



Englishcombe Parish Assembly

4th June 2025

Welcome

Agenda & Guidelines

Meeting Agenda

- Welcome
- Guidelines of the meeting (ensure everyone gets their say)
- Englishcombe Parish
- Update since last meeting
- The survey results
- Questions & discussion
- Next steps
- Wrap up and close

Meeting Guidelines

- Please allow us to take you through a couple of short presentations to make sure everyone has the latest and correct information
- Please hold the questions and discussion until the appropriate part
- Everyone who wants to will get their chance to speak
- Whilst there may be differences of opinion lets ensure that we respect each other and remain courteous & constructive – we are all on the same team
- We will take note of all the questions and so please say your name and where in the parish you live

Englishcombe Parish

What do we mean when we talk about the parish of Englishcombe?

- Englishcombe is a civil parish.
- There are over 10,000 civil parishes in England with most in rural areas.
- Civil parishes were established in 1894, replacing local committees known as vestries who oversaw both church and secular affairs.
- Civil parishes are secular units, distinct from church parishes, even if they cover the same geographical area.
- When we talk about 'the parish of Englishcombe' it is the civil parish to which we are referring.

What is a Parish Council?

- Parish councils are the lowest level of local government.
- Parish councils are made up of unpaid councillors, elected to serve for 4 years at a time.
- Parish councils are funded by way of a precept. This means that a proportion of the council tax paid by local residents is paid back to the parish to cover its expenses.
- In larger parishes, the parish council may be responsible for managing various public facilities. In smaller parishes, their duties are likely to be very limited.
- A parish council must have at least 5 members.
- Parish councils generally employ a clerk.

Who are the Englishcombe Parish Council?

- Englishcombe Parish Council has five current councillors and a clerk.
- The councillors are Will Pow (chair), Robert Law, Mycroft Croisdale-Appleby, Anne Corlett and Nick Spicer
- All five councillors live in the parish – two in Inglesbatch and three in Englishcombe.
- Englishcombe Parish Council employs Jack Turner as parish clerk.
- There are two current vacancies on the parish council. Three applications have been received for these vacancies.

Why does the parish clerk attend meetings remotely?

- It is extremely difficult to recruit for the paid role of parish clerk.
- The role involves various administrative duties as well as acting as adviser to the parish council
- Over the last few years, the EPC has made several unsuccessful attempts to recruit a permanent clerk
- In September 2024, the EPC secured the services of Jack Turner to act as locum clerk.
- Jack has extensive experience and has spent the last few months bringing the EPC's systems in line with the latest legislation and guidance.
- Jack does not live locally and therefore attends via Zoom link. Under current legislation, remote attendance is permitted for parish clerks, but not for councillors.

How do parish council meetings work?

- Parish councils must hold at least four meetings per year.
- One of these meetings must be the annual meeting.
- Parishioners may attend parish council meetings but may only speak during an allocated time at the start of the meeting.
- A parish assembly must be held each year. If necessary, further assemblies can be held.
- This meeting is a follow-up to the parish assembly that took place in May.

Who are the Duchy of Cornwall?

- The Duchy of Cornwall is a private estate that exists to provide an income for the eldest son of the monarch
- The Duchy owns land in various counties, including Somerset.
- The Duke of Cornwall receives the income from the estate but does not own its assets outright.
- The Duchy's financial duties are governed by legislation and overseen by the Treasury to ensure that the estate is managed effectively.
- The income paid to the Duke of Cornwall goes partly towards supporting his charitable activities, but the Duchy of Cornwall is not itself a charity.

What is the relationship between Englishcombe parish and the Duchy of Cornwall?

- The Duchy are one of the major local landowners, leasing land and buildings to various tenants.
- Within Englishcombe village, the Duchy owns Manor Farm, the Acorn Barn, the Old Schoolhouse, the Wheelwright's workshop, the Orchard, the Millstream and a small number of residential properties.
- The parish council currently leases the Millstream, the Orchard and the Wheelwright's from the Duchy for the use of the parish.
- The Old Schoolhouse has been leased to a private individual for an extended period of time. The parish council have had no involvement in this arrangement.
- The Acorn Barn is occupied by the Life Project under a long lease and has been fitted out to meet the needs of its service users. It is not available for public use.
- No other Duchy owned property is relevant for the purposes of this meeting.

Why are we here?

- The lease on the Old Schoolhouse ends in September. The Duchy are not renewing this lease. They propose to sell the building and its land on the open market.
- The Duchy recognize that this would leave the parish without a meeting place.
- The Duchy have indicated that they are potentially willing to put a proportion of the sale proceeds from the Old Schoolhouse into converting the Wheelwright's Workshop into a useable hall.
- They will only do this if the parish demonstrate a need for a community facility and if the sale generates sufficient funds.

What is the current position?

- The Duchy propose to put the Old Schoolhouse on the market this year – possibly late August. They ideally want it sold before the end of the year.
- As an alternative, they will consider a formal application by a community group for a business lease.
- This would be contingent upon the group raising the funds (current estimate - min £200,000, max unknown) to bring the building to a leasable standard.
- It would also be contingent upon the production of a viable business and management plan for the building.
- Any lease would be a full repairing/insurance lease, meaning that the leaseholders would be responsible for all running costs, buildings and contents insurance, maintenance and repairs.
- Any such application will need to be made in the next couple of months.
- The EPC is not in a position to make such an application.

Update since last meeting

Action Group Established

TBC

Meeting with the Duchy of Cornwall

21st May

Visit to the Wheelwrights

21st May

Letter to the Parish

27th May

Summary: Meeting Regarding The Old Schoolhouse – 21st May 2025

Attendees: Representatives from Englishcombe Parish Council, the Duchy of Cornwall, and the Save Our Schoolhouse Residents Action Group.

Purpose of Meeting: To discuss the future of The Old Schoolhouse building in light of its disrepair, and to explore options for community benefit following the Duchy's decision to sell the property.

Key Points from the Duchy of Cornwall:

- **Building Condition:** The Old Schoolhouse has serious compliance issues (electrical safety, energy efficiency, fire safety, accessibility) and is not viable to refurbish for commercial use.
- **Decision to Sell:** The Duchy has decided to sell the building but intends to reinvest proceeds into developing The Wheelwrights Workshop (already leased to the Parish Council) into a sustainable community space.
- **Conditional Investment:** If the community does not support this alternative space, the Duchy may withdraw its reinvestment plans.
- **Sale Details:** The sale is planned to begin in August 2025, once the lease ends in September. It will include the adjacent field as a single package.

Residents' Concerns and Proposals:

- **Parking and Safety:** Concerns were raised about increased traffic and the safety of alternative play areas like the Millstream.
- **Alternative Use:** Suggestions were made to transform the Schoolhouse into an environmental and exhibition centre.
- **Business Case Option:** Residents asked whether a community entity could present a business case to take over the building

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Duchy's Responses:

- The Duchy will consider a proposal from a charity or CIC to lease the building, provided:
 - o A fully costed business plan is submitted within two months.
 - o The group agrees to fund and complete all necessary upgrades.
 - o A new lease would then be granted under favourable terms.
- The Duchy reiterated it will not fund any refurbishment directly and does not intend to run or staff the building.
- Covenants will be applied to the sale to ensure future development aligns with the local area.
- Use of Millstream for community events was suggested as a viable alternative venue, including space for structures like marquees.

Parish Council and Community Action:

- A community survey is underway, with results to be presented at the Parish Assembly on 4th June and shared with the Duchy thereafter.
- The residents group is considering forming a legal entity to take on the Schoolhouse project.
- All parties agreed to maintain open and transparent communication going forward.

Meeting Closure: Emma Pryce (Duchy) closed the meeting, reaffirming the Duchy's desire for a cooperative relationship with the Parish and its willingness to invest in an alternative community space if consensus is reached.

Dear Parish Council Clerk and Residents of Englishcombe Parish

MANOR OF INGLESCOMBE The Old School, Englishcombe Subject to contract, without prejudice

I am aware that many of the residents of the village and surrounding areas are concerned about the possibility of losing the Old School House in Englishcombe. The Duchy of Cornwall have met with the Parish Council and some representatives on behalf of the residents and have listened to the concerns over the future of this property and the needs of the community. Firstly, we wish to thank John Davies and his family for all their hard work and dedication to the Old School over the years.

The lease for the School ends on 28th September 2025 and therefore we would like to formally present the following options to the community:

- 1) The Old School is retained, and the community invest into bringing it up to a condition that meets current regulation under a licence. Only once these works have been completed satisfactorily will the Duchy grant the community a favourable replacement full repairing and insuring lease so that the property can be utilised.**
- 2) The community is given 1st refusal to purchase the Old School.**
- 3) The Duchy proceed with a sale of the Old School later in 2025 and from the proceeds invest in converting Wheelwrights Barn into a new village asset to be leased to the community under favourable terms.**

In order to assist the community in coming to a decision, the Duchy will draw up a schedule of works for the Old School and obtain two quotes to present to the Parish as soon as possible. We will also request a market appraisal of the property to ascertain the current value.

Please be assured that the Duchy wish to work with the Parish Council and local residents in helping to ensure there is a community space in the village of Englishcombe for present and future generations to enjoy.

Please do keep me updated with the thoughts of the village so that we can continue to work with you on the best outcome for all involved.

Yours sincerely

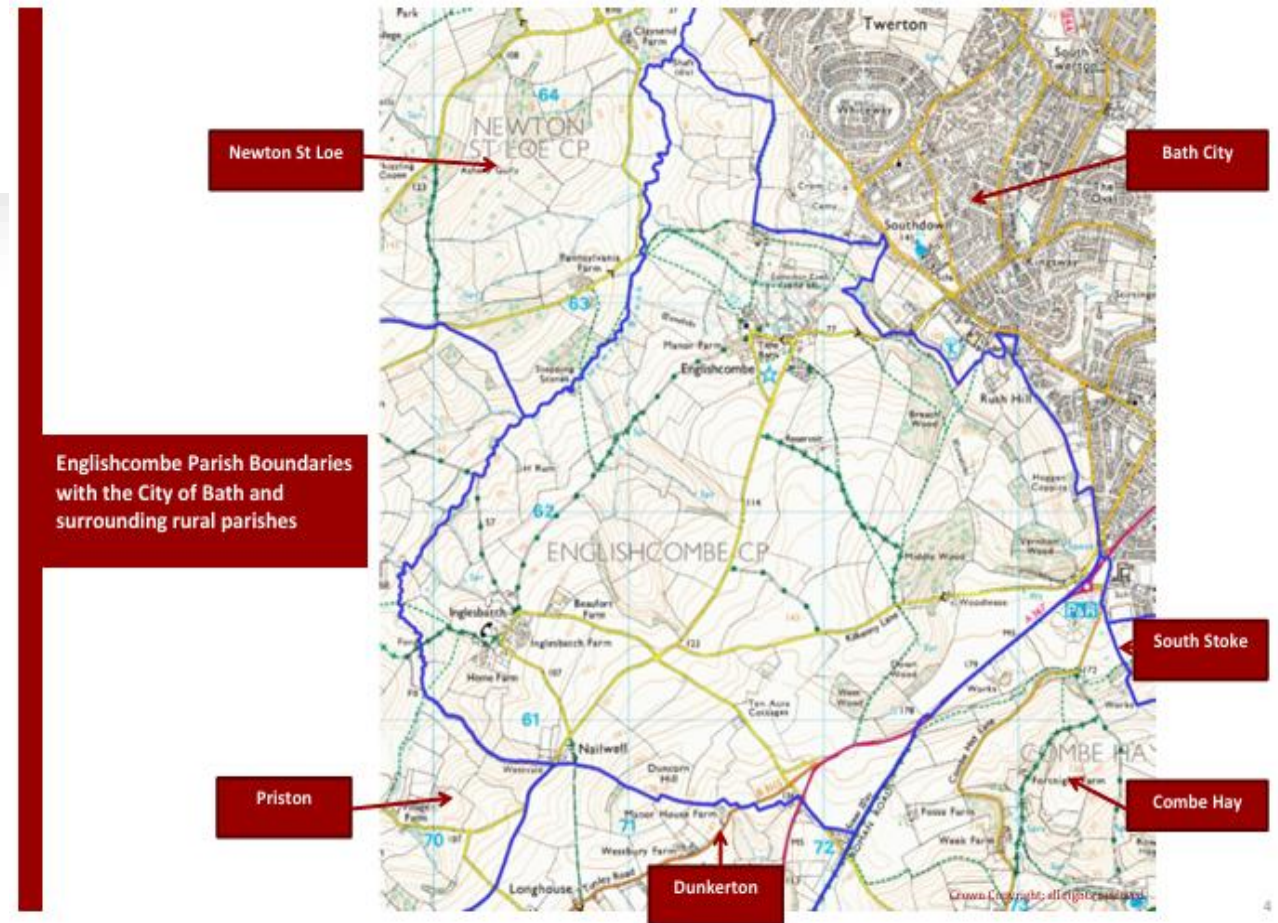
Emma Pryce MRICS FAAV Rural Estate Surveyor on behalf of the Duchy of Cornwall

Parish hub survey – results

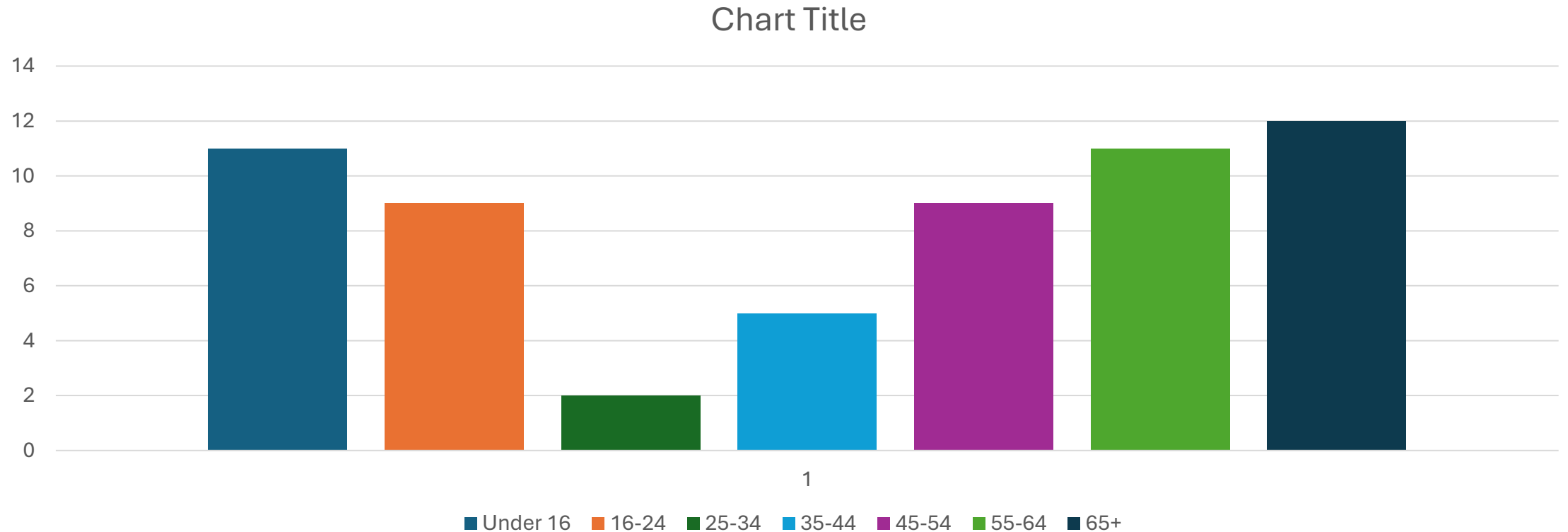


Overview

- The Parish Council distributed 120 surveys to households in the parish.
- A total of 33 responses were received, yielding a return rate of 27.5%.
- No surveys were rejected or duplicated.



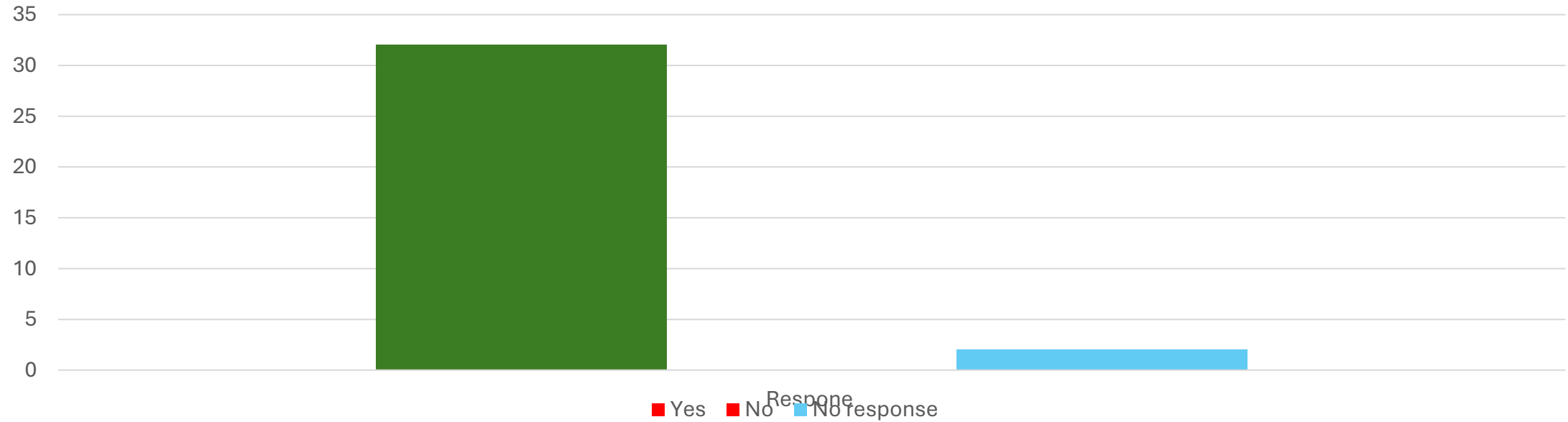
1. Ages in your Household



Finding:

The survey responses reflect a broad age range across the parish, with the highest representation in the 65+ group (13 households) and 55–64 group (11 households). Younger age groups, such as Under 16 (11 households) and 45–54 (9 households), were also well represented, suggesting multigenerational interest in community activities.

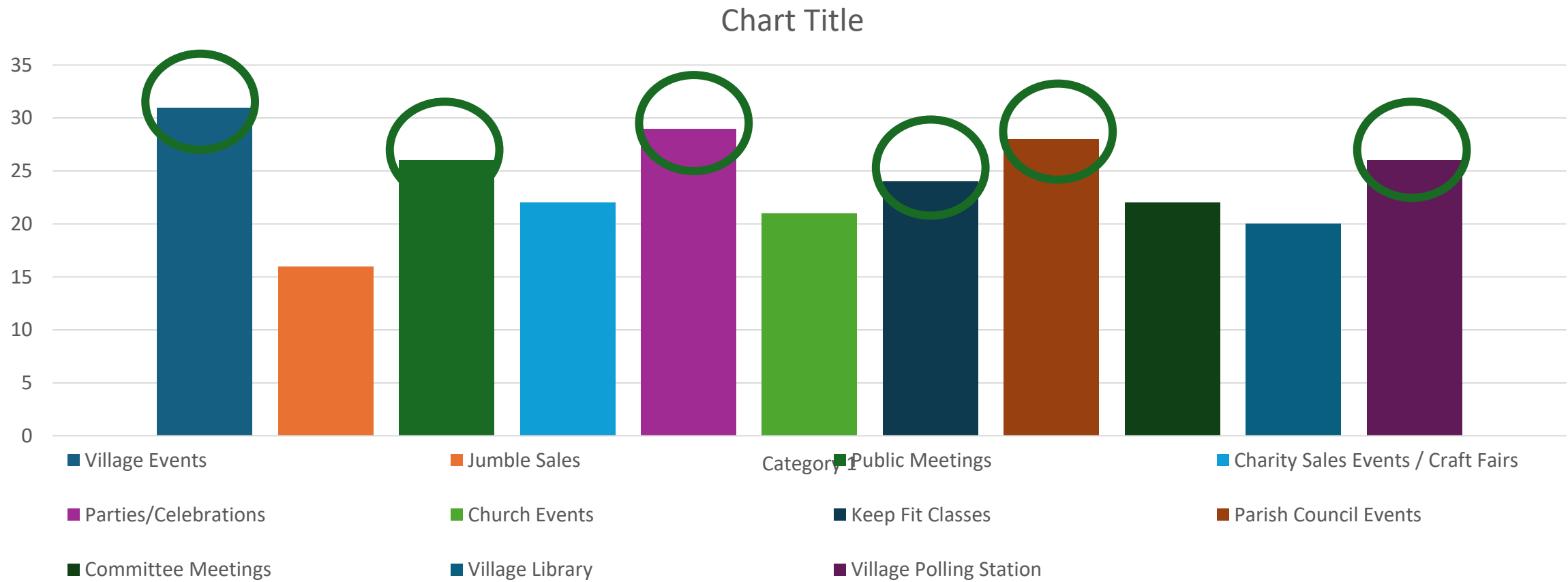
2. Would you and / or your household like to have a communal space that could be used for village events and hired for private events?



Finding:

There is overwhelming support for access to a community space. Out of 33 responses, 32 households expressed interest, with no one opposing the idea. Only one response did not answer the question. This result strongly indicates a shared community desire for such a facility.

3. What type of events would you like to use the space for?



Finding:
Residents are most interested in inclusive, social, and practical events. The most popular suggestions were: • Village Events (31 mentions) • Parties and Celebrations (29) • Parish Council Events (28) • Public Meetings (26) • Polling Station Use (26)

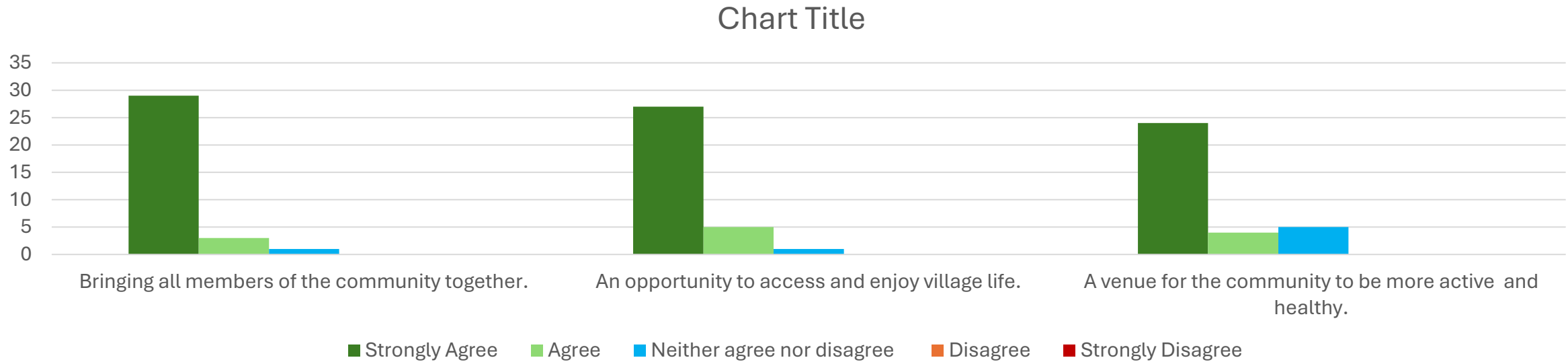
3. What type of events would you like to use the space for? Other ideas

- Chapel Coffee Mornings
- Non church related events
- Village Pub/Café
- Firework & Bonfire Event
- Occasional Social Club/Pub
- Cyclical Community Events
- Garden Tool Storage
- Pre-School/Nursery Club
- Plant Share / swap
- Education and learning
- Village Talks
- Community Library of shared things
- Educational Classes
- Youth Club
- Film Club
- Outdoor area for games
- Village Fair
- Pub Nights

Finding

Additional interests reflecting a desire for both communal and functional uses.

4. Do you Agree or Disagree with the following statements? A village “hall” would provide facility for:

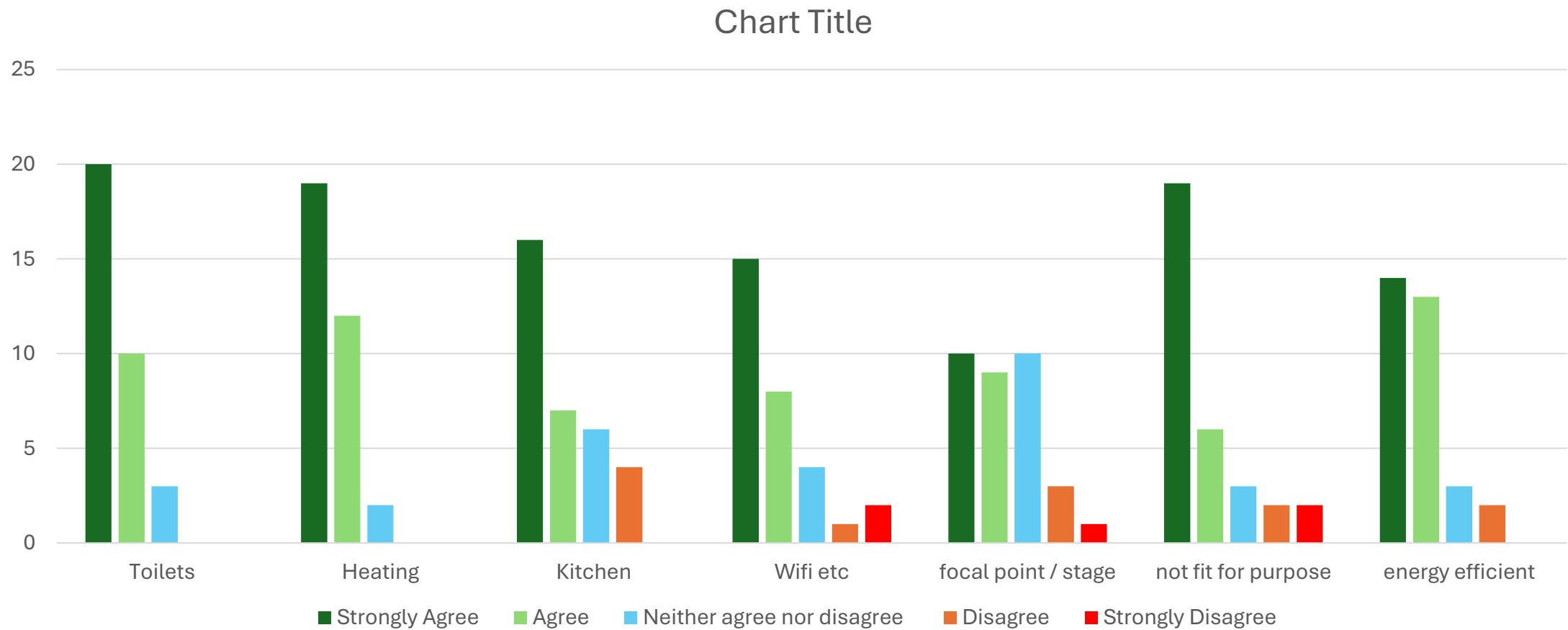


Finding:

Respondents offered a rich variety of creative ideas for further community engagement, including:: • Chapel coffee mornings • A village pub or café • Firework evenings • Youth-focused activities • Gardening clubs • Book exchanges

These suggestions highlight a proactive and imaginative community spirit, looking for ways to connect and make use of a potential shared space.

5. The Village would benefit from a new or an enhanced facility with:



Finding:

Residents are most interested the facility having – toilets, heating

Q5 Additional Comments and Suggestions

Respondents also provided open-ended comments with additional ideas and suggestions. These included:

- Chapel Coffee Mornings
- Village Pub/Café
- Firework Evenings
- Youth Activities
- Gardening Club
- Book Exchange

(Refer to the full "Comments Made" sheet for detailed entries.)

Key concerns arising

- Loss of village community hub
- Parking and traffic issues in the village
- Recreational space for children
- Access between the grove and the centre of the village

6. Conclusion

- The survey results clearly indicate strong community interest in having a local space available for various events and activities.
- The Parish Council is encouraged to explore suitable options to support this community need, taking into account the diverse range of suggested activities
- We, the parish, will need to run and maintain the hub (not the Duchy, not John, not the chapel)
- By working together, we can get something sustainable that can improve our parish and our lives

Questions & Discussion

6. Next Steps

Discussions and agree the way forward

Present findings to Duchy & Agree requirements for business case

Develop business case to secure Duchy funding