

UPDATE TO THE STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN FOR SOUTH MOLTON TOWN AND SURROUNDING PARISHES TO THE YEAR 2023



*From a rich past -
a bright future*

Prepared by The Community Company (South
Molton) following a public consultation process
in 2009-2010.

Version 1.0 - December 2003

Version 2.0 - February 2011

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Chairman's Comments

This brief report is the distillation of public consultation work carried out in 2009 and 2010 together with the deliberations of the directors of The Community Company. It updates but does not replace the Strategic Action Plan published by Molton Area 2000 in 2003. Pleasingly, the time lag between the consultation and this publication has meant that some of the text is out of date as aspirations have become reality! Most notably this has been in the provision of built infrastructure – new public lavatories, a new kitchen in the Assembly Rooms, a substantially complete Youth Resource Centre, a community garden on the Sheep Fair Field, some improvements to local footpaths and new play equipment in Central Park. Progress on “softer” changes has been slower but lobbying to improve public transport has taken place.

The change in government at a national level in 2010 has changed the planning environment with a new emphasis on “localism”. Whatever the reality of the changes, the value of the community input distilled in this document will not be diminished. It is particularly important to emphasise that the public consultation process that we used encompassed not only the town but all the surrounding parishes that use South Molton as their “service centre”. This roughly corresponds with the Community College catchment area. Any shift to planning at a parish / town level needs to explicitly acknowledge the interdependence of the town, village and rural communities.

Over the last decade or so, South Molton area residents have developed an expectation of constructive public input into the planning process and many people, both Community Company members and non-members, have given substantial amounts of volunteer time to help produce this document. To all those people, please accept my thanks on behalf of the whole community.

Tryphena Huntingford, Chairman

1. Process of Public Consultation

This document is a distillation of outputs from two workshops and an open consultation day. The first workshop, 4 July 2009, used a rural toolkit with support from NDC to initiate discussion and identify key concerns of the town and surrounding parishes. Approximately 45 members of the wider South Molton community attended on invitation from the Community Company (South Molton) though the meeting was advertised for further interested parties to attend. Participants were invited in order to represent a wide range of organisations, age groups, businesses, occupations and personal interests in an attempt to cover as wide a spectrum as possible. The second workshop, 13 February 2010, also approximately 45 people, used the output from the first (collated by members of the first workshop) to produce display boards that would invite participation from the public at a Saturday morning Open Day held in the Assembly Rooms, together with a display of the Core Strategy by NDC. The Open Day, 27 February 2010, was widely advertised in the town and surrounding villages. Between 150 and 200 people came to the Open Day, many of them choosing to spend hours in discussion and responding to the displays using coloured dots to denote priorities, sticky notes to add comments and additional materials to expand on points as required. A number of the original workshop participants manned the displays resulting in a lively and positive morning and copious material to draw together.

The structure of this document follows that developed by the participants of the consultation process.

2. Summary

Essentially, the consultation process generated a remarkably positive atmosphere. South Molton continues to inspire affection and loyalty, with an awareness of the town's interdependence with its rural hinterland, respect for the various sections of the community, and concern that the economic development all would welcome does not spoil but build on the character of this place. The traditional role of agriculture was reaffirmed, along with an embracing of new technologies and work. This small market town with its large rural hinterland is well placed to move into the future with confidence and to make its own unique contribution.

3. Housing and Infrastructure

A number of concerns were raised about the type of housing stock, both existing and new, as well as how social housing is allocated and the physical amenities needed to fulfil all the needs of the community.

Housing

- New houses should not all be built by large developers. Some new houses should be locally designed and built. Self build and other hybrid schemes should be explored
- All new houses should have solar hot-water and district heating systems should be considered. The energy consumption of existing housing stock needs to be assessed and ways found to improve it.
- Local people should have first priority for affordable / social housing.
- Care homes and "independent living units" need to be part of the housing mix.

Infrastructure

- The existing **medical centre / surgery** is inadequate and increasingly unacceptable. Centrality, parking and pedestrian and disabled access all need to be borne in mind in planning their replacement. The idea of the site of the current Sainsbury's was welcomed.
- The **Junior School** needs replacing. A new school is best placed near the infant school with a possible additional primary nearer the community college.
- **Allotments** and green spaces are a key concern. Sufficient growing land should either be provided within new developments or additional land allocated elsewhere. The provision of allotments to the west of the community woodlands would create a greenbelt of woodland, orchard and allotments.
- Beech House represents a valued community resource as a **day care centre**; it is feared that the private sector might be less able to offer day and respite care.
- A new **Youth Resource Centre** is a high priority.
- **User-friendly public toilets** are a high priority.
- There should be a **minor accident unit** at the hospital if the town grows as planned.

- Space for future services at Pathfields such as a combined **fire/ambulance station** should be considered.
- There is an opportunity for more **community use of college facilities**.

4. Economy and Employment

Economic development was welcomed by almost everyone. South Molton is a lively town which needs development, but this must be respectful of both the tradition and ethos of the town. Several members of the public suggested the concept of a 'slow town' and there was much discussion about the unique character of South Molton in this context which included pride in the twice weekly pannier markets. The economic interdependence of South Molton and the substantial surrounding hinterland needs to be more formally acknowledged and supported.

Key points

- There is recognition and public support for the **specialist niche of retail** in South Molton – butcher, baker, etc, along with both the antique, health care services (main stream and complementary) sectors and the South Molton Recycling Centre. **Local food** could be a greater economic driver.
- There is overwhelming public support for moving the **Livestock Market** out of town:
 - The development of an **agri-centre at Pathfields** is an important part of the development vision. The contribution of farming and agricultural diversification to the local economy calls for more attention in economic planning.
 - Moving the livestock market provides a key opportunity for developing the central area.
 - There is general acceptance of a supermarket in the central development area.
- There is a strong sense that **supermarkets** which are too big, or to have two (2) supermarkets in town would have a strong negative

impact on the individual retail shops and cafes. **Parking** is viewed as a major issue for the town compounded by supermarket development/s.

- There was much enthusiasm for the further development of **Pathfields** as an industrial/employment centre, both for local and national companies. Any development should not be of a type to rival or to detract from the centre of town.
- **Tourism** is an important industry for the economy and also for employment. The re-housing and development of the TIC is important.
- The potential of the **Assembly Rooms/Pannier Market** as an economic catalyst is not currently realised. There are suggestions for the development of the Pannier Market into specialist markets such as Hog Roasts, Fat Stock days, and themed events such as ones for French goods, arts and crafts events etc.
- There is a perceived need for increased **adult learning / training / education** opportunities in town.

5 Links (Transport, Communications and Services)

Although there were a number of particular points, the overwhelming message from this consultation exercise was the frustration felt about the lack of joined-up thinking, most obviously in relation to transport but also in the use of open space, public buildings and information management. Improved public transport and refocusing public space for non-car users (pedestrians, cyclists, disabled scooters) would dramatically improve the quality of life for many, particularly the elderly and the young.

A democratic deficit exists which could be addressed through public meetings and workshops organised by the Community Company, a new interactive community website, more effective use of the Amory Centre, and a refreshment of communication channels used by the town and parish councils.

Transport

- **Bus services** since the change of timetabling in 2008 are inadequate. This has become more relevant for villages in the light of local post office closures. Also, bus company services need to be co-ordinated

e.g. First and Stagecoach arrive at the same time for Barnstaple leaving hour gaps between services. Co-ordination is also required between different modes of transport to produce an integrated transport plan for the area. Consideration needs to be given to a bus link to Tiverton Parkway, eg by altering bus route 155 to Exeter to take in train stations. An evening bus service to Barnstaple has been repeatedly requested. Bus policies at County level may need changing to achieve the changes required.

- There is a shortage of **foot paths** and those that exist can become overgrown and unusable. There is a concern that pedestrian and cycling perspectives have not been given due weight in the design of the Central Development Area (CDA). There is a need to increase the number of **multi-use paths** for cyclists, horseriders, walkers and disabled, e.g. improve access from North Molton under the link road with lighting and a footbridge over river. Ensure paths link up and are not cut off by roads. Access to the River Mole is a high priority. Within town, pedestrian access along Old Alswear Road to the community college and the football fields is unsafe.
- **Buses** should be adapted to be able to **carry bikes**.
- A **public transport hub** with enhanced picking up / dropping off and waiting facilities needs to be incorporated into planning for the CDA.
- Learn from Torrington **community transport forum** that exists already. Consider different forms of advertising to promote schemes e.g. facebook, college radio, leaflets etc (see communication section).
- A **mini bus** (possibly combined with a 'Park and Ride') would be valued to link up the wider local South Molton community, in particular Pathfields and the town centre.
- A **scooter to rent** scheme offered for young people needs to be explored.
- The existing **lorry park** in the CDA needs relocation.
- **Parking** poses serious and growing problems, particularly in some parts of the town (eg North Street and West Street, bus stop on corner of Poltimore road) with enforcement issues needing resolution. Consider possibility of disabled parking in the square – or by reducing width of street by pedestrian crossing in East Street outside the Surgery. General review of parking in the town required.
- Local car hire / swap / car club/ community bus / Park and Ride / **car substitute arrangements** need investigation. Need to publicise the Devon car share website and possibly hold meeting/events to arrange lifts in villages/towns to reduce concerns over personal safety issues. A

number of different transport services in the area may be available e.g. DCC minibus hire outside school times, community transport etc but needs to be better publicised.

- The A361 will need upgrading if the planned expansion goes ahead. It is already dangerous in many places.

Communication

- Communication and **information exchange mechanisms** need to be enhanced, including the development of a central website for the area, e.g. Town Council website. Facebook and other electronic forums represent effective and often preferred communication channels for the young, so should be formally supported. What is the potential for community radio?
- The **Community News Sheet** is valued. The printed version of "**Who's who**" would still be welcome. Need to be a range of different formats of communication to suit different needs.
- **Better links** need to be made with the Community College, the Pathfields Development, U3A, the Amory Centre, and the youth constituency and between parishes, including better publicity about what is available in the area. The use of the Amory Centre by non-funded groups is difficult due to the cost.
- There is a communication challenge facing **South Molton Town Council** in its image projected and in its deliberations on behalf of the community.
- A **Youth Council** with representation on the town council is supported. Need to explore ways in which greater youth involvement is encouraged.

Services

- Beech House represents a valued community resource as a **day care centre**; it is to be privatised which will lead to 6 redundancies and day and respite care may be lost if uneconomic. Facilities for the elderly need review.
- The **Job Centre outreach** has gone which is of great detriment.
- The ongoing need for a **Youth Resource Centre** remains great.
- **Benefit forms** are too complicated and more support is needed to help claimants. Age Concern will help the elderly but again needs publicity.
- More entertainment (eg for plays), leisure, sport, growing and open **space needed**.
- Inadequate **public conveniences** are an ongoing issue.
- There are a range of services available by appointment at the Amory Centre e.g. CAB and BPAG. **Drop-in** times should be re-established.
- There is an increasing need for **adult learning / training / education** opportunities in town.

6. Sport and Recreation

Despite various facilities, the town suffers from an absence of 'a public arts, music / concert and recreation space', although a renewed policy towards the Assembly Rooms and an imaginative use of existing spaces might address this. There are a large number of sports and recreation clubs within the town (details of 43 collected) but few dedicated spaces for sport. The idea of a sports' hub is warmly welcomed for the longer term with better access to college and school facilities in the shorter term. Open space (Community Woodlands, allotments, countryside) is much appreciated with concern to improve access wherever possible and increase it with the growth of the town.

Buildings and physical infrastructure

- The **Pannier Market and Assembly Rooms** are valued community assets, with considerable potential. A new lift and better catering facilities would massively improve the Assembly Rooms.
- **The Amory Centre** is underutilised and not considered to be community friendly as it is expensive to hire.
- The **Community College and schools facilities** (both sport and other recreation) are considered underutilised with access requested out of school term-time.
- The creation of a **sports' hub** is warmly welcomed with support for a wide range of physical activity excluding swimming which is catered for by the existing pool. Consideration should be given to including after-sports leisure (bar, food and function room) within a hub.
- Facilities in a new **Youth Resource Centre** should be complementary to a new sports hub.

Open space

- The **Community Woodlands** are highly valued and worthy of further funding.
- **Allotments** are valued and generate interest and ideas, including innovative opportunities for co-operation, selling produce and community participation.
- **Access to the countryside** is fairly difficult. Development may bring opportunities to improve footpaths, bridleways and multi-use paths.
- The public spaces in the town are woefully under-equipped for children. The **Recreation Ground** has the potential for much greater use with minimal improvements and some equipment. **The Central Park** needs urgent upgrading.

Appendix

Workshop invitees and attendees (4 pages)

Action Plan Update – February 2011 The Community Company (South Molton)

ASPIRATION	EXAMPLE PROJECT	PLAYERS	TIME SCALE (short, medium, long)	Comments
Economic				
1. Support town's interdependence with hinterland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area loyalty schemes Retail delivery service, including holiday makers 	SMBA/ SMTTC/CoCo	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant applications ongoing. Include local organisations such as Chulmleigh BA
2. Support niche retail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As 1. Promote complementary health care 	SMBA/CoCo	Ongoing	
3. Encourage local food to be an economic driver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create food hub Specialist food markets 	SMBA/ SMTTC/CoCo	Ongoing	
4. Support tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rehouse TIC See 1. Capitalise further on "Gateway to Exmoor" 	TIC/ SMBA/ SMTTC/CoCo	Ongoing	
5. Realise the potential of the Assembly Rooms / Pannier market	Increase number of specialist events	SMTTC	Short, ongoing	
6. Provide more adult learning / training / education		Community College/ DCC/ ND Workforce Dev Gp (ND+)	Medium	CoCo to lobby
7. Create an agri-centre at Pathfields		SMTTC/ NDC	Ongoing	

Action Plan Update – February 2011 The Community Company (South Molton)

ASPIRATION	EXAMPLE PROJECT	PLAYERS	TIME SCALE (short, medium, long)	Comments
Infrastructure				
Housing				
8. Enable local building skills / businesses to be involved in housing development		SMTC / NDC	Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased communication required, including with SMTC. Request from NDC that CoCo is formal planning consultee. Remain represented on LSP or equiv.
9. Encourage all new builds to have solar hot-water and to assess the potential of a district heating system		SMTC / NDC	Long	Ditto
10. Assess insulation of existing housing stock		SMTC / NDC	Long	Ditto
11. Include independent living units in new housing developments		SMTC / NDC	Long	Ditto
Other built infrastructure				
12. Improve GP built infrastructure		GP partnerships		High priority
13. Provide new junior school		DCC	Long	
14. Provide new allotments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community garden Division of existing allotments Allocation of new land in Core Strategy 	SMTC	Ongoing	
15. Provide a Youth Resource Centre		DCC	Ongoing	
16. Provide user-friendly toilets			Complete	
17. Increase use of Community College by the community		Community College	Ongoing	Lobbying / Information / Communication. Compare with other colleges.
18. Move livestock market	Links with 7.	SMTC/NDC/SMBA	Long	
19. Improve infrastructure for arts and recreation	Links with 5.		Long	Potential cooperation between NDArts (Stella Levy), ND+ and councils
20. Upgrade Assembly room lifts	Links with 5.	SMTC	Short	
21. Debate number/size of supermarkets		SMBA/NDC/SMTC/CoCo	Ongoing	
22. Improve infrastructure for sport and leisure		NDC/ rugby, football and other clubs	Medium	Active committee

Action Plan Update – February 2011 The Community Company (South Molton)

ASPIRATION	EXAMPLE PROJECT	PLAYERS	TIME SCALE (short, medium, long)	Comments
Services				
23. Continue to provide day-care for the elderly		DCC	Ongoing	Lobbying and communication needs to be ongoing
24. Develop an interactive community website	Could link with local shopping website, see 1.	CoCo/ SMBA	Ongoing	
25. Lobby for subsidised use of Amory Centre for community groups		SMTc	Short	More communication required
26. Set up a Youth Council		SMTc	Short	Close to completion
27. Improve open space for children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade central park Upgrade recreation ground 	SMTc	Short/medium	Central park completion expected spring 2011. Skate park rehab and new management by summer '11
28. Improve access to the countryside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Links with 4. Improve paths within the community woodlands 	STRIDE/ TIC	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding for new footpaths expected to reduce after 2011 Grants received for improving woodland paths. Completion expected 2011
29. Reinstitute the Job Centre outreach	Links with 6	As for 6 + national	Ongoing	Lobbying role
30. Continue advice services	eg, debt management	CAB, Plough and Share Credit Union, BPAG etc	Ongoing	Possible links with 6 and 29
Transport				
31. Improve parking and parking planning in town	Town traffic plan	SMTc/DCC	Ongoing	Currently a successful partnership
32. Improve public transport	Transport forum	CoCo / DCC	Short/ongoing	Good relationship with bus companies and DCC
33. Improve access for pedestrians, cyclists and disabled scooters	Linked to 30.	SMTc/DCC/STRIDE	Ongoing	
34. Create a transport hub in the Central Development Area		NDC	Long	Maintain communication link with NDC
35. Assess the potential of a local mini-bus	Transport forum	CoCo	Short	Hire service brokered by Torridge
36. Relocate lorry park		NDC/SMTc	Medium	Maintain communication link with NDC
37. Assess the potential of a scooter to rent scheme	Transport Forum	CoCo	Short	Wheels to Work scheme available
38. Promote lift sharing		CoCo/DCC	Ongoing	
39. Assess the potential of a car club	Transport Forum	CoCo	Long	Potential with support of Graham Roberts Car Hire

Invitees at July 4 planning workshop

Elected government

SMTC	Dave Goodman
	David Worden
	Sue Sewell
	Martin Kingdon
	Mervyn Way
	Lynne Smallridge
	Stephen White (Apologies)
	Kevin Venison
	Geoff Venison
	John Mair
	Stephen Lock (Apologies)
	Mike Smale
	(David Worden, Sue Sewell)
NDC	Eric Ley
DCC	Jeremy Yabsley
parishes	Richard Edgell
	Anita Lewington, Romansleigh
	Marion Mason Thomas, West Buckland
	Colin Evans, SMTC Town Clerk's office

Demographic groups

Older	Janey Easton
	Stella Scoins
	Gary Wilson, Eastleigh
Younger	(Janet Camp)
	Katie Bones
	Sarah Warren
	Cat Merlin
With young children	Anna Woolacott
	Nick Litherlands

Invitees at February 13 planning workshop

Elected government

SMTC	H	Dave Goodman
	S	David Worden
	L	Sue Sewell
		Martin Kingdon
		Mervyn Way
	E	Lynne Smallridge
		Stephen White
	E	Kevin Venison
		John Mair
		Stephen Lock
		Mike Smale
		(David Worden, Sue Sewell)
		Eric Ley
NDC		
DCC	H	Jeremy Yabsley
	E	Richard Edgell
parishes	L	Anita Lewington, Romansleigh
		Marion Mason Thomas, West Buckland
	L	Barbara Rands, North Molton
		SMTC Town Clerk's office

Demographic groups

Older	H	Janey Easton
	H	Stella Scoins
		Gary Wilson, Eastleigh
Younger		(Janet Camp)
	S	Katie Bones
	L	Sarah Warren
	E	Caspian Merlin
With young children		Anna Woolacott
		Nick Litherlands (Apologies)

Employment sectors

Health	Maria Hosegood, Practice Manager Richard Westcott, retired doctor Jon Lawrence, Turning Point Clinic
Education - infants - juniors	Paul Williams (Apologies) Angela Hulme Ros Spain
- seniors	
Farming	(Martin Kingdon)
- farmers and f services	Stuart Holton (NFU) (Apologies) (Eric Ley) Shaun Carter, Mole Valley SM manager Fiona Waterer, Shire horses
- vet	(Sue Sewell)
Small businessses	(Jon Lawrence)
Retail	Rosemary Hallet
Manufacturing	(Mervyn Way), Pathfields Assoc
Tourism	Garth, TIC (Apologies) Cathy Dole
SM Recycle	Sarah Portsmouth
Funeral directors	Graham Westacott
Builders	Martin Griffin, RGB (Apologies) Jamie Stoman, SM Scaffolding (Apologies)
Professionals	Crosse-Wyatt (Apologies)
Commuters	Mary-Ellen Whalley, ND College
Housing	Gail Lockwood, Oak Meadows

Employment sectors

Health	F Maria Hosegood, Practice Manager F Richard Westcott, retired doctor L Julien Barker Isabel Tomlin
Education - infants - juniors	E Jon Lawrence, Turning Point Clinic Paul Williams Angela Hulme (Apologies) Ros Spain
- seniors	(Katy Bones, Sarah Warren, Cat Merlin)
Farming	(Martin Kingdon)
- farmers and f services	Stuart Holton (NFU) E Robert Kilvington (Eric Ley)
- vet	E Shaun Carter, Mole Valley SM manager
Small businessses	E Fiona Waterer, Shire horses (Sue Sewell) (multiple reps!)
Retail	E Rosemary Hallet (Barry Goldbourne)
Manufacturing	Garth, TIC (Apologies) Cathy Dole (Apologies)
Tourism	Sarah Portsmouth
SM Recycle	E Graham Westacott
Funeral directors	Martin Griffin, RGB (Apologies)
Builders	H Graham Haydon, Joiners Jamie Stoneman, SM Scaffolding (Apologies)
Legal profession	L Nigel Ayre, Crosse-Wyatt
Commuters	F Mary-Ellen Whalley, ND College
Housing	H Gail Lockwood, Oak Meadows

Voluntary / Interest

U3A	George White
Probis	Jonathan Edmonds
Rotary	Jim Williams
Sports	Matt Parkhouse, football
	Steve Setherton
	(Stuart Holton) rugby (Apologies)
Arts	Stella Levy
Pubs	Jayne Morton
Religions	Andy Jarvis, Baptist minister
	Chris Robinson (Rev'd) (Apologies)
Scouts	Janet Camp
Museum	Jenny Yendle
Community woodlands	Jenni Payne

Service providers

fire service	(Darren Homewood), fire service (Apologies)
transport	Darren Homewood, SM taxis (Apologies)
police	Graham James, (Apologies)
Amory Centre, NDC	Susan Andrews

Voluntary / Interest

U3A		George White (Apologies)
Rotary	L	Barry Goldbourne
Sports	S	Matt Parkhouse, football
	S	John Parkhouse, rugby
	S	Janette Manday, STRIDE
	S	Graham Peters
	S	Steve Setherton
		(Stuart Holton) rugby (Apologies)
Arts	S	Jenny Wilkinson, Griffin Yard Gallery
Skate park		Jayne Morton
Religions	H	Andy Jarvis, Baptist minister
		Chris Robinson (Rev'd)
Scouts	S	Janet Camp
Community woodlands	L	Jenni Payne

Service providers

fire service		(Darren Homewood), fire service (Apologies)
transport		Darren Homewood, SM taxis (Apologies)
police	S	Graham James, (Apologies)
Amory Centre, NDC	H	Susan Andrews

- Other community**
- Paul Henderson (Apologies)
Sally Cotton
Derrica Hodgson
Claude Squire
Tony Martin (Apologies)
John Moore
Sally Watson
Tryphena Huntingford
Martin Peterson
Anne Brodrick
Jean Foster
- NDC support**
- Andrew Austen
Jan Kennedy

- Other community**
- E**

Paul Henderson (Apologies)

L

Sally Cotton

E

Susie Harkness

H

Veronica Johnstone
Derrica Hodgson (Apologies)
Claude Squire
Tony Martin (Apologies)

E

John Moore

F

Sally Watson

F

Tryphena Huntingford

S

Martin Peterson
Anne Brodrick (Apologies)

Adm

John Phillips
Jean Foster (Apologies)
Rae McCool
Spud Leaning

E

Karin Barton

E

Richard Barton
Jonathan Edmonds (Apologies)
- NDC support**
- F**Andrew Austen

Key to workshop group
H - Housing and Infrastructure
E - Economy and Employment
L - Links (Transport, services
and communications)
S - Sport and Recreation
F - Facilitator