



# THREE FIELDS

## Undy & Magor

Report on the survey carried out in April 2016 to determine how the residents of the community of Undy and Magor would like to see the site known as the Three Fields developed and the benefits that it should deliver for the community.



## **Introduction**

Having identified the need for additional community facilities to meet the requirements of the rapidly growing population of the villages of Undy and Magor, in 2001 Monmouthshire County Council purchased the Three Fields site for community use, including the building of a community centre. However, over the past 15 years several funding bids have failed, with the only progress made being the construction of a car park funded by a loan taken out by the Community Council and Section 106 receipts.

In order to make progress and bring the site into beneficial use Monmouthshire County Council commenced the Community Asset Transfer process to pass the lease to a consortium of local groups who amongst them had most of the funding in place to commence building on the site. To support the Asset Transfer application, it was decided to carry-out a community survey to fulfil three main objectives;

- Determine what the community wanted the site to deliver, to gauge its support and so help guide the development
- To demonstrate to Monmouthshire County Council that the planned development met the wishes of the community and enjoyed its support
- To support further funding bids that would be needed to landscape the site and provide additional sporting facilities.

## **The Survey**

As the aim of the survey was to ensure that the site, buildings and services reflected the needs and aspirations of the whole community a letter, questionnaire and reply paid envelope was mailed to all 2,500 homes in the two villages in early March 2016. All adults were encouraged to complete their own questionnaire, with every mailer containing sufficient questionnaires based on the number of occupants on the Electoral Role. Two community consultation events were held on the site to provide face-to-face contact with the members of the consortium behind the new development initiative.

The Vale of Usk Rural Development Programme provided 80% of the cost of the survey as the development of the site will assist with the delivery of the Rural Development Plan across four of its themes. These are; demonstrating and promoting renewable energy, supporting Digital Inclusion by providing a venue and training in ITC skills, developing and delivering non-statutory services and to provide an access point for tourism through the sustainable transport hub on the proposed Cardiff City Region Metro network.

## **Survey Results**

The strong support of the community has been demonstrated by the fact that whilst the target was to have 600 completed questionnaires from the 5,631 residents on the Electoral Roll we actually received 777, a response of 13.8%. Of these 192 provided their email address to be kept informed of progress, as well as some offers to become involved in the project. This high response rate will also demonstrate the strong support of the community for the project to potential funders.

The following summarises the results, with the full set of data given in the appendices at the end of this report.

Initially we wanted to determine what benefits residents thought that the site should deliver for the community. From the list of 14 suggestions the most popular was to create a better place to live, with the ability to provide more services locally coming second and the reduction in isolation in third place. Coming fourth was the desire to contribute to leading a more active lifestyle, and fifth to retain green amenity space. Creating a village green coming a lowly twelfth. This indicates that residents want the site to working for the community as opposed to being left idle as undeveloped and unutilised fields.

The next question related to the facilities that people would use if they were available on the site. Top of the list came an outdoor space for carnivals, fetes, markets, etc., closely followed by a community park for walks, jogging, picnics, etc. These were closely followed by a hall for private hire, a large multi-purpose hall and a smaller hall for club and society meetings. A fitness suite came in at number six, with an art, crafts and hobbies workshop seventh, but still supported by 333 residents. This indicates the desire for both fitness and recreation.

There was provision for respondents to add other facilities that they would like included, with the full list given in appendix ii. Facilities that figured most prominently were the proposed new rail station and facilities/activities for the youth of the villages. Only 7 people considered that the existing halls provided adequate provision.

We then considered the level of membership of local groups and where relevant, what prevented a higher rate of participation. Of the 777 respondents only 21% belonged to a local group, club or society, with the biggest reason for not belonging being no spare time. A quarter of people didn't know what activities take place in the villages, with 20% saying that there are no groups that interest them. This indicates that as well as the site needing to provide the facilities and capacity to increase the range of activities that are available, the organisers will need to do more to publicise what they are offering. Creating the opportunities for more people to become involved in local activities will also go a long way to satisfying the desire to overcome isolation, which was considered very important by over half of respondents, and improve community cohesion which was also considered very desirable.

Next to be considered were the existing halls within the villages and what users thought of them. The main issues were halls not being available when needed, availability of parking, size of rooms and levels of equipment. For some, disabled access was also an issue. This would indicate that there is the need for additional capacity that is well equipped and with disabled access. Parking provision would not be an issue as the site already has a large, underused car park.

There is progress being made to open a new rail station in the villages, with an initial feasibility study indicating that an ideal location would be adjacent to the Three Fields site, and so we took the opportunity to use the survey to collect data relating to the possible use of the station which could be included in the next stage of the development process. We have already seen a lot of support from peoples' comments and have discovered that by opening a station in the villages the number of people using the train for their daily commute would increase by a third, and those using it on a weekly basis for shopping or leisure would more than double. This will assist in delivering our environmental aims by reducing the number of car journeys.

With the survey being mostly funded by the LEADER programme we were interested in how the site could assist in developing the local rural economy, which 46% of respondents thought the site should help achieve. It transpires that 9.4% of respondents run a small business, with most of them expressing interest in the ways that services delivered from the site could help them.

Finally, when looking at the gender profile of respondents we can be reasonably satisfied that they are representative of the community with the male/female respondent ratio being 46.6/53.4%, compared with 49%/51% in the Neighbourhood Statistics. The age bands used in the survey do not match exactly with Neighbourhood Statistics but show an under-representation from the under 50's with a corresponding over-representation from those over 50, particularly in the 50 to 64 bracket. This is possibly because younger people are busy working or raising a family, whilst those a little older have more free time to participate in the survey as well as looking for new activities.

### **Current situation**

M.A.G.O.R, the group campaigning for the station, has used the results relating to train travel to compile a report showing the high level of support, which will be included in the next stage of the feasibility study, GRIP3. The survey data is also being used in a submission to Network Rail's 'New Station Fund', which could provide 75% of the station build cost.

On 8 July 2016 a formal expression of interest was submitted by the Trust to Monmouthshire County Council along with details of the proposed building and services that would be delivered. The building was to be funded with £0.75M from the South East Wales Energy Agency and £0.25M from Section 106 money held by Monmouthshire County Council. Following that submission, the majority of Trust members considered that the proposed building should have provision for badminton and better facilities for amateur dramatics. Unfortunately, the South East Wales Energy Agency is forbidden by charity law to use its funds to provide those facilities as sport and drama are not included in its charitable objectives. The inclusion of these facilities would also have been outside the charitable exemption it has obtained from HMRC, and so would not have been exempt from VAT, so adding considerably to the building cost.

The Trust is still pursuing its plan to build a community hub although the prospects are in doubt as there are now other local groups expressing an interest in securing the available Section 106 money that the Trust hoped would fund their building to develop capacity in their existing community facilities.

However, having had to withdraw from the Three Fields Community Trust, on 27 September 2016 the South East Wales Energy Agency submitted an expression of interest for the site with the proposal to fully fund the £1M building that would deliver the wishes of the community as expressed in the survey results. This proposal awaits the decision of Monmouthshire County Council, which to date has not given any indication of its position.

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