan spelling out clearly what needs to be done and who has to be involved. This plan will assist with setting priorities and help to target available resources.

The recommended actions are all achievable, given the existence of strong community support and goodwill, but most also need firm backing from outside agencies such as the District and County Councils and the Leicestershire police authority – bodies in that wider audience who need to know how Heather sees itself, its hopes and its fears.

A great deal of effort has gone into the writing of this report, not least from those who took the time and trouble to complete the survey forms, the team who designed, circulated and collected the questionnaires, analysed the responses and suggested the outcomes, the Rural Community Council – in particular, Hannah Ferguson – and the Countryside Agency who helped to fund it all.

The planning process stimulated involvement from all sections of our community. Not just from the Parish Council (crucial though their help was), but from people who are active in the voluntary organisations with which Heather is well provided.

All of us who live in Heather in 2005 are in their debt for this concise, lucid and valuable report-back to us. Yes, it does set a useful agenda for elected councillors, potential funders and others, but in reality it is now **our** plan. It shapes change in **our** village, contributes to **our** quality of life and aims to safeguard **our** future

We must ensure that its recommendations are implemented, updated and monitored. It will be a yardstick for us all to assess progress in the months and years to come.

I hope that in 15 years time, any Heather people looking back to this era with 2020 vision will recognise and applaud the role of this plan in protecting the unique character of our village whilst ensuring that we still benefit from the opportunities which will present themselves in the meantime. I commend it to you.



The Parish Plan Steering Group

(from L to R)

Alison Wright

Jane Boyce

Sharon Harris

Roy Attwood

Barbara Blaber

The Report

The information contained in this report is summarized from the results of the Heather Parish Plan questionnaire. A full copy of the results can be obtained from the Parish Clerk.

Action areas are summarized in the main body of the report. For detailed actions items, please refer to the detailed Action Plan at the end of the document.

Local Amenities and Access

For a relatively small parish, we are fortunate to have some good amenities on our doorstep. The shop and post office in Heather are quite well used, with the majority using the shop mainly for groceries and the post office for postal services and savings bank.

The suggestion of a cash-point in the village received wide support with 78% of respondents saying they would use one, and we are pleased to note that one is now available in the Crown public house (transaction fee chargeable).

On the social side, Heather school social events are supported by 43% of respondents, whilst the pubs and football club are used on a regular basis, although there were some comments on the services on offer in these places.

Only 9% of respondents use the mobile library, the main reasons being:

- People unaware of its existence
- Inconvenient times
- Inappropriate venues

There was a huge demand for residents to be kept informed of village events etc by a parish newsletter. Also, almost 80% of respondents said they would make use of a register of local services.

There didn't seem to be a problem with residents accessing a doctor, dentist or chemist, although almost half felt they had a problem with access to a local chiropodist.

We also asked if people experienced difficulties accessing services in the village, and the main ones were:

- Getting on/ off a bus
- Getting into the mobile library
- Entering the shops



Maud's shop

Other services/ amenities you would like to see in the village

- *A café as a meeting point for young people*
- *Reliable, value for money bus service to local towns*
- *Fish and chip shop or mobile chip van*
- *Youth club*
- *Local youth football team*
- *Events for 18 – 30 age group*
- *More early buses*
- *Police presence*

Improved communication

Additional village amenities and improvements to existing ones

ACTION AREAS

- **Improved communication**
- **Additional village amenities and improvements to existing ones**

Social and Leisure activities

Through the media, we are regularly presented with stories of the nation's growing obesity and lack of fitness. So it is with delight that we can report that those in the community responding to the recent consultation expressed their commitment, or wish, to participate in a wide variety of leisure or recreational activities. To the community's credit, the most popular activity is the Scarecrow festival with walking and Sence Valley very close favourites. Unsurprisingly, social drinking is an activity accessed on frequent occasions.

A number of unusual requests were made, including a seating circle, death slides and spider web climbing frame. You will have an opportunity to further comment and add other ideas at our launch event.

Community Building

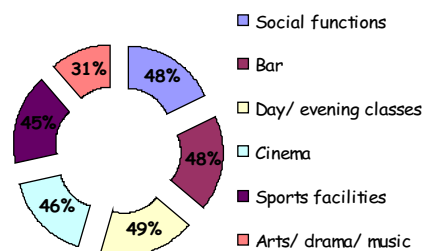
Our village hall was destroyed by arsonists in March 2003. The old facility had its faults, but it was still used quite extensively for our local youth clubs, play groups, private functions and sports activities, notably the cricket team. It was an important source of income for the village.

The adult questionnaire responses indicate firm support for building a new facility, with the highest number of people (48%) looking to use it for social functions. A bar, day or evening classes, sports facilities and a cinema room also received a lot of support. A new community building would enable the Parish Council to provide a Parish information office and the majority of adult respondents would welcome this. A new centre could also provide much-needed activities for the young people of the village and 69% of respondents of the Youth questionnaire said they would support it; more to the point, 16 of these said they would be keen to help in the planning.

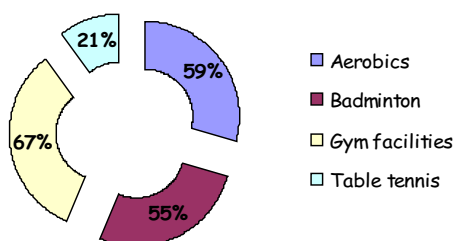
We also asked what type of sporting facilities people would use. Gym facilities, aerobics and keep-fit came top of the list for indoor sports, closely followed by badminton. Tennis topped the outdoor list with 5 a side football also receiving support.

We received numerous comments about the type of building and there is clearly concern that any new building should be as secure and vandal-proof as possible. Others gave suggestions for other activities for example, a history club or bingo for pensioners. All these points would be taken into account in planning for a new facility.

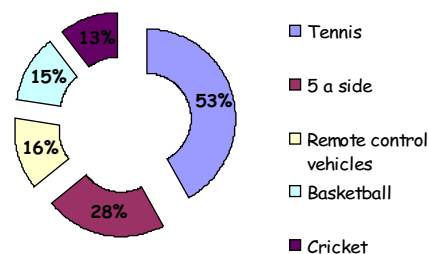
WHAT WOULD WE USE THE VILLAGE HALL FOR?



INDOOR SPORTS PREFERENCES



OUTDOOR SPORTS PREFERENCES



ACTION AREA
 • Village Hall Planning

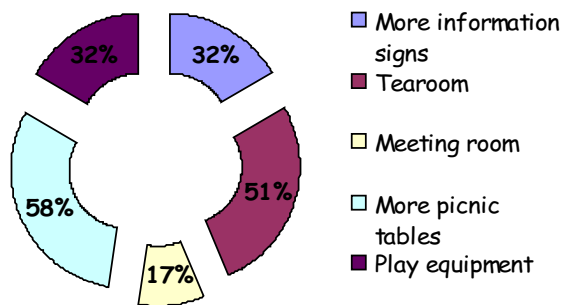
The Environment

The questionnaire has proved that the majority of the villagers greatly value the rural environment they live in and would like to see it preserved and improved to some extent. Keeping verges and hedges tidy and painting and maintenance of village equipment are high on their list of priorities along with planting bulbs in roadside verges and erecting hanging baskets.

The local public footpaths are regularly used and are well sign-posted and in good order. Over a 100 people said they would like to take part in a guided public footpath walk around the village.

We are very fortunate to have Sence Valley Forest Park on our doorstep; over a third of Heather residents visit it more than once a week, and nearly three-quarters rate it as good or excellent. It is used for various activities such as walking, running, jogging, horse riding, bird-watching and family picnics. There is also a volunteers group who take part in conservation work in the park. Residents are keen to see future developments in the park, and there was strong support for an entrance and car park on Pisca Lane.

WHAT FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE AT SENCE VALLEY?



Sence Valley

Unfortunately we do have a problem with dog fouling not only in Sence Valley Forest Park but all around the village. The general consensus is we need more dog waste bins and better signs warning of penalties for dog fouling.

There were mixed views regarding the village litter problems, depending on where in the village you live. However, 104 people offered to take part in a Parish spring-cleaning day. People also felt very strongly about recycling with 69% using the current village facilities and more than 80% prepared to use the District Council's collection service, if it were available.

What you said about Sence Valley

- *"It's a picturesque and very lovely open space with lakes. We find it a peaceful haven – winter and summer."*
- *"Pleasure to have after years of open-casting, an asset to the village."*
- *"Makes our village a good place to visit and is something to be proud of."*

ACTION AREAS

- **Access to Sence Valley**
- **Tackling the problem of dog fouling**
- **Litter and recycling**

Law and Order

The majority of adult residents do feel safe in Heather. However, mobile CCTV and better street lighting in certain areas of the village were also considered beneficial. Many also felt that more areas should be covered by the Neighbourhood Watch scheme.

There was an overwhelming response to the lack of visible policing during evenings and night-times throughout the village, and dissatisfaction with police response, with more than 70% of people reporting crimes stating that they were not kept informed of progress.

Finally, 79% of respondents expressed support for an outside drinking ban in the village.

ACTION AREAS

- **Police presence**
- **Outside drinking restrictions**
- **Improved street lighting**

Traffic and Transport

Several traffic calming measures have been introduced into Heather in the past months, including speed humps and new speed limits. There were mixed views as to whether these measures have had any impact on the speed of vehicles in the village, but most people thought they had not improved the amount or type of traffic or traffic noise. In particular, many complained about the speed humps, expressing the view that they are ineffective, and those on Swepstone Road badly designed.

There was a great deal of concern too about the volume of heavy traffic coming through the village.

As you would expect, most respondents were car users, but a significant number do use the buses to get to work, shop and attend social activities. Improving the frequency and timings of existing services was considered to be slightly higher priority than having additional services. There were many good ideas about how public transport in the parish could be improved which need to be developed into a proper strategy.

ACTION AREAS

- **Traffic calming measures**
- **Heavy goods vehicle restrictions**
- **Parish transport strategy**

The Church in our Community

The Church of St John the Baptist is our Parish church and probably our most distinctive landmark. 24% of people see it as a focal point of our community and nearly 30% value it as a historic building.

More than 50% of people visit the church for baptisms, weddings and funerals and 40% for concerts, but only 16% regularly worship there. But a number of respondents had ideas about how the church could attract more people.



The Church

How could the church do more to attract you?

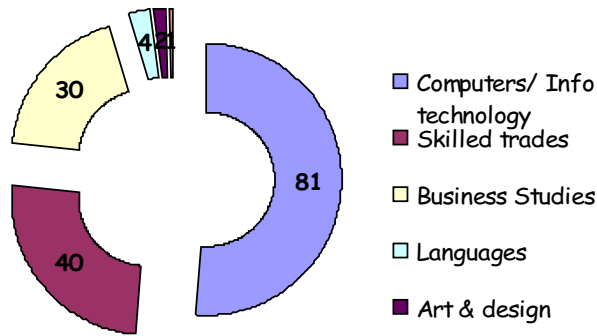
- *"Publish services and events"*
- *"Regular Sunday school with better advertisement of this"*
- *"Open daily so that people can go and pray anytime"*
- *"Keep building open for the benefit of summer visitors"*

Training and Employment

The questionnaire responses gave a good insight into the employment status of our parish residents and where people are employed. 60% of respondents thought Heather would benefit from having more employment opportunities in the village.

There was certainly interest in having more training facilities available locally, notably for computers/ information technology.

TRAINING PREFERENCES



ACTION AREAS

- **Training facilities**

Housing

People of Heather parish value the peaceful location and rural environment and there is concern that any further general house building would start to erode these. However there was more support for affordable retirement or starter homes.

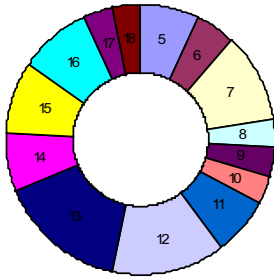
ACTION AREAS

- **Local Development Plan**

Youth in our Community

We produced a separate questionnaire for younger members of the community. This was partly based on input from those who attended the Youth Event, hosted by County Council Youth Services at Heather St Johns Football Club in April. We had 58 responses in an age range from 5 to 18, with 53% of the responses being from boys and 47% from girls.

YOUTH RESPONSES BY AGE



As you would expect, given the age ranges, over half the people responding were at secondary school. The most popular form of transport to school is by bus (58%) whilst 28% walk to school.

Being bored is the biggest problem for the young people in our village – 61% of respondents gave this as one of the things they liked **least** about living in Heather. So there was strong support (69%) for a new village hall, and 16 people said they would like to help with the planning – definitely an offer not to be refused! There was a wide range of ideas for other activities and facilities in the village and 16 people also said they would be prepared to help with the organization of activities for others.



Play area

Sporting activities, particularly football and swimming, featured high on the list of preferences, but other popular choices were:

- Chip shop
- Internet café
- BMX track
- Youth club.

Our play areas are used by less than a quarter of the young people of the village, Belcher Close being the most widely used. When asked why they didn't use the play areas, most said it was because there was nothing to do there or nowhere to shelter or sit down, others talked about vandalism.

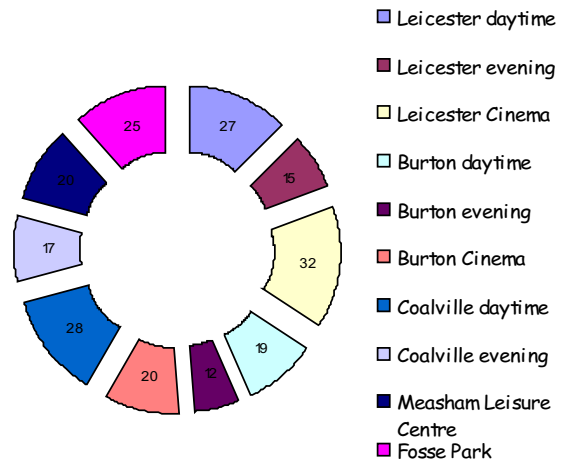
Sence Valley is popular with the younger residents, too, with a third of respondents visiting it on a weekly basis. They would like to see a tea room, more picnic tables and play equipment in the park.



Sence Valley

Transport is also an issue when it comes to keeping young people occupied and there was good support for additional bus services to varying destinations.

BUS DESTINATION PREFERENCES



Most of our young people feel safe in Heather but recognize that vandalism is a problem. They believe that more activities would be the best way to reduce vandalism, but more policing and CCTV also received support.

ACTION AREAS
• Youth activities and involvement

OUR ACTION PLAN

REF	ACTION SUMMARY	DESCRIPTION	WHO NEEDS TO BE INVOLVED
1	PARISH AMENITIES		
1.1	ADDITIONAL AMENITIES	Investigate possibilities for a cash-point in the village	Parish Plan Steering Group and local traders
1.2		Review timings of mobile library visits	County Council
1.3		Investigate possibilities for mobile chip van in the village	Parish Plan Steering Group
2	COMMUNITY BUILDING		
2.1	VILLAGE HALL PLANNING	Involve a wide range of people in the planning process	Village Hall Management Committee. Willing volunteers from the community (including young people).
2.2		Use outputs of questionnaire to identify needs for both adult and young users, and prospective users	Village Hall Management Committee
3	COMMUNICATION		
3.1	PARISH NEWSLETTER	Set up group to plan and launch a new Parish newsletter	Parish Council/ Parish Plan Steering Group
3.2	PARISH "WELCOME" PACK	Set up group to plan and develop a Parish "Welcome" pack for new residents.	Parish Council/ Parish Plan Steering Group
3.3	PARISH INFORMATION OFFICE	Include provision of Parish Information office in planning for new community building	Village Hall Management Committee
4	ENVIRONMENT		
4.1	ACCESS TO SENCE VALLEY	Contact County Council and Forestry Commission to discuss access from Pisca Lane	Sence Valley team, County Council and Forestry Commission
4.2	TACKLING THE PROBLEM OF DOG FOULING	Carry out anti-dog fouling campaign - better signage relating to penalties, "dog etiquette" leaflet etc	Parish Council
4.3		Provision of dog waste bins to be included in 2005/6 budget	Parish Council
4.4	LITTER AND WASTE RECYCLING	Implement full kerb-side collection system in Heather	District Council
4.5		Arrange a Parish Spring Cleaning Day	Parish Plan Steering Group.
5	CRIME PREVENTION		
5.1	POLICE PRESENCE	Have more visible and frequent police presence at key times of day, to curb vandalism and nuisance	Police Authorities
5.2	OUTSIDE DRINKING BAN	Investigate process for implementing outside drinking ban in the village	Parish Council/ Police Authorities
5.3	IMPROVED STREET LIGHTING	Improve street lighting in areas identified by questionnaire	County Council
6	TRAFFIC & TRANSPORT		
6.1	PARISH TRANSPORT STRATEGY	Set up group to discuss and develop a transport strategy for the village, in liaison with local authorities and service	Parish Plan Steering group

REF	ACTION SUMMARY	DESCRIPTION	WHO NEEDS TO BE INVOLVED
6.2	TRAFFIC CALMING	Review effectiveness of traffic calming measures providers	County Council Highways
6.3	HEAVY GOODS TRAFFIC	Confirm restrictions; ensure signage in place; discuss how restrictions can be enforced.	Parish Council/ Police Authorities
6.4		Meet with local businesses to discuss acceptable practices	Parish Council
7	EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING		
7.1	TRAINING FACILITIES	Source training facilities either in the Parish or locally; provide information through Parish newsletter or Information office	Parish Council/ Parish Plan Steering Group
8	HOUSING		
8.1	LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN	Confirm content of current Local Development Plan in relation to the Parish. Input to future revisions of the Plan.	Parish Council/ District Council
9	YOUTH IN THE COMMUNITY		
9.1	YOUTH ACTIVITIES	Actively recruit volunteers to assist with developing and running activities for young people in the Parish	County Council Youth Services

