Long Distance Paths as Catalysts for Local Development: The Role of Parish Councils

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Abstract

Long distance paths are local resources, but previous research by the author suggested that they are not fully exploited by many rural communities. The continuing debate on rural governance following the publication of the Rural White Paper in November 2000, together with a curiosity as to the potential development role of parish councils resulted in the current research. This had three clear objectives.

- What socio-cultural, environmental and economic benefits could be derived for local people from the presence of a long distance path?

- Do parish councils assist in unlocking this potential, and if so, how?

- Could this process be improved if parish councils acted differently?

A two-phase research approach was adopted. Initially telephone interviews were used to conduct a broad based scoping study. This identified many relevant issues and provided introductions that led to the second phase when three case study locations were explored in greater depth. Here data was collected primarily through face-to-face semi structured interviews supplemented with documentary evidence.

It was confirmed that there were minimal disbenefits but that the benefits were potentially considerable. At least half of the parish councils contributing to the research were found to participate in relevant local development to greater or lesser degrees. However it appears that not all parish councils are willing or able to accept responsibility for local development initiatives related to long distance paths. Some thought that local businesses or other agencies should promote and lead projects, whilst others were too busy dealing with routine matters. In addition parish councils were not always receptive to suggestions for collaborative working with other organisations. In all instances it was found that this local resource was not fully exploited by parish councils.

Local authorities have more recently acknowledged the potential benefits brought by long distance paths. Thus during the last ten years new routes have been devised and it was found that parish councils were always consulted during the development phases, whilst historically the reason for, and the method of development of long distance routes was completely divorced from parish councils. In these latter instances parish councils needed to adopt a proactive approach to harness maximum community benefits. Generally however their activities were inhibited by several identified constraints. These were concerned with a lack of representation, skills and positive attitude towards local development initiatives.

Examples of successful local development were identified that maximised endogenous resources and one of these is local people. It is suggested that if parish councils are to be successful the Government should first allocate sufficient resources for the capacity building of councillors and clerks which would enable them to take a more positive role in local development initiatives.

Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of The University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

Signed   Date

Preface

The subject for this thesis evolved from my recent undergraduate studies which focused on rural planning and community development. A keen commitment to long distance walking together with a growing interest in rural governance stemming from personal involvement in an INTERREG project led to a topic with three components - parish councils, local development and long distance paths.

I am particularly grateful to my supervisors Professor Malcolm Moseley and Elisabeth Skinner who have so willingly given me their time, suggested texts and provided introductions to relevant personnel. I have appreciated the enthusiasm and time given to me by all the interviewees mentioned in Appendix 2, as well as support received from other students and staff in the University's Countryside and Community Research Unit in addition to staff in Research Administration.

Finally I would like to thank my husband, Stuart and all the family for their wholehearted support and patience during the preparation of this thesis.

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"If visiting the countryside is one way of sustaining us in our daily lives, we in turn ought to make sure that our visits help to sustain the countryside itself"

(Sir John Johnson in Countryside Commission 1991 p2)

Chapter 1 Introduction

The aim of this research is twofold. Firstly to investigate the role of parish and town councils in fostering local development by unlocking the potential benefits from the presence and use of long distance paths. Secondly, the scope for different or improved action by parish and town councils will be explored in order that social, economic, environmental and cultural benefits arising from these paths can be maximised for local communities.

This thesis builds upon the author's previous research (Boase 1999) which identified the needs of long distance walkers and noted that many rural communities did not appreciate the benefits that could be derived from this sector. Where it was recognised it became clear that a 'driver' was frequently required to take advantage of the community benefits that could be generated by the proximity of a long distance path. Parish and town councils (for simplicity referred to hereafter as 'parish councils') represent local communities and by judicious use of their powers it is thought they could fulfil this role and enhance local development in their communities. The research topic therefore addresses three elements, parish councils promoting local development by exploiting the proximity of long distance paths.

The idea for long distance paths was first introduced in The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and the dream for 'A Long Green Trail' was developed by the campaigning access journalist, Tom Stephenson resulting in the opening in 1965 of England's first long distance path, the 412 kilometre Pennine Way (Blatchford 1990 p.9). This was followed by ideas from other keen walkers who, from short local walks devised longer routes to enable journeys to be made on foot through villages and areas of attractive countryside resulting in trails that are "based on local knowledge of the best paths available" (Countryside Agency 1999 p.4). The idea that local communities might derive benefit from this activity was not considered, in fact in many cases there was hostility, but walkers persevered in their ambition to pursue longer expeditions.

There are now 545 routes listed in Harveys Long Distance Path Chart (1998), thirteen of which have been designated by the Countryside Agency (formerly Countryside Commission) as National Trails. These are "paths that have the character and quality to be truly national: allowing an extensive journey on foot …. and capable of attracting tourist use from home and abroad" (Countryside Commission 1989 p.7). In this respect a long distance walker is regarded as a 'tourist' since, as explained by Butler and Clark (in Bowler et al 1992) he/she has travelled some distance to enjoy an activity and will expect to stay away from home whilst "spending several days or weeks walking all or part of a trail" (Countryside Commission 1997 p.1). More recently trails have been created for other reasons, most commonly to provide economic benefit for the communities through which they pass, thereby responding to the notion that "rural areas must continue to adapt to change if they are to thrive" (DOE/MAFF 1995 p.142).

Whilst economic viability is desirable it is just one facet of a vibrant community, and thus a more holistic vision is needed. Francis and Henderson (1992) suggest that development is not merely change but is a process that is capable of being sustained. This is reiterated by Moseley (1996) who adopts a multi-dimensional approach to local development describing it as "a sustained and sustainable process of economic, social, cultural and environmental change, designed to enhance the long term well being of the whole community" (p.20), which "when properly conceived and undertaken, is a virtuous spiral in which everything affects everything else" (Moseley 2002 p.7). It is development pursued within a specific space, "big enough to achieve but local enough to care" (the slogan of South Shropshire District Council). Namely an area, not so small that it lacks resources and not so large that it contains so much variety that identity is difficult and co-ordination becomes unmanageable.

The aim of local development is therefore to strengthen communities in order that they can "face the chaotic context of change facing rural areas and small towns" (Ashton 1995 p.19) culminating in communities that are economically and socially active, have a balanced age structure, a caring attitude and are capable of sustaining themselves with some degree of empowerment. Moreover to accomplish this Westholm et al (1999) point out that organisations have to respond to a changing world, evaluating their work and being receptive to new ways of working but "how successfully they achieve this, and how effectively they 'deliver development' requires further research" (p.24). The

parish council is one element of a community that could influence this development process.

The Rural White Paper (DETR/MAFF 2000) highlights the Government intention that villages should be "active living communities" (p.24) where people are "fully involved in developing their community" (p.145). It emphasises the 'bottom-up' approach to local development encouraging parish councils, as the tier of government closest to the people to "contribute more effectively to local governance" (p.148), to take a proactive role by working in partnership, positively seeking out initiatives to meet the needs of local people. Francis & Henderson (1994) note that parish councils have the power "to underpin what is already happening in order to make it more effective ....and to encourage groups and individuals to acquire the confidence and skills to take collective action" (p.1). Moreover, Allen et al (1994) note that since rural areas may be very different one from another, local development initiated at 'grass roots' level can be tailored to meet the specific needs of that locality. However, whilst now dated, the only relevant research known to have been undertaken shows that in many cases parish council powers are not used effectively (Ellwood et al 1992).

Whilst some users of long distance paths are local people, others are tourists. The Countryside Agency (2000) reported that some benefits generated from tourism are not recognised by beneficiaries, so this may account for a lack of involvement by parish councils. When reporting on 32 potential benefits brought by tourism, the Rural Development Commission (1996) stated that "social and community benefits may have to be worked for ... appropriate structures to capture community benefit need to be devised locally, and creatively and energetically managed" (p.vi). A Government objective is to promote access to rural areas for all sections of society "in a way which both protects the countryside itself and brings benefits to local communities" (DETR/MAFF 2000 p.137) and one means of access is via a long distance path. Most National Trail Management Strategies allude to involving communities to maximise benefits. All areas have their own resources which can be utilised for local development potential and this "area-based approach is linked to the new importance given to the role of endogenous resources" (LEADER 2001 p.23), or, more simply, of building on that which already exists, in this instance a long distance path. But Boase (1999) identified that, in many cases such development potential was not realised without a facilitator; if

parish councils used their powers efficiently it is thought they may have the capacity to fulfil this role.

The paucity of literature concerning parish and town councils is regarded by some as a constraint, (Jarrett 1998); however the top down approach in which communities are not consulted has given way to a system of local governance which allows them to "unleash forces of creativity and innovation previously dormant" (Stoker 1999 p.14). This suggested dynamic potential, the effects of the publication of The Rural White Paper in 2000 with specific regard to parish councils as well as the focus on rural tourism following the foot and mouth epidemic in 2001 have all given the future for the countryside a greater political importance and provide a framework for further exploration.

The aim of the research is therefore to determine whether, how and to what extent parish councils currently, or potentially, play a central role in turning the presence of a long distance path to the advantage of local people. The research is confined to England since local government structures differ in other parts of the United Kingdom, although the literature review highlights examples from a wider area. Defining what is meant by rural has occupied rural researchers for many years but in this case the former Rural Development Commission definition of a rural settlement comprising a population fewer than 10,000 is used.

The following questions were set to guide the research. Chapter 2, the literature review, will detail various concepts related to these questions and after exploration they will be returned to in Chapter 6.

- What socio-cultural, environmental and economic benefits could be derived for local people from the presence of a long distance path?

- Do parish councils assist in unlocking this potential, and if so, how?

- Could this process be improved if parish councils acted differently?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The literature review will begin with a brief overview of the structural and social changes occurring that require new ways of sustaining and reintroducing vitality to rural settlements. A well-used method is to build upon what already exists in the area utilising local people, resources, skills and knowledge to produce community benefits which can lead to successful local development. This concept will be explored at the same time looking at one specific local resource that can be exploited. This is the rights of way network and in particular long distance paths. Not only can benefits be derived for local people using these paths, but long distance paths attract a specific type of visitor into the community who may stimulate a chain of benefits which contribute to local development. Some key elements of local development will be examined and the literature review will also point up relevant examples where communities have been actively involved in exploiting their locality through tourism related ideas. But these initiatives do not 'just happen', they require individuals or organisations with commitment and drive to mobilise and encourage local people, to interact with all stakeholders, to monitor and evaluate actions in order for successful local development to occur. It must be understood, however, that the research deals with everything on a small scale. Thus settlements referred to tend to have low populations, the number of long distance walkers is small compared to other visitors but the local development initiatives which might appear to be low key, are nevertheless significant and in harmony with these dimensions. It is therefore appropriate that parish councils, as the tier of government closest to, and representing, these small communities have been chosen as a possible facilitator. This chapter will include a review of parish councils, what they are, what they do and their potential in the context of this research. Hence the review has two principal elements, local development and parish councils, and begins with an overview of some recent trends in rural areas.

2.1 Changes in rural areas leading to the need for local development activity

"Farming was the business of the countryside" (Countryside Agency 2001 p.6), but farm incomes have declined by sixty six per cent in the last twenty years whilst employment in agriculture dropped fourteen per cent over approximately the same period (Countryside Agency 1999a p.20). New forms of economic

activity are encouraged to sustain viable rural communities, "especially in those areas hardest hit by the decline in traditional rural industries" (HMSO 1994 p.160). Innovation is exciting but it is often necessary to convince local people that change is a good thing when an area is already in decline. Moreover, "Innovative ideas alone are not enough: they must be translated into action with determination, energy and enthusiasm" (Scottish Office Central Research Unit 1997 p.i).

Increased and more affordable mobility has also created dramatic changes in rural areas that now house high earning commuters living alongside the indigenous population some of whom are on low incomes. The idyllic image of rural living encourages people to retire to the countryside whilst at the same time young people are leaving to seek affordable housing, employment or higher education. All these factors contribute to the imbalanced rural communities so often found today where "agriculturally orientated discourses are increasingly irrelevant" (Woods 1998 p.16).

Whilst many people still need and demand village services such as shops, post offices and banks, "many rural communities have altered, as facilities have become more centralised and car use has increased" (Department of the Environment 1997 p.3). Between 1991 – 1997 this led, for example, to a decline of 9% in food shops (Rural Development Commission 1997 p.11) thus reducing the availability of places where people "meet, exchange news, concerns and ideas and thereby underpin community care in its widest sense" (Moseley 1996b p.37). There are environmental concerns too caused by new methods of cultivation, the loss of biodiversity and the competing uses for the land for building, tourism and recreation. These changes have created a countryside that "is a mosaic of thousands of independent activities, cemented together in an economic, environmental and social relationship" (Sissons 2001 p.150) which now needs to be addressed in an integrated manner.

2.2 Defining the concept of local development

Recognition of the changes outlined above has led to a "specifically rural perspective to a wide range of existing policies, occupations and interventions" (Francis & Henderson 1992 p.12). However it can be demonstrated that rural areas differ both structurally and functionally, each with its own issues so Moseley (2002) suggests that "rural policies and programmes are best pursued at a local level – not just for 'rural areas in general' but for this or that specific rural area" (p.2). Clifford & King (1993) in their contribution to a series of nine essays on local distinctiveness suggest that providing the same

solutions to subtly different circumstances encourages convergence and homogeneity and can at times miss the whole point. These, together with "simple models and very general explanations" (Murdoch & Marsden 1994 p.310) must be avoided. Specifically concerning rural tourism development Butler et al (1998) and Bramwell (1994) reinforce this point recommending that since rural areas are economically, physically, socially and politically diverse each should address its own needs, since "what is successful in one location may not prove successful in another" (ibid p.37).

Recent government policy recognises that local people are in a strong position to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their communities and to shape their own future (MAFF/DETR 2000). The concept of subsidiarity, whereby power and responsibility are devolved to the most local level creates a challenge for the upper tiers of government and other agencies "that of 'letting go' and placing trust in local actors, agencies and coalitions" (Moseley 2002 p.4) allowing the community to take control, to set their goals and to plan accordingly. This does not yet appear to be universal since Marsden and Murdoch (1998) suggest that "institutions at this most local of scales continue to serve as advisors and consultees but seem to lack any real authority in the realm of policy formulation and delivery" (p.3).

Very successful initiatives have already been undertaken which "have developed from emphasising the macro-economy and globalisation to a focus on the significance of the endogenous potential of regions" (Westholm et al 1999 p.23). This may include natural, cultural, human, economic or institutional resources which, at the local level, are more easily mobilised to produce sustainable local development. Endogenous resources are less vulnerable to change by external forces and therefore provide a secure basis for development. This notion has been adopted in the European LEADER programme which aims to stimulate development initiatives at the local level using an area based approach which identifies the current situation, its strengths and weaknesses to maximise local potential.

The term 'local development' is described by Neil & Tykkylainen (1998) as an ambiguous concept which now requires clarification to form a basis for study. Local suggests a specific space in which people have something in common creating a shared identify, "it refers to a place, to the people who inhabit it and to the spatial and administrative systems around which their activities revolve" (Selman 1996 p.2). Development can be seen as progress but this should be capable of being sustained and whilst it may, for example, create employment,

sustain services or provide transport solutions, it is also about people and "should be concerned with promoting and sustaining an active and responsible citizenship, encouraging people to lead fulfilling lives, ensuring people acquire greater power and self-determination" (Francis & Henderson 1992 p.15).

Local development therefore implies an activity undertaken by and for local people in a specific area who are making a deliberate intervention to promote positive change and growth to benefit and sustain their locality. It should be recognised that rural problems, many caused by the influence of external forces, are inter-connected and therefore a holistic approach is needed to provide solutions whereby, according to Moseley (2002) "economic, social, cultural and environmental change, is at least not mutually damaging, and at best is mutually reinforcing" (p.6). Some relevant elements of local development are now discussed.

2.3   Local development using one local resource – the long distance path

It is accepted that truly local development generally occurs by adding value to an existing local resource and specifically in this instance, to the presence of a long distance path. First proposed in 1949, the majority of these remain as regional routes whilst a few have been designated as National Trails. Now over fifty years later their potential for promotion to national and international markets is recognised by tourism officers. However it is said that they are often undersold (Countryside Commission 1992). On the other hand they are generally welcomed by Local Authorities since they give national recognition to the scenic landscape, attract central government funding and "create a focus for walking as a local recreation and as a tourist attraction" (ibid p.6). Regional routes command less attention and more reliance is placed on trail associations and more local stakeholders to develop, maintain and promote the routes. Whether or not this potential is recognised at the parish level will be explored later but first it is necessary to see how long distance paths could assist local development.

The Countryside Council for Wales et al (1993) reported, "people who enjoy the public good (in this case a long distance path), by definition, do not pay for it directly, but they do buy goods and services in the vicinity, hence the existence of a public good provides benefits to local people" (p.3). Research by the Rural Development Commission (1988) and later by the Countryside Agency (2000) acknowledges that rural tourism when properly managed, is a bonus for local people, helping to create jobs, sustain pubs, post offices,

shops, museums and cultural events. Midmore (2000) focuses specifically on walking as a tourist activity and suggests, "that the interdependencies between walking and the rural economy could be the basis of a highly effective and efficient means of rural regeneration" (p.6). For any local entrepreneur the presence of a long distance path gives a reason to develop small businesses. Some examples include farmers providing various types of accommodation, food growers selling produce at the wayside, shops that also sell prepared food and drinks and people offering baggage transfer along the routes. This non-polluting tourism activity where visitors use and help to sustain local services provides a long season with an even spread of activity from April through to October (Boase 2001 p.6). However it is not only the economic benefits but also environmental, social and cultural aspects that need to be exposed.

A six year project, the Parish Paths Partnership (P3), piloted by the Countryside Commission in 1992 empowered local communities to take responsibility for their own path networks by providing funds to encourage parishes to become involved in the promotion and maintenance of these paths. Whilst recognising that the rights of way system had changed from being part of a working countryside to a recreational asset where "resources must not just be known about, but must be usable with confidence and certainty" (Curry 2001 p.411), it was described by the Commission as very successful (Countryside Commission 1994). The scheme was normally centred on one parish but two linear P3 schemes on long distance paths were developed and now continue in Devon. These have the potential to allow neighbouring parishes to work together for a common aim developing local groups whilst promoting social interaction and networks.

User surveys from National Trails confirm that a significant proportion of users are from abroad and research by the Countryside Agency suggests the number of foreign visitors to England rose by 22% between 1994 – 1998 (Countryside Agency 2000 p.25). Long distance paths therefore bring these visitors into sparsely populated rural areas which would otherwise not get this influence. Local people, who provide information and add interest, have the opportunity to interact and exchange experiences with walkers from all over the world who, it was reported, like to find out more about the villages and communities they pass through (Boase 2001 p.24). Events such as charity walks where local groups become involved are also often centred on long distance paths, in addition they are incorporated in loop walks sometimes

promoted at walking festivals. The possibilities for community involvement are numerous and the Countryside Commission (1999) would like to see "communities celebrating their local paths, using illustrative maps, notice boards, events and the naming of paths and other countryside features to promote local character, heritage and associations" (p.11).

The Countryside Commission (1999) encourage "rural communities to become more involved in the design, ownership and management of local tourism initiatives (p.14). Both Roger Turner and Malcolm Bell in their separate presentations highlighted the growth in the numbers of people taking short breaks, giving rise to a potential market for people wishing to walk for two or three days on a trail, and possibly returning to the area at a later date with friends and family, since "people get hooked once they have done a section" (pers. comm. M. Bell 2001). Fifty seven per cent of respondents in a survey of long distance walkers conducted by the author walked more trails now than they had done previously (Boase 1999 p.35). Thirty three percent of users on National Trails are men aged between 45 – 59 years (Countryside Commission 1997) and the growth in this activity could be attributed in part to the increase in fit early retirees with time for leisure. In addition the abundance of commercial operators providing programmed holidays with associated services, particularly attract the overseas market (Countryside Commission 1992).

Research by the Countryside Commission (1997) showed that a much higher proportion of long distance walkers, compared to other UK tourists, came from socio-economic groups A or B, that they spent twice as much on food and drink and were twice as likely to use serviced accommodation (p.3). This is a low impact and environmentally friendly activity "undertaken by an informed and sensitive user group" (Midmore 2000 p.2), which whilst promoting personal health and contentment "also provide wider social and economic benefits to rural life and society" (Countryside Commission 1999 p.2).

2.4 Adding value as an element of local development

Clearly it can be demonstrated that "the countryside represents a vital environmental, economic and social resource" (Taf & Cleddau 1985 p.28), but in order to maximise the potential for development, communities must have clear objectives which match with national and regional targets, whilst being appropriate to local people, environments and cultures. The former Rural Development Commission (1993) recommended "there should be an assessment of the resources likely to be available" (p.12) in preparation for a

Rural Development Programme and therefore a baseline study is often the precursor to local development.

Many communities have conducted an appraisal which provides up-to-date information on lifestyles, conditions and visions for the future of local people who themselves have undertaken the work. Thus such an appraisal addresses the real needs and wishes of the community. However, "it focuses essentially on problems, needs and wants and largely ignores the 'other side of the coin' ie the local resources (human, physical, financial, institutional) that might serve to alleviate some of those problems" (Moseley 2001 p.3). In addition, such appraisals do not necessarily include all stakeholders and the range of issues may be limited or given a particular slant if funded by an external agency. Thus again the importance of discovery by and for the community is important. If the community loses the sense of ownership, opportunities for capacity building through increase in confidence, skills and empowerment are then depleted. These intangible benefits are important and "can go on to bear fruit years after the appraisal exercise itself is forgotten" (Moseley in Derounian 1998 p.83). In addition appraisals should lead to meaningful plans for action and "take into account the interplay between a combination of factors that significantly influence local development" (Neil & Tykkylainen 1998 p.314).

Nevertheless, despite some omissions, the process of conducting an appraisal is a valuable tool for creating awareness, providing information and equipping local people with skills and confidence. The same can be said regarding the P3 Scheme. Such processes could lead to more focused baseline studies such as that carried out in West Cornwall for the 'Rural Tourism Walking Project' which identified walking as a poorly organised and under-utilised market segment that could, if developed, create considerable local added value" (LEADER 2001 p.55). The Countryside Commission (1992) too placed high value on the use of local surveys which were found to be cost effective and enlightening. Recognising that accommodation is not only a place to rest, but also a point of information and an opportunity to meet other visitors and local people, it is recommended as a good place to do a survey and thus identify needs. (LEADER 2001 p.11).

As an illustration, accommodation providers in Llandegla on the Offa's Dyke National Trail noticed that long distance walkers were frequently requesting camping facilities. The Community Council (similar to parish councils in England) decided to permit casual camping on the playing field which adjoins

the village hall. Later when the hall was modernised funding was obtained for the provision of two showers and toilets for use by campers and others. These facilities encouraged more walkers to stop in the centre of the village and whilst "we don't attempt to make money from the camping" (pers. comm. Mr. Jones 1999), these extra visitors inspired the shop to provide teas and a seating area, as well as stocking appropriate items for walkers and organising a casual 'book swap' service. In addition more business was generated for the pub that provides meals whilst the village hall was upgraded for mutual benefit. Villagers "meet all sorts of interesting people ... it's a nice feeling when you see them plodding down" (pers comm. M.Byrne 2001). Thus this small scale initiative identified by local people utilising the long distance path, has helped to support villages services and promote social interaction in a small remote community (population 390) whilst enhancing the experience for long distance walkers as evidenced by the fact that some now stop for more than one night. It exemplifies local development which "is understood as endogenous development activated almost exclusively by local actors" (Conti 1993, in Neil & Tykkylainen 1998 p.6). Exactly what is meant by 'local people' and to what extent and how they get involved requires further exploration.

2.5 Community involvement in local development

When people become involved in community organisations more human interaction occurs which can lead to increased self confidence and enhanced opportunities for joint ventures. A greater sense of community spirit may develop as well as heightened awareness in local affairs resulting in a community more willing to act and take responsibility for its future.

Local people have been described as "a massive and usually untapped resource" (Taf & Cleddau 1985 p.5) that have local knowledge and are more likely to be committed to development specifically linked to their area. Thus a sense of ownership emerges which bodes well for the long-term sustainability of any projects. The LEADER programme centred on local people and organisations being at the core of the decision making process since it was hoped "to set in train a people-centred process of rural development, with local people 'learning by doing' – ie. developing their awareness, confidence and skills by means of genuine involvement" (LEADER 1992 p.21). With regard to tourism projects the Rural Development Commission (1988) noted that they helped to widen the horizons of the community whilst engendering a sense of civic pride, whilst Getz (1991) suggests that community led initiatives are likely to provide a better experience for visitors with fewer negative impacts if

development has taken place in line with community wishes. Both these aspects are exemplified in the brief case study in the previous section.

Three groups can be identified in most communities. These are political and community leaders; representatives from numerous community and interest groups; as well as those who simply live or work locally. However Moseley and Cherrett (1993) suggest that it may be difficult to involve the full spectrum of people since their interests, skills, commitment and availability are so diverse. Thus it is preferable to acknowledge that not everybody will contribute all of the time and it is better to "identify and encourage as wide a range as possible of interest groups covering all aspects of political, economic, social and cultural life, and to focus their interest and attention on the elements and stages of the project which have the most significance and importance to them" (ibid p.8). In addition, if everyone is kept informed and people see tangible outputs occurring within a given time they will be more likely to become enthused and involved.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2000) concluded that whilst some community leaders devote their life to, and are visionaries for, their community they might lack the skills necessary to deal with a range of people from different walks of life. They are expected "to span the barriers between the structures and professions of government on the one hand and the socially excluded and often disgruntled local populations on the other" (ibid un-numbered). Whilst they enjoy the feeling of power they often lack innovative ideas and leadership qualities. Moreover, expectations from the community can be very demanding and 'leaders' are expected to give up vast amounts of time for no pay whilst being available to deal with community matters at all times of the day and night. When problems occur they are often blamed, and this together with the time and financial aspects may present severe constraints to involvement. However, the 'newcomers' to the countryside mentioned at 2.1 are frequently "articulate and often well-connected to channels of political power, they are prepared and able to act in support of their opinion" (Cherry & Rogers 1996 p.160) so it is important for them to be included. In addition, some local people through their work have external connections and are wearing 'different hats' at different levels. This can influence the role they play in local development and provide an entry to a wider network.

Whilst it is agreed that the involvement of local people is desirable, exactly how to get them involved gives opportunity for innovative methods. Some well

tried ideas include public meetings, training events, exhibitions, festivals and use of the media, but whatever method is employed, a two way process should be established which not only provides information but is also a mechanism for collecting it from local people. This two way process is emphasised in the South West Coastal Path Draft Strategy (1996) which states "local communities and individuals have a great deal to contribute to people's enjoyment of the trail, just as the trail has much to offer them …..(therefore) local communities need to be involved with not just affected by its (the strategy's) implementation" (summary page).

The Community Development Foundation also stress the importance of community involvement since "community activity nurtures human bonds and forms of mutual aid and social capital which neither the state nor the market can provide" (www.cdf.org.uk/html/whtis.html), but "social capital creation needs a deliberate process to bring different stakeholders and institutions together – it does not happen by accident" (pers. comm. Professor Jules Pretty 2001).

2.6   Partnerships for local development

A parish council is a constituted decision-making structure that has the potential to provide a framework for local development. The notion of subsidiarity, where power is devolved to local groups, can be achieved if partnerships which include parish councils, are created. Central government recognise that "they (parish councils) have a vital role in helping principal councils keep in touch with the smallest communities in their areas. Parish councils can work in partnership with their principal council to bring government closer to the people, and to establish the decentralised delivery of local government services. It is important therefore that parish councils everywhere embrace the new culture of openness and accountability, putting their local people first" (DETR 1998 p.20). More recently the Departments of Transport, Local Government and the Regions and Environment, Food and Rural Affairs together with The Countryside Agency, Local Government Association and National Association of Local Councils have jointly published a consultation paper on 'Quality Parish Councils' which is again committed to the partnership approach (DEFRA 2001). Partnerships are also encouraged between local business and residents, voluntary and private groups as well as public bodies and thus a wide range of stakeholders emerge giving the local community a link into the wider world and the statutory authorities a greater understanding of the needs and aspirations of the local community.

Partnerships "are appropriate for tackling issues that have a number of dimensions which cannot be addressed ... by a single individual or organisation" (Slee & Snowdon 1997 p.3). Partnerships give opportunity for shared vision, synergy, skill sharing and development, strategic planning and can provide a stimulus for local development projects. However, in order to create effective partnerships from different sectors community leaders "require prompt and appropriate induction and training as well as money to meet their practical needs" (JRF 2000 unnumbered). On the other hand, officers working in all tiers of government and in agencies need trust and confidence enabling them "to let go and allow people to decide many things for themselves" (Moseley & Cherrett 1993 p.19). "A successful combination of local and global know how is a pre-condition for development" (Neil & Tykkylainen 1998 p.352), thus these "external linkages are all important" (ibid p.349). Derounian (1998) suggests "the real 'trick' is to ensure conformity so that top-down and bottom-up approaches coincide" (p.42).

Two examples will exemplify the 'partnership principle' of local development. The Tarka project in North Devon was based on a partnership of local activists, a wildlife trust, parish, district and county councils as well as representation at international level. The project, organised by local people and first conceived in 1987, European Year of the Environment, reported dwindling farm incomes, high unemployment, concern for village amenities and a lack of identity. "Locally the project had a high profile" (pers. comm. A. Moulton 1996). Using existing local resources, cycle and long distance walking trails were developed linking with the previously threatened railway line. Many small businesses were created including cycle hire, bed and breakfast, farm shops, a museum, craft workshops and tea-rooms. The project has been so successful that "there has been enormous interest from overseas governments and regional tourist boards" (pers. comm. A. Moulton 1996). Without the expertise, funding, advice and commitment of the partners it is doubtful if this integrated project could have flourished to the same extent. It is noted that local communities benefited from the retention of the railway line, strengthening of village services, a focus on local produce and crafts, the creation of a sustainable form of transport and recreation as well as a reduction in economic leakage by tourist spend from the North Devon area.

Another tourism initiative was developed in 1985 in West Wales to raise the profile of the area following the closure of the secondary school and the relocation of the local government offices. Here community councils joined

together to develop a footpath project to benefit local people and visitors. This began with the clearance and waymarking of footpaths and the production of a village leaflet, whilst making the area more attractive by reinstating the green and a pond. Through linking adjoining settlements by the rights of way network, a long distance path, The Landsker Borderlands Trail is now used to promote this tranquil area, which is rich in history and culture. It therefore builds on the local resource to diversify from the agricultural economy to an "effective but environmentally sympathetic tourism sector" which aims to "maximise the economic gain whilst enhancing the social, cultural and physical environment" (Taf & Cleddau 1985 p.22). The 'top down' and 'bottom up' linkage described above was highlighted at the launch by Rt. Hon. Nicholas Edwards who said "The Government can help and encourage but it is up to the people of rural Wales to supply worthwhile ideas and enthusiasm to develop them" (ibid p.1).

The West Wales project was similar to the North Devon example in that both populations sensed an increased feeling of peripherality. Both initiatives reinforce the findings of the Rural Development Commission (1996) that tourism benefits were most noticeable in areas with low populations. In many cases the appropriate area is greater than a parish but smaller than a county where there is a perception of greater cohesion and more community spirit which in turn facilitates the mobilisation of local people to initiate and sustain proposals.

Thus a partnership can bring together two elements of local development: participation by local people relying on their own initiative and the provision of technical support and advice to encourage and make the efforts of these people more effective. The Community Development Foundation advocates the creation of long-term quasi-independent specialist local agencies. Some areas have been identified where Development Trusts have been created to "support projects which involve the community, build a thriving economy, improve and sustain the quality of life and improve the natural and built environment of the area" (RSPB et al 1999 p.16) and perhaps there is a role for them to work in conjunction with parish councils.

2.7 Exploiting 'locality' as a resource for local development

Roger Turner, in his presentation at the Rural Life Conference 2001 emphasised the Countryside Agency's objectives for promoting sustainable rural tourism which include:

- "Bringing out local distinctiveness, culture and heritage and
- promoting local produce and gastronomy" ...

and these have significance for successful local development. Attention to detail is essential if local distinctiveness is to be retained and Jones and Little (2000) claim "incorporation of local culture may be vital for success of development initiatives" (p.177).

Local people know their area and thus have the potential to capitalise on their unique selling points and these can include resources such as long distance paths or surrounding heritage, cultural or environmental connections. "Whilst one small-scale tourism project alone may not reverse the fortunes of a local community, it may well bring the community together and become a catalyst for change" (Scottish Office Central Research Unit 1997 p.iii). This is demonstrated in the three brief case studies in North Devon, West Wales and at Llandegla. However community leaders need to be aware of the potential, to have the skills to market their product and the ability to provide the most appropriate 'goods'. Research indicates, for example, that in one key location on the Offa's Dyke National Trail only one quarter of businesses mentioned the path in their promotional literature whilst it was recognised that "for many small businesses, there would be no business without the nature conservation resource" (in this case a long distance path) (Countryside Council for Wales et al 1993 p.38). This has been overcome in the Landsker Borderlands project in West Wales which has more recently grown under the LEADER initiative, where "a tremendous effort has been made to provide training, giving the inhabitants the role of 'ambassadors' for their region" (LEADER 2001 p.51).

It has been found that walkers "are particularly interested in authenticity" (ibid p.27) and prefer to eat something typical of the region. It is therefore up to people to serve local foods and provide information about the route and the locality as well as promoting local produce, crafts and culture. This was recognised at a conference as long ago as 1988 by Professor Michael Dower, then Director of the Countryside Commission, who said "I rejoice at a development which reflects the spirit of the place, which reveals its special character and history and breathes a sense of 'localness', giving the tourist not only a holiday unique to that place but also some assurance that the benefits of this visit will spin into the local economy".

It certainly appears that the activity based tourism so far described can be used as a vehicle for local development which encompasses three principal issues; it is multi-dimensional, it relates to a small area and it is sustainable

(thus can be continued indefinitely without detrimental impacts). It has the potential to promote the development **of** local people, **by** local people, **for** local people (pers. comm. M. Moseley 2000) using the local resource. There are numerous rural communities that have all the ingredients, scenic landscape, heritage, paths, village services, accommodation, interested and interesting local people, but what they so often lack is something to bind all these ingredients together. Local action groups developed under the LEADER initiative have driven these projects forward from the community level, but it would appear that this is a role that could also be undertaken by parish councils. After all "aren't they supposed to be the lifeblood of rural communities?" (R. Wakeford 2002 p.6).

2.8 Parish Councils as facilitators of local development

This section will very briefly outline the history of parish councils before concentrating on their position in society today, what they do and how this could be related to local development and local governance. Some constraints on parish council activity are identified before a concluding summary of the potential role of parish councils to promote local development from the presence of a long distance path.

Early parish councils were created from parish vestries and were traditionally chaired by the parson or the squire, their principal function being the administration of the Poor Law. They were regarded by the people of the eighteenth century as 'the government' and by legislation in 1894 became a statutory tier of local government (Poole & Keith-Lucas 1994). It was hoped such legislation would encourage parish councils to concentrate on better governance of rural affairs by working more closely with the local people.

Much more recently, in 1969, there was a government proposal to abolish parish councils but in defence the National Association of Town and Parish Councils stated "these councils provide a forum for discussion of matters of importance to the community ... they also provide a means by which local communities equip themselves with things they want and for which they are able and willing to pay" (Poole & Keith-Lucas 1994 p.199). In 1991 when the structure of local government was again being considered, some parish councils wanted greater prominence and in response to this the government commissioned a survey which specifically investigated all aspects of parish councils. (Ellwood et al 1992). Evidence contained in this report highlighted the reality that parish councils were not generally performing efficiently and effectively. A subsequent government consultation paper (DOE 1992)

therefore stated that "given the sheer range and diversity of local councils – both in terms of what they do and how well they do it, the Government does not believe it would be right to provide across the board increases in their rights and powers" (in Poole & Keith-Lucas 1994 p.213).

Approximately 8,000 parish councils currently exist, constituting the most basic unit of government in England today. Some of them evolved in 1974 as a result of the Local Government Act 1972 when the former rural district councils were extinguished. They tend therefore to be found in the less densely populated areas, although a few represent larger settlements some preferring to adopt the title 'town council'. The report by Ellwood et al illustrates that parish councils do vary enormously in composition and activity, but the average council in 1992 represented a community of 1,700 inhabitants, comprising nine councillors and one, frequently part-time, paid employee, the clerk. Parish councils are "elected bodies with discretionary powers and rights laid down by Parliament to represent their communities and provide services for them" (Ellwood et al 1992 p.1). Although these powers, which will be discussed later in this section, are wide ranging (see Appendix 1) they have hardly any mandatory duties except to hold an annual parish meeting and to meet at least three times a year. This means, "that they can choose what to do" (Derounian and Howes 2001 p.6).

Parish councils have however more recently received positive attention. The Rural White Paper states "while some (parish councils) already set an outstanding example in community leadership, a large number could or would like to do more and we will help them achieve that" (DETR/MAFF 2000 p.146). Stephen Wright, advisor to the Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils, welcomed this "potentially challenging new emphasis on the role of Parish and Town Councils" (pers. comm. 2000). So how do, and could parish councils fit into the wider picture?

New ways to govern society are emerging and whilst traditional governing mechanisms decline "the phoenix rising from the ashes of traditional local government is community governance" (Stoker 1999 p.14). The term 'governance', whilst being "part of the governmental apparatus" (Stoker 1994 p.11) implies a less rigid system which encompasses both government and non-governmental agencies providing "a complex array of interactive relationships" (Stoker 1999 p.xiv) in which parish councils could, and sometimes do, play a central role.

Historically, and in rather simplistic terms, the public sector once sought to fulfil obligations laid down in statute, the private sector was concerned with profits and the voluntary sector was altruistic, however, the boundaries between, and *raison d'etre* of, these organisations has recently become blurred. A lack of cohesion can result when some organisations are not necessarily working in harmony with each other or with the state. Nevertheless, the move towards local governance leading from the decentralisation of power to the local level provides "the opportunity to use local knowledge to meet local needs" (Stoker 1994 p.5). This is recognised by the Government which wants "to do more to ensure that local people are directly involved in public sector activities so that their voice can be heard, and their knowledge and experience can be fully used" (DETR/MAFF 2000 p.162). The Government wants "to empower local communities so that decisions are taken with their active participation and ownership" (DETR/MAFF 2000 p.11), and since parish councils represent local communities it is appropriate that they should take a central role in this process.

Principal authorities are required to produce community strategies which promote economic, social and environmental well-being and "will be expected to bring together parish and town councils, other public agencies, the private and voluntary sectors and all sections of the local community, to identify and work towards a long term vision and action for improving the quality of life in their area" (DETR/MAFF 2000 p.152). This process gives opportunity for parish councils to become actively involved in working with other agencies and tiers of government. The government is also encouraging villages and small towns to produce parish plans, which it is proposed will feed into community strategies. These parish plans set out a long-term vision for specific localities and parish councils are expected to lead the development of such plans.

Whereas other local organisations come and go, parish councils have accountability and structure, as well as being able to raise and spent money. Since parish councils receive no funding from central government many of them raise funds through the 'precept'. This is an amount, agreed annually following scrutiny of a budget for the following year, which is levied on all council tax payers by the local authority on behalf of the parish council. However, "the generation of income by using their own assets means that many local councils are able to reduce their call on the public purse" (Ellwood et al 1992 p.75), so, for example, revenue may also be derived from the hire of halls and from council owned car parks and allotments. However, councils can

only spend funds where they are statutorily authorised to do so but following the report of Ellwood et al, the Department of the Environment described the administrative and financial structures in many councils as very fragile (DOE 1992 p.40).

All of the powers of parish councils are relevant to local development but the most pertinent for this research are shown in Table 1 below.

Statutory Power of Parish Councils	Relevance for local development resulting from long distance paths
Acquire land to benefit the parish	Potential to provide recreation, picnic or camping area or for larger community building for use by local people and visitors
Provide off street parking	This may encourage visitors to use settlement as centre for walking the long distance path, however it has been found that long distance walkers are four times more likely to request public transport provision than for car parks (Boase 1999 p.27).
Repair, maintain and sign footpaths	Parish councils may undertake work on behalf of, and may receive costs from, the highway authority.
Support arts and crafts	This promotes 'locality' described at 2.7.
Encourage tourism	The benefits of a sustainable tourism activity have been explored at 2.3.
Provide entertainments	This encourages social interaction, may exploit local cultures and enhances visitors' experience.
Have the right to be consulted on planning applications	Enables parish councils to voice local concerns and to respond to the needs of the community specifically related to exploitation of local resources.
Have a right to provide public conveniences	A facility both for the local community and for visitors. When provided in conjunction with other authorities there is potential for partnership working.

Table 1 Some powers of parish councils and their relevance to local development (Collation by the author based on various sources)

Nevertheless, the report by Ellwood et al, which is the only known comprehensive survey of parish council activity shows that many powers are not fully utilised (Ellwood et al 1992). Howes suggested that the reason for this might be "that staff do not understand what their capacity is and how the parish

council fits into the whole pattern of government in Britain" (pers. comm. 2001) whilst Arnold Baker advises new councillors to acquaint themselves with local government law to "look beyond the obstacles for what can be done, if need be by indirect means" (in Poole & Keith-Lucas 1994 p.179).

Councillors are volunteers frequently juggling time, money and loyalties and whilst they may be committed and enthusiastic these qualities " are insufficient to run a tier of government" (Derounian and Howes 2001 p.10). They need confidence and skills to make decisions on a wide variety of issues that affect their communities, as well as understanding how these interact with national policy. Howes (1998) explains that "a major problem is that it is assumed that somehow on election councillors are transformed into experts on law, procedures and the financial management ...... it is presumed that they automatically know about the powers available .... and are knowledgeable about principal authority policies..... The belief that somehow the signing of a declaration of acceptance of office confers instant wisdom and knowledge must rank as one of the of the few remaining beliefs in magic within British local government" (p.327).

The Rural White Paper (DETR/MAFF 2000) triggered an enhanced status for parish councils encouraging them to obtain Quality Parish status. To help them achieve this standard the Government recognised that training provision for councillors and clerks was necessary and to this end have, in conjunction with the Countryside Agency and the National Association of Local Councils, produced a National Training Strategy for Parish and Town Councils (CA/NALC 2001). Training events begin to build networks between parishes and assist more effective working practices. Therefore if parish councils are willing to participate some problems associated with lack of skills may be alleviated. However it is noted within the Strategy, "there is much to be done to ensure that all (parish) councils share that commitment to development and learning" (p.8).

The Local Government Act of 1972 authorised parish councils to act as agents for other tiers of government, once again providing an opportunity to "help principal councils keep in touch .... and (for parish councils to) work in partnership with the principal council to bring government closer to the people" (Local Governance 1998 p.258). In this capacity the most frequently provided services by parish councils include street cleaning, grass cutting, responsibility for public conveniences and path maintenance. They are also, as a result of the Local Government and Rating Act 1997, required to consult parish councils

on certain subjects designated by the Secretary of State (Arnold-Baker 1997), the principal one being planning matters.

In addition to providing services parish councils can undertake a range of other functions by exercising the powers available to them some of which are mentioned above. "A list of activities could be extended indefinitely" (Poole and Keith-Lucas p.134) with events such as the Festival of Britain, The Silver Jubilee and more recently the Millennium and Golden Jubilee celebrations stimulating community activities, mobilising local people and demonstrating a growing appreciation of the range of their powers.

Many parish councils have been active in tracing public rights of way, some of which were ploughed up during the war to grow food. This has frequently led to, or stemmed from an interest in local history and gives rise to such initiatives as parish maps, village walks, festivals and the formation of maintenance and conservation groups, all of which encourage community activities and bring benefits to local people as well as visitors (King & Clifford 1985).

The Rural White Paper sets the agenda for a holistic approach to local development, highlighting the role that could be taken by parish councils, whilst providing a framework for all stakeholders to work in collaboration for the benefit of local communities. The powers relevant to this research have been set out and it is suggested that some councils are proactive in their work, but no research appears to have been undertaken which substantiates this claim. However, the literature review has highlighted some constraints to parish council activity.

The Government wants "to encourage both parishes and principal authorities to work much more closely together" (DOE/MAFF 2000 p.149), but parish councils are perceived by many to be unimportant and principal authorities "for the most part have appeared content that local (parish) councils do very little" (Derounian & Howes 2001 p.10). They are not taken seriously and often not considered as suitable partners by other agencies and tiers of government, thus "a spiral of apathy and alienation from the local government process is set in train" (ibid p.11). Indeed Hirsch "for convenience" excludes them from his book 'A Positive Role for Local Government – Lessons for Britain' (1994) describing parish councils as having "minor responsibilities and no significant revenue resources" (p.29).

These attitudes do not support parish councils or assist them to become proactive and willing to engage with their communities in local development

activities. Poole and Keith-Lucas report one clerk who, recognising the changes in agriculture referred to at 2.1, suggested his council should encourage the development of small businesses in the area. He thought that local knowledge could be used to good effect to find suitable premises but "he found strong resistance to change, and a reluctance on the part of the long-standing inhabitants of the village to become involved" (p.260).

The Rural White Paper stresses involvement by all parts of the community and this is seen as so important that it is included as one of the criteria needed for Quality Parish status but whether the membership of parish councils embraces all sectors of the community is questionable. Ellwood et al (1992) revealed, and it was more recently confirmed by the Department of Environment Transport and the Regions (1998) that the majority of councillors are male and between the age of 45 – 59 years. Whilst the proportion of women had risen they were nevertheless under-represented. In addition whilst all inhabitants of a parish over the age of 18 have a right to vote and take part in a parish meeting they cannot become a member of the council until the age of 21. This lack of representation may account for the background of apathy and sometimes hostility against which many councillors work. There is also confusion over the title, since some people believe it is necessary to be an active church member in order to participate (Poole & Keith-Lucas p.260).

The legislation, regulations and codes of practice are complex and constantly changing and therefore many councils, and particularly clerks, have only a limited capacity to grapple with them (Poole & Keith-Lucas 1994). Clerks have been shown to deal with a host of varied duties with many reporting involvement in forty different subject areas. Almost all (96%) are part-time whilst the majority have another job and a quarter of all clerks also look after a family. Some nine per cent undertake the role of clerk in a voluntary capacity and two thirds have received no formal training (Ellwood et al 1992). In spite of these staggering figures clerks have to be meticulous and accurate since they are publicly accountable to the electorate. In addition if they appear "inept and inefficient they would not be taken seriously by higher authorities" (Poole & Keith-Lucas 1994 ch vi), a point already suggested.

To summarise, the possible constraints to parish council activity identified in this literature review are concerned with a lack representation, attitudes, skills, procedures and reliance on the clerk.

2.9 Concluding comments regarding parish councils and their potential role in local development

The literature review began by examining various recent changes but whilst these have revolutionalised rural areas, parish councils "at the end of the 20th century are not unlike their predecessors of 100 years before" (Poole & Keith-Lucas 1994 p.264). Historically parish councils were concerned chiefly with social issues but in the twenty first century they need a multi-dimensional approach in order to contribute effectively towards the development and maintenance of vibrant sustainable communities. However, "a group which is active in the rural community such as the parish council ... may be a democratic and progressive agent of change, or a repressive and conservative defender of the existing patterns of inequality"(Francis & Henderson 1992 p.32). Some parish council powers related to harnessing community benefit from a local resource, and more specifically in this case a long distance path, have been set out above. The Government has given parish councils the opportunity to demonstrate their effectiveness to benefit their communities and "it is clear that local (parish) councils in England have considerable powers to act on behalf of their local communities if they so decide. And some do!" (Derounian and Howes 2001 p.6).

One of the goals of the Rural White Paper is to encourage parish councils "to achieve a new status in local government as the voice of their community and enable them to work more closely with their partners" (DETR/MAFF 2000 p.146). Clearly these latter paragraphs demonstrate that changes are needed in some councils if they are to fulfil these objectives. Whether or not they receive appropriate support, are willing to participate in local development activities and are receptive to change, remains to be seen.

With all this in mind, at least thirteen parish councils will be investigated to a greater or lesser extent and the methodolody for the research is set out in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter has two distinct parts. Firstly the issues surrounding the methodological choices are set out, providing a brief overview of different methods that might be adopted, followed by a focus on qualitative research, and in particular the case study approach. Secondly there will be a resume of how the research was actually conducted with reference to data collection, sources, storage, analysis and reporting.

3.1 Differences between qualitative and quantitative methodologies

The fundamental differences between qualitative and quantitative methodologies involve the types of data and the way in which they are investigated and analysed. Researchers using quantitative methods tend not to be so involved with their research subjects, finding it more effective to use very structured data collection instruments producing numeric data which are statistically analysed often using specialist computer programs. On the other hand, researchers using qualitative methods produce words and "seek insight rather than statistical analysis" (Bell 1997 p.4), whilst tending to become more involved in the data collection through the use of interviews and observation; techniques which are less standardised. During analysis therefore the researcher needs to search for emerging patterns and themes.

The choice therefore depends upon the two approaches' appropriateness for the given situation in the context of the research questions, the data required and resources available. However, "there is no 'right' methodology" (Sarantakos 1998 p.56) indeed, many authors advocate the use of mixed methods. In this way triangulation is introduced whereby the subject is viewed from several angles providing a balanced perspective and thereby increasing the reliability and validity of the results.

3.2 Adoption of, and justification for using qualitative methods

There are three elements within this research, long distance paths, parish councils and local development. Regarding the first two of these, there are numerous and varied examples whilst the third element is often difficult to quantify. Rather than seeking superficial data on large numbers of respondents it was thought that a more useful approach would be to gain an in-depth understanding of the processes involved within just a few settings. In this instance data was required relating to the actual and perceived benefits

that are derived from the presence of a local resource as well as a detailed investigation of the work, related to local development, of a range of parish councils. It was anticipated this would involve approximately fifteen of them together with a range of other organisations. Qualitative methodologies were appropriate in order to achieve "results that are not obtained by statistical procedures" (Bourma & Atkinson 1997 p.206) by acquiring a rich quality of data, gleaned from processes happening in their natural settings involving a small number of respondents.

It was expected that findings would be emergent rather than pre-figured and would require an open approach which would allow unexpected issues to be explored. Sarantakos (1998) acknowledges that objectivity is not possible in qualitative research which "encourages intersubjectivity, closeness between the elements of the research and involvement of the researcher in the whole research process" (p.19). Despite the fact that the qualitative approach appears less structured than quantitative methods, careful preparation and wide reading are still essential. Planning the research was therefore seen to be vital to clarify the concepts and ideas underpinning the research and to understand how these related, and contributed to theory. Whilst flexibility is desirable "the most important thing is to be clear about what you are doing and why" (Seale 1998 p.113) thus avoiding wasted time and resources and ensuring that all the components fit together.

Data analysis involves "discovering significant classes of things, persons and events and the properties which characterize them" (Marshall and Rossman 1999 p.152). Coding may take various forms and there are computer software programmes to assist in qualitative data analysis for example, NUDIST. Whilst the use of software has the advantage of speed, a computer driven analysis "may take no account of a word's significance with a document" (May 1997 p.172). In addition a good understanding of the software is needed. Alternatively the researcher may use a manual system of coloured highlighter pens for classifying and coding. In this respect it was decided to use manual methods since it was thought inappropriate to devote time to learn new software for what was anticipated to be manageable amounts of data at Masters level.

Research Schedule

	2001												2002						
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul
Literature review	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█											
Methodology					█	█													
Scoping study							█												
Analyse scoping study								█											
Write up scoping study									█										
Case study 1										█									
Case study 2											█								
Case study 3												█							
Analyse case studies											█	█	█						
Synthesis of all results														█					
First draft write up													█	█	█	█			
Final draft																	█	█	
Contingency																		█	
Submission																			█

Figure 1

3.3 Adoption of, and justification for the case study approach

Miles and Huberman (1994) stress "you cannot study everyone everywhere doing everything" (p.27) and it was accepted that it is impossible for a single researcher with limited time and resources to conduct a study of all parish councils in relation to local development activities resulting from nearby long distance paths. The selection of one or more case studies "allows the researcher to concentrate on a specific instance or situation and to identify the various interactive processes at work. These processes may remain hidden in a large-scale survey but may be crucial to the success or failure of systems or organizations" (Bell 1987 p.6). However it must be remembered that the study is a case of 'something', in which the unit of analysis, once defined should remain the focus of the research. In this study the role of the parish council in respect of promoting local development related to the proximity of a long distance path provides this unit of analysis.

It has already been suggested that to "achieve a higher degree of validity and reliability; and ... overcome the deficiencies of single-method studies" (Sarantakos 1998 p.154) several methods or sources be combined. This process of 'triangulation' was thought to be important since the case study has "traditionally been considered to be 'soft' research" (Yin 1994 p.18) being seen as less rigid than the more formal quantitative survey methods. In this instance the data was collected through semi structured interviews which were supplemented with documentary evidence and observation.

By providing an opportunity to study the unique, unusual or less well understood "the case study can 'flesh out' the picture in a way that is crucial to our understanding and not possible using more superficial techniques" (Punch 1999 p.156) but different writers have opposing views on the selection of case studies. Sarantakos (1998) recommends using the more typical units selected through purposive sampling where those most likely to produce results are deliberately chosen and where the choice of unit is more geared to suitability than to representativeness. Since a continual interaction occurs between the theory and the data being collected, a recommendation by Stake (1995) to "ultimately select the ones to study ... in terms of what might optimise understanding" (p.13) seemed to be the ideal solution.

The essentially inductive nature of the research using direct observation and interviews to gather information as well as analysing documentary evidence

demands a specific research strategy. Marshall and Rossman (1999) believe that "conceptualising a study and developing a design that is clear, flexible and manageable is dialectic, messy and just plain hard work" (p.54). In order to keep data collection focused a researcher needs a thorough understanding of the theories under review and this preliminary work was thought to assist in keeping the research within confined parameters. Findings may not be exactly as expected but at all times it was acknowledged that the interviewer should remain impartial.

Having decided that a case study approach was appropriate the literature, as indicated above suggested several practical issues needed to be addressed. A research schedule was devised at the outset and this is shown in Figure 1. The following section explains and justifies exactly how and why the various stages of the research were conducted.

3.4 The current research – description of, and justification for the work undertaken

Since, as already noted, there are over 8,000 parish councils in England which, according to the relevant literature cited at 2.8, vary enormously it was decided that the research should be undertaken in two distinct phases. The first, a scoping study which was conducted mainly through telephone interviews, and the second three case studies. This second phase involved a visit of several days to each case study location and used multiple sources of evidence.

3.5 The Scoping Study

The scoping study had two objectives. Firstly, it was designed to reveal issues to be addressed in the case study phase and secondly to inform this later phase, specifically in the choice of locations, details of which appear following the analysis at the end of Chapter 4. These objectives were achieved by exploring with a range of informants, and deliberately in outline only, all the research questions relating to the likely impacts of long distance paths, as well as the scope and scale of existing relevant parish council activity.

3.5.1 Identification of informants for the scoping study

Various organisations and individuals working with parishes were at this time targeted so that the perceptions and attitudes of a range of stakeholders could be considered at this early stage. All had an interest in the subject but from different perspectives and this enabled the research to be contextualised within a much wider picture. In addition parish council clerks were contacted to ascertain issues from the local point of view.

A few suitable contacts within relevant organisations were already known from previous work, and through them further interviewees were identified. However interviewees at the parish level were needed. Initially contact was made via a message in the monthly electronic bulletin transmitted to approximately 120 Local Policy students at the University of Gloucestershire. The majority of these worked in parish councils. Eight rapid, helpful and enthusiastic responses were received mostly from parish representatives where long distance paths passed through their community. Other possible informants were found by word of mouth from these new and the previously described known contacts. Criteria for selection of suitable parishes (see following section) were scrutinised and matched with the contacts already made, some were then eliminated and then gaps were identified. Extensive use was then made of local authority web sites which provided the name and address of parish clerks and through them other councillors and relevant interviewees were found.

3.5.2 Selection criteria for scoping study interviewees

According to Boase 1999 (p.32) the interaction between long distance walkers and rural communities changes according to:

- the designation of the long distance path (National Trail or regional route)
- the position of the settlement along it,
- the size of the settlement
- the attitude of local people towards visitors

Therefore in order to expose as many issues and situations as possible a wide geographic area was explored at this stage with no focus on specific long distance paths or locations. At least one settlement from each of the following categories was selected:

- on an established National Trail
- on a National Trail under development
- at the intersection of several long distance paths
- 1 km off a National Trail
- on a regional route
- at the end of a regional route

In addition a range of settlement sizes were chosen varying between 160 – 8,500 inhabitants. Five had up to 1000 inhabitants whilst nine had over 1000 inhabitants. Table 2 shows the individual parish councils selected, together

Parish Councils Examined in the Research

⊙ Case study locations
▪ Scoping study locations

St Cuthbert's Way
Cotswold Way
Two Moors Way

⊙ Holy Island

▪ Wooler

▪ Londesborough

Llangela

▪ Blakeney

▪ Reepham

Winchcombe
▪ Cricklade
⊙ Dursley

▪ Edenbridge

▪ Queen Camel
⊙ Witheridge

N Tawton
▪ Stokenham

Calstock
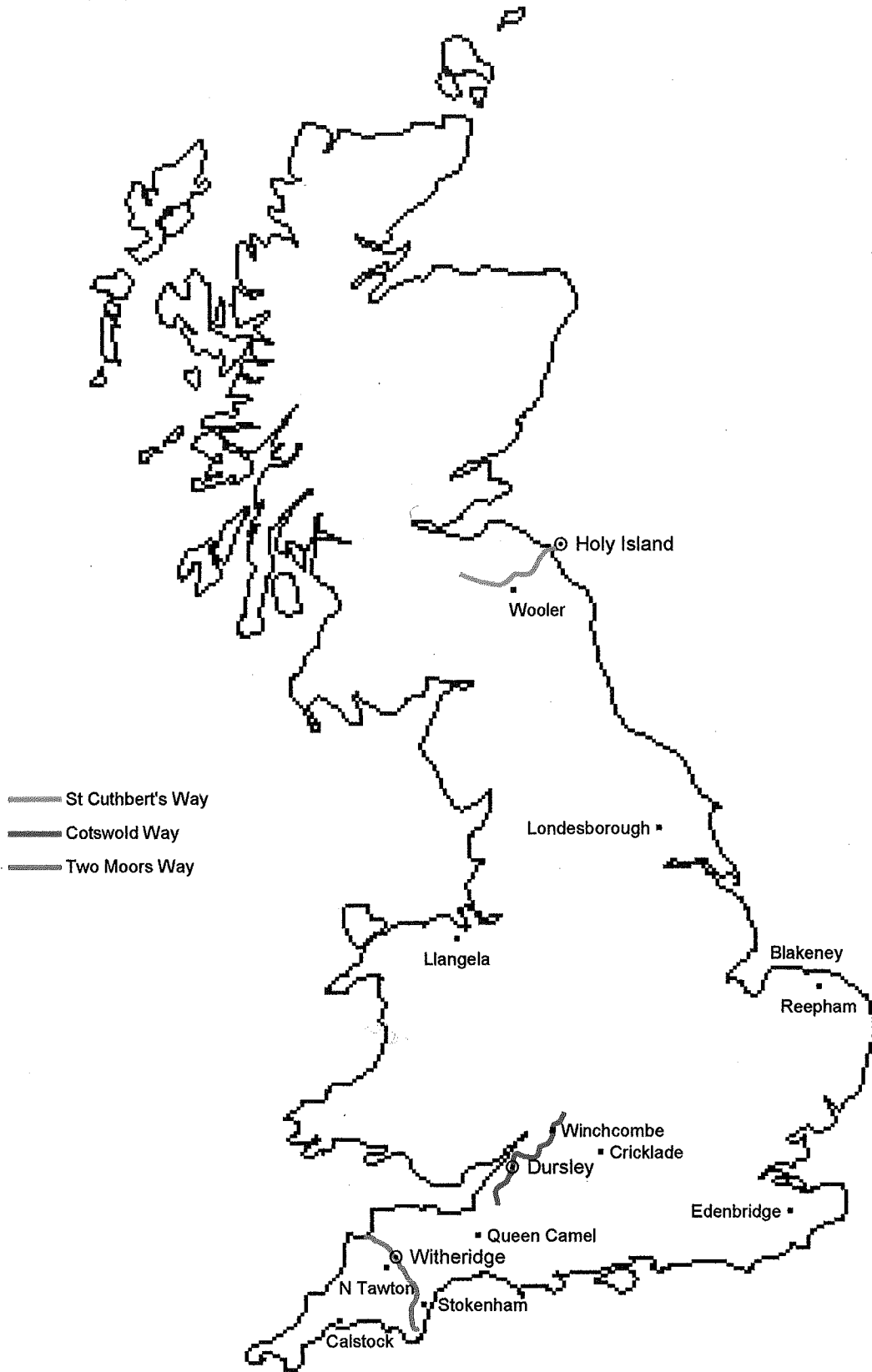
Figure 2

with their characteristics and Figure 2 illustrates their locations. A full list of informants appears in Appendix 2.

Long distance path description	Settlement and name of long distance path(s)	Population
On an established National Trail	Blakeney on Peddars Way Cricklade on Thames Path Londesborough on Wolds Way Llangela on Offa's Dyke	800 4,000 200 390
On a National Trail under development	Dursley on Cotswold Way	5,800
At the intersection of several routes including a National Trail under development	Winchcombe on Cotswold Way, Gloucestershire Way, Windrush Way, Wardens Way	6,000
On a regional route	North Tawton on Tarka Trail Witheridge on Two Moors Way Calstock on Tamar Valley Walk Edenbridge on Vanguard Way, Greensand Way, Eden Valley Walk Reepham on Marriotts Way Queen Camel on Leyland Trail	1,500 1,000 7,000 8,500 2,000 789
At the end of a regional route	Holy Island on St. Cuthbert's Way	160
1Km off a National Trail	Stokenham near SW Coastal Path	2,000

Table 2 Parish councils included in the scoping study

A total of thirty two productive interviews were carried out and Table 3 shows the various organisations that provided data.

Organisation	Role of interviewee	Reason for inclusion in the survey
Parish and Town Councils as shown in Table 2	Clerks and councillors	To ascertain Councils' perspectives and attitudes
Rural Community Councils	Two Directors	To provide perspectives from local communities as well as parish councils, with whom they work closely

Long Distance Walkers Association	President and also former Chairman of the Countryside Commission	To ascertain the long distance walkers' perspective and general views
Countryside Commission (now Countryside Agency)	Former Director	To provide a general local development perspective
Outdoor Writers Guild	Chairman and also former head of Information Services at Peak District National Park	To give general views
Countryside Agency	Five National Trail Officers – each responsible for a specific LDP	To provide a perspective from officers working with communities and to varying degrees with parish councils.
Countryside Agency	National Trails Policy Officer	To provide strategic information
Countryside Agency	National Trails Marketing consultant and a former North Downs Way National Trail Officer	To provide information at all levels.
County Councils	Four Tourism Officers	To provide the perspective of (some) trail development and promotion officers.

Table 3 Organisations participating in the scoping study

3.5.3 Execution of the Scoping Study

For practical reasons the scoping study was undertaken mainly by means of telephone interviews. An interview template, shown at Figure 3, was developed. Open questions were used to address four issues, with space allocated at the end of the template for any additional comments.

Once completed, it became clear that the scoping study had proved very valuable in a number of respects. First, it clarified the key issues to be explored relating both to the impacts of long distance paths and to the types of parish council involvement. Secondly, it clarified the criteria for selecting the case studies and allowed some useful initial exploration of potential locations in that respect.

Figure 3 Template for scoping study interviews (Source: Author)

Parish/population/location	
Name of interviewee	
Position of interviewee	
Address	
Tel/email/mobile/fax	
Level of activity on long distance path (where applicable)	
Recommended further contacts	
Recommended sources	

1. The benefits brought by the presence of a long distance footpath

2. The perceived disbenefits brought by the presence of a long distance footpath

3. Current parish council support for local development

4. Further potential for parish councils to assist

5. Additional comments

3.6 The Case Studies

3.6.1 Selection

Turning to the three case studies, there was a long list of potential parish councils and the aim was to select ones that would uncover a broad range of issues. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest conducting more than one case study since confidence is increased if similar concepts become apparent in more than one case. It was therefore decided that three parish councils would be targeted and that they should differ in respect of:

- the population of the parish,
- the position on a long distance path
- the designation of the relevant long distance path
- the history of the long distance path
- the geographic location within England

These criteria evolved from previous research (Boase 1999). Analysis of the scoping study suggested two further situations considered to be of interest. Thus in addition, at least one location was selected which:

- was not normally a tourist area
- considered itself to be geographically peripheral

An overview of each case study location will be found at the end of Chapter 4.

The choice of parish councils was also influenced by conversations with parish clerks within the scoping study who were often proactive in introducing other suitable interviewees. A detailed explanation of the selection of these interviewees appears at the beginning of Chapter 5.

At all times interviewees in both the scoping study and this case study phase were provided in advance with an overview of the research objectives and, after negotiation, confirmation of the date and time of the proposed interview. In many instances email facilitated a speedy, efficient and cheap method to plan the research. This was particularly pertinent during the scoping study since it was conducted at a time when many people were on holiday but with the aid of a systematic logging chart and this rapid response method an effective interview schedule was developed. It should be noted that email was not exclusively used and potential interviewees unable to access the Internet were not excluded.

3.6.2 Execution of the case studies

The principal data collection instrument used was the semi-structured interview, undertaken face to face and lasting approximately 30 minutes, which

according to May (1997) allows interviewees to talk about subjects in their own terms. In addition to interview material, data was also gathered from documentary sources and by observation some of this involving photography. Documents included parish council minutes, Local Plans, tourism, economic and regeneration strategies, maps and footpath guides. Yin (1994) describes case studies using multiple sources as "being rated more highly in terms of overall quality, than those that relied only on single sources of information" (p.92). In the event it was found that parish council minutes in particular provided fundamental information on individual councils that was unobtainable elsewhere, whilst other documentation presented broader dimensions.

3.6.3 Data storage and analysis

It was decided that although it might at first be inhibiting to interviewees, where permission was granted the interviews would be tape-recorded. This allowed eye contact to be made and gave confidence that all material was captured. In addition the actual language used could be analysed later and occasionally revealed deeper meanings than had at first been perceived. To facilitate analysis all interviews were transcribed in full, whenever possible later on the same day as the interview. Using this method any additional notes or documentation were also stored with the interview transcripts. Thus at the end of each case study visit a complete record of all evidence appertaining to that location was filed together. It was anticipated that a transcript of the interview would be provided allowing interviewees to confirm the accuracy of their specific interview.

Four basic themes emerged concerned with the ways in which parish councils intervene to promote local development and these themes were used to code all the data before explanations and new understandings emerged. Each interview transcript was scrutinised and the themes explained at 5.1.4 were identified, using a system of coloured highlighter pens. The thematically analysed text was then collated into the four categories before the results were written up and reported in Chapter 5.

Having explained the method of the research, the findings of the scoping study will be reported in Chapter 4 and this will conclude with an introduction to the case study locations. Chapter 5 will present a discussion and analysis of the results from the case studies. The research questions outlined in Chapter 1 will be referred to again in Chapter 6 where conclusions will be drawn.

Chapter 4

The Scoping Study: A telephone survey of a selection of parish councils and other agencies

4.1 The purpose of the scoping study

As described in Chapter 3, a two-stage research approach has been adopted. The first element being to conduct a scoping study followed by an in-depth case study phase. This chapter reports the findings from the thirty-two telephone interviews conducted during the scoping study. These findings provided a focus on the types of benefit that long distance paths generate, as well as investigating the level and scope of relevant parish council activity. A further objective was to use the interviews as a basis for deciding the case study parish councils, and their locations are described at the end of the Chapter. The results are presented according to the questions on the interview template (Figure 3).

4.2 The scoping study results

4.2.1 The benefits

Economic Benefits

Without exception respondents were positive when asked about the benefits; these were wide ranging but it was often the economic benefits that were foremost in people's minds. In the case of accommodation, it was said that some small providers derive their entire income from long distance walkers. This in turn provides a 'spin-off' to other service providers such as pubs and restaurants where evening meals are purchased, as well as local shops where other provisions and necessities are bought. Banks and post offices also benefit from visitors using their services. This in turn creates some employment and therefore a proportion of this money is retained, through purchases and wages, within the local economy.

The presence of a long distance path also gave rise to new opportunities for enterprise. Many farmers have diversified to provide all types of accommodation. One suggested that his generation were more widely travelled and better educated than his parents and were therefore more willing and able to respond to the changes in agriculture outlined at 2.1. One trail, according to a former tourism officer has inspired someone to build self catering accommodation for use as a base to walk the trail, whilst another officer described walking as a vital piece of the economic jig-saw.

Tourism Benefits

Tourism and other officers commented that the presence of a long distance path publicises an area encouraging walkers into previously unexplored settlements whilst at the same time linking tourist attractions and parishes. Return visits are often made, perhaps with friends and family or as a focus for a weekend break combined with some walking. Respondents confirmed that long distance walking extends the tourist season as previously described at 2.3 since it is an activity that can be undertaken at most times of the year.

Long distance walking has been described by several interviewees as bringing the right type of tourist, those who are interested in nature and care about the environment. A National Trails Policy Officer said that people who walk in the countryside tend not to cause disruption, whilst the activity fits well with green tourism strategies. National Trails are sensitively waymarked (Countryside Agency 1999 p.3) and most other routes make some attempt to direct walkers. Some farmers welcome these well-marked paths since they help to avoid trespass as a result of navigation difficulties.

Long distance paths frequently pass through different counties, districts, parishes and other designated areas and provide the opportunity for tourism officers to work with all stakeholders bringing the partnership approach discussed at 2.6 into play.

Opportunities for local people to be involved with, and use, the local resource

Speaking of three recently created long distance paths a former Head of Tourism said "The principal reason for developing the trails was to derive economic benefit, however they are now used by a lot of local people so this is an added benefit for local communities" (pers. comm. M. Woods 2001). He also described the popular workshops focusing on local crafts which have been supported by parish councils along the routes and confirmed that even though the initial interest had passed there was still a lot of community involvement.

The presence of a long distance path focuses attention on specific rights of way and, as explained by the National Trail Policy Officer, local authorities will divert funding to maintain routes whilst the presence of a National Trail commands central government funding. This, together with the increased usage, ensures clear access both for local people and visitors.

Trail Officers report that long distance paths have stimulated the formation of local maintenance groups. For example on the Peddars Way National Trail over 40 volunteers participate, whilst the Thames Path National Trail office organises a volunteer working programme. Where long distance paths pass through settlements, they have been used as a focus for enhancement projects. The parish council chair in Londesborough on the Wolds Way National Trail described their interpretation panel installed to celebrate the Queen's Silver Jubilee as being very well used. Plans here are under way to mark the Golden Jubilee with a viewpoint. Other projects have included the installation of benches at appropriate places on long distance paths. All these projects would usually involve the parish council and on occasions some financial assistance, labour and advice has been received from trail offices. Long distance paths may also be taken into account when applying for grants and one case was cited where the path was used as a lever against undesired development.

Local schools in the vicinity of the Wolds Way National Trail have been the subject of an awareness raising competition focusing on the National Trail. The Trail Officer described the project as very successful and saw it as a beneficial, but largely untapped opportunity. In some circumstances there are already links with the education service, for example within the National Parks. However he explained that time and energy were required if new relationships needed to be forged.

The Countryside Agency together with the British Heart Foundation has launched the Walking to Health Initiative which aims "to get more people walking in their local community – with benefits to their health and the environment" (Countryside Commission 1998 p.1). However one council, keen to foster the scheme incorporating a nearby long distance path reported receiving an unenthusiastic response from the Countryside Agency.

On Holy Island one of the churches provides a 24 hour welcome for walkers completing the long distance path. Youth hostels provide a link between communities along many trails, whilst on others bed and breakfast providers are reported to have formed networks, some now transporting walkers' luggage. A different dimension is added on some long distance paths where sculptures crafted by local people have been installed. These provoked a mixed response, in one area a respondent thought they depicted the locality, but in another location sculptures were disliked and thought to have been a waste of money.

4.2.2 Disbenefits

A very clear conclusion from the telephone interviews is that over one third of interviewees stated they could think of no disbenefits to the community from the presence of a long distance path. In other instances interviewees commented that the problems were perceived rather than actual or that opinion was clouded by personal bias. For example respondents suggested the people, mentioned at 2.1, retiring to the countryside for a 'quiet life' may not welcome visitors particularly in small communities where the impacts may be more noticeable. According to tourism officers tensions occasionally arise between service providers who benefit from long distance walkers and those who are not involved in tourism.

Designated routes, which tend to be more clearly defined and well maintained also attract local people who exercise their dogs, described by a countryside warden as 'bringing its own problems'. In addition a councillor commented that uncontrolled dogs could scare animals whilst litter can suffocate livestock, crisp packets eaten by cattle cited as a particular problem.

Designated routes are a magnet for 'organised' events, such as charity walks, Army training runs and, where the path is also a bridleway, horse and bike rides. These create problems of sudden over-use giving rise to erosion and environmental damage. On the positive side however, a tourism officer thought fund raising walks may create a spin off in terms of local spending but one parish clerk commented "they come, but they nearly always bring their own food .. I suppose because they don't know what is here" (pers. comm.. G.Claydon 2001).

4.2.3 Parish Council support for local development arising from long distance paths

The most relevant parish council powers used to support local development in the context of this research were connected with tourism and a summary of the identified incidences follows.

Two parish councils had created their own community websites for promotion to the international market as well as for a local resource, whilst several others had a link to established sites. The printing of facility booklets specifically for walkers and the promotion of local businesses both to people visiting parish council offices and reading their notice boards does occur but is not widespread. Two clerks were very conscious that the full range of accommodation was not provided within their communities. Some councils try

to address this through separate tourism committees as well as providing training events and negotiating with landowners for camping facilities.

Other facilities provided directly by parish councils include car parks, benches, street cleaners and toilets. However, public toilets appear to cause disagreements between parish councils and district councils who are very keen to close these facilities due to the expense of maintenance.

The Community Council of Northumberland encourages parish councils to become involved by helping to develop circular walks off long distance paths. This was noted in other areas which are developing marketing materials to promote their communities for walking holidays or 'car less' weekend breaks. One clerk commented that the presence of a long distance path motivated the council to initiate the renovation of some parts of the town. In South Devon, a 'Hopper' bus, supported by parish councils had been very successful both for long distance walkers and for local people but has now been withdrawn by the district council. This caused frustration for parish councils in this area who, it was reported, are keen to address the issue of rural transport.

A few parish councils are very involved with footpath maintenance and repair of stiles with voluntary groups taking great pride in their efforts, whereas many leave it to other authorities. A District Council Director and former tourism officer said they maintain strong links with the parishes that have confidence that the District will attend to path problems. These links may be through a designated footpath officer but some parishes said they were too small to split tasks in this manner.

Many respondents discussed their relationship with parish councils, other agencies and neighbouring communities. The Community Council of Northumberland has created some Development Trusts as mentioned at 2.6. These aim to encourage and advance the benefits of specific areas and received the support of parish councils. In several instances good relationships existed between parish, district and county councils through the P3 Scheme, explained at 2.4, and the National Trails Policy Officer described "the role of the highway authority and relationship with the Countryside Agency and National Trail Officers as absolutely vital" (pers. comm. J. Hobbs 2001). One trail development officer reported that parishes were very keen when the idea for a new long distance path was first mooted since they all had businesses that would benefit. He described the very effective consultation that had taken

place when the District Council footpath officer talked to parish representatives during the course of his everyday work.

The National Trails Policy Officer suggested that if significant work was being carried out in a specific parish the relevant parish council would normally be involved and be invited to events organised by the individual trail offices. She confirmed that National Trail officers are requested to speak at parish council meetings, and councils had been used to assist with user surveys. However some National Trail officers saw the relationship as, for the most part, a one-way process, with the trail officer taking the proactive role and at times feeling rather distanced from and ignored by parish councils. It was suggested by a trail officer that this is "probably due to a time factor on both sides..... maybe the time has come when we should be talking more often" (pers. comm. M. Hodgson 2001). The time constraints were highlighted by two other respondents who thought parish clerks usually have so much to do that they can't give the long distance path any attention. Thus parish councils may tend to be bypassed in favour of county and district councils.

4.2.4 Further potential for Parish Council support for local development arising from long distance paths

The responses indicate that there is already activity within parish councils to promote local development linked to long distance paths. However a trail officer pointed out that inevitably some parish councils are proactive whilst others are not, illustrated by one parish clerk who admitted that the long distance path was not exploited at all by that parish council.

All interviewees identified potential for parish councils to promote local development using the long distance path as a catalyst and this extensive list is thematically categorised in Table 4. These actions can be considered from another perspective, and that is the means by which parish councils can exert influence. This will be examined later at 5.1.4 when the themes to be used in the analysis of data are discussed.

Tourism	Encourage long distance walkers by adapting village facilities to suit their needs Develop website Provide internet access Present facilities to walkers in an accessible manner Encourage foreigners to visit Encourage long distance walkers to linger and to explore the locality Provide 'one stop' information Encourage good tourist information points Identify gaps in service provision and address this Assist in dispersing 'honeypots' Encourage opportunities to inform visitors about the area – parish maps, village trails etc
Highways - Walks	Link long distance path to facilities, attractions and to other parishes off route via circular walks Promote 'ribbon of development' with neighbouring parishes Provide or promote public transport linking long distance path with settlements
Recreation and Education	Assist with education regarding local resources Link with other subjects on National Curriculum Liaise with local schools Assist with safety aspects (nearest phone etc.) Support/nurture community working groups Involve locals in interpretation initiatives
Land Acquisition, Entertainment Arts and Planning	Support new enterprise
General	Report 'grass roots' issues to higher levels. Enhance feeling of local ownership of long distance path

Table 4 Potential fields of relevant activity by parish councils, emerging from the scoping study

4.2.5 Observations made relating to the limited involvement of many parish councils

The scoping study interviews revealed some indications that parish council involvement in releasing benefits is currently, and may remain, limited for a variety of reasons. Moreover, about one third of parish council representatives commented that their councils were not achieving their full potential. Whilst it was not originally intended to identify limitations on parish council activity in this phase, relevant remarks were made and these cannot be ignored.

First with regard to promoting tourism some parish councils reported a negative attitude by some councillors especially long standing members, whilst

other councils did not see this as their role. More specifically with regard to long distance walkers several parish councils, unwilling to invest in unwanted facilities, wanted more information on the needs of this sector.

Secondly, with regard to more general issues that create barriers for local development activities, some parish clerks reported, as cited at 2.8, that they were inundated with tasks and that time only permitted the most urgent or compulsory matters to be dealt with. Some councils are reluctant to raise the precept and found they were not eligible to receive certain external funding, Therefore it was felt they could not afford to initiate projects.

Thirdly, with regard to attitudes, there was a hint that other organisations did not hold parish councils in high esteem, in addition it was perceived that some parish councils preferred to work alone rather than together with other actors.

Comments made by three officers reinforced the need for further research. The National Trails Policy Officer described the attitudes of parish councils towards long distance paths as "an uphill struggle … the Countryside Agency puts millions of pounds into National Trails but local authorities and parish councils still don't recognise the benefits" (pers. comm. J. Hobbs 2001). Other officers were emphatic that they were an untapped resource. There were significant opportunities to develop and portray local cultures as a commodity so that long distance walkers not only enjoyed the landscape but were also exposed to regional traditions. However, officers report that 'on the ground' it frequently does not happen.

4.2.6 Conclusions from the scoping study

The scoping study was very useful in clarifying the perceived benefits brought to rural communities by long distance paths. In addition it identified the potential channels of influence that parish councils could exert to promote local development and these were used as a basis for the thematic analysis of the case study phase. The main points were:-

- Numerous benefits were identified and these were mainly connected with tourism and economic activities.

- There were very few disbenefits and these tended to vary according to the perspective taken by respondents.

- Three of the eight agency representatives interviewed made negative comments regarding the work and the ability of parish councils, whilst three other officers suggested a need for this type of research.

- The scoping study confirms the findings of Ellwood et al (1992) highlighted in the literature review that whilst some powers are being used there is further potential to use these more effectively and creatively.

- The results from the scoping study have informed the selection of case study parish councils as well as resulting in a focus for the questions to be used for interviews during that phase.

- It was considered important to select councils where at least some relevant activity was taking place. Thus the choice was influenced by factors associated with parish councils' attitudes and achievements related to local development gleaned during the telephone interviews, as well as their locations and populations.

4.3 The Case Study Locations

As stated in Chapter 3, three diverse locations would be used for the case study phase and the scoping study pointed to several that not only met the criteria outlined at 3.6.1, but also had unique characteristics that stood them apart from other contenders. The following locations were ultimately selected:

- Dursley in Gloucestershire at an approximate mid point on the Cotswold Way (National Trail under development)
- The Holy Island of Lindisfarne in Northumberland at the end of St. Cuthbert's Way
- Witheridge in Devon on The Two Moors Way and at an intersection with other routes.

This section concludes with a brief overview of each parish and the reason it was selected.

4.3.1 Dursley

Dursley, a small town with a population of 5,800, is surrounded by an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, situated within the District Council of Stroud in the south Cotswolds some 25 km south of Gloucester. Since the 16th century it has been a focus of population and industry, once an important settlement in the woollen trade it later developed to become a centre for engineering. During the last ten years however approximately 2,000 jobs have been lost as factories have closed or dramatically reduced their workforce. This, together with ease of mobility referred to at 2.1, and competition from nearby towns, has weakened the retail sector in the town centre and "created an air of neglect throughout the town" (Stroud District Council 2000 p.3). Nevertheless, the full range of services and basic retailers still remain. The Town Council however recognise that "Dursley possesses undeveloped potential in the beauty of its surrounding hills and woods" (Dursley Town Council 1998 p.1), acknowledging, as discussed at 2.3, that a local resource can be a catalyst for

local development. In addition a former mayor of the town described the Cotswold Way as a motivating theme for the regeneration of the market town.

The Cotswold Way is a 166km trail, predominantly along the Cotswold escarpment linking Bath in the south to Chipping Camden in the north. First developed in 1969, the Way was proposed as a National Trail in 1995 (Countryside Commission 1995). A specific objective of the Cotswold Way Implementation Strategy 1999 – 2004 is to "work with local communities to enable them to get the most social, economic and cultural benefit from the Cotswold Way" (p.12). These aims at both community and strategic levels show a degree of commitment. This influenced the inclusion of Dursley at this stage, together with the historic absence of tourism and the presence of the former mayor to act as a 'gatekeeper' to the local community.

4.3.2 The Holy Island of Lindisfarne

'Holy Island' is a small community of 160 inhabitants located off the northeast coast of Northumberland in the Borough of Berwick-upon-Tweed on the Scottish borders. Here the traditional industries of agriculture and fishing, whilst still practiced, have declined and been overtaken by catering for the needs of visitors, since this is one of the most famous Christian sites in Europe visited by pilgrims from all over the world. A limited range of provisions could be purchased at the post office and this together with several gift shops, a café, two hotels and two pubs comprise the only services.

Only accessible at certain times of the tide, the island is connected to the mainland by a vehicular causeway, although it is also possible to follow a 'pilgrims route' over the sands. It is along this route that the 100km St. Cuthbert's Way from Melrose in Scotland, through the Northumberland National Park finishes on Holy Island. Opened in 1997, one of the aims was "to provide economic benefit for the communities through which it passes and others close to the route" (Smith and Shaw 1997 p.vii), it was later recognised "as the project which had made the greatest contribution to the economic and social life of the Eastern Borders and North Northumberland" (Shaw R. 1999 p.1), a region described by a former tourism officer as 'a neglected part of the country'. Holy Island is one of the settlements in Northumberland where, as discussed earlier, a Development Trust has been created which works closely with the parish council. This, together with contrasts with other case study parishes, such as size, location, history and remoteness were reasons for its selection.

4.3.3 Witheridge

Witheridge is a village of 1000 inhabitants situated between Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks within North Devon District Council. It is a tranquil area of undulating countryside dominated by agriculture. There are no landscape designations although according to the Local Plan it is still considered to be attractive, with Conservation Area status granted to the centre of the village. The nearest town is Tiverton, 12 Km away and Witheridge with a bakery, post office with general stores, newsagents and two pubs, serves as a local centre providing services for the village and surrounding rural area. Observations suggest that the village may suffer a lack of identity being between but not within, either National Park; being situated on the border of the district councils and now by-passed by the North Devon link road.

Witheridge is however one of the few larger settlements approximately mid way along the 163 km Two Moors Way which starts at Ivybridge in the South, crossing Dartmoor National Park followed by this mid Devon section before finishing through Exmoor National Park at Lynmouth. Keen ramblers created this long distance path in the 1970s to provide a scenic exploration. However a recent article in the local paper reported that the way had brought prosperity to some rural backwaters and a Witheridge councillor suggested the parish council wanted to make more use of the Two Moors Way since he felt that at present the village was not offering suitable facilities. The North Devon District Council local plan recognises that "The Two Moors Way runs through Witheridge ... (and) provides opportunities for public access to the countryside on both sides of the village. It also provides tourism and recreation opportunities within the village for people walking the route in its entirety" (18.17). Agriculture provides the main employment in the area, but the changes described at 2.1 are forcing this remote settlement to adapt in order to help sustain its vitality. Similar to Dursley, there has been acknowledgment at both community and regional levels that the local resource can assist local development potential in Witheridge. However its location, size and possible feelings of peripherality provide contrasts with the other selected parishes and for all these reasons it was selected.

The case studies reinforced some issues revealed in the scoping study, as well as identifying new dimensions. Discussion of these appears in Chapter Five.

Chapter 5

Presentation and Discussion of Results

Preamble

With the issues to be explored and the actual case study locations carefully defined, it was possible to undertake the core phase of the research. The present chapter will focus on the findings of this work. During the scoping study four key themes had emerged and following some introductory remarks, the chapter will begin with an explanation of those themes and how they arose. Rather than presenting results case study by case study, the chapter will be thematically structured.

The method for this stage of the research has already been described in Chapter 3 but the choice of interviewees for the case studies, how and why they were selected, needs explanation.

The scoping study, whilst targeting parish council clerks had also sought to make contact with other relevant organisations at a strategic level so as to give a broad overview of issues worthy of further in-depth exploration. The case study phase needed other respondents firstly from within parish councils and secondly from a wider audience of other stakeholders working directly within the specific case study areas. The scoping study had also identified some potential benefits for local people. Some of these recipients formed a third group of interviewees selected to ascertain the level of parish council activity from their point of view. Respondents were either introduced through the clerk who tended to act as 'a gatekeeper' to each community; alternatively respondents were traced through the Internet or by searching relevant directories. In each of the three locations at least nine interviews were conducted with a combination of the following stakeholders.

- The chair of the parish council and other councillors
- A district councillor
- A tourism or economic development officer from district council
- A Rural Community Council fieldworker
- A rights of way or National Trail officer
- A recipient of benefits from a local long distance path
- Other relevant respondents notably trail development officers and Parish Paths Partnership officers

A full list appears in Appendix 2. In the case of Holy Island the opportunity was also taken to interview two activists in the nearby village of Wooler, which is also located on St. Cuthbert's Way and where some similar challenges arise. This provided another perspective on the issues under consideration, and relevant information is included in this Chapter. Thus there were thirty-two interviews in total.

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Documentary and reported evidence from both the scoping study and the case study phases demonstrated very clearly that long distance paths are resources that generate benefits for local people. At the same time an activity is encouraged which provides a sustainable opportunity for rural communities to maximise their assets without interrupting the farming cycle or destroying the existing fabric of the community. Before detailing the results a short overview will contextualise why long distance paths have been found to be relevant to local development, as well as providing a brief insight into the potential role of parish councils.

5.1.2 The case study interviewees confirmed that long distance walking is welcomed by tourism officers as being a non-polluting activity that fits very well into 'green tourism strategies'. Rights of way officers too were pleased that designation encourages additional usage and focused attention on the path. This ensures it remains open and accessible, and stimulates people to use the rights of way network to see new parts of the countryside that are not accessible by car or other transport. Without exception, respondents were pleased to have such paths crossing the parish and have 'taken them to their hearts' using them as a focus for community events. Local communities welcomed the visitors who arrived on these paths, and in one instance the creation of a long distance path was reported to have brought the spirit back into a very isolated community. Respondents were complimentary about long distance walkers saying they understood and appreciated 'country ways', were trustworthy and easy to please. Since they had made a physical effort to get there, they differed from, and were more highly regarded than, other types of visitor. A trail development officer succinctly described the relationship; "I always think people who do long distance paths are the elite walkers, they just love the countryside and as for the people who provide accommodation, they enjoy the company more than the profit, they enjoy meeting people, talking to people, that sort of thing" (pers. comm.. J. Turner 2002).

5.1.3   The scoping study had confirmed that in some instances parish councils took an active role in harnessing potential benefits for their communities, whilst others recognised that this process could be improved.   For example the Cotswold Way National Trail Officer said "Dursley Town Council want to focus on the Cotswold Way and they have every reason.   They have been most proactive – I take my hat off to them" (pers. comm. 2002).   However some parish council representatives admitted that they had failed in the past to cater for long distance walkers and readily acknowledge that up until now this local resource has not been exploited at all, either for their communities or for visitors. The potential benefits were reported in Chapter 4 but will now be used within the analysis to explore more deeply some aspects of parish council involvement.

5.1.4   **The themes used in the following analysis of all data collected**

The results from the scoping study analysed in Chapter 3 raised issues which were relevant to the powers available to parish councils already discussed in the literature review.   These issues were collated and culminated in four overarching themes, each crystallising one possible method of intervention by parish councils. These themes were used in this further analysis of data to bring together both phases of the research and are explained in Table 5.

Theme or Method of Intervention	Examples of potential parish council actions relevant to the theme
Persuasion and/or influence	Involve local businesses, parishioners, wider agencies or visitors
Direct provision of facilities and services	Provide community facilities and/or grants
Facilitation and enabling	Organise meetings, provide training, bring together individuals and organisations seeking a common aim.
Marketing and publicity of information	Provide signs, create website, publish leaflets

Table 5 Themes used for an analysis of both phases of the research, together with some relevant examples (Source: author).

Thus, referring to the literature review and using material from both stages of the research specific actions within each theme will be consistently reported. Each presentation will start with some introductory remarks followed by:-

- What parish councils currently appear to do
- What parish councils could do
- Constraints on parish council activity specific to each theme

Each section will conclude with a summary of findings.

When constraints, some of which were of a general nature, could not be linked directly to one of the defined themes, a separate section was created. This will follow the thematic presentation and discussion of results.

The remaining part of this Chapter will therefore have five main sections, the four themes, each broken down as described above, followed by a section on other identified constraints. The findings from each theme will be used to draw conclusions in Chapter 6.

5.2 Parish councils' impact on local development through persuasion and influence

5.2.1 Parish councils have the potential to persuade and influence others for the benefit of the communities they represent and thereby enhance local development activities. This effect can be of a formal or informal nature and is found at various levels. Some key aspects of parish council involvement within this section include consultation, co-operation and discussion.

Three separate 'channels of impact' have been identified and these include:-

- local businesses - whilst some respondents thought it was up to the business sector to promote themselves, others acknowledged the role that parish councils might play to encourage business enterprise for the benefit of the whole community

- the local community - this includes all parishioners who, as set out in the literature review, are seen as crucial for the success of local development initiatives.

- external organisations – this group includes other tiers of council, tourism offices and those responsible for trail development as well as businesses external to the community. The related notion of partnerships as a tool for local development was explored in the literature review at 2.6 and is relevant to this section.

5.2.2 Beginning at the 'grassroots' level, parish councils' influence on local businesses will be discussed. Businesses need to advertise and where parish councils have developed a website this provides an ideal opportunity. But first businesses need to know how, and be encouraged, to become involved in this relatively new sphere of working. In Witheridge notices are displayed in the local shops encouraging proprietors to contact the webmaster. As well as informing internet users about their business they can give full details of their

address, telephone number, services, opening hours, and charges. This is particularly valuable information for long distance walkers when they plan their itinerary, since on some long distance paths the opportunities to purchase food and other necessities are few and far between. One typical example related to a village shopkeeper who is keen and able to prepare picnic food but who needed advance requests to ensure that adequate fresh supplies are available. If long distance walkers are able to obtain this type of detailed information when planning their walk it would overcome the situation described at 4.2.2, (where it was presumed that walkers were unaware of local facilities) as well as assisting the local economy and helping to sustain rural shops.

Transport to and from long distance paths has already been identified as the most important facility requested by long distance walkers (Boase 1999 p.27). The Cotswold Way User Survey (in Countryside Commission 1995 p.13) reports that one quarter of all long distance walkers use public transport to access the Way and forty five percent requested improved provision. The residents of communities along the path also need transport. A Countryside Agency initiative, Vital Villages, allows parish councils to apply for and receive Parish Transport Grants to subsidise transport operators who are willing to provide services to meet local needs. On Holy Island the parish council is proactive in bidding under this scheme following discussions for the local minibus operator to run services at times of the year when it is not economic for the larger transport operators to function.

5.2.3   Secondly parish councils' <u>influence on local residents</u> is discussed. Probably the most fundamental issue is to encourage members of the community to stand for election on the parish council. This aspect is discussed more fully at 5.2.5. Turning now to a more specific action, parishioners are encouraged by some parish councils to take an active interest in the local path network which includes long distance paths. It was noted that in some locations parish councils appointed specific officers to co-ordinate activities. In Dursley this is extended to neighbouring parishes where six representatives from three parish councils have formed a group that organises maintenance working parties on sections of the Cotswold Way and other local paths. A National Trail officer commented "it's very helpful if we can get this link into the community through volunteers … they may already have relationships with the local landowners and this may later lead to further local working parties being formed" (pers. comm. J. Ronald 2001). Whilst the P3 scheme has officially finished, it is continued by some county councils under various different guises. Witheridge

Parish Council, through their dedicated P3 officer works with parishioners on their local path network. This provides a framework for maintenance work by communities who, through the P3 officers, are guided by County rights of way officers who encourage such voluntary action.

5.2.4   County councils would certainly be among the third group, namely <u>external organisations</u>, under consideration within this theme. It was thought, in several locations, that the presence of county and district councillors on a parish council was beneficial and could assist the development of good channels of communication with other tiers of councils. If this resulted in positive dialogue between the parties it could be considered beneficial to local communities

The North Devon District Council recently produced a Draft Local Plan for consultation. This was presented by district council officers to a well-attended meeting in a number of locations including Witheridge.   Here the Parish Council was proactive in representing the views of the community. One aspect of the discussion centred on the presence of the Two Moors Way and how the benefit of this could be maximised for the community. Again in connection with the District Council that Parish Council is currently trying to influence the decision to close the public conveniences discussed later at 5.3.2.

Representing the Borough Council, the trail development officer for St. Cuthbert's Way conducted a wide ranging consultation during the creation of the Way. He informally visited parishes along the trail corridor. Many local businesses could foresee an increase in their trade and through representating their interests some parish councils were able to influence the line of the trail. The Countryside Commission, in the case of the Cotswold Way, undertook a more formal consultation when National Trail status was proposed in 1995. All affected parish councils were consulted. Dursley Town Council for example commented on two issues, the route alignment and possible conflict with other users on paths and bridleways in the area. These together with the Commission's response are reported in the Submission Document (Countryside Commission 1995 Appendix 2).

In connection with long distance paths the case studies confirmed that parish councils are generally proactive in advising National Trail and rights of way officers of any local problems associated with the route.   However, the responses they received were mixed, with one parish council suggesting that the officers responsible are completely unreceptive, whilst another instance

was cited where the two parties worked very harmoniously to keep the path in good order.

A district council officer suggested that parish councils are well placed to influence national funding streams to support the provision of services or for regeneration projects. Examples were noted in all the case study locations, such as applications made to the Vital Village programme described at 5.2.2, although constraints were identified as set out at 5.2.6.

Relationships between parish councils and tourism officers, who can assist in promoting settlements, varied considerably. On Holy Island the Development Trust, working closely with the Parish Council, is in contact with the Borough Council tourism department which holds an annual event for any business providing a service for visitors. Holy Island businesses are encouraged to attend the event where they are able to circulate their own literature among tourist offices. Less fruitful relationships are discussed within the following section.

5.2.5 Further potential for parish councils to impact on local development through persuasion and influence

Having presented the evidence on current parish council activity in this regard, the discussion now turns to what more they could do.

One example of an application for a Parish Transport Grant was reported above. However in nearby Wooler a lack of transport had been highlighted in a recent village appraisal, but the Parish Council was not minded to progress a bid. In consequence a much-needed service is denied to both the community and users of the long distance path. This was frustrating for the Development Trust in the same village which recognised the need but whose own willingness to make the application was thwarted by its ineligibility under the rules of the initiative. Therefore parish councils must be prepared to take up these options that they alone can progress for the benefit of their community.

It is important that as wide a section of the community as possible is represented on the parish council. This helps to ensure that all aspects of community life are considered within the council. Parish councils could be active in persuading members of the community to stand for election as noted at 5.2.3. However analysis of the field interviews suggests that this does not happen. No representation of the under 35 year age group was found, or even considered by parish council representatives. The local business sector, particularly those that may benefit from visitors were very seldom represented.

An exception was on Holy Island where, it was suggested, almost all the 160 parishioners were affected by tourism in one way or another.

The longevity of service and dominance by some councillors on parish councils was thought by district council officers to be a disadvantage. One instance was discovered where a clerk had been in post for twenty-two years and was purported to influence and try to override the chairman's decisions. In another situation until recently, a husband and wife who had acted as chairman and clerk for many years were said to have dominated the council. Elections were generally uncommon and one respondent commented that councillors usually persuade 'suitable' people to come forward, and that two new potential candidates were quickly discouraged.

Conversely taking a prospective candidate's point of view it was suggested that people feel personally judged by the election process and are therefore less likely to come forward. In addition it was thought that business people preferred not to be involved with parish councils since, in the event of unpopular decisions, their business might be boycotted. In small communities they could not bear this risk. This concurs with the findings of the literature review at 2.5. Within the context of this research, however, it is particularly important that the parish council should have representation from users of long distance paths and this could be via the local businesses with whom direct contact is made. Several respondents suggested that parish councils did not know the requirements of these visitors and this may be a missed opportunity for an efficient channel of communication. Quite clearly there is a need for co-operation amongst all members of the community and parish councils could be expected to take the lead by creating a receptive and open forum for debate.

In some cases new faces did not seem to be welcome whilst in others there was no awareness of how to engage with all parishioners. It must be remembered that parish councillors are volunteers and therefore in order to reduce excessive workloads and potential 'burn-out' of just a few within the community, 'new blood' should always be encouraged. It is therefore short sighted in terms of the sustainability and effectiveness of a parish council not make it a priority to include and become involved with the whole sphere of society with their settlement.

The majority of parish councils did not appear to appreciate the influence they could exert to raise the profile of their parish, and relationships with tourism officers were either non-existent or strained. Previous research by the author

revealed that tourist information centres were the most likely sources of information for long distance walkers when planning their itineraries (Boase 1999 p.31). It would appear therefore that the link between communities, parish councils and tourism officers is worth developing.

Tour operators organise long distance walking holidays on the majority of long distance paths represented in this research. It was suggested parish councils could contact these organisations to provide a welcome and to ensure that walkers' requirements were met in full. In fact no instances of this were found.

5.2.6 Constraints identified which impede effective action via persuasion and influence

It is noted that some parish councils appreciate and use new technology for the benefit of the community. However if the website described at 5.2.2 is to be effective the parish council needs a mechanism whereby they can be notified of any changes that occur so that the website is updated accordingly.

In the majority of situations it appeared that county and district councillors were very supportive of their local community, but in one instance the community were disappointed. They had assumed the county councillor standing also on the parish council, would act first and foremost for the local people. Instead his personal political profile at the county level appeared to be a priority. Therefore attendance at, and input within the parish council was reported to be minimal.

Several examples were identified where parish councils had influenced the receipt of funding for community projects, but when neighbouring parishes compete for funds this was seen to create tension. Moreover, even within the same parish it was found that different groups were competing for the same funds demonstrating a lack of co-ordination and co-operation.

5.2.7 Summary of key issues related to parish councils' role in influencing and persuading to assist local development

Three potential impact groups were identified; the local businesses, parishioners and external organisations. Measures adopted were:

- encouraging businesses to promote themselves
- co-operating with local business to bid for grants
- adopting a framework to encourage parishioners to become involved with and use the rights of way network
- responding to consultation documents from external organisations to influence policy and implementation of local initiatives

- developing good working relationships with relevant external organisations to ensure the local rights of way network is well promoted, maintained and enhanced.

All parish councils under review were proactive in response to consultations from external organisations. This is very welcome since, in some situations this is a very positive and formal method for parish councils to influence decision makers. But this specific issue is an exception and generally under this theme it was found that parish councils have the potential to improve their effectiveness. Some of this potential will be explored under other themes. However, some constraints were identified.

- Some respondents did not regard parish councils as having a role in anything to do with local businesses.
- Parish councils were often either unwilling, or did not know how, to encourage wider representation within the council.
- There is a lack of co-operation for the mutual benefit of the local community.
- On occasions parish councils fail to keep up to date with initiatives that may benefit the community or are not prepared to act accordingly.

Potential parish council action to persuade and influence stakeholders to promote local development	Identified examples of actual parish council action within the research locations	Some identified constraints that impede parish council action
Encourage local businesses to promote themselves	Inclusion on village website in Witheridge	Not seen by some as a role for parish councils
Apply for grants in conjunction with local businesses	Application for Parish Transport Grant on Holy Island	Some parish councils unwilling to apply to grants.
Encourage parishioners to become involved in rights of way use and work.	Tri-parish working group in Dursley P3 scheme in Witheridge	Rights of way issues may not take high priority within parish council business
Encourage all sectors of the community to stand for council and when elected to work for the benefit of the local community	A major weakness	Councillors have other priorities Local people fear elections Local business representatives fear involvement will

		detrimentally impact on their business.
Influence decision-makers by responding to consultation documents	Witheridge – Draft Local Plan Dursley – Proposed Cotswold Way National Trail	
Influence officers working on the rights of way to ensure clear access	Various attitudes encountered	

Table 6 Summary of the potential and actual actions and some constraints for parish councils related to their role in influencing local development based on the presence of long distance paths (Source: author)

5.3   Parish Councils' role in aiding the direct provision of services and facilities

5.3.1. Three methods have been identified by which parish councils could, through direct action, promote the provision of services and thereby the extraction of benefit from long distance paths. Firstly, they can provide services or manage property on behalf of another authority. Secondly, they are able to provide a facility directly from their own budget. This may be derived from the precept, from rental income, from grants received for specific projects or from investments. Thirdly, parish councils may not be in a position to provide a facility directly, but they can allocate grants which assist other groups to provide a benefit for the community. In this section examples relate only to the provision of funding to enable others to undertake functions. It is accepted that this third category could also be included as an 'enabling or facilitation function' but it will be seen that activities discussed at 5.4 differ from this section and relate more to parish councils acting as a 'binding force'.

5.3.2 Taking the first of these methods, which relates to the provision of a facility on behalf of another organisation, this was found in all cases to relate to larger infrastructure issues.

Of relevance in this research, are facilities that not only benefit the local community but are also useful to long distance walkers. In every case study location there appeared to be some discussion with the higher tiers of councils regarding the provision of public conveniences. Each time a different scenario existed, but all concurred fundamentally with the findings of the scoping study where an uneasy relationship with other councils was detected in this respect. Thus, Witheridge Parish Council has, within the last two years, used a grant

from North Devon District Council to refurbish the toilet block which stands in the centre of the village square and is adjacent to the Two Moors Way long distance path. However, following the 'Best Value' review very recently undertaken by the District Council, there is now a threat of closure unless the parish council is prepared to take control of the facility. (On a more positive note it was reported that this Review did stimulate some discussion within the Parish Council about the adequacy of facilities for long distance walkers in the village).

In Dursley, one of the two public conveniences is likely to be closed by Stroud District Council, this again is situated adjacent to the long distance path and the town council is currently negotiating a satisfactory solution. Closure may exacerbate an existing problem reported by service providers, who say visitors use their toilet facilities when they are not bona fide customers. On Holy Island the provision is directly under the control of the Borough Council that levies a charge on users, none of which goes to the Parish Council.

Street cleansing is another function undertaken by a parish council on behalf of the district. A local person is employed as a street cleaner under an agreement between North Devon District Council and the Parish Council in Witheridge. The clerk reported that he is given specific instructions to clean the paved section of the long distance path where it enters and leaves the village.

The literature review identified several ways in which parish councils have powers to encourage tourism. Dursley Town Council acknowledged that the present tourist information provision situated within the Leisure Centre is inadequate and lacks a dominant position in the town. Negotiations are in progress to lease and refurbish an ancient Weavers House in the centre of the town and directly on the line of this more urban part of the long distance path. The building would accommodate a tourist information and interpretation centre, and would be particularly appropriate since it reflects one important aspect of the town's heritage. The project has been in jeopardy because despite only having to pay a peppercorn rent to the owners, Stroud District Council, and having grants promised to undertake the refurbishment work, no funds are available for ongoing maintenance. A very recent proposal for the Town Council to pay rent for accommodation within the same scheme may resolve the situation.

5.3.3   The second method of service provision relevant to long distance paths is for parish councils to provide a service directly from their own budget. Witheridge

Parish Council recognised that there is a serious shortage of accommodation for long distance walkers, and no camping facilities whatsoever exist within the village. These fundamental requirements need to be in place if walkers are to be encouraged to stay overnight. Very recently this Council has applied to the District Council for a Locality Grant to boost parish funds and to be used specifically for the development of a simple campground.

Dursley Town Council, in collaboration with local business and other organisations, provided various 'street furniture' linked to the Cotswold Way to guide and inform walkers as they passed through the town. Cotswold Way 'finger posts' direct walkers along the designated route, whilst the industrial heritage is depicted in various street sculptures cast by a local enterprise. In addition plaques explaining the history of the town have been deliberately sited on the walking routes rather than on vehicular thoroughfares with the presence of the Cotswold Way being a significant factor. The scoping study identified several parish councils that had installed public benches. Long distance walkers as well as local people welcome these since they increase opportunities for social interaction as well as providing a resting place.

5.3.4   The final method to be considered in this section is the provision of a grant by parish councils to other organisations or individuals to support community initiatives.

One parish council granted four hundred pounds per annum to a local IT expert for the creation and maintenance of a community website. Not only did this provide a meaningful hobby for a local resident, but an added benefit is that he undertakes much further work free of charge. This has resulted in an excellent community resource as well as promoting the village at international level. This website replaced one developed by an external contractor which was described as a disaster because it did not fulfil the needs of the community. This epitomises the role that the community can play in local development initiatives, but parish councils must be aware of, and give opportunity for, community involvement. In addition ongoing funding is necessary if this type of project is to be sustained.

Several parish councils have given grants for the production of leaflets. These depict village trails as well as walks linking the long distance paths to village facilities and other paths. One of the aims of the former Countryside Commission was to link long distance paths to local routes "thereby creating a truly national, interlinking rights of way network" (Sharpley 1993 p.219). One

example was found where these leaflets were laminated and included maps, instructions, local history and drawings prepared by local experts. They were left with service providers for visitors to borrow and return at the end of their walk, when they frequently stopped to purchase refreshments. As long as leaflets are readily available, they were described by tourism and trail officers as being valuable for encouraging walkers to remain in the area for longer. They then tend to spend more money whilst gaining a greater understanding of the area which thus enhances their visit. It was also thought ideal if parish councils could instigate this at the local level rather than leaving it to trail officers, who often have as many as fifty parishes to deal with along the trail corridor.

In connection with grant provision, one parish council gave a grant to a local conservation volunteer group whose work included maintenance on the long distance path.

The three examples concerned with the website, the path leaflets and the conservation group were found to bring together members of the community with relevant skills who took great pride in their work. This is clearly a very effective use of comparatively small amounts of money and reinforces the notion of endogenous development discussed earlier at 2.2.

5.3.5 Further potential for parish councils to aid the direct provision of services and facilities

Provision of some infrastructure items is relatively expensive for district councils. However it appears that the long term survival of public conveniences may depend on the facility being under the direct control of parish councils which should be willing and able to respond to the needs of the community whilst providing some employment for a local person.

A relatively cheap solution is being missed to encourage users of the long distance path to stop in Witheridge. The public conveniences are surrounded by a large shelter under which were once sited some benches. These have now been removed as they were thought to attract noisy youngsters. A businessman whose shop overlooks the site however, remarked that the benches were extremely well used by long distance walkers for resting, eating refreshments purchased locally and re-organising their packs. When questioned about their reinstatement a parish councillor was ambivalent saying, if the subject came up, they might consider it.

Again in Witheridge there is a community centre, but this is only open for limited periods for serving refreshments. Although the parish council was instrumental in the initial set up, it no longer has any control and it is managed by another community organisation. However, a councillor thought, and it was observed, it was a good facility which could be optimised. For example there is a suggestion to use it for a part time police sub station. The Parish Council could investigate providing a grant to support extending the opening hours. This could offer a much needed service for walkers whilst encouraging social interaction with local residents, many of whom it was reported, were seldom able to leave the village.

A 'Walkers Welcome' was observed in one settlement, whereby establishments especially catering for users of the long distance path displayed stickers in their windows. This scheme provided a focus for the path as well as creating a network of local businesses. However enquiries revealed that this was not the work of the council, rather the Chamber of Commerce, and begs the question whether stimulating local business should be the role for parish councils or one for the business communities themselves. Two respondents quite emphatically agreed with the latter suggestion, but perhaps there is still a role for the parish council to facilitate such actions. This will be explored more fully in the Section 5.4

5.3.6 Identified constraints to parish council activity related to the direct provision of services.

Whilst it is acknowledged that public conveniences provide a useful facility for visitors and for local people, some parish councils are unable to take over the responsibility unless districts are prepared to provide funding. In one case identified this would amount to more than that raised by the precept in one whole year.

Regarding the 'street furniture' some local people did not like these features and this, together with vandalism, may be seen as reasons not to support street enhancements in the town. This problem was not widespread and tended to occur in the larger settlements.

The removal of benches in Witheridge illustrates a lack of understanding by parish councils about the needs of long distance walkers and two respondents specifically thought some feedback from walkers would be very helpful. As suggested at 5.2.5 if business people were represented on the parish council they could provide a useful link since they are in closer contact with users of the long distance paths.

The 'camping facilities' example at 5.3.3 raises the issue of parish councils' access to funding. This was not considered by a district councillor to be a major hurdle whereas the process of applying for funds was, on several occasions, described as problematical. This task frequently appeared to fall to one person within the council who was expected to gather all the necessary information as well as completing the documentation. This is very time consuming and can be frustrating if the application proves unsuccessful. Whilst funding for capital projects was sometimes obtainable, parish councils still have to identify funds for ongoing costs exemplified here by the Weavers House and the website projects.

The attitude of parish councils to local development has been identified as a major concern. If parish councils are to be effective they should be prepared to discuss issues, to decide on, prioritise and allocate responsibility for actions. This was specifically seen as a constraint to the development of tourism. A district council officer described parish councils as being willing to listen but highly resistant to change and therefore extremely slow to react. This may in part be due to a breakdown at parish level between those who want to promote local development and those who do not want any change at all. This was demonstrated within the scoping study in a settlement where a campground was proposed but the plans were aborted due to community conflict over the idea. Moreover if a measure half-heartedly adopted, had failed and been abandoned this was thought to reduce confidence and inspiration.

5.3.7 Summary of key issues related to parish councils' role in the direct provision of facilities

It was identified that parish councils may use three methods to provide facilities which include:

- providing and retaining services and facilities through negotiation with other authorities
- directly providing services and facilities
- providing grants to support community initiatives.

Some more imaginative use of grant allocations could be explored particularly when, as demonstrated, a small amount of finance may lead to a significant gain for the community.

The potential for the local community to become involved in initiatives should not be under estimated and opportunities should be maximised for all sectors to be included where appropriate.

Constraints upon parish councils' provision of facilities were identified as:

- uneasy relationships with other authorities regarding provision of some services
- a lack of understanding of the needs of long distance walkers
- the lack of knowledge, skills and time needed to apply for funding
- the availability of funding for sustaining projects
- ambivalence towards tourism development measures.

Potential actions by parish councils to support the direct provision of services to promote local development	Identified examples of actual parish council action within the research locations	Some identified constraints that impede parish council action
Provide infrastructure on behalf of another authority	Consider taking responsibility for public convenience Management of street cleansing	Funding Relationships with other authorities
Provide a service directly from parish council budget	Apply for grants for direct provision of services Provide 'street furniture' Install public benches Consider the adequacy of facilities for users of long distance paths	Need for suitable person willing, able and competent to complete grant application Vandalism Dislike by local residents Lack of understanding of the needs of long distance walkers Many parish councils lacked awareness of this user group
Provide a service directly from parish council budget	Refurbishment of building for tourist information centre.	Funding issues Negative attitude of some parish councils towards tourism
Provide a grant to support community initiative	Website Walks leaflets Conservation work	Parish councils not always receptive to working with the community, which can reap large rewards for small investments

Provide a service directly from parish council budget	Support a 'Walkers Welcome' scheme. One identified but not developed by parish council	Suggestion that this not a role for parish councils

Table 7 Summary of some potential and actual actions and some constraints for parish councils related to the direct provision of services related to local development from the presence of long distance paths (Source: author).

5.4 The role of parish councils in the facilitation and enabling of local development

5.4.1 Parish councils have the capacity to enable and facilitate local development initiatives principally by supporting and encouraging members of the local community and relevant organisations. Any action which brings these like minded actors together to promote local development, and specifically in this case to generate any of the benefits arising from the long distance path identified in the scoping study, could be relevant under this theme. This section discusses how meetings, events, collaborative working and technology have been used in this respect. Thus as far as the 'enabling theme' is concerned the parish council would act as a catalyst to promote local development and facilitate capacity building of local people.

5.4.2 Positive actions initiated by parish councils relevant to their facilitation and enabling role in local development

Meetings have been arranged by parish councils which have brought together local people to raise awareness of a long distance path in their area. Here participants may receive training which increases community confidence and awareness, whilst discussing issues of relevance. Experts can also be invited to advise on specialist matters where appropriate. In an attempt to inform the community about the Cotswold Way, Dursley Town Council borrowed the 'mobile information panels' from the National Trail Office. Together with a presentation, these were used as a focus for a consultation in which the local community had the opportunity to discuss plans to encourage more visitors to stop in the town.

In another example training was offered to encourage local people to consider providing bed and breakfast for users of the long distance path. This involved speakers from the Heart of England Tourist Board as well as representatives from the district council tourism department briefing a public meeting about the ways in which bed and breakfast and other enterprises could be launched. There were mixed feelings about the overall benefit of the event, and it is

questionable whether or not the objectives were met since subsequent research showed that there is still a dearth of suitable accommodation in this particular settlement (Boase 2001).

On Holy Island the parish council convened a meeting of hoteliers, publicans, café and shop owners to discuss the positioning of an information board. They were represented by the parish council in negotiations with the Borough Council which installed an appropriate sign.

Some parish councils were found to have sub committees relating to tourism, finance, environment or planning. These allow councillors to become involved in aspects of life in which they have particular interests or skills and as explained at 2.5, may help to involve a wider range of local people. Here issues are resolved prior to, and reported at, full parish council meetings. By adopting this structure councils are maximising the use of councillors' time whilst minimising discussion time at council meetings. However some councils identified in both phases of the research considered themselves too small for such committees, whilst others felt that councillors would not want to take on this extra task.

5.4.3   Events, similar to meetings provide a means of drawing like-minded people together. Whilst it may not appear to have any direct relevance to long distance walking, the parish council on Holy Island attempted to highlight a frequently occurring problem for visitors, that of the tide governing their arrival and departure times. The natural cycle appears to tempt visitors, and this includes users of the long distance path, to leave the island before the tide rises rather than timing their visit to occur over the short high tide period. At this time they are more relaxed, tend to spend more and to explore the island in greater depth. An event, organised by the parish council, re-enacted the landing of the Vikings and was deliberately timed 'over the tide'. However the chair of the Parish Council said "despite being a spanking hot day, they were frightened, frightened of being cut off, so most people didn't stay" (pers. comm. S. Massey 2001). It was noted in other communities that when an initiative was unsuccessful, people may become dis-spirited and lose confidence preferring not to attempt anything rather than be seen to fail.

The scoping study revealed that Cricklade Town Council had, three years previously, organised a music festival. This had been so successful that it was now co-ordinated by a separate community group. This example demonstrates that some parish councils do undertake such activities which, if

suitably promoted to users of long distance paths, could provide a wonderful opportunity for visitors to participate in local cultural gatherings.

5.4.4 'Village appraisals' were described at 2.4 as a useful baseline study for local development. In two of the case study locations these have been undertaken and driven by parish councils, whilst in the third case the process was aborted due to the withdrawal of funding by an external agency. One resulted in a parish plan, promoted through the Countryside Agency's 'Vital Village' initiative, now being progressed by the Development Trust on behalf of the parish council.

5.4.5 Partnership working was noted at 2.6 as a method of facilitating local development by bringing together different actors with varying skills, knowledge and experience to reach a common aim. Parish councils are in a strong position to foster these relationships. However, the emergence of a range of other groups, ostensibly working with parish councils, is now occurring. For example on Holy Island a Development Trust was created with advice, staff and funding from the Community Council of Northumberland. The shortage of affordable housing, identified by the Parish Council was the trigger, with the Trust being formed to receive funding which the parish council could not lawfully handle. The Trust has representatives from the Parish Council, the Fishermans' Society, the Parochial Church Council, the Village Hall Committee and three other representatives elected at an annual meeting, and is said to work closely with the Parish Council. However a similar situation in a neighbouring village did not appear to benefit from such synergy.

Funding issues also prompted the creation of Dursley Town Trust which now manages the Town Hall, with representation from the Town Council as well as other community groups. A recent request to let the building to a local organisation to serve teas on Sunday afternoons will provide rent for the community, profit for the hirer and a much needed facility for users of the long distance path, other visitors and local people. A further arrangement between the Council and the Trust looks likely, should the proposed development of the Weavers House, discussed at 5.3.2, come to fruition. This demonstrates the 'spin-offs' that are possible from creating and maintaining representation in other community groups

5.4.6 Many interviewees recognised the value of the 'bottom-up' approach discussed at 2.2 and 2.6. It was thought that when a local community itself identifies and adopts issues they are more likely to have a successful

outcome. One respondent in Witheridge described the lack of suitable accommodation for long distance walkers as a basic need in relation to which the parish council should and could take a lead. The Witheridge website described earlier, supported by this Parish Council and developed by a community activist exemplifies this approach. The website has demonstrated to the local community that the parish council is adopting measures to use the long distance path as a focus for local development. It has inspired a farmer to diversify to provide various services for long distance walkers, whilst another villager has been encouraged to offer bed and breakfast accommodation. Raising awareness through this medium not only encourages enterprise, but brings service providers into contact with each other. It should be appreciated that whilst people in a village are generally expected to know each other, the parish boundary and certainly the long distance path may extend some way out of the centre into locations where residents may feel more isolated. It is pleasing therefore if, for example, a shop or pub recommends long distance walkers to use more remote facilities, such as accommodation. This example highlights several by-products from this one initiative all of which are relevant to local development and which would not have occurred had the parish council not initially supported the idea of the website.

5.4.7 The undeveloped potential of parish councils relevant to their facilitation and enabling role in local development

Potential actions will be discussed in the same order as those mentioned at 5.4.1 and will begin by thinking about the potential of meetings.

5.4.8 It is important that facilities are available and open for both long distance walkers and local communities. Examples were found where it was not possible to purchase refreshments on certain days and times, and therefore opportunities were missed. Parish councils know their local service providers and it was suggested in two separate locations that discussions should be initiated by the council to ensure that at least one facility was open for business at most times of each day. No such collaboration was detected.

It was stated that a mayor has funds available for entertaining and it was thought that if, for example, a group of long distance walkers particularly those from abroad, was interested in a tour of the settlement they could contact the council in advance to arrange this. This could provide an opportunity for local people to interact with and inform visitors.

5.4.9 The skills and organisation required to organise the events described at 5.4.3 could be used to promote a walking festival. These are known to vary from

simple one day events to a series of activities over a two week period. No examples were found within this research but if a suitable network of paths exists and sufficient enthusiastic people are available, this is another promotional activity that parish councils could undertake or at least support.

5.4.10 Connected with surveys, the research revealed several parish councils that were unaware of the needs of long distance walkers. Parish councils may wish to sponsor a detailed survey on all aspects of the needs and provision for these visitors and one parish council representative hinted that this would be supported given the availability of funding and someone willing and able to undertake the work. This would provide a useful foundation for further development.

5.4.11 The literature review highlighted the intention of National Trail Offices to work closely with local communities. Many acknowledge that the parish council is their way 'into the community' and in all cases every effort appears to be made to involve them. For example the Cotswold Way National Trail Office would always invite parish councils to their biannual Forum and they have recently been notified of a new proposal which aims to appoint individuals living within walking distance of the Trail to monitor sections and report any problems. Parish councils need to react to these overtures for successful relationships to be developed and sustained.

Further possibilities for parish councils to work with other groups have been suggested. A long distance path provides an ideal motivation for neighbouring parish councils to work together since they have a common interest regarding the path. An extension of this could involve clusters of parish councils co-operating for the shared purpose of maximising local development potential from the long distance path. Officers from other agencies could be invited to impart professional expertise. Some officers thought there was no opportunity for this whilst others hinted that occasionally adjoining parishes did not get on or were in competition with each other for funding. Clearly these issues need to be resolved if mutual benefits are to ensue.

5.4.12 Finally, parish councils could do more, perhaps through press releases, to raise awareness of the long distance path amongst local people, encouraging them to use and learn more about the path whilst highlighting the need for suitable services for long distance walkers. This would enable local people to advise and help walkers as they move on to the next stage of their journey,

thus enhancing the experience for the walker whilst maximising benefits for the community.

5.4.13 Identified constraints to parish council activity relevant to their role in facilitating and enabling local development

Any barrier for parish councils to develop good relationships with relevant stakeholders could be construed as a restriction on their facilitation and enabling role. Further constraints to the spread of mutually beneficial working relationships were revealed and these will now be described.

5.4.14 Whether or not parish councils regard other stakeholders, described at 5.4.5, as a help or a threat is questionable. Several instances were uncovered where parish representatives perceived their councils as positive vehicles for local development, whilst at the same time and in the same locations representatives of other groups described the council variously as being of no benefit at all, unconscious of their potential and willing to listen but unwilling to act.

There was further speculation that if the parish council undertook its proper function there would be no need for these alternative groups, some representatives of which acknowledged that it was preferable to by-pass the parish council. In turn some parish councils felt that other groups were taking over or were seen as more successful which caused tension. However other respondents implied that when one tries to bind the parish council to these new groups resistance develops. One district council officer identified a possible solution, "the trick is to try and keep the parish council on side"(pers. comm. R.Makeig-Jones 2002).

Whilst National Trail offices were proactive in involving parish councils, this was often described as a one-way process. Moreover, some other long distance path management groups do not see a role for parish councils at all. However it appears that the majority of parish councils are happy to accept this somewhat dormant role.

The attitude of the community was also highlighted since it takes time to nurture and develop these relationships which must be properly and sometimes legally conceived. Thus communities become impatient and some tend to accuse parish councils of being mere 'talking shops'.

5.4.15 Summary of key issues related to parish councils' role in enabling and facilitating local development arising from the presence of a long distance path

It was identified that parish councils are active in:

- raising awareness of the long distance path to the local community
- co-ordinating meetings for relevant stakeholders
- creating sub committees to address specific issues
- sponsoring surveys
- working with other individuals, groups and agencies.

In each instance, actions could be increased or enhanced if relevant initiatives were taken. Constraints upon such parish council activity were identified as follows:

- difficulties arising from collaborative working arrangements
- a lack of motivation to maximise local development opportunities.

Potential actions by parish council to facilitate and enable local development	Identified examples of actual parish council actions within the research locations	Some identified constraints that impede parish council action
Facilitate meetings of existing and potential service providers	Encourage B & B – Dursley Website – Witheridge Information Board – Holy Island	Tensions between the various stakeholders
Organise events	Holy Island Cricklade	Failure to recognise significance for local development
Form sub committees on specific subjects, eg: finance, planning and environment	Dursley, Witheridge	Councillors not always willing to participate Some parish councils too small for sub-committees
Initiate appraisal process followed by constructive plan of action	Holy Island	Withdrawal of funding
Facilitate a survey to be undertaken of needs of walkers	No evidence	

Work with other parishes and organisations	Creation of Development Trust (Holy Island and Wooler) and Town Trust (Dursley)	Can create tension Unaware of potential of long distance path. Unreceptive to approaches from other organisations Badly regarded by other organisations Poor relationships with neighbouring parishes Competition for funding
Entertain visitors	No evidence	Parish council must be notified in advance of anticipated visit
Provide press releases to raise awareness of long distance path	No evidence	Parish councils need to be proactive

Table 8 Summary of the potential and actual actions and some constraints for parish councils related to the facilitation and enabling of local development from the presence of long distance paths (Source: author)

5.5 The marketing role for parish councils in the promotion of local development arising from the presence of a long distance path

5.5.1 The literature review emphasised the possibilities for tourism to make a positive impact on local development. Parish councils have powers to encourage tourism and one way of doing this pertinent to this research is to promote the settlement itself as well as the services, heritage, local produce, history and events that are relevant to long distance walkers. Before exploring the existing and potential marketing activities of parish councils some background considerations merit discussion.

5.5.2 A tourism officer suggested that overnight visitors were the most sought after as they brought markedly more money into the local economy and they interact more extensively with the community. Observations from respondents within two of the case study locations identified the fact that long distance walkers may not regard their settlement as a stopping point. Two reasons were cited. First guidebooks are written with the walk divided into manageable sections and if, as in the case of Witheridge, a settlement happens to fall in the middle of a section walkers may be less likely to stay overnight. A similar situation occurs at the beginning and end of a long distance path, as found on Holy Island. However it should be pointed out that not all walkers would follow this pattern and some may not use a guidebook at all. Conversely, simply

having a settlement included in a nationally published book raises the profile of the area.

Secondly, if walkers perceive a settlement to be unwelcoming, run-down or unattractive they may tend to choose to stay elsewhere particularly, as in the case of Dursley, where there are alternative settlements nearby. Tourism and National Trail officers comment that communities need a positive attitude whilst providing a hospitable atmosphere for visitors. Many parish councils under consideration represented small communities that were unlikely to have a dedicated tourist office. However this section demonstrates that all parish councils can effect some measures to market and promote their settlements.

There were relevant views from both parish councils and from other officers suggesting on the one hand that promotion was not a role for parish councils whilst a district council officer commented "they are unconscious of the potential (of long distance paths) and would not see it as their role in any way, shape or form …. They look to the district council or other agencies to do that on their behalf" (pers. comm. R. Majeik-Jones 2002). Another officer suggested that parish councils were incapable of producing marketing materials and signposting, whereas the literature review and evidence gathered shows that this is exactly what parish councils can achieve. Another reason for inactivity under this theme is the perception that commercial organisations should be responsible for their own promotion, as discussed in 5.2.1.

A more positive view suggests that attracting just a few walkers can make a significant difference to these small communities. Taking Witheridge with a population of approximately 1,000 as an example, it is estimated that roughly 2,000 walkers complete the Two Moors Way annually. If perhaps only a quarter of these stayed a night in Witheridge spending say £30 per person on all their requirements this could bring £15,000 per annum into the local economy. At the same time the scale of this activity is proportional to the size of the settlement and would not appear to have any detrimental impacts.

The status of a trail is a very significant aspect for promotion of settlements. The literature review shows that there are only thirteen National Trails in England. These already receive national marketing and funding and so communities on such trails should expect a measurable increase in activity when, as in the case of the Cotswold Way, it has recently been designated.

Parish councils may wish to capitalise on this national publicity. Regional routes also attract large numbers of long distance walkers since some people actively avoid the National Trails, (Boase 1999) and therefore parish councils need to recognise and exploit this potential. However one respondent thought that whilst it was not as difficult as it may seem to promote a settlement, it was a role of the parish council that had for many years been wasted, since there were many measures that could be, but were not, put in place.

Having set out these fundamental issues the scope and scale of parish council activity in this respect will now be reported.

5.5.3   Other sections of the research have already referred to the need for coherent plans for action. A comprehensive tourism strategy was developed by Dursley Town Council in a bid to win the Better Towns Tourism Competition in 1998. This has provided a framework for ongoing marketing and tourism related projects despite the fact that it was not successful in the competition. Some frustration was detected which may have resulted from this failure as discussed more fully at 5.3.6.

5.5.4   The power of the internet appeared to be largely unexplored except as noted at 5.2.2 in Witheridge. Here the local webmaster attempts to portray the positive characteristics of the community including comprehensive details of facilities, shops and organisations as well as promoting the surrounding countryside as a resource. The parish council minutes are public documents and these together with agendas and times of forthcoming council meetings are posted on the website. Dursley Town Council do however recognise that a website has the ability to give the town a worldwide profile illustrating their long and interesting heritage. A recent allocation from the 'Foot and Mouth Recovery Fund' will probably be used for this purpose.

5.5.5   Notice boards were displayed in every settlement visited but those examined varied enormously. Some were excellent, displaying clean, clear notices, whilst others had information that was up to five years out of date, faded, damp stained, crumpled and unappealing. In one location there were two well designed and sited boards containing no useful information whatsoever. Generally it is the parish clerk who holds the key to these notice boards and this is one inexpensive information source that, if well maintained, could be extremely beneficial for the community as well as for long distance walkers.

5.5.6   Newsletters are another way in which information is disseminated within and potentially beyond the community. One specific example is described. The

parish council news in Witheridge is soon to be incorporated within 'Witheridge Scene', a community publication produced by a relative newcomer and entirely supported by advertisements. This is non political and is delivered quarterly free of charge to every household and available to visitors from local shops. (Interestingly the distribution process itself promotes community action since it brings together volunteers who deliver in their own roads).

5.5.7 The scoping study had identified some parish councils that had compiled a list of service providers of relevance to long distance walkers together with opening times and contact information. This was either kept at the council office where visitors would come for information or displayed in a prominent location close to the long distance path or outside the office. Some councils used village notice boards for this purpose.

5.5.8 Another example of the promotion of a settlement with a long distance path involved the sale of specially commissioned mugs and tea towels, an initiative that any parish council could fund, but that was identified in only one location.

5.5.9 Further potential for parish councils to assist local development through marketing measures

With the exception of notice boards the measures outlined above were identified in only one, or just a few settlements. However all the ideas could be considerably more effectively pursued by the vast majority of councils and suggestions are given below.

The tourism strategy developed by Dursley Town Council could be used as a model for other parish councils to follow. However this theme must first be on the agenda of the council, with the possibility of some funding and people willing to devote time to consider and implement the strategy.

A rural community council fieldworker said that very few parish councils had so far developed their own website but this medium was thought to hold great potential. Information technology can also be used for the production of newsletters and there is scope here to involve members of the community with artistic imagination.

If notice boards are to convey useful information they must be readable, up to date and accurate. Some boards contained only parish council business, whilst others advertised village services and events but very few gave up to date transport information or large-scale clear maps of the settlements.

The practice of compiling lists of service providers could be much more widespread and whilst providing a service for visitors would encourage them to support community facilities.

All parish councils could promote their settlements and the long distance path through the sale of specially commissioned memorabilia, provided that there was a suitable outlet where this could be sold.

In the past some parish councils have been very involved with the local community in the production of large-scale sketch maps portraying the settlement but none were found during this research. These could include, and raise the profile of the long distance paths as well as other places of interest and would inform visitors as well as local people, some of whom it was reported were unaware of the presence of these paths.

Walking festivals, discussed at 5.4.9 are another tool for marketing but no examples were found.

5.5.10 Some constraints upon parish councils' ability to assist local development through marketing

Many settlements and parish councils have a presence on websites hosted by private concerns or by county and district councils but due to a lack of access for posting information, these were not thought to be very effective. Dursley, Wooler and Holy Island Parish Councils fall into this category.

Regarding websites, a councillor pointed out that it takes time to gain an understanding of and to obtain funds for new technology developments of this nature. Moreover, if a website is to be of maximum use it needs to be kept up to date. This requires someone with appropriate skills and accurate information being able to access the website on a frequent basis. Clearly if this is to be an efficient means of information transfer good communication channels need to be established between the community, the parish council and the webmaster.

It is therefore demonstrated there are very few constraints under this theme. Given some imagination, the most crucial element appears to be the will to initiate, plan and accomplish initiatives.

5.5.11 Summary of key activities related to parish councils' role in promotion and marketing settlements to assist local development related to long distance paths

Measures that were adopted were:

- developing a tourism strategy as a basis for action
- creating a website as a community resource and for international promotion
- ensuring notice boards were up to date, informative and clear
- disseminating information through newsletters
- marketing specially commissioned memorabilia.

Other promotional actions that were not found but that had potential were:

- producing parish maps
- organising walking festivals focusing on long distance paths.

Constraints to parish council involvement in promotion and marketing were:

- tourism was not included as an agenda item
- many parish councillors lacked an understanding of and the skills necessary to derive full benefit from information technology
- a failure to recognise the potential impact of a clear and up to date notice board.

Potential actions by parish councils to facilitate local development through marketing	Identified examples of actual parish council action within the research locations	Some identified constraints that impede parish council action
Development of a tourism strategy	Dursley "Better Tourism Equals Better Town"	A failure by some parish councils to regard tourism as important. Strategies require commitment in terms of time and funding.
Development of a website	Witheridge Under consideration in Dursley Holy Island has limited presence on privately developed site and Borough Council site	A lack of appreciation of the potential of websites. A lack of knowledge, skills and funding needed to develop a website. The necessity for appropriate arrangements to regularly update the website
Provision and maintenance of notice boards	All settlements have them but in the majority of cases these are not well presented.	The need for time and dedication of one person with access to the board

Production of parish maps	None found	The need for enthusiasm to start production
Production of newsletters	Witheridge More potential to develop in other locations	The need for enthusiasm and skills for production and co-ordination for distribution
Marketing promotional memorabilia	None found that were thought to be directly sponsored by parish councils	The need for funding to initiate idea
Festivals	None identified	The commitment and time needed to organise events.

Table 9 Summary of the potential and actual actions by parish councils to maximise local development through marketing, together with some identified constraints (Source: author)

5.6 Some more general constraints upon relevant parish council activity

5.6.1 Where barriers to parish council activities were relevant to specific themes they were discussed in the previous sections. This section will explore all of the other identified constraints relevant to parish councils' promotion of local development in general and more specifically to using a long distance path as a catalyst for change. Three perspectives will be explored; the characteristics of parish councils, the attitudes of parish councils and the abilities of the councillors themselves.

5.6.2 Whilst it is generally held to be desirable for all sections of the community to be involved in parish matters, as reported in 5.2.5 cases have been cited where just a few activists dominate all aspects of the parish council business. Moreover in these situations other passive council members appear simply to 'make up the numbers', some holding office for very many years and, whilst prepared to give time, having very little else to offer. This is unlikely to be to the benefit of the population at large, although there is always the possibility that a dynamic benign chairperson could motivate and lead councillors and the community to achieve excellent outcomes.

A key functionary in all parish councils is the clerk. They range between an unpaid individual spending a few hours a month on parish matters to full time employees with a realistic salary. This differential depends largely upon the size of the settlement but the majority of clerks interviewed in both stages of

this research were part time officers who were paid for several hours work each week. As noted in the literature review at 2.8, it is now clear that much is expected of them. For example within the last year alone the clerks interviewed had had to grapple with revised procedures relating to a Code of Conduct, audit requirements, Quality Parish status as well as considerable amounts of paperwork relating to consultations. In many cases this means that the task is far greater than the time allocated and remuneration paid to them. Where parish councils are particularly active, this in fact generates even more work for the clerk. This excessive workload may result in clerks concentrating on elements of their work which are of greater interest to them, or on which they have a better understanding. Some clerks have received little or inadequate formal training for their role and since many work from home in isolation, the task can seem overwhelming. If parish councils are to undertake and achieve beneficial local development projects, councillors must acknowledge that appropriate time and resources must be allocated to clerks as well as access to suitable training.

Most parish councils under consideration are found in areas of scattered populations. This distribution of both councillors and parishioners does not lend itself to coherent working relationships. In addition some parish councils felt peripheral, not only to the other tiers of councils but also within their geographic locations.

Whilst the above issues relating to representation, training and feelings of peripherality do not appear to be of direct relevance to the research questions, they do affect the organisation and work of parish councils which in turn has an impact on its effectiveness with regard to local development related to long distance paths.

5.6.3 A long distance path brings with it the potential for communities to link with other settlements in the region, but it appears some parish councils fail to recognise this. Many respondents working outside parish councils described them as insular, with councillors having their own sphere of understanding which can lead to disagreements not only within the council but between neighbouring parish councils and the community. A large number of respondents thought parish councils lacked motivation, were purely reactive and had an ambivalent attitude towards 'doing anything'. Both councillors and other respondents suggested that parish councils had other concerns such as law and order or planning issues and that local development was not a high priority. Some parish councils have a negative self-image regarding tourism

since their settlement is not frequented generally by tourists. However, each case study location had its own unique characteristics and as set out at 2.7 it is this 'locality' that is an important element in local development and the presence of a long distance path provides parish councils with an opportunity to draw visitors into areas they would not otherwise visit.

The way in which a long distance path was first developed may also influence the attitude of parish councils. The research indicates that some paths were heavily reliant on one or two individuals who may not have thought to consult or involve the parish councils en route, whilst others were created purely for reasons of access with no consideration being given to communities deriving benefits. It is only in recent years with the changes outlined at 2.1 that attempts have been made to capitalise on long distance paths. The research backs up the findings of the literature review which suggested that parish councils are well placed to play a part in this. Investigations have revealed that parish councils are now almost always invited by relevant organisations to participate in projects related to long distance paths. Whilst many parish councils were unaware of the needs of long distance walkers, these other organisations had conducted user surveys and collated walker evaluation forms which could be made available to provide general information.

5.6.4 It is acknowledged that all councillors give their time freely, but as noted earlier this is not sufficient to run a council to best effect. Many parish councillors were not highly regarded by district and county officers due to their perceived lack of understanding of the ways in which government delivers policy. Frequently they also lack experience, skills, knowledge and confidence to achieve successful outcomes. Members of the community need to see these outcomes otherwise they tend to lose faith in the ability of the parish council. Councillors' aptitudes to discuss, plan, achieve and evaluate successful local development initiatives appeared to be problematical. Just as in the case of clerks, councillors would also benefit from suitable training for their role. Successful local development requires vision, focus, drive and enthusiasm and councillors need to be equipped with the necessary skills to maximise local resources for the benefit of local people.

5.6.5 Thus a summary of the general constraints for parish councils participating in local development work relates to:

- a lack of representation on the parish council
- the longevity of office and inactiveness of some councillors

- a failure to recognise the importance of and training for the role of the clerk
- a lack of willingness or awareness of working or seeking advice from other organisations
- a lack of a positive attitude by parish councils
- a lack of ability to discuss issues, prioritise and plan for action.

This chapter has provided an in-depth presentation and discussion of the results obtained from both stages of the research. Chapter 6 will now position these findings in the context of the research questions set out in Chapter 1 and the theory reviewed in Chapter 2.

Chapter 6

Conclusions, recommendations and reflections

This chapter begins with a summary of the research findings, followed by a more detailed consideration of the conclusions with reference to the objectives set out in Chapter 1. Some recommendations will be made before conclusions are set within the wider perspective of local development and rural governance, followed by a short final reflection on the research project as a whole.

6.1 Reference was made in Chapter 1 to the history of long distance paths. The research has revealed that in many instances, since the aim was simply to develop pleasant long routes, parish councils were not originally consulted. Therefore in the past they have felt no particular commitment to these paths. Only more recently have they become a focus for community benefit; this was clearly demonstrated on St. Cuthbert's Way. Here the trail development team kept close contact with all the affected communities that have subsequently seen great benefits. The research does therefore confirm that long distance paths passing through rural communities do indeed have the potential to be used as a catalyst for local development.

Of the parish councils contacted during this research, a large majority recognised that there were potential gains to be made for their communities. As parish councils are a statutory tier of government representing rural communities, it is appropriate for them to take an initiating and supportive role. However it was found that their attitudes and achievements varied enormously, ranging from the rather negative to the moderately positive. The initiatives discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 may appear, in isolation, to have a minuscule impact. The communities are small, the 'drivers' are small, the number of visitors is small but it should be remembered that across England as a whole there are over five hundred long distance paths and over eight thousand parish councils. Thus the combined effect of these actions has a potentially significant positive impact on very many rural communities.

Within the three case study councils there was certainly some enthusiasm to promote local development specifically related to the long distance path, but this varied according to the attitude of the individual interviewees. Thus councillors did not always appear to be working in harmony with other councillors, with their communities or with other organisations.

It was also clear from all the interviews that, with regard to long distance paths, parish councils had opportunities to work with many organisations to promote local development. Thus they are one of many key players within rural governance and as such should seek to work with all stakeholders. Some parish councils seemed unwilling or unable to work in this way. However a Rural Community Council fieldworker suggested that undertaking work at the local level was never easy and that tensions very frequently arose. In addition working relationships were often marred by the fact that many officers in other tiers of council lacked confidence in the ability of parish councils.

The literature review highlighted the need for local development to be a holistic process. However only one council was found to have a tourism strategy which made mention of promoting gain from the long distance path, whilst in the vast majority of parish councils a piecemeal approach prevailed. The literature review has also stated that best practice entailed the identification and use of local resources, but the research revealed a lack of awareness of this concept. Maximum potential was neither fully appreciated nor realised in any of the parish councils interviewed. In addition they frequently lacked confidence, vision, focus and enthusiasm to foster local development.

More detailed conclusions are now reported in accordance with the research objectives set out in Chapter 1.

6.2 What socio-cultural, environmental and economic benefits could be derived for local people from the presence of a long distance path?

The research demonstrates that 85% of the parish councils with which contact was made acknowledge that there are benefits to be gained from the presence of a long distance path. The most important benefits tended to be of an economic nature since path users supported many rural services, some of which are currently threatened. Furthermore this income may be subject to a multiplier effect when it is spent locally. In addition visitors generate some employment for local people. One respondent described this as a cycle, which is depicted in Figure 4, and was a model identified particularly in Witheridge. Other settlements, for example Holy Island, did not benefit in this way since no provisions could be purchased locally but islanders were employed at lodgings frequented by long distance walkers. It was confirmed that these visitors are welcomed into rural communities since they provide an opportunity for social interaction in remote areas without arriving in such large numbers that they disrupt daily life. Their presence does not create the pollution and congestion

brought by visitors arriving in vehicles and they were said to be 'in tune with nature' and therefore had an appreciation of rural lifestyles. Thus there appeared to be no negative attitudes whatsoever in this respect. In addition there are hidden benefits and examples, albeit a very few, were found where a long distance path had become a focus for a community event, education or health initiatives, and the formation of voluntary groups. Each of these have potential but this was not widely recognised. An added advantage is that long distance paths attract more attention from rights of way officers. Thus, it was reported by local people and also observed, that the paths are maintained to a high standard.
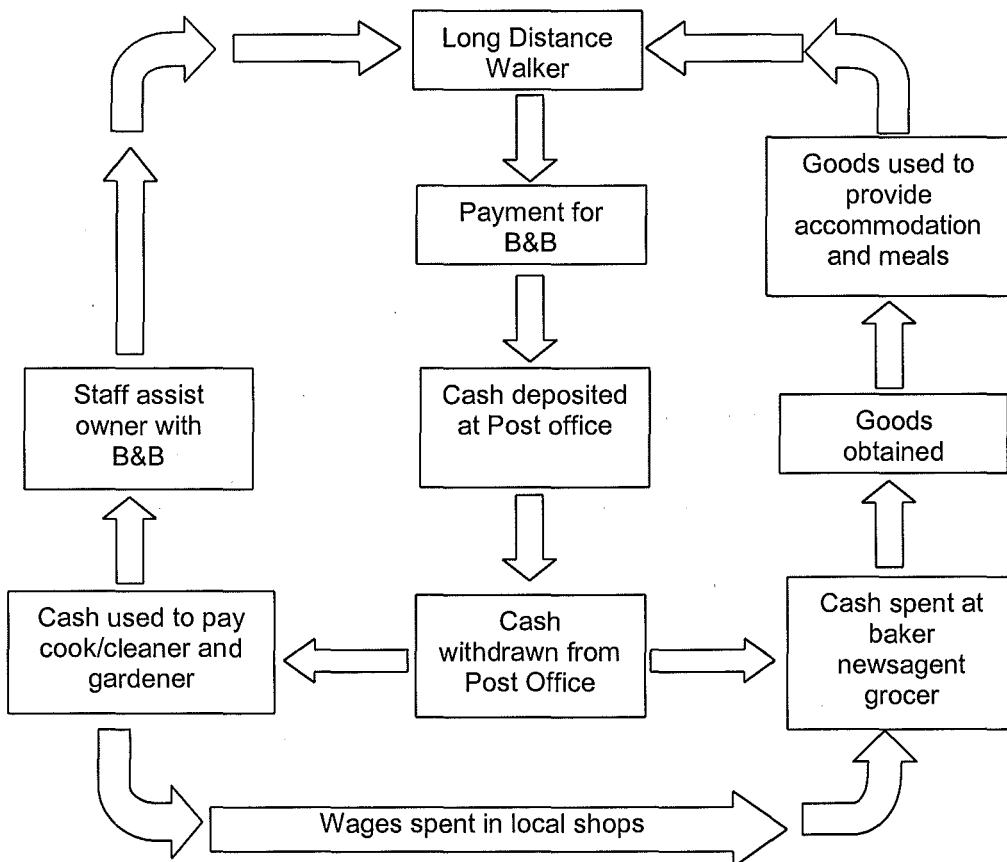
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   │  Staff  │        ┌──────────────┐      │   Goods used to  │
   │ assist  │        │  Payment for │      │     provide      │
   │ owner   │        │     B&B      │      │  accommodation   │
   │ with    │        └──────────────┘      │    and meals     │
   │  B&B    │               │              └──────────────────┘
   └─────────┘               ▼                       ↑
        ↑          ┌──────────────┐         ┌──────────────┐
        │          │Cash deposited│         │    Goods     │
        │          │ at Post office│        │   obtained   │
        │          └──────────────┘         └──────────────┘
   ┌──────────┐           │                       ↑
   │Cash used │           ▼              ┌──────────────────┐
   │to pay    │   ┌──────────────┐       │  Cash spent at   │
   │cook/     │◀──│     Cash     │──────▶│     baker        │
   │cleaner & │   │  withdrawn   │       │   newsagent      │
   │gardener  │   │ from Post    │       │    grocer        │
   └──────────┘   │   Office     │       └──────────────────┘
        │         └──────────────┘              ↑
        └──────▶ Wages spent in local shops ────┘
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Figure 4 A simple model of the cash and activity cycle related to long distance walkers and local services as suggested orally by one respondent

Very few disbenefits were reported and these related to minor tensions between those who derived benefit from long distance paths and those who did not or were unwilling to adapt to the changes necessary to maintain a vibrant community. Thus the evidence tended to depend on the personal perspective of the respondents or their informants.

Since this potential for local development exists there is scope for it to be recognised, implemented and sustained by an appropriate 'driver'. The

literature review suggested that parish councils were in a strong position to undertake this role and findings from the research in this respect are now reported.

Do parish councils assist in unlocking this potential, and if so, how?

The research revealed that eight of the fourteen parish councils contacted initiated local development related to long distance paths, to greater or lesser degrees. One was conscious that they 'ought' to be doing something whilst the remaining five were unwilling, uninterested or had other priorities. The underlying factor determining their success relates to the attitudes of individual parish councils.

In this respect parish councils take the lead in three principal areas of activity. These are awareness raising, project initiation and partnership working.

For any initiative to succeed awareness must be raised and there is evidence which demonstrates that all parish councils try to disseminate relevant information to a wide range of stakeholders from the local to the international level. A variety of methods are employed from a simple notice board to a complex website, but none were widely used to good effect. Noticeboards, whilst being a cheap effective medium, were very poorly presented in many instances. The efficiency of a website to disseminate information depends to a large extent on the webmaster who updates the site, and three cases were cited where parish councils could not, or did not know how to, access the webmaster. Two parish clerks suggested that websites were well used at the national or international level but that within the community there was a minimal reliance on this medium. The scoping study cited an instance (4.2.2) where it was thought that long distance walkers were not well informed about village services and information dissemination discussed is therefore vital if maximum community benefits are to be obtained.

As for the initiation of projects having direct or indirect relevance to long distance paths, examples were identified where parish councils have undertaken projects ranging from the development of local walks to large scale building regeneration schemes. In most cases local people have been involved, many adding specialist skills, labour or experience. A parish clerk commented "we are very keen on it (the long distance path) and have lots of volunteer support, without which we just could not be so active, we are known locally as having an exceptionally well maintained rights of way network, therefore this encourages people to come" (pers. comm. M. Downing 2001).

With regard to funding, it is often possible to fund an initiative from the parish budget, but in all the case study parish councils applications had been made for external funding related to tourism. However it was found that these could be problematic. Some instances were cited where funders did not permit a parish council to receive grants whilst in other cases it was only the council that was allowed to apply for and receive the grant. In addition applications take time to complete and to be processed and even if successful, delays may occur in settling claims. It was detected that this was dispiriting for local people who may be unused to, what appear to be, bureaucratic complications. Parish councils do not always have to deal with these applications alone. One council was reported to have close contact with the District Council tourism officer who helped to obtain European funding for projects concerned with the rights of way network.

As for partnership working, it was frequently found that parish councils worked in conjunction with other organisations, sometimes with regard to the funding issues mentioned above, or because they were involved with regeneration or tourism initiatives. Speaking about long distance paths one district councillor said, "they (parish councils) are the only ones who can actually drive the development although they should be able to bring in agencies to assist" (pers. comm. Cllr Bonner 2002). Results presented at 5.2 confirm that opportunities do exist for collaborative working.

However, many respondents working outside parish councils described them as insular and parochial with a limited understanding of wider issues. Moreover all parish councils cited examples of inability to progress projects satisfactorily due to a lack of time, skills or experience. Partnership working has been shown to alleviate some of these barriers by combining the local with the broader knowledge to benefit rural communities. However if this arrangement is to be mutually beneficial it was thought a greater degree of commitment needs to be shown on both sides, but more particularly on the part of the parish council where it was perceived they were sometimes unreceptive.

Thus the case studies demonstrate that all parish councils have the capacity to, and do sometimes, lead local development projects connected with long distance paths. However in each case study location there was a feeling that the business community should be as much, if not more, responsible for promoting itself, since this sector was seen to gain most. This is a short-sighted outlook since the literature review illustrated that local development was not only concerned with monetary gain but other social, environmental

and cultural dimensions, all of which may and flourish as a result of a thriving economy.

6.4 Could this process be improved if parish councils acted differently?

Whilst it has been demonstrated that this type of tourism is a low-key activity which brings substantial community benefits and few, if any detrimental impacts, the parish councils under review have clearly failed to seize the potential in this respect.

A fundamental requirement is for parish councils to be willing to engage in the local development process but not all took a positive perspective, some preferring to leave it to other organisations. Two parish council clerks reported that there was insufficient time and energy to initiate new projects and that they were either responding to crises or dealing with statutory matters. One council took no part, suggesting that it was the responsibility of the tourist office which was open seven days a week. The ownership, (or lack of it) of projects was mentioned at 2.4 and this was relevant in two examples where a long distance path has been created either by the district or county council. In one case the parish council felt that "we as village people appreciate it, but it is not part of us, our own circular routes are different … that was our initiative" (pers. comm. R. Giles 2001). Therefore in these two situations no correlation seemed to exist between the parish council and the exploitation of the long distance path.

Many other stakeholders were uncertain whether or not parish councils had the ability to undertake such activities and, despite new guidelines intended to involve them, some parish councils ignored approaches from other organisations.

The literature review suggested and the research demonstrated that initiatives conceived within the community are more likely to be successful than anything imposed by an external organisation. But local opinion does not always hold parish councils in high esteem. If everyone can see just one measure that addresses their own concerns, confidence in the ability of the parish council would be raised, causing people to take more interest and gradually become involved in community projects. It was noted that parish councils often failed in this respect. Interestingly, three respondents commented that the interviews themselves may stimulate positive change thus even the process of conducting the research could become a force for local development.

The majority of respondents, both within and outside the parish councils, raised concerns that they are not well equipped to deal with the multiplicity of issues that arise. Within this research these have included consultations, briefings and grant applications related to transport, planning, services, finance and health. Councillors are volunteers who are prepared to give time but who are not expert in all these matters.

The research, whilst uncovering some fundamental issues relating to the role of parish councils related to local development, concurs to a large extent with the literature review. Long distance paths can be used as catalysts for local development, although this potential is largely unrecognised. On balance parish councils are considered to be appropriate facilitators but they are not realising their potential.

The literature review suggested some constraints upon parish council activity. These were concerned with representation, skills, attitudes, procedures and the large range of issues that arise. All these constraints have been highlighted during the research thus confirming the findings of the literature review.

6.5   Recommendations

The above conclusions clearly suggest that if parish councils are to play a constructive role in rural governance they must be receptive to new ways of working with others, proactive in demonstrating what can be done and thereby increase the respect they command from other stakeholders. It has been shown that they do not have to work in isolation and must be prepared, where appropriate, to work with, inform and seek advice from their communities and other actors.

Best practice in local development, as discussed in the literature review, depends upon maximising endogenous resources. Two of these resources are local people (2.5) and specific sections of long distance paths that pass through the community discussed at 2.3. The first of these involves social capital; councillors who give their time voluntarily and clerks, who whilst frequently paid, were in every situation overworked. In order for their time to be used effectively councillors and clerks need to equip themselves with the most appropriate skills for the job. Training is available and all should avail themselves of these opportunities. A recognised training course will, in turn help them to demonstrate to their communities that they can respond to local needs, that they are proactive and that they want to involve all sectors of the

population. Through this capacity building of councillors the net of social capital is widened to include a greater proportion of local people all working to a common aim.

Secondly with regard to long distance paths, parish councils should undertake a review and identify all potential sources of benefit. It is however insufficient for parish councils simply to appreciate potential, this must be transformed into reality. Therefore they need to understand exactly what benefits may be generated from the long distance path and to explore how these could be maximised. If a parish council is committed to developing this theme it is recommended that all sectors of the community be represented in a dedicated sub-committee which would ensure that all aspects of the long distance path are systematically investigated before a detailed plan for action is devised. This should include clear objectives, a proposed time scale, details of individuals responsible for different parts of the plan, as well as how it could be financed. It is also recommended that small initiatives should be tackled and completed first so that the community and those responsible for action see tangible results within a relatively short period. This increases confidence and provides inspiration to continue. Such a plan could form a section in a wider parish plan for the whole community as proposed in the Rural White Paper (DOE/MAFF 2000) and fostered since by the Countryside Agency (Countryside Agency 2001a).

It is recommended that in order to derive more local benefit from proximity to a long distance path, parish councils could usefully take the following steps:

- declare a positive attitude among all councillors towards a project aiming to maximise local benefits
- create a sub-committee comprising councillors most interested in the project
- seek out representatives from within the community to join the sub-committee
- identify all local resources that could be exploited as well as any that may benefit from the project
- ascertain the needs of users of the long distance path
- develop a plan of action as detailed above
- engage with all relevant stakeholders for possible advice, funding, skills, labour or general support
- avoid being over-ambitious
- achieve 'mini-objectives'
- publicise and celebrate all success

All too often during the fieldwork respondents rather pessimistically made statements regarding parish councils such as 'a few do (things) but many don't'. Taking the steps outlined above together with some vision, drive and enthusiasm this could be transposed into 'many do but a few don't' achieve successful local development related to long distance paths.

6.6   The research in a wider context

This research project has concentrated on long distance paths and parish councils as examples to investigate how a local resource can be exploited by a local 'agent' to benefit the community and lead to sustainable outcomes. Some very modest actions have been described that all relate to local development. However, it is now important in conclusion to take a wider view and propose how these findings fit into a broader framework.

In the Rural White Paper (DETR/MAFF 2000) the Government, keen to promote the principle of subsidiarity, recognised that parish councils have the potential to work effectively on behalf of their communities. Subsidiarity by definition "deems that decisions should be made by the communities affected, or on their behalf, by the authorities closest to them" (Selman 1996 p.15) and the research has demonstrated that to a certain extent parish councils are active in this respect. However, parish councils should view the Rural White Paper as their opportunity for transformation into more meaningful and proactive vehicles for local development.

It is now clear that parish councils comprise councillors who vary enormously in their competence, levels of interest, readiness to mobilise the community and work with other stakeholders, as well as in the degree of energy and amount of time they are prepared to devote. If subsidiarity is taken literally it becomes reliant on these volunteers resulting in a fragile situation and fluctuating outcomes as demonstrated in this research.

The Government is committed to providing support for parish councils to gain 'Quality Parish' status. Whilst this sounds a laudable idea, a critical factor is easily overlooked. Government must first consider the quality of the individuals involved in taking responsibility for fulfilling this status. Chapter 2 describes the process of local development as being one that builds on local resources and at 2.5 the different people within a community, including the community leaders, are shown to be one vital local resource. The government needs to recognise the potential of, and give every support to, this social capital before other initiatives are put in place. The level of funding, according to the Consultation Paper

on Quality Town and Parish Councils (DEFRA 2001) allocated to training is only £2m, whereas transport and community services have each been allocated £15m, whilst parish plans account for £5m. Clearly there is a lack of understanding at national level of how to achieve successful local development. If parish councillors were provided, through training, with the skills and awareness necessary to lead the local development process they would then be able to demonstrate that their councils are active, competent and representative, criteria necessary to gain Quality Parish Council status. Thereafter their voluntary time could be used to maximum effect by responding positively to other government measures, such as those for which funding is allocated as described above.

A brief example will bring together all elements of the research within the context of current policy. Moseley states "a parish that knows its own mind is well placed to influence those outside forces" (Moseley in Derounian 1998 p.92) and one way in which parish councils can contribute to rural governance is to work with their community to produce a parish plan. Suitably constructed this can integrate with the community plans being drawn up by other statutory authorities. In producing these parish plans local resources should be exploited and as stated earlier a strategy to harness benefits from the presence of a long distance path could and should be incorporated within such a plan. These parish plans will contribute towards 'Quality Parish' status which increases the credibility of parish councils at the national level, whilst at the same time assisting other tiers of local government to respond to the needs of individual settlements. In this way a large number of stakeholders become involved in the governance of rural areas whilst the 'voice' of the community still underlies the decision making process at the local level.

The thesis shows that the role of parish councils in unlocking latent benefits from resources within their parish is both under-developed and under-researched. In that regard it may be useful for parish councils to be encouraged to take a holistic look at their local resources and at the 'tools' potentially at their disposal to better extract value. Appendix 3 sets out some initial thinking along those lines in the form of a possible toolkit.

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The National Association of Local Councils
(representing Parish, Town and Community Councils)
108 Great Russell Street, London, WC1B 3LD
What Can Local Councils Do?
(A summary of their powers for those who want better villages and towns)

The powers which have been vested in Parish, Town and Community Councils by Acts of Parliament are summarised in this leaflet as a guide to Councillors and others. Each description is brief and is intended to be a general indication. Like all powers given to public bodies the powers of local councils are defined in detail in legislation and these details may include a requirement to obtain the consent of another body (for example the approval of the County Council to the provision of a car park). Local Councils must exercise their powers also subject to the provisions of the general law (for example planning permission is necessary for a sports pavilion). Information on all these details should be in the hands of the Clerks of the Councils. The standard text-book, *Local Council Administration* by Charles Arnold-Baker, which is sold by the Association, is the complete guide to the powers and functions of local councils.

The powers are listed alphabetically. Where a power is marked with an asterisk the council may, in addition to exercising the power itself, help another body to act by giving financial assistance.

Allotments Provision and maintenance of allotments for cultivation.

*Arts Developing and improving knowledge of the arts and the crafts which serve the arts.

Baths Provision of baths and wash-houses (which in modern terms may mean a launderette).

*Cemeteries Provision and maintenance of burial grounds, or cemeteries, or crematoria.

Churchyards Power to contribute to the costs of a churchyard in use and a *duty* to maintain any closed churchyard where the duty has been transferred by the Church.

*Clocks Provision and maintenance of public clocks, on churches or elsewhere.

Commons Power to protect any finally registered common which has no registered owner.

*Entertainments Provision of any form of public entertainment and any premises for giving entertainments. (This includes maintaining bands or orchestras and providing for dancing.)

Footpaths Maintenance of public footpaths and bridleways.

*Halls Provision of buildings for public meetings and functions, for indoor sports or physical recreation, or for the use of clubs or societies having recreational, social or athletic objects.

Legal Proceedings Power to prosecute and defend any legal proceedings in the interests of the inhabitants. Power to take part in any public local inquiry.

Lighting Provision and maintenance of any *footway* lighting which lights roads or pavements provided the columns are not above specified heights.

*Litter Provision of litter-bins in streets and support for anti-litter campaigns.

Mortuaries Provision of mortuaries and post mortem rooms. *Open Spaces* Provision and maintenance of public open spaces, pleasure grounds and public walks.

Parking Places Provision and management of car and cycle parks. *Parks* Provision and maintenance of public parks and appropriate facilities.

Planning Local councils have a right to be notified of any planning application affecting their area and to make comments which the planning authority must take into account.

*Playing Fields Provision and maintenance of land for any kind of outdoor recreation, including boating pools.

*Ponds Power to deal with ponds, pools, or other places containing filth or matter prejudicial to health.

Post and Telephone Power to guarantee the postal or telephone authorities against a loss on a facility.

Public Lavatories Provision and maintenance of public lavatories.

Roadside Verges Power to plant and maintain roadside verges.

*Seats Provision and maintenance of public seats on the highway.

*Shelters Provision and maintenance of shelters for general public use and also particularly for bus passengers.

Signs Power to erect signs which warn of dangers or announce a place name, or indicate a bus stop.

*Swimming Provision of indoor or outdoor swimming pools or bathing places.

• Tourism Provision of facilities for conferences and encouragement of recreational and business tourism.

*Village Green Powers to maintain the village or town green. *General Expenditure Power* In any situation *not* covered by one of the specific powers described above a council may spend money on any purpose which in its opinion is of benefit to its area or to the inhabitants. The total expenditure by the council on all the cases under this general power must not in any financial year exceed the product of a 2p rate for the parish or town or community. (This power is often called 'The Free Two Pence'.)

Full list of informants for all stages of the research

Name of informant	Position held	Organisation represented
Mrs B Pain	Clerk	Holy Island Parish Council
Mr. J. Booth	Clerk	Deepham Parish Council
Mrs. B. Ashwin	Clerk	Londesborough Parish Council
Mr. M. Byne	Councillor	Llandegla Community Council
Mr. G. Wheeler	Former Mayor, Town and County Councillor	Dursley Town Council Gloucestershire County Council
Mr. W. Taylor	Clerk	Winchcombe Town Council
Mrs. G. Claydon	Clerk	Stokenham Parish Council
Mr.R. Foss	Councillor	Stokenham Parish Council
Mrs. P. Swanston	Clerk	Cricklade Town Council
Mr. R. Bishop	Former Clerk	Blakeney Parish Council
Mr. D. Morton	Clerk	Maltby Parish Council
Mr. M. Downing	Clerk	Edenbridge Town Council
Mrs. M. Huckle	Clerk	Witheridge Parish Council
Sir John Johnson	President Former Chairman	Long Distance Walkers Association Countryside Commission
Mr. Lidston-Scott	National Trail Officer	Peddars Way National Trail & N. Norfolk Coastal Path
Mr. R. Shaw	Former Tourism Officer & Trail Development	Berwick-upon-Tweed Borough Council Till Valley Tourism Initiative
Mr. D. Francis	Director	Community Council of Northumberland
Mr. M. Woods	Director & Former Tourism Officer	Area East Somerset County Council
Dr. J. Hobbs	Senior Countryside Officer	National Trails, Countryside Agency
Mr. M. Hodgson	National Trail Officer	Wolds Way and Cleveland Way National Trails
Ms J. Joslin	National Trail Officer	Thames Path and Ridgeway National Trails

Mr. R. Smith	Chairman	Outdoor Writers Guild
Mr. G. Cassell	Community Project officer	Cotswold District Council
Prof. Michael Dower	Former Director	Countryside Commission
Mr. S. Wright	Director	Gloucestershire Rural Community Council
Ms H. Slade	Former National Trail Officer	South Downs Way National Trail
Mr. J. Walker	Marketing Consultant	National Trails, Countryside Agency
Ms H. Sharpe	Tourism Officer	Somerset County Council
Mr. D. Taylor	Former Councillor and P3 officer	Witheridge Parish Council
Mrs. J. Massey	Clerk	Calstock Parish Council
Mrs. A. Baker	Clerk	North Tawton Parish Council
Mr. R. Giles	Clerk	Queen Camel Parish Council
Mr. F. Woollacott	Chairman	Witheridge Parish Council
Ms. Lesley Smith	Parish Liaison Officer	Community Council of Devon
Mr. R. Makeig-Jones	Economic Development Officer	North Devon District Council
Mr. J. Turner	Secretary & Trail Development	Two Moors Way Association
Mrs. Y Childs	Service Provider	B & B
Mr. Harris	Service Provider	B & B, Camping, Luggage Transfer
Mr. T Bonner	District Councillor	North Devon District Council
Mr. S. Church	Countryside & Heritage Officer	Devon County Council
Mrs. J. Rudge	P3 Officer/member	Two Moors Way Association
Mr. I McGregor	Vice Chairman Chairman	Holy Island Parish Council Holy Island Development Trust
Ms R. Richardson	Fieldworker	Community Council of Northumberland
Mr. S. Hackett	Ranger	Northumberland National Park
Mr. T. Derbyshire	Countryside Officer	Northumberland County Council

Mrs V Patterson	Service Provider	Post Office/ Store
Mrs. M. Heron	Clerk	Wooler Parish Council
Mr. T Johnson	Manager	Glendale Development Trust
Mrs. S. Massey	Chairman	Holy Island Parish Council
Mrs. M. Morgan	Clerk	Dursley Town Council
Mrs. C. Pierce	Mayor	Dursley Town Council
Mr. B. Allen	Councillor Councillor	Dursley Town Council Stroud District Council
Mr. G. Pierce	Councillor	Dursley Town Council
Mr. K. Harrison	Fieldworker	Gloucestershire Rural Community Council
Mrs. D. Bragg	Tourism Officer	Stroud District Council
Ms J. Ronald	National Trail Officer	Cotswold Way National Trail
Mr. P O'Callaghan	Clerk	Bodmin Town Council
Mr. & Mrs. Roberts	Service Providers	B & B
Mr. E Denny	Service Provider	Café
Mrs. S. Jones	Member	Dursley Chamber of Commerce
Mr. B. Wheeler	Service Provider	Newsagent

Author's Proposal for a 'Toolkit'

Aim: To produce an integrated strategy to assist parish councils in developing a local resource for community benefit

Objectives:
- stimulate local action
- involve the community
- exploit 'locality'
- add value to a local resource
- foster partnership working

To be produced in loose leaf format, each section to be expanded to include:

- an information sheet explaining the issue and methods to be used
- a record sheet to list actions taken
- an outcome sheet to identify progress

1. Confirm commitment to the strategy within the parish council
2. Create sub-group (if appropriate)
3. Seek out representatives from all sectors of the community to join sub-group
4. Allocate or search for small amount of funding or sponsorship
5. Raise enthusiasm and attract further community support by publicising proposal
6. Conduct baseline study
7. Set time scale
8. Identify the likely users of the project and ascertain their needs
9. Decide how existing facilities could be extended or adapted
10. Broaden base of service providers as appropriate by encouraging participation by wider audience (eg: cycle hire, tourist attractions, transport links, craft workshops, local food/drink suppliers)
11. Identify barriers to development
12. Seek advice on planning, tax, health & safety, funding issues
13. Compile a list of local craftsmen and sources of local materials to be used later
14. Identify other 'attractions' that users may enjoy
15. Develop links with neighbouring communities
16. Consult with: residents, community groups, service providers, potential users, statutory authorities, relevant organisations/agencies
17. Devise publicity information (to be updated regularly)
18. Co-ordinate all stakeholders
19. Implement agreed action plan via sub groups and other community leaders
20. Provide information on, and monitor progress
21. Amend where appropriate
22. Celebrate all success