

# Wyre Forest Matters Sustainable Community Strategy

making a real

difference

2008-2014

Wyre Forest



**matters**

The Local Strategic Partnership

# contents

<b>About the Wyre Forest District</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Introduction from Ray Brookes, Chair of Wyre Forest Matters</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Our Shared Vision</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Achievements!</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Introducing Wyre Forest Matters and the Sustainable Community Strategy</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Delivering the Sustainable Community Strategy</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Monitoring the Sustainable Community Strategy</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Communities that are Safe and Feel Safe</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>A Better Environment for Today and Tomorrow</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Economic Success Shared by All</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Improving Health and Wellbeing</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Meeting the Needs of Children and Young People</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Stronger Communities</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Geographic Partnerships in the Wyre Forest District</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Supporting Information</b>	<b>38</b>

about the

# wyre forest district

## The District

Wyre Forest District is situated within North West Worcestershire and covers an area of 75 sq. miles (19.4 hectares). It is a mix of urban, rural and market towns, comprising the three towns of Kidderminster, Stourport on Severn and Bewdley, together with a rural hinterland of several villages including Arley, Rock, Chaddesley Corbett and Wolverley. The three towns form a triangle of settlements at the centre of the District but despite their close proximity, each has its own particular character and community identity.

## Population

The population of Wyre Forest District is approximately 98,500, and when compared regionally and nationally the District has a high population of over 65s. This is projected to rise by at least 50% during the next 20 years compared with a total population increase of less than 5%.

## Kidderminster

Kidderminster (56,000 popn) is the main centre for commerce, offering industrial, offices, shopping and leisure facilities. It is recognised as a local regeneration area and has recently undergone an extensive £60 million river and canal side redevelopment. Kidderminster is one of 25 strategic centres in the West Midlands and provides the main focus for the District's economic development.

## Stourport-on-Severn

Stourport on Severn (20,000 popn) developed as an important industrial Georgian Canal Town and was once one of the busiest canal ports in the Midlands. For over 100 years this attractive town with its riverside meadows has been a popular day trip destination.

## Bewdley

Bewdley (9,000 popn) is a Georgian riverside town which saw significant development during the 1960s. Today, Bewdley is an attractive historic market town, has an award winning museum and is a popular visitor destination.

## Rural Hinterland

The District is semi rural and its rural settlements offer a limited range of facilities. To the east, the larger villages include Chaddesley Corbett, Blakedown, Cookley and Wolverley, whilst to the west of the River Severn are the smaller settlements of Clows Top, Far Forest, Callow Hill, Bliss Gate and Rock.

## Natural and built environment

The District has a rich landscape character, and topography is significantly influenced by the Severn and Stour river valleys which flow through the town centres of Bewdley and Kidderminster respectively, before joining at Stourport-on-Severn.

Some 6% of the District is formally recognised as of national importance for nature conservation, including parts of the woodlands of the Wyre Forest and Chaddesley Woods. There are significant areas of lowland heathland, acid grasslands and wetlands which make a key contribution to biodiversity. To the west the land is elevated and dominated by the Wyre Forest ancient semi-natural woodland and the Abberley & Malvern Hills Geopark. The District is home to a number of protected species which are often found along the watercourses and in the pools and marshland areas. A rich heritage is also present, including buildings, conservation areas, monuments, landscapes and archaeology.



## Deprivation

Wyre Forest District experiences relatively low levels of deprivation compared to other local authority areas. It is ranked 162 out of 354, with a rank of 1 being the most deprived, and within the West Midlands it is 15th of 34. However, there are pockets of real deprivation such as Oldington and Foley Park, Greenhill and Broadwaters, that experience high levels of poverty, poor health, social exclusion and low educational

attainment. Oldington and Foley Park ward is the most deprived in Worcestershire and in the top 10% nationally.

**For even more detail on the Wyre Forest District, a full "spatial portrait" (from which the above is an extract) is set out within the Local Development Framework Core Strategy (see page 11).**



# introduction

## from Ray Brookes, Chair of the Wyre Forest Matters Local Strategic Partnership



I am delighted to introduce **Wyre Forest's new seven year Sustainable Community Strategy "Making a Real Difference"**, which replaces and builds on "Helping to Transform Your Life", our previous Community Strategy. This strategy sets out how the agencies and organisations represented on Wyre Forest Matters will work together over the next seven years to continue our success.

**"Making a Real Difference"** is a **"Sustainable"** Community Strategy to place greater emphasis on how we will meet the diverse needs of Wyre Forest's existing residents and improve quality of life, while also safeguarding the prospects of future generations.

This strategy has brought together the concerns of Wyre Forest communities under six main themes which, as a partnership, we need to focus our efforts on in order to improve the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the District. These are:

- **Communities that are Safe and Feel Safe**
- **A Better Environment for Today and Tomorrow**
- **Economic Success Shared by All**
- **Improving Health and Wellbeing**
- **Meeting the Needs of Children and Young People**
- **Stronger Communities**

It is going to take all of us working together to make the District's vision real and this document is just the very start of the process.

### Our Shared Vision:

#### **Making a Real Difference**

**Wyre Forest is a vibrant District where all our communities enjoy a high quality of life, and people value themselves and one another. Residents of all ages receive efficient services and play an active part in the success and wellbeing of the District. Our distinctive and beautiful rural landscape is preserved; our three uniquely identifiable riverside towns and the outlying villages thrive, socially and economically. Wyre Forest District is a safe, prosperous and healthy place to live, work and play.**

This Vision is underpinned by several key outcomes. These are expressed at the beginning of each themed section as individual visions for that theme, which the priorities aim to achieve. They are collectively set out below.

#### **Communities that are Safe and Feel Safe**

Wyre Forest District is an even safer place to live, work, visit and do business. Crime and disorder are low, and our residents feel safe.

#### **A Better Environment for Today and Tomorrow**

The built and natural environment of the Wyre Forest District provides an accessible, attractive, enjoyable, healthy and wildlife-rich place to be, now and in the future. Biodiversity and heritage assets are protected and enhanced. Our varied natural habitats and diverse landscapes are thriving, offering a range of outdoor interests, contributing to local educational opportunities and sustainable tourism. Residents and businesses contribute to minimising climate change, through greater use of renewable energy sources and minimising waste.

#### **Economic Success Shared by All**

Wyre Forest District has a thriving and sustainable urban and rural economy, with the infrastructure and a skilled population in place to support it. It offers its businesses and investors attractive, accessible and high quality employment locations, particularly around Kidderminster and the Stourport Road Employment Corridor, and a diverse, dynamic, competitive business and employment base. Kidderminster benefits from sustainable brownfield regeneration which emphasises its unique carpet industrial heritage. The riverside assets of Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley offer many opportunities to draw in visitors, and Kidderminster also supports a vibrant tourist economy, providing a choice of quality commercial leisure facilities, restaurants and cultural opportunities.

#### **Improving Health and Wellbeing**

By working in partnership with local people and organisations, the physical and mental health and wellbeing of all our communities is promoted, sustained and improved. Urban and rural residents have healthier

lifestyles with good understanding of healthy eating, enhanced access to green open spaces and greater opportunities for physical activity. As they get older, residents' good health and wellbeing continues through easy access to quality health care facilities.

#### **Meeting the Needs of Children and Young People**

All children and young people in Wyre Forest District are healthy, safe, enjoy life and achieve success, make a positive contribution and benefit from economic wellbeing.

#### **Stronger Communities**

All our communities, rural and urban, experience a high quality of life. Kidderminster, Stourport-on-Severn, Bewdley and the larger outlying villages serve their communities' needs with quality leisure, learning, healthcare and shopping facilities and appropriate services and support are available to all those who need them. Everyone has the opportunity to have fun, learn and develop through culture and recreation.

Our neighbourhoods are regenerated and residents are community spirited and actively engaged in shaping services. Kidderminster town centre is attractive and accessible, inspiring community pride. The unique public realm of Stourport-on-Severn is enhanced through the restoration of the canal basins and the regeneration of Bridge Street, and Bewdley remains a thriving market town whose historic character is preserved and its flourishing riverside environment enhanced.

Everyone is able to sustain a good quality lifestyle. The District's local population has a choice of housing which caters for a variety of needs. Attractive, affordable housing is accessible in the three towns and larger rural settlements. The entire District is well served by a sustainable transport network, so local residents benefit from a variety of transport choices and no longer rely on the private motor car.

Wyre Forest District has a strong and vibrant voluntary and community sector, which provides first class services and is supported by a large number of volunteers.



# achievements!

Since 2004, partners within the District have achieved much by working together. Here are a few examples.

## **Safer Communities: Neighbourhood Police Bases**

In partnership with Wyre Forest District Council, local Schools and Community Housing, West Mercia Constabulary have been establishing Police bases in the heart of the communities they serve. These Police bases show what partnership working can achieve to meet resident priorities for safer communities as they have so far led to higher resident satisfaction with the Police and reduced crime.

## **Safer Communities: Partnership Tasking**

The Wyre Forest Community Safety Partnership (WFCSP) introduced partner Tasking in January 2006, bringing together a wide range of partners to receive intelligence and decide collectively how they will tackle problems within the District. One example of action taken as a result of the Tasking process has been the expansion of the "Vulnerable Vehicles" scheme, where Police Community Support Officers, Wardens and Parking Attendants look out for cars which have been left insecure or vulnerable in some way and inform the Police, who then send a pack to the vehicle's owner to help in securing the car in the future. Tasking has been such a successful approach to partnership working on community safety that WFCSP received a commendation for its excellent performance from John Curtis, Home Office Regional Director.

## **Better Environment: the Clean and Safe Charter**

In partnership with Wyre Forest District Council, Worcestershire County Council, Wyre Forest Community Housing and the Police, the Oldington and Foley Park Pathfinder set out to support partners to deliver better services and encourage residents to have a sense of pride in their neighbourhood. A Clean and Safe Charter was delivered to each household setting out responsibilities of different partners to maintain and police the area. Service providers began delivering an

improved service through working together and making better use of resources. For instance, the District Council uses mechanical sweepers to sweep hard areas while Community Housing maintain shrub beds and undertake regular litter picks. The Charter was launched with 2 "tidy" days, where over 60 residents and partners joined forces to make their neighbourhood more attractive by litter picking, planting shrubs and bulbs, and generally cleaning up the area. The initiative was a success, creating a cleaner environment and improving resident satisfaction with street cleaning services.

## **Economic Success: The Revitalisation of Sandy Lane Industrial Estate**

Following years of networking and campaigning by local people and organisations, work is underway to improve, revitalise and transform Sandy Lane Industrial Estate. This £700,000 project is a partnership effort between British Business Parks, Sandy Lane Business Association, Stourport Forward, Advantage West Midlands Rural Regeneration Zone, Worcestershire County Council and Wyre Forest District Council. A new lay-by has been created at the entrance to the estate and a new sign has been inserted detailing the locations of all the businesses. A new section of footpath has been created, improving safety and access for pedestrians. Nelson Road, previously plagued by deep pot holes, is to be repaired, upgraded and then maintained, as is Heathfield Road. Local businesses have been encouraged to invest in making improvements to their premises and around £40,000 has been awarded in grants to help to fund these improvements. During 2006/7 the project helped to create 20 jobs and safeguard 11 jobs.

## **Improving Health and Wellbeing: Community Public Health Development Worker**

One of the key roles of our Health and Wellbeing theme group is to recognise inequalities and work in partnership across agencies to make improvements.

The group identified that while Oldington and Foley Park benefited from the Neighbourhood Pathfinder Programme, SureStart and other initiatives, other areas such as Broadwaters and Greenhill did not. The group felt it was essential that a dedicated health professional should work in this area to forge networks and start new projects within the community. This led to a 12 month piloting of the post of Community Public Health Development Worker funded by the Primary Care Trust. Chris Swanson, an experienced nurse, was appointed, and got busy getting to know local people and groups and facilitating various sessions and events, such as exercise taster sessions for the Bangladeshi community, a health awareness course for older people and a HiNRG day for young people.

## **Meeting the Needs of Children and Young People: Junior Pathfinders**

There are many examples of local young people working with partners to improve the quality of life for both young people and the wider community. At Birchen Coppice School, a group called the Junior Pathfinders have helped to organise and run community events, raised money for young people to go on trips, organised and run clubs, conducted a youth survey and reported the results to partners and managed their own Community Chest funding pot.





# community strategy

## About the Local Strategic Partnership

Wyre Forest Matters is the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) for the Wyre Forest District, and is a partnership which brings together organisations from the public, private, community and voluntary sector. This includes major public services like health, housing, police and local authorities, not for profit organisations and community groups and regeneration schemes such as the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder. The key objective of the LSP is to improve the quality of life in the Wyre Forest District by addressing important issues affecting those who live and work here, such as health, community safety, transport and education.

## About the Sustainable Community Strategy

The Local Government Act 2000 tells us that the statutory duty to produce a Community Strategy sits with local authorities working together with partner organisations. This strategy was drawn up by Wyre Forest Matters, our Local Strategic Partnership, in consultation with a wide range of partners and local people.

## Sustainable Communities

This strategy demonstrates how local organisations and agencies will work together to improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of their area. As a partnership we are committed to helping the Wyre Forest District, and the rest of Worcestershire, to develop in a sustainable way. Sustainable communities are communities which are:

- **Active, inclusive and safe**
- **Well run**
- **Well designed and built**
- **Well connected**
- **Thriving**
- **Well-served**
- **Fair for everyone**
- **Environmentally sensitive**

(The eight components of Sustainable Communities, taken from 'Sustainable Communities: People, Places, Prosperity'. ODPM, January 2005.)

These components of sustainable communities will be addressed through the priorities of this strategy.

## Refreshing the Sustainable Community Strategy

The first Community Strategy for the Wyre Forest District was launched in April 2004. This strategy is a refresh of that original, which was made necessary by changes in the local and national landscape, like climate change becoming more prominent and the introduction of the Local Area Agreement (LAA). The LAA is a set of high level priorities that are important for the whole County and that this strategy will help to deliver.

## Local Development Framework

Following the introduction of a new planning system in September 2004, the District Local Plan (Jan 2004) is being replaced with the Local Development Framework (LDF). The LDF is a portfolio of documents which will guide the physical and spatial development of the Wyre Forest District until 2026. This strategy and the LDF must work together, with both taking account of the objectives in the other.

## Delivering the Sustainable Community Strategy

This strategy fulfils a range of functions:

- It is the overarching strategic document for the District, setting out the key priorities across several themes.
- It provides a route map for all partners to follow, which aims to improve the social, economic, health and environmental wellbeing of the area and its inhabitants.
- It draws many plans and strategies together but does not replace them, as they provide the in depth analysis of specific problems, and a detailed assessment of what should be done about them.
- It incorporates all the things which are really important in this area, and it provides a platform to explain what is important in this District and why. This helps to support bids for funding.

While the strategy itself is important, it is the delivery of the strategy which makes the difference to quality of life in the Wyre Forest District.

The Local Strategic Partnership will focus its efforts on ensuring that the priorities found in this strategy are being delivered. This may not always be through the LSP itself, but through another partnership, group or framework which is better placed to lead. These are summarised below.

## Partnerships

There are a range of partnerships dedicated to improving the quality of life in the Wyre Forest District. These are either focused on particular geographic areas, such as Stourport Forward, Bewdley Development Trust and the Oldington and Foley Park Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder (for more info on these see page 36), or specific issues, such as the Wyre Forest Community Safety Partnership. Certain priorities within this strategy will be more effectively delivered by these specialist partnerships.

## The Local Development Framework (LDF):

The LDF is about spatial planning, and using this to make places sustainable and pleasant to live in. Many of the priorities set out in this strategy have a spatial dimension. For example, if we are to improve the economic success of the District, this will require land for employment use. Community safety can be greatly enhanced by careful planning of neighbourhoods and the buildings within them. Both the health of residents and the environment can be protected and improved by intelligent siting of services and design of transport routes. The LDF provides a mechanism for addressing social, environmental and economic issues through land use and other planning policies, and will help to deliver our priorities by guiding the physical and spatial development of the Wyre Forest District until 2026.

## Action Groups

There are a variety of established action groups within the District. These groups are most often at neighbourhood level, able to involve local residents and bring partners together to develop locally focused action plans to deal with specific issues. As they are closer to the community, they are very effective at dealing with local problems.

## Parish and Town Councils

Parish and Town Councils are the first tier of Local Government, run by people elected and willing to give their time to serve the interests of their local community. They provide community leadership, and form a crucial and influential link between the area they represent and the other tiers of Local Government. Through Parish Planning they involve the community in creating a vision for their area, the delivery of which will both support and be supported by this strategy.

## Partner Organisations

The work of every organisation within the District contributes to improving the quality of life in the area in some way. They all provide services which benefit the community, and will have their own strategies and priorities. These individual strategies should dovetail with this one, so that everyone is working towards our common goals.





## Monitoring the Sustainable Community Strategy

### Performance Management

Performance against the priorities contained within this strategy will be tracked to ensure we are making progress. There are various performance indicators set against the priorities which will tell us the answers to questions such as:

- **Is teenage pregnancy reducing, by how much and where?**
- **Are people learning new skills, and what are they?**
- **Is crime reducing; do people feel safer?**
- **Is public transport improving, and are people more satisfied with it?**
- **Are people eating more fruit and vegetables and getting enough exercise?**
- **Are children and young people achieving at school?**

The performance indicators we have set use very specific methods of measuring the information we want to know, and are detailed enough to guide the action that needs to be taken. They are set out in an appendix to this strategy, details of which can be found in the "Supporting Information" section on page 38.

### Our Starting Point

A picture of the District as it stands currently is provided in the Baseline Data appendix (details of this can be found in the "**Supporting Information**" section on page 38), which sets out the range of evidence which has been used to identify the priorities found in this strategy. This evidence comes from a range of local, regional and national sources, as below, and ensures we have a starting point from which to monitor our progress.

**Statistical information includes data from:** the Local Development Framework Sustainability Appraisal, the Wyre Forest Public Health Report 2006, Worcestershire's Interim Economic Survey 2006/7, Worcestershire's Local Transport Plan 2006, National Statistics 2006 amongst other sources.

**Perception and Public Consultation includes data from:** the West Mercia Fear of Crime Survey 2006, Wyre Forest District Council's Best Value General User Survey 2006/7, the Worcestershire Health related Behaviour Survey 2004, consultation on the Children and Young People's Plan, the Wyre Forest District Council's LDF Citizen's Panel survey 2006 amongst other sources.





## Vision

**Wyre Forest District is an even safer place to live, work, visit and do business. Crime and disorder are low, and our residents feel safe.**

## Introduction

Since the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, our local approach to tackling crime and disorder has been to work together. A strong Wyre Forest Community Safety Partnership exists, which brings together organisations such as the Police, Local Authorities, Primary Care Trust, Fire Brigade and Registered Social Landlords as well as representatives from the Voluntary and Community sector. Through this partnership, significant progress has been made in keeping crime levels low.

Surveys indicate that people feel safer than they did three years ago. However, even the low levels of crime and disorder, anti-social behaviour and fear of crime that are experienced can have a significant impact on people's lives and the cohesion of our rural and urban communities. A greater focus has been placed on working more closely with those communities that suffer disproportionate levels of crime and disorder in order to tackle the root causes of the problems and rebuild confidence in those communities.

But there is still much to be done. A complex relationship exists between crime and social factors such as poor housing, unemployment, truancy and ill health. The Community Safety Partnership's commitment to deliver sustainable solutions that derive from sound analysis of the problem will help to meet the challenge of reducing crime levels further and making the Wyre Forest District even safer.

### Our Priorities

#### Priority 1:

*Improve the quality of life for people living in Wyre Forest by reducing crime and deliberate fires*

Residents surveyed in 2003/4 and 2006/7 felt that the level of crime was the most important thing in making

somewhere a good place to live, and the level of crime dropped from 2nd to 5th in the ranking of what most needs improving, confirming that things are changing for the better. However, the drive to reduce crime never stops as it is such a major influence on quality of life, and we must make sure that levels continue to fall.

#### Priority 2:

*Reassure the public reducing the fear of crime*

In 2006, 54% of respondents to the West Mercia Fear of Crime survey remembered at least one specific episode in the previous 12 months when they had worried about becoming a victim of crime. This is a good reduction on 2005, but tells us that although crime levels are low, fear of crime remains disproportionately high.

#### Priority 3:

*Reduce the harm caused by illegal drugs and alcohol*

In 2003/04, 67.5% of those consulted agreed that drug use was a very or fairly big problem in their local area. In 2006/07, this had reduced to 47%. This is a good sign that things are moving in the right direction, but the damage caused by drugs is such that efforts to reduce drug misuse must continue. Alcohol is also a major concern as a cause of anti-social behaviour, particularly amongst young people, and of disorder, violence and injury.

#### Priority 4:

*Build respect in communities and reduce anti-social behaviour*

Anti-social behaviour can vary from a one-off, low impact irritation, such as an abandoned car, to a sustained nuisance which severely affects someone's quality of life, such as people being drunk and rowdy every night on their street. It is a complex area on which a great deal of effort has been spent over the last few years, and this will continue.

## Where in the District do these priorities apply?

These priorities apply to the whole of Wyre Forest District, but where activity actually takes place is always shifting, according to where the problems are. The Community Safety Partnership has a constant supply of intelligence to tell them where they need to place resources to drive down crime and disorder. However, there are three wards where a more sustained focus is being applied. These are Oldington and Foley Park, Broadwaters and Greenhill, and partnerships have been formed in both areas (see page 37 for more information on these) to concentrate on understanding and resolving the problems that exist there.

## Relationship to other Themes

### Safer Communities and Better Environment

The street scene has a huge effect on how safe people feel within their communities. Neighbourhoods free from graffiti, flytipping, littering and vandalism have a positive effect on local morale, feelings of safety and often actual levels of crime. In addition, the design and placement of parks, play areas, alleyways and other features can have significant implications for community safety.

### Safer Communities and Economic Success

Community safety partners and businesses need to work together to promote a strong economy, as the cost of crime to businesses and the economy as a whole is significant. Town centres, local shopping precincts and late night establishments need to be safe, secure environments for residents to shop and socialise and an attractive place for businesses to invest.

### Safer Communities and Improving Health

Health issues have a complex relationship with community safety. Victims of crime can suffer with poor health as a result of their experience. Many entrenched offenders have mental health problems or drug or alcohol dependencies, and drugs and alcohol are

factors in many crimes. As such, health partners have a key role to play, for instance in the treatment of offenders, and conversely community safety work can help ease the burden placed on the health services, for instance by working to prevent violent crime.

### Safer Communities and Children and Young People

Children and young people are involved in community safety from a victim, offender and location perspective. Research shows that young people are the most likely group of people to be victims of crime, so providing safe places to play, safe routes to schools etc, is very important. A minority of young people are offenders who need to be supported to find a more productive way of life. But whilst the majority of young people are well-behaved, some people have negative perceptions and are fearful of young people, particularly when they are in groups. Whilst this perception needs challenging, there is also a need to find suitable spaces for young people to congregate and provide positive activities for young people to engage in.

### Safer Communities and Housing

Housing partners play a big role in assisting communities to be safe and feel safe, through the provision of well managed housing which meets the needs of its residents and takes account of the surrounding community. In addition, housing partners within the District, underpinned by the Worcestershire Supporting People programme, work together to try to ensure that more vulnerable residents are assisted to acquire and maintain appropriate accommodation.

### Safer Communities and Transport

Transport systems are an integral part of safer communities. Public transport is needed to enable young people to reach activities, and to help people get to their destination safely. In itself it needs to be safe too, so that people feel comfortable using it.



# environment

for today and tomorrow



## Vision

**The built and natural environment of the Wyre Forest District provides an accessible, attractive, enjoyable, healthy and wildlife-rich place to be, now and in the future. Biodiversity and heritage assets are protected and enhanced. Our varied natural habitats and diverse landscapes are thriving, offering a range of outdoor interests, contributing to local educational opportunities and sustainable tourism. Residents and businesses contribute to minimising climate change, through greater use of renewable energy sources and reducing waste.**

## Introduction

The beautiful environment of the Wyre Forest District is one of our greatest assets, and it is consistently quoted by residents as something that makes the District a great place to live. As a semi-rural District, we have a rich variety of landscapes and habitats and these need to be protected to preserve their biodiversity.

With climate change an ever more present issue nationally, this strategy recognises the need for everyone to help to reduce carbon emissions and to make the most of our limited resources by reducing energy and water consumption and minimising waste, reusing and recycling. It also recognises the need to adapt to a changing climate and to plan for erratic and extreme weather.

The urban environment and what's outside your front door is a key part of this strategy also, as the cleanliness and greenness of the neighbourhoods we live in is an essential part of everyone's quality of life.

## Our Priorities

### Priority 1:

*To have cleaner, greener and safer public spaces*

This priority captures the concerns that local people have about the environmental quality of their neighbourhoods

and the District. Litter, graffiti, vandalism, neglect and lack of cleanliness all have a significant impact on everyone's quality of life and their confidence in the safety of their area.

### Priority 2:

*To reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the impact of climate change*

Environmental pressures are of increasing concern to Wyre Forest people and left unchecked, these pressures will almost certainly result in lasting damage and permanent change to the environment. Managing and balancing these demands for now and the future is therefore a key challenge to be addressed, and as such organisations within the Wyre Forest District are signing up to the Climate Change Pledge. This element of our strategy supports the wider Worcestershire Climate Change Strategy.

### Priority 3:

*To reduce waste and increase re-use and recycling*

The objective here is to manage waste in order to limit its production and prevent it going to landfill. This will be achieved first and foremost by reducing the amount of waste being produced; secondly, by reusing products and materials; and thirdly by recovering value from waste through recycling or composting. This strategy recognises that everyone has a role to play in supporting this agenda.

### Priority 4:

*To protect and improve Wyre Forest District's natural environment*

The quality of the District's environment is one of its most valuable assets, and includes a rich built heritage, sensitive habitats and diverse landscape. In the 2006 Citizen's panel, over half of the comments made about the District's environment and countryside said how beautiful and peaceful it was, and the difference that made to people's quality of life was clear. We know that if we fail to protect the District's environment today, each future

generation will pay the price. This part of the strategy links to the Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan (revised in 2007) which sets out to protect and enhance the most significant elements of Worcestershire's natural environment. Our strategy recognises that WFM partners have a role to play in this work.

## Where in the District do these priorities apply?

These priorities apply to the whole of Wyre Forest District.

## Relationship to other Themes

### Better Environment and Safer Communities

The street scene has a huge effect on how safe people feel within their communities. Neighbourhoods free from graffiti, flytipping, littering and vandalism have a positive effect on local morale, feelings of safety and often actual levels of crime. In addition, the design and placement of parks, play areas, alleyways and other neighbourhood features can have significant implications for community safety.

### Better Environment and Economic Success

Businesses have a clear role to play in preserving our environment, particularly in helping to reduce carbon emissions and reducing the severity of climate change. There are opportunities for local businesses to flourish in the environmental sector, with opportunities in renewable energy, waste management, packaging and recycling.

### Better Environment and Improving Health

Our more elderly and vulnerable residents are susceptible to suffering from fuel poverty (the financial position when a household needs to spend more than 10% of its income on fuel to achieve an adequate standard of warmth), and homes that are cold or damp are associated with an increase in respiratory infections and coronary heart disease. If we increase the number of homes benefiting from Warm Front and other grants and increase the





energy efficiency of homes, the health of many people will benefit. Looking outside the home, the benefits to social and emotional wellbeing brought by being able to walk, cycle and spend time in clean, green and wildlife-rich spaces, such as parks, nature reserves and open countryside, are also well recognised.

**Better Environment and Children and Young People**

Teaching our young people about environmental issues will yield results in the future, by creating an informed and concerned generation for whom recycling and energy conservation are natural choices. And there are benefits too for the education of young people, in teaching skills and knowledge which could lead to employment.

**Better Environment and Housing**

The Code for Sustainable Homes makes clear that everything from materials to water use can have an environmental impact and introduces a system whereby sustainable construction will be monitored, with the aim that by 2016 all new homes will be zero-carbon. Looking again at Warm Front grants, an increase in these should result in many old inefficient home heating systems being removed and insulation being upgraded. In addition, improving the energy efficiency of existing housing stock will yield benefits in terms of reducing climate change, and the impact of flooding in the summer of 2007 will require a range of responses to adapt to future occurrences.

**Better Environment and Transport**

Getting around the area is important for people who live, work and visit the District, and there are two key environmental issues related to that. Firstly, two locations, Welch Gate in Bewdley and Horsefair in Kidderminster, are designated Air Quality Management Areas, and traffic emissions are a significant contributory factor to the air quality problems in these areas. Secondly, the choices we make in how we travel around our District can have significant implications for carbon emissions and therefore climate change.



# Economic success shared by all



## Vision

**Wyre Forest District has a thriving and sustainable urban and rural economy, with the infrastructure and a skilled population in place to support it. It offers its businesses and investors attractive, accessible and high quality employment locations, particularly around Kidderminster and the Stourport Road Employment Corridor, and a diverse, dynamic, competitive business and employment base. Kidderminster benefits from sustainable brownfield regeneration which emphasises its unique carpet industrial heritage. The riverside assets of Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley offer many opportunities to draw in visitors, and Kidderminster also supports a vibrant tourist economy, providing a choice of quality commercial leisure facilities, restaurants and cultural opportunities.**

## Introduction

Achieving a strong, prosperous and sustainable economy for the District is of great importance. A key element in this is the development of town centres, and the Regional Spatial Strategy recognises Kidderminster's strategic role in providing a focus for retail, leisure, business and commercial development.

Kidderminster is one of 25 strategic centres in the West Midlands and is the main area of economic development in the District. A central part of this is the corridor running south out of Kidderminster, the Stourport Road Employment Corridor, which is important as a manufacturing area and has potential in offering major brownfield regeneration opportunities. The District's other main settlements are the market towns of Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley. These two towns play an important role for residents, businesses and visitors alike, whilst also supporting the rural hinterlands to their south and west.

Rural issues in the District are very important, and although the majority of employment is concentrated in the nearby urban areas, there are a number of small scale rural businesses that exist within the area which should be preserved and enhanced.

## Our Priorities

### Priority 1:

*To develop a vibrant and sustainable economy, by attracting and retaining high growth and niche businesses into the Wyre Forest District*

There are opportunities for retail, manufacturing and commercial businesses to either set up or expand within each of the three towns. Raising the profile of the District as a business location and boosting the confidence in the area are key elements in attracting new investment to the area, as is supporting existing and established companies. This is a challenging priority, as it is heavily influenced by many other areas of work, such as reducing congestion, and factors which are not easy to control, such as land becoming available for business use. There is also a need to contribute to a low carbon economy in line with the aspirations of the Regional Economic Strategy.

### Priority 2:

*To develop the economic infrastructure*

This is primarily about creating an optimum environment for business in terms of physical infrastructure, such as the supply of land and property, ICT, transport and accessibility, marketing and promotion. It is also about tourism. The district has a varied and flourishing tourism industry, offering a range of visitor attractions within the towns and in the rural hinterland. The value of tourism in Wyre Forest was estimated in 2004 to be £54 million, contributing 15% of the total value of tourism to Worcestershire (Economic Impact of Tourism Worcestershire 2002–2004). This is a varied area of work which partners are working hard to build upon.

### Priority 3:

*To improve the skill base of the population*

This priority is about recognising the need to provide the right training to meet business needs, and to have a well-educated and skilled population so that local people can get local jobs, improve their prospects and maximise their economic potential.

### Priority 4:

*To ensure access to economic benefits*

Wyre Forest District is generally perceived as being economically prosperous. However, it is not the case that everyone benefits from this prosperity. The District is home to a number of areas that experience high levels of poverty, poor health, social exclusion and low educational attainment. We must ensure that the needs of these areas are targeted to enable all of our residents to enjoy a better quality of life. Worklessness plays a big part in this agenda. In 2006, the District had the highest rate in the County of people claiming disability allowance, incapacity benefit, and income support (DWP data 2006). Therefore, aiming to help people off benefit and back into work is very important in the Wyre Forest District.

## Where in the District do these priorities apply?

These priorities apply to the whole of Wyre Forest District, but our three towns – Kidderminster, Bewdley and Stourport – are the areas with the most scope to develop the economy. With regard to Priorities 3 and 4, the focus is on our areas of most need, Oldington and Foley Park, Horsefair and Broadwaters. Specific partnerships exist to deliver in all these areas – see page 36 for more details.

## Relationship to other Themes

### Economic Success and Safer Communities

Community safety partners and businesses need to work together to promote a strong economy, as the cost of crime to businesses and the economy as a whole is significant. Town centres, local shopping precincts and late night establishments need to be safe, secure environments for residents to shop and socialise and an attractive place for businesses to invest.

### Economic Success and Better Environment

Businesses have a clear role to play in preserving our environment, particularly in helping to reduce carbon emissions and reducing the severity of climate change.



There are opportunities for local businesses to flourish in the environmental sector, with opportunities in renewable energy, waste management, packaging and recycling.

**Economic Success and Improving Health and Wellbeing**

The work environment has the potential to really affect our health, through stressful workloads for example, or being seated at a desk all day. Action to improve health can be taken through the workplace, with employers putting on health fayres, encouraging employees to walk or cycle to work, or selling healthy food within the canteen. Businesses have a vested interest in promoting health, as when staff are off sick the workforce is less productive and therefore less profitable. Keeping the workforce healthy helps to keep the business healthy.

**Economic Success and Children and Young People**

Our future economy depends on children and young people. For instance, if more young people are achieving qualifications at school and college, the proportion of the adult population who have the skills they need for sustainable employment will increase. Therefore, if children and young people are given a good start in life, supported to achieve at school, helped to feel valued and taught to believe in themselves and their talents, this will have a positive impact on the success of the economy by putting mature, creative and confident people into the workplace.

**Economic Success and Housing**

The housing market needs to be conversant with economic development. When businesses come into an area, there needs to be enough housing, in the right places and that is affordable, to support the accommodation requirements of the staff.

**Economic Success and Transport**

Transport issues are central to economic success. Businesses need a road structure which supports staff being able to get to work, and goods being able to be transported from and to the premises. Businesses can also help to ease traffic problems like congestion by encouraging and supporting staff to walk and cycle to work.



improving



and wellbeing

## Vision

**By working in partnership with local people and organisations, the physical and mental health and wellbeing of all our communities is promoted, sustained and improved. Urban and rural residents have healthier lifestyles with good understanding of healthy eating, enhanced access to green open spaces and greater opportunities for physical activity. As they get older, residents' good health and wellbeing continues through easy access to quality healthcare facilities.**

## Introduction

Overall, health in the Wyre Forest District has been improving, but there is still much to do if we are to meet local and national targets for health improvement.

Firstly our population is ageing, and we will need to ensure we can preserve people's health and wellbeing as they get older. Secondly, as elsewhere in the country, lifestyles in Wyre Forest District are not as

healthy as they need to be. Diets are poor, exercise levels are inadequate, and we are seeing an increasing consumption of alcohol, especially amongst the young. These patterns, if allowed to continue, will lead to a host of health problems in years to come.

Finally, we have some persistent health inequalities: health in our worst-off neighbourhoods remains worse than health in better-off areas. If we are going to resolve these, we will need to focus on improving health in our most deprived areas whilst not ignoring the needs of the wider community. (Public Health Report for Wyre Forest PCT 2006)

### Our Priorities

#### Priority 1:

*To increase the life expectancy of adults and reduce the incidence of coronary heart disease and cancer*  
Coronary heart disease and cancer are the two biggest causes of death in the Wyre Forest District, and contributing to this are smoking, obesity and alcohol intake. Data from the Wyre Forest Public Health Report 2006 tells us that:

20% of adults in the District smoke; about 2 thirds are overweight; 20% are obese; 17% drink more than the recommended weekly limit and 23% admit to binge drinking. We need to bring these levels down to raise the life expectancy of residents in the District.

#### Priority 2:

*To improve the quality of life of older people, especially those with a limiting long term illness*

By 2011, Wyre Forest District's population of over 65s is estimated to have grown from around 17,500 to nearly 21,000. These changing demographics will have implications for the overall health of the population and their need for health services as people tend to become more vulnerable to ill-health with age. But there is much we can do to prolong health. (Wyre Forest Public Health Report 2006) That is the challenge of this priority.

#### Priority 3:

*To reduce health inequalities*

Health inequalities are differences in health status between groups of people due to different economic and social circumstances. We need to address them as they are fundamentally unfair, and they reduce the overall health of the population. The inequalities that we seek to address through this strategy are: mortality from circulatory disease and cancers; smoking prevalence; obesity; dental decay; breast feeding and men's health.

#### Priority 4:

*Improved life choices for people with mental health problems*

The data routinely available about the mental health of the population is limited. The results of the Regional Lifestyle Survey show that overall mental wellbeing in Wyre Forest is similar to the county and the region as a whole, but there are still problems to be addressed.







### **Where in the District do these priorities apply?**

These priorities apply to the whole of Wyre Forest District. A particular focus is placed onto the wards covered by the Oldington and Foley Park Pathfinder and the Horsefair, Broadwaters and Greenhill Partnership, as these wards are where the most prominent health inequalities exist.

### **Relationship to other Themes**

#### **Improving Health and Safer Communities**

Health issues have a complex relationship with community safety. Victims of crime can suffer with poor health as a result of their experience. Many entrenched offenders have mental health problems or drug or alcohol dependencies, and drugs and alcohol are factors in many crimes. As such, health partners have a key role to play, for instance in the treatment of offenders, and conversely community safety work can help ease the burden placed on the health services, for instance by working to prevent violent crime.

#### **Improving Health and Better Environment**

Our more elderly and vulnerable residents are susceptible to suffering from fuel poverty (the financial position when a household needs to spend more than 10% of its income on fuel to achieve an adequate standard of warmth), and homes that are cold or damp are associated with an increase in respiratory infections and coronary heart disease. If we increase the number of homes benefiting from Warm Front and other grants and increase the energy efficiency of homes, the health of many people will benefit. Looking outside the home, the benefits to social and emotional wellbeing brought by being able to walk, cycle and spend time in clean, green and wildlife-rich spaces, such as parks, nature reserves and open countryside, are also well recognised.

#### **Improving Health and Economic Success**

The work environment has the potential to really affect our health, through stressful workloads for example, or being seated at a desk all day. Action to improve health

can be taken through the workplace, with employers putting on health fayres, encouraging employees to walk or cycle to work, or selling healthy food within the canteen. Businesses have a vested interest in promoting health, as when staff are off sick the workforce is less productive and therefore less profitable. Keeping the workforce healthy helps to keep the business healthy.

#### **Improving Health and Children and Young People**

Health issues affect children and young people just as they affect the adult population. Childhood obesity is an issue of increasing intensity, and the drive to promote healthy lifestyles amongst the young is very important. The high alcohol intake in younger age groups is a particular concern. Young people are also vulnerable to mental health problems, and to issues which affect them at a very young age, such as whether their mother chose to breast feed, or smoked during pregnancy. There is a role for everyone who comes into contact with children and young people to promote good health and watch for signs and symptoms that a young person needs help.

#### **Improving Health and Housing**

The availability and quality of housing has a huge influence on physical and mental health, and especially on the health of older people. Homes that are cold or damp are associated with an increase in respiratory infections and coronary heart disease. Poorly designed or maintained homes increase the risk of accidents. Homes with limited access to public transport and local facilities increase isolation and reduce independence. Modifications or additional support are often needed to allow older people to continue living in their own homes, and those with disabilities to live independently. We can see that in order to prolong health, the quality of housing has an important role to play.

#### **Improving Health and Transport**

Transport is a big factor in good health. Travel methods such as cycling and walking have clear health benefits. Public transport is also very important, as it helps to reduce isolation and provides access to health services to those without cars and in rural communities.



meeting the needs of

# children and young people

## Vision

**All children and young people in the Wyre Forest District are healthy, safe, enjoy life and achieve success, make a positive contribution and benefit from economic wellbeing.**

## Introduction

This theme is based on the Worcestershire Children and Young People's Plan 2006–2009, which contains priorities profiled into the Every Child Matters outcomes. The Plan was developed in close consultation with young people, including many from the Wyre Forest District. More insight into their thoughts and concerns will be given within the relevant priorities throughout this chapter.

Every Child Matters is a new approach to the wellbeing of children and young people from birth to age 19 where the aim is for every child, whatever their background or circumstances, to:

- Be Healthy
- Stay Safe
- Make a Positive Contribution
- Enjoy and Achieve
- Achieve Economic Wellbeing

## Our Priorities

### Every Child Matters: Being Healthy

#### Priority 1:

*Support children and young people to lead healthy lifestyles*  
Good health for children and young people is crucial to provide them with the best possible start in life and preserve the health of future generations. Particular issues to be addressed in the Wyre Forest District are childhood obesity, smoking, alcohol intake and teenage pregnancy.

#### Priority 2:

*Improve the emotional wellbeing of children and young people*  
An emotionally well child or young person has empathy and self awareness. They are able to manage their feelings, are motivated and have good social skills. Recent research commissioned by NCH, the children's charity, reveals that the development of children's emotional wellbeing is becoming increasingly important in deciding young people's life chances. This is because emotional wellbeing has a major impact on the emotional and social skills that enable a child or young person to gain a good education, qualifications and employment. (NCH Briefing, June 2007, Emotional Wellbeing and Social Mobility)

### Every Child Matters: Stay Safe

We know that community safety issues such as places being safe to go to are very important to children and young people. For instance, recent consultation conducted in Oldington and Foley Park discovered that children and young people want safety in parks to be improved, so that they can feel confident to use them. Priorities around issues like this can be found in the "Communities that are safe and feel safe" chapter, where they can be addressed more coherently with other community safety issues.

#### Priority 3:

*Prevent bullying, and support children and young people who have been affected by it*  
Bullying is a high level concern for children, young people, parents and carers, and a key priority they would wish to see addressed. (Public consultation results on Draft Worcestershire Children and Young People's Plan Sept 2006)

#### Priority 4:

*Protect children and young people who are at risk of harm or neglect*  
The protection of children and young people is everyone's responsibility.

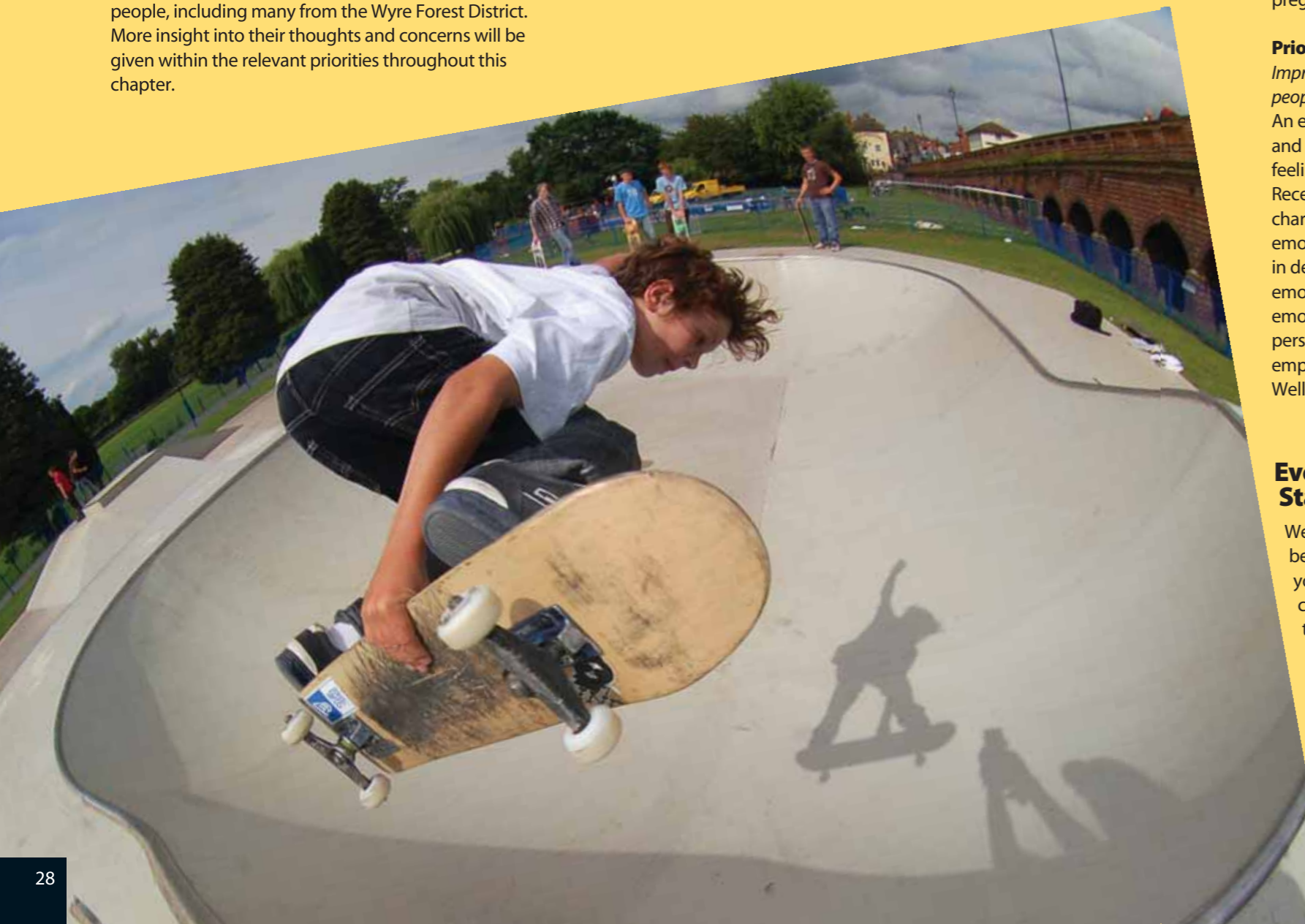
### Every Child Matters: Making a Positive Contribution

#### Priority 5:

*Ensure that children and young people are respected and valued in their communities*  
In 2006, young people cited the negative image that communities have of young people as a key barrier to success, and negative stereotyping was placed in the top 4 priorities of parents and carers who were consulted. They would like to see more celebration of the good things children and young people do through more positive portrayal in the media. One respondent summed up the issue saying, "Young people are all classed together. They should be treated as individuals and not feared." (Public consultation results on Draft Worcestershire Children and Young People's Plan Sept 2006)

#### Priority 6:

*Actively involve children, young people and their families more in decisions affecting their lives*  
1 of the top 4 priorities chosen by children in 2006 concerned their feelings that "we are not listened to". This signals that ensuring children and young people are valued and involved in decision making is very important. Young people consulted also prioritised this, making the point that they want responsibility for decision making



and to be involved, but that “young people need briefing and preparing if they are going to be able to make useful contributions to things... just as adults do”. (Public consultation results on Draft Worcestershire Children and Young People’s Plan Sept 2006)

## Every Child Matters: Enjoy and Achieve

### Priority 7:

*Support the implementation of Extended Services in Wyre Forest District*

Extended Services is part of the Every Child Matters agenda, and incorporates Healthy Schools, Extended Schools and Children’s Centres. The aim of a Children’s Centre is to offer early education combined with day care, support for families, health services, support for children with special needs and disabilities, links to jobs and training, and a base for childminders to meet and share good practice. Extended Schools aim to implement a Core Offer providing high quality wraparound care, a varied menu of activities, parenting support, swift and easy referral to specialist services and community access to ICT, sports and arts facilities, including adult learning. In order to achieve these objectives in the Wyre Forest District, delivering Extended Services needs to be a true partnership effort.

### Priority 8:

*Raise the educational achievement of all children and young people, from those who find learning challenging to the most gifted and able*

In 2006, the percentage of pupils in the Wyre Forest District gaining A\* to C grades was 51.8%. This represents a substantial increase since 1997, but is still lower than the Worcestershire (57.6%), West Midlands and England average. The same is true of literacy and numeracy rates at 11 and 14 ([www.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.dfes.gov.uk)), so to increase the rates of educational achievement in our District is a clear priority.

### Priority 9:

*Enrich the experiences and development of children and young people through activity and positive contribution*  
Whether it is volunteering, attending a cultural event, or being part of a sports team, children and young people can gain a lot of positive things from being active and making a contribution, such as the development of social abilities, learning a new skill or giving something back – the benefits are huge for both the individual and the community.

### Priority 10:

*Ensure that children, young people and their families have things to do and enjoy in their communities*  
In 2006, children, young people and parents and carers placed having things to do as a high priority. There was a clear feeling that there was not enough for children and young people to do in communities, and that cost, transport (particularly in the rural areas of our District), and tailoring activities to the desires of children and young people were important areas to address. (Public consultation results on Draft Worcestershire Children and Young People’s Plan Sept 2006)

## Every Child Matters: Economic Wellbeing

### Priority 11:

*Increase the participation of young people aged 16 and over in education, employment and training*

In 2006 in the Wyre Forest Connexions area, 7.8% of 16–18 year olds were NEET – Not in Education, Employment or Training – an increase of 1% since 2004 and above the county average of 6.8% (Connexions). Individuals in the NEET group are estimated to be 22 times more likely to become teenage mothers, 50% more likely to suffer poor health, 60% more likely to be involved with drugs and 20% more likely to become criminals (Worcestershire’s Interim Economic Assessment 2006/07). As the potential cost to society is so great, reducing the number of NEET individuals is a key concern.

### Priority 12:

*Ensure that all children and young people and their families live in satisfactory accommodation*

This priority involves making sure children and young people live in good quality housing, are prevented from becoming homeless, and are supported in their housing needs. It is related to the priorities in the Stronger Communities chapter around housing issues and reducing income deprivation.

## Where in the District do these priorities apply?

These priorities apply to the whole of Wyre Forest District.

## Relationship to other Themes

### Children and Young People and Safer Communities

Children and young people are involved in community safety from a victim, offender and location perspective. Research shows that young people are the most likely group of people to be victims of crime, so providing safe places to play, safe routes to schools etc, is very important. A minority of young people are offenders who need to be supported to find a more productive way of life. But whilst the majority of young people are well-behaved, some people have negative perceptions and are fearful of young people, particularly when they are in groups. Whilst this perception needs challenging, there is also a need to find suitable spaces for young people to congregate and provide positive activities for young people to engage in.

### Children and Young People and Better Environment

Teaching our young people about environmental issues will yield results in the future, by creating an informed and concerned generation for whom recycling and energy conservation are natural choices. And there are benefits too for the education of young people, in teaching skills and knowledge which could lead to employment.

### Children and Young People and Economic Success

Our future economy depends on children and young people. For instance, if more young people are achieving

qualifications at school and college, the proportion of the adult population who have the skills they need for sustainable employment will increase. Therefore, if children and young people are given a good start in life, supported to achieve at school, helped to feel valued and taught to believe in themselves and their talents, this will have a positive impact on the success of the economy by putting mature, creative and confident people into the workplace.

### Children and Young People and Improving Health

Health issues affect children and young people just as they affect the adult population. Childhood obesity is an issue of increasing intensity, and the drive to promote healthy lifestyles amongst the young is very important. The high alcohol intake in younger age groups is a particular concern. Young people are also vulnerable to mental health problems, and to issues which affect them at a very young age, such as whether their mother chose to breast feed, or smoked during pregnancy. There is a role for everyone who comes into contact with children and young people to promote good health and watch for signs and symptoms that a young person needs help.

### Children and Young People and Housing

Children and young people have the right to live in good quality decent housing, and the level to which this is achieved has a big impact on their life chances. Young people are often vulnerable to becoming homeless and partners work with young people to prevent this happening, as well as assisting those who find themselves in this situation, and offering education and training opportunities through supported housing projects.

### Children and Young People and Transport

Transport has a great impact on the quality of children and young people’s lives. The consultation on the Draft Worcestershire Children and Young People’s Plan Sept 2006 shows that children, young people, parents and carers consider transport to be a big issue in terms of cost and frequency inhibiting the ability of children and young people to access activities, exacerbating the problems of not having enough to do and rural isolation.



stronger

# communities

## Vision

**All our communities, rural and urban, experience a high quality of life. Kidderminster, Stourport-on-Severn, Bewdley and the larger outlying villages serve their communities' needs with quality leisure, learning, healthcare and shopping facilities and appropriate services and support are available to all those who need them. Everyone has the opportunity to have fun, learn and develop through culture and recreation.**

**Our neighbourhoods are regenerated and residents are community spirited and actively engaged in shaping services. Kidderminster town centre is attractive and accessible, inspiring community pride. The unique public realm of Stourport-on-Severn is enhanced through the restoration of the canal basins and the regeneration of Bridge Street, and Bewdley remains a thriving market town whose historic character is preserved and its flourishing riverside environment enhanced.**

**Everyone is able to sustain a good quality lifestyle. The District's local population has a choice of housing which caters for a variety of needs. Attractive, affordable housing is accessible in the three towns and larger rural settlements. The entire District is well served by a sustainable transport network, so local residents benefit from a variety of transport choices and no longer rely on the private motor car.**

**Wyre Forest District has a strong and vibrant voluntary and community sector, which provides first class services and is supported by a large number of volunteers.**

## Introduction

The Stronger Communities chapter has a mix of different themes: Culture, Access to Services, Housing, Transport, the Voluntary and Community Sector, Community Engagement, Community Empowerment and Income Deprivation. As such, each theme is

explained within its section, rather than in an introductory paragraph here. Due to the eclecticism of this chapter, the “Relationships to other Themes” section is missing, but the way in which the themes interact with the others in the Strategy is explained throughout.

## Our Priorities

### Culture

#### Priority 1:

*Improve access to learning, participation and cultural opportunities*

Communities should have opportunities to get involved in activities in their area. This could be anything from a guided walk to an art exhibit or community event. All are beneficial in terms of bringing communities closer together, improving quality of life, and providing opportunities to learn something new.

#### Priority 2:

*Increase participation in cultural, leisure and recreational activities*

When opportunities are available, it is important that communities access them, and any barriers which prevent this are removed. This priority has a particular focus on getting people more physically active, either through sport and physical activity (e.g. playing football) or active recreation (e.g. walking, cycling) as rates in Wyre Forest District are low, at 20.1% of people doing three 30 minutes sessions of physical activity a week.

### Access to Services

#### Priority 3:

*Improve access to services, including advice, support and facilities*

Everyone has the right to high quality, effective services, and there are a variety of reasons why services could be difficult to access for residents. Wyre Forest District has a considerable population of residents from different cultural backgrounds, who may struggle due to reasons of language or faith. The District also has a number of rural communities who face transport challenges to

reach services based in the towns. We have an ageing population, and must recognise that elderly people often have difficulties accessing local services. In terms of health, men are a particular group that need consideration as research suggests they are only half as likely as women to access healthcare. To achieve our other priorities such as improving health, reducing crime, etc, we need to improve access to services.

### Housing

There isn't just one solution to housing issues in the District. Creating a balanced housing market, finding available land to build on to satisfy the housing demand whilst not having a negative impact on the environment, supporting vulnerable people, preventing homelessness, ensuring that existing housing comes up to the required standard, supporting the economy – this is a very complex area and all partners have a role to play. Providing sufficient and suitable housing to meet the needs of the District's communities is vital to their wellbeing, and housing is an integral part of any sustainable community. More detail on this is given the “Relationships to other Themes” section within each chapter. This is an area of our strategy which the Regional Spatial Strategy and the Local Development Framework will really help to deliver, and a well-established strategic framework operates regionally and locally.

#### Priority 4:

*Increase the availability of affordable, appropriate and decent housing*

Everyone should have the opportunity of an affordable, decent home within a sustainable mixed community. Provision of housing should meet the needs of the whole community, including those whose needs are not met by the housing market, and should include a good balance of housing types and tenures. Affordable housing includes social rented housing and intermediate housing (e.g. shared equity) and is provided at sub-market prices, on the basis of a person's housing needs and circumstances.

50yds Bewdley Museum

750 yds Picnic Area

550yds Bridge to Steam Railway

50 yds Toilets

#### Priority 5:

*Improve housing conditions*

Decent homes are important in lots of ways. They are important for the health and wellbeing of those living in them. They have an impact on community safety, as poor housing helps an area to get a bad reputation which makes it an unpopular place to live, which in turn may lead to the breakdown of communities. The energy performance of homes has an impact on the environment and climate change. In short, decent homes are a key element of any thriving, sustainable community. In order to be decent, a home should be warm, weatherproof and have reasonably modern facilities. The Government believes that everyone should have the opportunity to have a decent home, and in the Wyre Forest District, Housing Association partners are working to make all social housing decent by 2010.

#### Priority 6:

*Access to housing and preventing homelessness*

There are many reasons why people become homeless. It may be a result of mental health problems or drug or alcohol dependency, family breakdown or domestic violence. Many people also have difficulty entering the community from care, prison or the armed forces. Wyre Forest District has a detailed Homelessness Strategy (updated in 2005) which has a strong emphasis on

partnership and multi-agency working as homelessness cannot be tackled by one agency alone. Excellent prevention work by the key housing agencies has resulted in a 40% reduction in the number of homelessness acceptances from 2004 to 2006, and strong working arrangements across the sub-region and in Worcestershire, particularly through the Supporting People Programme, to assist older and vulnerable people to access and maintain their accommodation is having a positive impact. However, homelessness is still a problem and because of a reduction in the amount of affordable housing available and issues such as potential economic downturn and interest rate rises, the numbers can quickly rise.

## Transport

As can be seen in the “**Relationship to other Themes**” section of each chapter, transport is integral to a sustainable community, but there is no single solution to traffic problems in the Wyre Forest District. This is an element of our strategy which the Local Development Framework will really help to deliver, and which supports the Worcestershire Local Transport Plan 2006–2011, where more detail about traffic issues in the Wyre Forest District can be found.

### Priority 7:

*Reduce the impact of traffic congestion upon Wyre Forest District*

Traffic congestion is rapidly increasing within the District and is having an adverse impact on the environment and the local economy. The urban areas of the District are experiencing declining air quality and the District currently has two designated Air Quality Management Areas at Horsefair in Kidderminster and Welch Gate in Bewdley. Traffic fumes are a large contributory factor in this. (Wyre Forest District LDF Core Strategy – Issues and Options paper July 2007) Congestion has been identified as a significant problem within Kidderminster as well as Stourport, and this will constrain the development of the former British Sugar site on the Stourport Road Employment Corridor unless an appropriate transport strategy is put in place (Worcestershire’s Local Transport Plan 2006–2011). For

residents, traffic congestion is the top priority, with 49% of respondents to the BVPI Survey 2006 considering it the thing that most needs improving in the area (BVPI General Survey 2006).

### Priority 8:

*Improve passenger transport, leading to improved accessibility and an increase in passenger numbers*

The demand for improved public and community transport within the Wyre Forest District has been established through a number of consultations. In the recent Citizen’s Panel Survey, 43% of comments made regarding transport issues concerned the need to improve public transport (Wyre Forest District LDF Citizens Panel Survey Summer 2006). The District’s bus network is currently inadequate and has suffered a decline with a legacy of service cutbacks and poor patronage. It also suffers from poor reliability due to highways congestion, particularly affecting radial routes into Kidderminster, irregularity of rural services and poor interchange with Kidderminster Rail Station. The Rail Station is poorly served by bus routes, is not conducive to access on foot or bicycle, and has very poor disabled access (Wyre Forest District LDF Core Strategy – Issues and Options paper July 2007). Clearly there is much to improve here.

### Priority 9:

*Increase the use of sustainable travel methods*

Increasing the use of sustainable travel methods such as walking and cycling has huge benefits – to the congestion levels in the District, to the environment through reducing carbon emissions, to the health of residents by getting people more active, and to the safety of the roads. It is an area of work which has huge potential, and plays an important part in the context of the whole strategy.

## Voluntary Sector and Volunteering

The Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and volunteers are an essential part of helping to improve the quality of life in an area, and play a large role in service delivery across all the themes in this strategy. The VCS is also a powerful force in getting residents

involved in their communities, and volunteers are a major resource, especially in rural communities. Our VCS is vibrant and varied, incorporating both large charitable organisations and small community groups, and the contribution that the VCS and volunteers make in achieving the outcomes set out within this strategy should not be underestimated.

### Priority 10:

*Ensure the value of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and volunteers is recognised across the District*

In Worcestershire, we have a Compact which recognises the important role that the VCS plays in delivering services to local communities. The Compact provides a very clear framework for the way that statutory and VCS organisations should work together to provide services, and should mean that Worcestershire residents receive better services provided in a way that is right for them. This priority aims to ensure that business conducted between the statutory sector and VCS is done in accordance with the Compact.

## Community Empowerment

### Priority 11:

*Empower local people to have a greater choice and influence over local decision making and a greater role in public delivery*

Involving people in decisions that affect them can mean involving communities in the planning or development of services, or in tackling problems such as crime, drug misuse or lack of play facilities for children. In particular, effective engagement of local people is critical to the regeneration of our most disadvantaged communities. It is only by listening to the experiences and ideas of people who live in these communities that we can make a lasting difference.

### Priority 12:

*Improve the quality of life for people in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Oldington and Foley Park ward) and ensure service providers are more responsive to neighbourhood needs and improving their delivery*

This priority is led by the Oldington and Foley Park Pathfinder, and aims to improve the quality of life of the

area and its residents. The ultimate objective is to make the neighbourhood safer, cleaner and help shape services to be better joined up, more accessible and more responsive to local needs. See page 37 for more details on the Pathfinder.

## Income Deprivation

### Priority 13:

*Reduce income deprivation including child and pensioner poverty*

Two wards in the Wyre Forest District – Rifle Range and Horsefair – have rankings in the top 10% most deprived in England for income deprivation affecting children. This priority also connects specifically to those in our Economic Success theme around getting people back into work, and those within the Health and Wellbeing theme around reducing health inequalities, as poverty has a direct effect on mental and physical health.

## Where in the District do these priorities apply?

These priorities apply to the whole of Wyre Forest District but as this theme is so varied, the geographic focus will be different for each one. For instance, congestion is generally an urban issue centred on our three towns, but access to services and passenger transport also bring rural challenges to be overcome. Priority 12 has a focus on Oldington and Foley Park, but many of the priorities within this theme will require action across all of our wards, as they are about engaging all of our communities and providing equal access to services, facilities and opportunities.



# partnerships in the wyre forest district

Many key partnerships within the District have a significant impact on the implementation of this strategy, particularly through attracting significant inward investment. Below are details on a few of those partnerships.

### **Stourport Forward (SF):**

Stourport Forward Ltd grew out of the Stourport Town Centre Forum and was set up to apply for and manage £616,000 of regeneration funding, which was made available from Advantage West Midlands through the Market Towns Initiative (MTI). This funding is managed by the Stourport Forward Board, originally elected from the Stourport Forward Partnership, and British Waterways are the Accountable Body. Three major projects are delivered through this partnership:

- 1) The **Restoration of Stourport Canal Basins (£256,000 SF grant) – British Waterways**. This project aims to extend and further develop tourism in the area through an action plan of engineering and landscaping work, and a major arts, events and volunteer programme.
- 2) The **Revitalisation of the Sandy Lane Industrial Estate (£113,000 SF grant) – British Business Parks**. This project has improved the entrance, footpaths and roads on the estate, and grants have been awarded as match funding to businesses on the estate to stimulate private investment.
- 3) The **Stourport Pride Report (£15,000 SF grant) – Wyre Forest District Council**. The Report contains detailed design guidance for the implementation of public realm improvements within key areas of the town. Two major projects have already grown out of the Stourport Pride Report, the **Enhancement of Bridge Street (£30,000, SF grant)** and the **Enhancement of Stourport Riverside Meadows (£25,000 SF grant)** both managed by Wyre Forest District Council. Beyond these three main projects Stourport Forward also has awarded a number of smaller grants to projects.

Stourport Forward has been approved as an “Emerging Development Trust” and members of the Board are currently developing a Succession Strategy to continue the work of the organisation following the end of the MTI programme. For further information on Stourport Forward, please visit [www.stourporttown.co.uk](http://www.stourporttown.co.uk)

### **Bewdley Development Trust:**

Born out of the Market Towns Initiative for Bewdley, Bewdley Development Trust is a partnership now set up as a not for profit community interest company. It has been successful in delivering projects which have brought improvements to the physical infrastructure of the town, given support to local community organisations and businesses, contributed to transport schemes and helped enhance and publicise Bewdley’s offering as a visitor attraction. Strategic work has seen the partnership act as a catalyst through commissioning feasibility work which has then supported wider project development. The organisation is committed to ensuring that Bewdley remains a vibrant town, which is expressed in their vision: “To have a thriving, high quality market town which meets the needs of the local community, develops to enhance the town’s historic character, encourages and supports existing and new creative businesses and achieves a reputation distinct from other neighbouring towns”. More information on the Trust can be found at [www.bewdley.org.uk](http://www.bewdley.org.uk), a site which is run by the Trust as both a visitor and community portal to the town.

### **Kidderminster Town Centre Partnership:**

Kidderminster Town Centre Partnership (KTCP) brings together the people with an interest in the vitality and future of the town. Established in 1993, the group was formed to provide a focus group to develop a co-ordinated and comprehensive response to challenges facing the town and its development. KTCP's aims are:

- **To broaden the visitor offer of the town centre**
- **To ensure the town centre offers a safe and secure retail and leisure experience to visitors and residents alike**
- **To ensure the town centre offers an inviting, clean environment to be enjoyed and enhanced**
- **To diversify and strengthen the economic base - to encourage the birth and growth of both new and existing business**

### **Oldington and Foley Park Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder:**

Working in the most deprived ward in Worcestershire, the Pathfinder aims to improve the quality of life of the residents living in the area. Many of the priorities in this strategy have been shaped by the experience of partners working together at a neighbourhood level in Oldington and Foley Park and the Pathfinder’s wide reaching consultation with the community. Their aims include making the neighbourhood safer, cleaner and helping to shape services that are better joined up, more accessible and more responsive to local needs. As a broad programme across the themes of multiple deprivation, the Pathfinder also focuses on helping residents develop their skills and employability, improve their health and strengthen the educational attainment of the children and young people.

### **Horsefair, Broadwaters and Greenhill Partnership:**

This partnership was commissioned by Wyre Forest Matters to be set up to focus on the issues of the neighbourhoods and engage residents and partners in finding solutions to them. Many of the priorities within this Strategy are shared with this partnership.

### **Partners:**

It must not go unnoticed that the work of every organisation/group within the District contributes to improving the quality of life in this area in some way. Whether it be a big project run by a public sector partnership, or a smaller scale community generated initiative, it all adds up to making Wyre Forest District a better place.

supporting

# information

**Action Plans**, which explain how we will deliver the priorities in this Strategy, are available at the following web address: [www.wyreforestmatters.co.uk](http://www.wyreforestmatters.co.uk)

Our **Performance Indicators**, which set out how we will measure success against our priorities, and the links to the LAA, can be found at the following web address: [www.wyreforestmatters.co.uk](http://www.wyreforestmatters.co.uk)

The **Baseline Data**, which sets out the most recent information on many of the issues contained within the Strategy, such as crime levels, educational achievement rates, health statistics, resident perceptions, etc, can be found at the following web address: [www.wyreforestmatters.co.uk](http://www.wyreforestmatters.co.uk)

the following

# organisations

and partnerships have signed up to the Sustainable Community Strategy priorities:

**Wyre Forest District Council**

**Wyre Forest Community Network**

**Churches Together in Kidderminster**

**West Mercia Constabulary**

**Worcestershire Primary Care Trust**

**Community Action Wyre Forest**

**Wyre Forest District Parish and Town Councils**

**Kidderminster College**

**Oldington and Foley Park Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder**

**Worcestershire County Council**

**Herefordshire and Worcestershire Learning and Skills Council**

**Wyre Forest Community Housing**

**Horsefair, Broadwaters and Greenhill Partnership**

**Connexions**

**Bewdley Development Trust**

**Stourport Forward**



# This information can be made available in large print or on an audio cassette. Call Customer Services on **01562 732928**

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如果你在明白這份文件方面需要幫助的話，請致電 01905 25121。

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