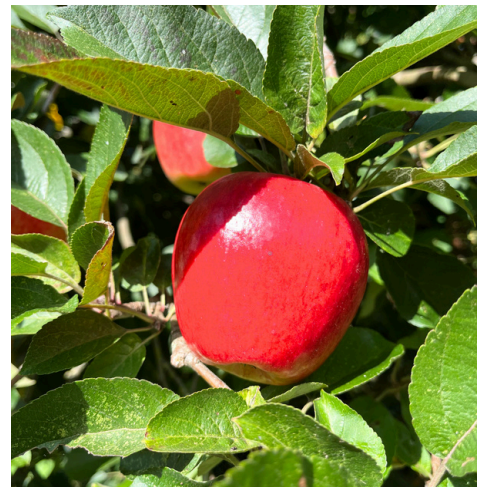




Batcombe Parish Community Review 2025

Executive Summary



Introduction and Methodology

Thank you to all who took the time to answer the Survey. The response to the meeting in the Village Hall in June 2025, and to the survey is a great reflection on the strength of our community. There was a fantastic response to both, the number of those responding to the Survey far exceeded many of those carried out in other parishes. We hope this enthusiasm can be carried forward in terms of people volunteering to help out with projects .

Short Parish overview

The Parish of Batcombe, comprising Eastcombe, Batcombe, Westcombe and Spargrove has a population of around 420. It is a special place to live for a number of reasons, tucked away in beautiful countryside it offers lovely views and many and varied walks. It also has a fantastic intergenerational community, a thriving and energetic group of families with young children mixing on a daily basis with older generations full of wisdom and humour. Batcombe parish is a community with a strong sense of pride in its landscape and the regular events that bring its residents together. However, like any community, it also faces challenges and has needs that require attention.

Reason for undertaking Review

The review seeks to understand the needs of the community and to understand where the priorities and enthusiasm is for coming together to meet those needs. Without a coordinated approach there is a danger that the community does not remain cohesive and inclusive or that energies are wasted rather than coordinated.



Introduction and Methodology

Topics chosen and rationale for them

The Survey tried not to suggest answers or be prescriptive in its outcomes. The topics were as broad as possible taking into account our environment and the realms of the possible. It has hopefully captured all the areas that are relevant to our lives: traffic, travel and transport, climate emergency and local environment, community facilities and services, connectivity, community safety, communication and housing. A public consultation event was held in the Village Hall in June 2025 to encourage members of the community to highlight issues and topics of concern, and to help inform the scope of the main consultation surveys.

With support and guidance from Thrive (a charity that supports communities in Somerset) a final set of questions for the online survey was devised. The survey was promoted extensively via social media, posters around the Parish, leaflet drops to every accessible house in the Parish along with door knocking, Parish Newsletter articles and face-to-face attendance at village events, such as the Fete, HUB visits and speaking to people in the Pub.

The survey's QR codes allowed residents to immediately start responding. Residents were encouraged to respond as individuals, and a separate survey was available for children and young people. Both had prize draw incentives.

The surveys were live between 24 August to 22 September 2025.

- 149 responses to the main survey
- 27 responses to the Children and Young People's survey



Information in blue relates to the findings in the Children and Young People's survey.



Key Findings

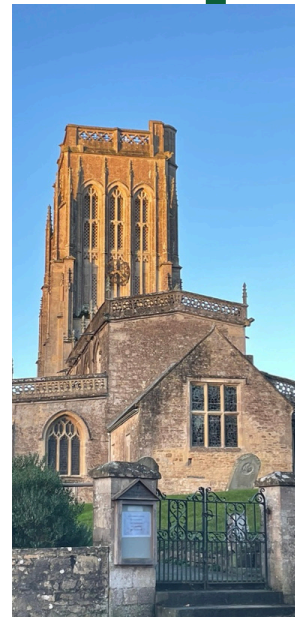
The results have now been analysed and a summary of the main findings follows:

Batcombe has a population of approximately 420 according to the 2021 Census. The overall response rate of 42% is above the average for similar community surveys conducted by Thrive.



Your Parish

The rural location of the Parish is the feature most appreciated by a substantial number of respondents. Other aspects these residents value highly are local facilities such as the pub, church, village hall and nearby food and drink outlets. Many of these residents also like the community spirit, community life and community activities available locally. The size of the community and contribution made by farming life, local history and heritage also adds greatly to people's enjoyment of their surroundings.



Children and Young People like the countryside, friendly atmosphere, the playground, friends and quiet surroundings.

The main concerns about living in Batcombe Parish are Broadband connectivity and poor road conditions (both explored in more depth later). Public transport, a lack of affordable housing, new developments and traffic also cause notable concern. Other comments include watercourse pollution, issues with noise and light linked to private events and parties, litter, diminishing volunteers and attendance at community events/using village facilities.



Children and Young People, particularly those of secondary school age upwards, find it hard to see friends outside school, difficulty getting out of the village and attend things that they want to do. A small number do not like the traffic.

Most people feel that the Parish facilities are the key to a thriving community. They also value community events and the community working together to solve problems and help one another. A safe environment, including play areas for children and access to open spaces and nature, is also considered important.



Traffic, Travel and Transport

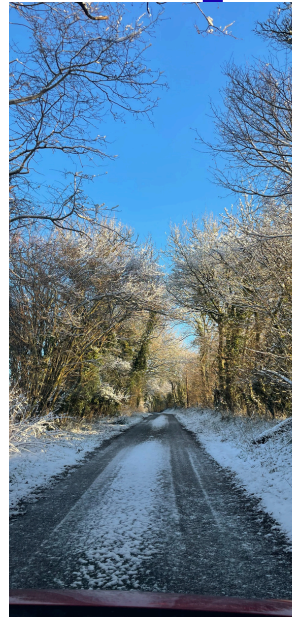
Poor road conditions and traffic speed are main concerns in the Parish. Other worries include parking, safety, pavement and verge damage, high traffic volume, and limited access to bus routes. Residents also mention icy roads, poor gritting, overgrown verges, and damage caused by large vehicles. Confusing speed limits and unsafe driving were raised, along with the need for safer road sharing with horse riders.

Potholes and poor drainage are leading road concerns. While many residents know how to report these issues, some do not, suggesting a need for better awareness of how to do this.

Traffic speed, congestion, and lack of parking are the main concerns around any new building developments in the Parish. Quite a few respondents do not have any concerns which may be attributed to the conservation area status. Among comments, the newly approved development of nine new houses in Cockpit Lane raises concern over access on the single track road.

Public transport would benefit just over half of respondents who answered. Although all options listed would be useful, most would use it to reach GP or hospital services, or to visit family and friends. Many comment that they do not use local services, but Batcombe's rural location and lack of buses means most of these residents rely on their own vehicle or lifts from others. Some are worried about getting older and not being able to drive, and the impact this could have on the village if people had to move away.

There is a lack of awareness of community transport. Just one respondent currently uses it, suggesting there is some communications work to do around promoting the service.





Climate Emergency and Local Environment

Respondents see a local produce market as the best way to cut their individual carbon footprint. A reuse platform for unwanted items, and schemes like a community fridge, pantry, or repair café, are also well supported. As highlighted earlier in the transport questions, limitations in public transport stop residents from reaching local facilities, it is also frustrating efforts to reduce their impact on the environment.

When asked to think about the Parish's longer term resilience for future generations, most respondents with an opinion would back a community-run energy scheme or solar street project. Some favour practical steps on water and sewage, while views on wind and hydro power are mixed. Around one in four are not interested in any of the options, and some want more information.

Planting wildflowers and trees, along with hedgerow projects, appeals to many residents as a way to support local biodiversity.

In terms of environmental issues affecting the Parish, most respondents are concerned about water pollution, wildlife conservation, fly tipping, and the state of Rights of Way. Litter, sewage systems, and pollution from farming are also prominent worries.



Rights of Way

Rights of Way are highly valued by respondents who want better upkeep of stiles, gates, footpaths and bridleways to meet national standards. Many believe the Parish Council should work with landowners to improve access for everyone, including disabled people. Some respondents are unable to enjoy local walks due to mobility problems. There is strong support for more encouragement to dog owners to clean up after their pets. Suggested improvements include creating a volunteer group for footpath maintenance and developing a circular walking route linking the villages with surrounding hamlets.

Only a narrow majority of these residents are aware of how to report issues with Rights of Way. The lack of awareness suggests there is some communications work to do around promoting the reporting process.





Community Facilities

Whole community events, clubs and societies are the main ways that residents are engaging with the community. Litter picking and church are also common ways for these people to come together. There are only a small number of residents who do not take part in community activities, showing that there is a lively and varied range of options on offer. Some include the Parish Newsletter, Heritage Centre, running club, walking football and badminton, swimming group, tennis and the skittles team – all mentioned in comments.



Children and Young People mainly enjoy walking, bike rides and badminton. A small number are involved in church/faith based groups, team sports and running.



Leisure, recreation and sport

The most used resources in the Parish are the Village Hall, footpaths and the pub. Many also use the milk vending machine, the shop at Westcombe Dairy, the Old School and Westcombe Taproom. The Heritage Room and bellringing are mentioned in other comments.



Nearly all the Children and Young People go to the playground with their friends and family. Many also visit the pub and the Village Hall. Fewer visit Westcombe Taproom. Others go to friends' houses, Penny Square barn or spend their time outdoors around the village.

Looking at potential future resources in the Parish, most of these residents would like a community-run village shop, a café or a community orchard/garden. A large number of respondents overall selected choices around access to food, for instance, many of those choosing food deliveries, a food van and having a food bank/pantry/fridge would also welcome a community shop or café.

Other popular resources would be a parcel collection point, a bike track or cycle path, outdoor exercise equipment and televised events for the community. After school clubs would also be popular for those members of the community with children.





Children and Young People opted for mainly new outdoor resources such as a bike/skateboard park, a hangout shelter in the playground/park and a woodland play trail. Quite a few would also like a computer/games club, youth club and an indoor meeting space.

The most popular new community activities would be a supper club, book club, craft/making club and gardening club. Quite a large number are not interested in the suggestions proposed in the question.

The majority of respondents consider that gritting and drains should be improved and invested in for the future, aligning with earlier comments around road conditions. Other considerations for investment are the Village Hall, Old School Room and footpaths and bridleways, which were explored earlier.



The biggest barrier preventing Children and Young People from joining in with activities more generally is they feel there is nothing for their age group. This is particularly relevant for 16-17 year olds, and to a slightly lesser extent 11-15 year olds.



Community Buildings and Events

Most respondents would like a local festival or market for beer/cider/local produce. The majority would also like to see live music events and a bonfire night organised in the Parish. To get more involved in the community and improve people's sense of belonging, respondents would like the opportunity to share their skills and take part in a second hand swap shop or a repair café. There would be a large number of volunteers willing to get involved in developing new activities in the Parish. Many are willing to donate tools or materials or help provide support to get an activity up and running. Quite a large number would also get involved in a management group.

An outstanding number of these residents use the Village Hall and Old School.





Connectivity

Many respondents are unhappy with mobile reception and coverage in the Parish. Views on superfast Broadband are mixed, with many comments around reliability. A lack of Fibre broadband and unreliable copper landlines - soon to be unsupported by BT - are common concerns. Some pay for expensive alternatives such as Starlink, though these can be disrupted by bad weather. Overall, mobile coverage is considered poor or non-existent, and one resident reported having no mobile phone at all.



Community Safety

Traffic and speeding are the main community safety concerns in Batcombe Parish. Many respondents are also worried about access and distance to emergency services and emergency health care provision. Around one in four respondents expressed concern about burglaries and the limited visible police presence in the parish. One also mentioned reports of drug dealing activity along local lanes. Suggestions for improvements to community safety include setting up a Good Neighbours scheme with checks on vulnerable community members, community defibrillator and First Aid training and better activities for young people in the Parish.



Communication

The majority of respondents feel well informed about activities and events in the local area. Most hear about local news and events through friends or word of mouth, and the Parish Newsletter remains a popular source of information. Many also use WhatsApp groups, posters, leaflets, the Community Facebook group, and Parish noticeboards to stay updated. However, some of these residents do not feel well informed, especially those who rely only on word of mouth. One person commented that they sometimes miss important news, such as the death or funeral of a local friend, because they “don’t always bump into people.”

A welcome pack for new residents is considered a good way to improve communications. A large number feel that the current communications are good for them. However, others would like to see better use of social media.





Housing

Among residents who expressed an opinion, most support new housing in the form of low-cost or starter homes to buy, and social housing. However, many others feel that no further housing development is needed in the Parish.

Most respondents feel it is important that any new housing should be in keeping with traditional cottage/house styles in the Parish. Around two in five of these residents do not support new housing. Most have concerns over poor design in future housing developments in the Parish. Others are concerned about the loss of green space, increased traffic congestion, lack of parking, damage to the roads and an impact on community cohesiveness



Demographics

Two in three respondents have lived in the Parish for more than 11 years. 35 have moved to the community since 2021, during or since the Covid 19 pandemic. The sizeable majority of respondents are working age (18-64 years).



Children and Young People responded from all age groups. There is a fairly even split between those attending primary and secondary schools. There is a much smaller response from young people in the 16-17 years age group. All of them live in the Parish.



Next Steps

The next stage is to focus on the projects identified by the Survey. A further meeting will be held at the Village Hall to discuss the projects and gather support for them. The Steering Group will also liaise with Thrive to see what funding can be obtained for the identified projects. Keep your eyes and ears open for the next exciting stage of the process.

Privacy Statement

Analysis was conducted by Thrive, the operating name for Community Council for Somerset (CCS). Data is captured for legitimate and contractual purposes. Information is collected and analysed in accordance with Thrive's role as a Data Controller and Data Processor.

Data is shared in accordance with the Data Sharing Agreement between Thrive and Batcombe Parish Council.

Batcombe Community Review Steering Group will enter any paper copies using standard proprietary online survey software. Once entered all paper copies will be destroyed.

Digital copies are retained for 12 months and deleted after this period. Any personal data that is captured is anonymised with the report and held securely for the purposes of analysis. Hard copies of consultation surveys are kept for the duration of the consultation period and destroyed after the final report is signed off by the commissioner of the survey.

No data will be published which can identify an individual without their consent.

If you have provided contact details to offer help, this data is shared with Batcombe Community Review Steering Group. If you have entered your details to take part in the prize draw and you win, your data is shared with Batcombe Parish Council for the sole purpose of presenting your prize.

If you would like to find out more about how we use your data or want to see a copy of information about you that we hold, please contact info@thrivesomerset.org.uk or call 01823 331222. Protecting your Personal Data is important and we fully comply and adhere to the Principles of Data Protection set out in our Data Protection / Privacy Policy visit: <https://thrivesomerset.org.uk/privacy-notice/>.