

TRENTHAM

... ON THE WAY !!

TRENTHAM & DISTRICT COMMUNITY PLAN

“Trentham . . . On the Way!” is the catch-call suggested for the Community Plan by a leading local business operator. It is not meant to replace “Trentham Cool Country” but the issue of Trentham’s identity does need consideration – currently the Hepburn Shire Council Plan identifies the tourism character of each of the other towns but is silent on Trentham.

This version is for the ‘complete’ version of the Plan – a much shorter (say 4-page) summary version must also be prepared. Also, extensive presentation work needs to be done – this draft should be considered ‘text only’.

Final (?) Draft, November 2009

TRENTHAM COMMUNITY PLAN

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1 Introduction

A Community Plan enables a community to give voice to its values, hopes, ideas and concerns . . . and to identify the priority actions it wishes to take so that it can have a real say in shaping its future. The influence of a community plan is limited only by the imagination and commitment of the community – it is a means for resolving priorities and differences within the community and representing agreed community priorities to government and other funding sources.

A community plan is a celebration of the strengths and achievements of a community and the community's determination to take positive responsibility for its future.

The emergence of community plans is part of a renaissance in communities – recognition of the values of community; confidence that communities can (and should) take greater responsibility for their own future; and growing frustration with the failures of existing social and governance structures. A community plan is a declaration that we, the members of the community, are the first line of response to the needs of our community and that we need to ‘roll-up-our-sleeves’ rather than sit around complaining ‘why doesn’t someone do something about it’.

*The Trentham Community Plan is **our** plan
– and we, the citizens of Trentham and districts, are responsible for making it happen.*

2 Executive Summary

This Community Plan has been written by the people of Trentham through their input to the survey forms, interviews, a community workshop and review of the draft – it is a community-driven Plan.

The Plan presents a statement of what people value in their community, their hopes and concerns for the future and the projects and action they would like to see happen – action that will protect what we value and give us real input into shaping our future.

If it is possible to encompass the input of the nearly 150 responses to the Community Plan surveys into a single statement, it would be that Trentham people . . .

“want to retain the friendliness and community character of Trentham and ensure that future development respects this, the townscape and environmental values”

This summary statement has been used as the basis for the structure of our plan.

Trentham is big enough not to be totally dependent on larger surrounding towns although not big enough to claim that we've got all we need. Trentham does, nonetheless, have a strong sense of self-reliance borne of its climate, location and heritage as a timber and potato growing community. The qualities of resilience, belief in a fair go and a strong sense of community; together with its wonderful natural attributes: water, rich soil and proximity to the Wombat Forest; have been the basis of Trentham's past vitality, survival and are the basis for its future potential.

Trentham folk are realistic and recognise the realities of change: change which happens organically within our community and external changes which will affect us to varying degrees. How we manage and respond to change is a core element of this Plan. While we are proud of the qualities that help to define our community, there is also a strong sense that Trentham has been neglected in the past: the Plan is therefore also an advocacy document.

3 Structure of the Plan

The Plan is in three broad parts: **community**; **development**; and **environment**.

These reflect the summary statement of community aspirations which emphasises community values; development; and the built and natural environment. This structure for the Plan address the three pillars on which our community operates.

This document provides the overview and specific Community priorities, the parts of the Plan dealing with Development and Environment include some specific actions and recommend respectively the development of an economic and employment strategy and an open space strategy. When developed, these strategies will be part of the total Community Plan.

The Plan is based primarily on the responses to the Individual/Household Surveys (see Appendix D), which asked very open ended questions. These are not reported further in any detail but are generally discussed as an introduction to the three main parts of the Plan (see Section 6).

4 Context

Trentham and district people are very proud of their town and community. Either as born-and-bred, long-term residents or more recent arrivals we all have one thing in common: *we chose to live here*. The individual and household surveys revealed widespread agreement in what we value – although we have a greater variety of views on what we believe should be done to shape our future. In this we are probably similar to most small towns.

However, we recognise that there are important contextual issues that influence our present and future community. These include global changes in climate, peak oil, financial systems and population. All of these will have impacts on Trentham and, while we can't do much about any of them, we do need to try to manage these impacts. For example, the ageing of the population and Melbourne growing to >5 million people will have 'knock-on' effects on our community. Trentham's water supply and proximity to other centres [20 minutes to Daylesford, Kyneton and Woodend and one hour to Ballarat, Bendigo and Melbourne] mark our district as strategically located. Add to these, our rich volcanic soils, proximity to the Wombat Forest and general lifestyle advantages and we can expect continuing development pressures, which we should seek to manage, or at least influence, so that we can retain the values that contribute so much to defining our community and the quality of life we enjoy. Our major disadvantage is generally agreed to be that we have no access to natural gas.

The surveys for the Community Plan were undertaken in late 2008, before the worst bushfires in Victoria's history. Trentham and surrounding districts are vulnerable to bushfires, and the town has now been identified in the State listing of most fire threatened towns. Fire safety has now emerged as the major priority for the community.

As Hepburn Shire CEO Kaylene Conrick said at the TRATA AGM November, 2008:
"Trentham's challenge will be to control its future development".

A strong, coherent and agreed community plan
is the best means we have for responding to change and influencing our future.

5 Priorities

A number of key themes and issues were distilled from the many responses to the surveys and used as the 'first cut' broad priorities for the community workshop (31 March 2009). Participants were invited to confirm, challenge, elaborate and add to these themes and issues and the summary of these responses are listed in Appendix F.

The workshop then identified, through a process of inviting people to champion and contribute to developing particular ideas and projects, the priorities for the coming year. A further opportunity for people who were not able to attend the workshop to identify priorities was offered through the April Community Newsletter. A total of 13 priorities were identified, which are listed below and highlighted in Section 7.

These priorities will be the action agenda for the coming year – but it will be important for us to regularly review the progress of the Plan and renew it every 2-3 years. Some priorities will be specific or readily achieved while others will be long-term and strategic. In seeking to be comprehensive, we will inevitably be too ambitious, and other opportunities will come along, so the Plan must be flexible and seek to reconcile optimistic ambition with tangible achievement. Setting priorities and targets and regular review are the means through which we will obtain that balance.

The priorities identified for the coming year are:

- **increasing community safety against the threat of fire;**
- **supporting the growth of local businesses;**
- youth activities;
- sporting facilities;
- community hub;
- **improving communications & coordination between community groups;**
- seeking better working relations with Hepburn Shire;
- sustainability, climate change, peak oil and the natural environment;
- promoting volunteering;
- strategies to respond to population growth and ageing;

- **reviewing our tourism product & positioning;**
- **promoting the community bank concept;**
- **weed control & elimination;**
- access & mobility;

Even this list is ambitious, however good work is already underway in several areas (shown in bold).

6 The Plan

The single composite statement emerging from the surveys is that Trentham people . . .

“want to retain the friendliness and community character of Trentham and ensure that future development respects this, the townscape and environmental values”

This section – the detailed part of the Plan – is arranged under the three broad headings of *community*, *development*, and *environment* rather than the conventional categories of youth, health & well-being; business & industry; environment & sustainability; education & learning; sport & recreation; culture; and community (although these are used to group the clubs and organisations). Even so, these three broad headings often overlap. For example, the concept of Trentham as ‘a walking & cycling town’ – should this be listed under ‘community’ or ‘environment’? Fire safety is another broadly-based issue.

There is another key word in the composite statement . . . *respect*. Respect is an intangible quality that can say a lot about a community. The word respect wasn’t used much in the responses people made to the surveys although it was often implied and qualities of tolerance and acceptance were also identified. It seemed the most appropriate word to use when constructing the composite statement. Respect is not something we can manage as a community – it comes from within – however, it is a quality that should, desirably, underpin the community we would wish to encourage through this Plan.

6.1 COMMUNITY

This Community Plan is for Trentham and Districts and is therefore based on a geographic definition of community. The Plan does not draw a boundary line or list the surrounding districts that might comprise ‘Trentham and Districts’ (although see Appendix E – Newsletter report re Community Plan) – people in these surrounding areas effectively self-define their connections to Trentham through their various interactions with the town. Part-time residents are also part of our community. Survey responses were received from district and part-time residents: thus the Plan is for all who identify or have any affiliation with the town and who have an interest in its future.

There are numerous communities of interest within Trentham. The various clubs and organisations reflect the vitality and range of interests across the larger community (see Appendix B) – and should be celebrated as a measure of the rich diversity of our community life. Some responses to the Surveys challenged the need for so many groups. In those areas where this argument has some validity moves are already underway to better coordinate and rationalise the efforts of these groups. The important consideration is for community support so that the contributions of these groups are sustained and ‘the whole is greater than the sum of the parts’ – and that is an important purpose of the Plan.

The emphasis on community and the friendliness of the community in the survey responses to the questions about what people like about living in Trentham, and its greatest values / strengths / advantages underline the value of this quality. How we nurture and grow this sense of community and how we seek to manage change are two key themes that run through the Community Plan.

Community is an elusive quality, difficult to define but something we know when we are part of, something very important to our personal and social well-being.

Community issues arising from the survey responses, workshop and community representations:

- fire safety
- public transport
- population growth & ageing
- access & mobility issues
- working together
- a social/community centre
- indoor sports facility
- volunteerism
- health services
- affordable & sustainable housing

Each of these issues is discussed briefly below with proposed actions/strategies as relevant.

Fire Safety

The devastating bushfires in February 2009, in particular the threats posed by the fires burning eastwards from the west / north-west, brought into sharp focus Trentham's exposure and vulnerability to fire.

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Emerging from this awareness are clear priorities for greater preparedness for fire through (i) awareness, householder responsibility and supporting the emergency services in the implementation of the Township Protection Plan, and (ii) a proposal for a facility to provide a fire assembly point and other community services. The latter has been formulated from within the community with strong initial support for this project as the 'No 1' priority for the community. Weed control is also very important for reducing the fire risk and was identified at the workshop as a major priority (cross-referenced under 6.3 Environment).

Action:

- 1 Build on the CFA-community collaboration established during 2009, community awareness and support for the CFA to promote widespread 'ownership' and implementation of the Township Protection Plan.*
- 2 Establish a broadly-based community steering committee to drive the Multi-function Indoor Facility project (and develop a professional concept proposal, including a feasibility study, for the Facility).*

Public Transport

Public transport was identified in the 145 completed survey responses as one of the most frequently identified issues - 'More/better public transport (79 responses)' was second only to 'Business sector / main street (132 responses)'. While public transport is a composite issue involving numerous reasons for action, including the age profile of the community, commuting for work, rising fuel costs to name some of those identified, it is clearly an issue we must address as the need will become greater rather than diminish. Local community transport needs were also

identified and there is support for a community bus. The concept of Trentham as a walking and cycling town (Action 30) is an important adjunct to a public transport strategy.

Action:

3 Develop a public transport strategy which encompasses travel to nearby towns, links to rail transport, and a community network.

Population and ageing

This is also a composite (and complex) issue that has two main dimensions: (i) managing the growth of population so that the character of the town and values of the community are maintained – which will be discussed in section 6.2 Development, and (ii) meeting the needs of the resident population, in particular the existing and anticipated age profile. Access and mobility issues relate strongly to ageing and specific access needs and road/footpath surface concerns have been identified as in need of urgent attention.

The local Hepburn Health Service Hospital and Hostel facility is identified as one of Trentham’s key strengths.

Action:

4 Develop a local response and strategy complementary to the Hepburn Shire Positive Ageing Strategy.

5 Address specific and urgent access needs, particularly to retail premises.

Working together

A lot of survey responses identified what were seen to be shortcomings in how our community operates and encouraged existing groups to work together; for new residents to be welcomed; and an expectation that new residents should become involved in the community. Two current initiatives – for greater awareness / coordination / support by the main existing community groups and a proposal to bring 3 natural reserves under one Committee of Management (refer 6.3 Environment) – partly address this concern and should be encouraged: the former could provide the vehicle for community ‘ownership’ of the Plan. [The existing cooperation between the three churches through the Trentham Combined Churches Committee is noted.]

Calls for a community centre, or ‘hub’, also clearly connect with this issue – see below.

One of the real advantages of smaller communities is their capacity to ‘get their act together’, which is a primary purpose of this Plan. Another critical factor is communications . . .

traditionally ‘the grapevine’ and, hopefully, more effectively through the monthly Newsletter and shop-window notices: the case for greater use of web-based communications was identified as a priority at the workshop.

Another dimension of ‘working together’ is in the community’s relationship with the Shire. A significant number of survey responses found fault with the Shire and, while there is strong evidence that Trentham has not been getting ‘a fair go’ in the municipal budget, it must be recognised that Shire funds are limited. Similarly, the Shire’s consultation with the community regarding priorities is seen to be either non-existent or wastefully expensive. There is a corresponding obligation on the community to determine its priorities and to communicate (and when necessary negotiate) these to the municipality: the Plan is a major part of this process.

Resource realities demand that both Shire and community seek to optimise outcomes rather than taking adversarial or ‘squeaky wheel’ approaches.

Action:

6 Endorse the ‘awareness-coordination-support’ initiative between community groups.

7 Develop a ‘welcome-kit’ and strategy to engage new residents.

8 Review the effectiveness of existing communications and explore the potential for web-based and mobile communications

9 Establish processes for on-going communication and collaboration with the Shire.

Youth activities

“It takes a village to raise a child” – African saying, quoted by Hillary Clinton.

Like most small country towns Trentham has the experience of young people moving away in their late teens for education and career. Rather than take an approach of looking for ways ‘to keep our young people here’, the premise of this Community Plan is to seek to make young people’s experience of growing up in Trentham a really positive one. We believe this is the best means of encouraging a lifelong affection for their home town where they spent their formative years and which might play out in various ways over their lifetimes.

On a first glance Trentham offers a limited range of sporting opportunities (footy, netball, table tennis, cricket, tennis, golf), a swimming pool and a skate park for young people. Less obviously recognised is the access to surrounding bushland and mobility by cycle which gives young people similar opportunities to those enjoyed by older residents in their youth. The local Milk Bar is an important meeting place where young people ‘hang out’. Limited drama and creative arts activities are offered through the Neighbourhood House. But still, the perennial cry of early teens that ‘there’s nothing to do’ has some validity.

The approach underlying this Plan as far as young people are concerned is a combination of respect – as a community we need to communicate to young people that they are valued – and engagement, that they will be heard. We will seek to provide opportunities for young people to be heard and be involved in the community. Major initiatives in this Plan must take real account of the interests of young people.

Suggestions for expanding the range of youth (and community) activities include providing for new sports (soccer and hockey, paintball and BMX); enhancing the potential of the skate park (there is widely-expressed concern by parents and young people that the skate park is far less than they were led to expect) and swimming pool (possibly through shared ‘add-on’ re-locatable facilities); films at the Mechanics Institute; and more innovative ideas such as cycle/small engine maintenance in association with a Men’s Shed, community service, junior Landcare, creative arts, health and wellbeing, personal growth and self-esteem building initiatives. The possibility of a community bus as part of a public transport strategy would be important for extending the range of activities that could be offered to teenagers.

Survey responses calling for more employment opportunities for young people will be addressed in the recommended economic and employment development strategy.

[NB The focus of this section is on young people in the age range 8-9 to late teens. Younger children seem to be well-catered for through activities largely organised by parents. The Kindergarten and Primary School are recognised as major assets in the community.]

Action:

- 10 A youth engagement strategy based around a concept of a ‘Kidspace’ be developed, with direct input from young people, and requiring all community projects to be subject to review for their relevance to youth and youth involvement.*
- 11 Opportunities for widening the range of activities for young people to be pursued through both the sports facilities review (Action 14) and the youth engagement strategy.*

A social/community centre

Trentham has a number of community facilities: the Mechanics Institute, the Neighbourhood Centre, and the Railway Station, plus specific purpose facilities, including the churches, historical police precinct, sports ground and cemetery. The community therefore carries a huge maintenance responsibility which is mainly met by voluntary fund-raising and labour. (Other similar facilities in Hepburn Shire are owned by the Shire and are therefore eligible for annual Council maintenance funding.) The numbers and age profile of the committees maintaining Trentham’s facilities suggest that generally we are fighting an up-hill battle to maintain these at satisfactory levels (and that’s barring any major renovations or repairs). And yet, respondents to the surveys identified the need for a community centre or ‘hub’, including strong support for a library, community arts, U3A, a social venue other than licensed premises, exercise facilities and a Men’s Shed (of these, the strongest support that has emerged during this phase of consultation is for library facilities and community arts). The Multi Function Indoor Facility priority proposed in the Plan exacerbates the general issue of maintaining community facilities.

Proponents of change must be sensitive to long-standing community 'ownership' of these facilities, although a planned strategy for their future must be better than genteel decay.

Action:

- 12 *Review the existing inventory of community facilities, their 'fit-for-purpose', maintenance needs, funding and management structures*
- 13 *Establish a funding agreement with Council for equitable pro-rata maintenance funding for community facilities*
- 14 *Seek a collaborative definition of the concept of a community 'hub' and how this might be provided.*

Indoor Sports Facility

A significant number of survey responses identified the need for an indoor sports facility, some proposing a heated indoor swimming pool. Generally the condition of facilities at the sports ground falls seriously short of acceptable standards and any proposals for up-graded sports facilities should be part of an integrated overall strategy. Sports facilities are a fundamental element in the overall structure of a community and the current condition of the main sports ground is short-changing the community, particularly our young people (too many parents are driving their children to nearby towns for all their sport and training). Again, the efforts of the stalwarts who have maintained these facilities over decades are not being criticised – only so much can be done with voluntary support and limited funding.

Action:

- 15 *Undertake a review of sports facilities and prepare a development strategy as a matter of urgency.*

Volunteers

Much of Trentham's community spirit derives from a strong tradition of volunteering – but, similar to many other communities, the ranks are thinning and ageing as needs grow. The decision to volunteer is ultimately a personal one based on interests, sense of community and the welcome extended by the community group. Action 7 will go some way to assisting the engagement of new residents. Groups should also consider how they can enhance their skills in recruiting, managing and recognising their volunteers. Some survey responses wanted newcomers to make more of a contribution along with a sentiment that 'we've done our turn' – this may not be a productive line of discussion but it points to a need for some ongoing debate about what 'community' means and how we 'grow community'. As leading Australian sociologist Jim Ife has said when faced by overwhelming change, the only action the individual can take is 'to build community'. Ideally community groups will collaborate in this debate – see also Working Together.

Action:

- 16 *Community groups collaborate to provide training in the recruitment, management and recognition of volunteers.*
- 17 *Encourage an on-going discussion regarding community values.*

Health Services

The Hospital and Hostel is widely seen to be one of Trentham's main assets and employers (ref 6.2 Development) and its current re-building program will allow for some increased services. The extent and range of additional services requested by survey respondents depends on government funding formulae and levels of demand. Similarly, calls for increased medical, dentistry, mental health and para-medical services are ultimately policy and/or financial decisions. Aged care is a growing need generally and in our community (Actions 4 & 5 in part address this) and the community should explore other means of supporting an ageing population. The current 'strengths exercise' program offered through the Neighbourhood Centre is one example and more ambitious programs, such as more independent living units, should be explored.

Action:

18 *Investigations be undertaken into how the community can work with Hepburn Health Service to encourage the provision of increased health services.*

Affordable and sustainable housing

Affordable housing is another issue that is largely outside the influence of the community but nonetheless a very real problem for many people. The Shire and the Uniting Church have a very limited number of lower rental properties. A related issue is that of energy efficiency in many older dwellings, where the owners or occupiers are not willing or able to make the necessary modifications resulting in ever-increasing heating and utility costs. The Hepburn Shire's Council Plan includes encouragement of 'a wider, more attractive, environmentally sustainable range of property, housing and lifestyle choices' and a commitment to 'reviewing our Planning Scheme to provide for different housing and lifestyle choices which are more resilient, less dependent, environmentally sustainable and socially cohesive.' (Council Plan 2009-2013, p 22)

Action:

19 *Explore the avenues that may be available for the community to influence the provision of affordable and energy-efficient, sustainable housing.*

6.2 DEVELOPMENT

[This section draws on the Business Support Project the results of which were presented to participating businesses and volunteers and are currently subject to further analysis, the Community Bank initiative and more generally on the Survey responses and Workshop.]

Trentham is emerging from a relatively depressed economic period, symbolised in recent years by the burnt shell of the Cosmo, but now with a variety of new enterprises around town contributing to a greater sense of confidence. Nonetheless some important small traders are still doing it tough. The Business Support Project (BSP), initiated under TRATA and largely funded by Hepburn Shire with extensive voluntary contributions from the community, offers the first real overview of the local economy and provides a strong basis for an economic and employment strategy. Results from preliminary analysis of the BSP are congruent with many of the issues identified through the community surveys.

The issues listed below are the priorities identified by the BSP, Community Plan surveys and workshop.

- supporting the growth of local business & economic viability
- streetscape
- retail mix & competitiveness
- bank – promoting the Community Bank concept
- tourism product & positioning
- signage
- infrastructure & relations with Council
- overdevelopment & local input to planning & development

Issues such as future water supply; the implications of peak oil in increasing fuel costs; and maintaining heritage and character are addressed under 6.3 Environment. Improving communications and coordination; working together; and relations with Council addressed under 6.1 Community, are also relevant under Development and, as appropriate, are addressed in greater detail in the BSP recommendations.

Supporting the Growth of Local Business & Economic Viability;

Streetscape; Retail mix and competitiveness.

These three issues are grouped because they are addressed in the substance and recommendations of the Business Support Project. A strong message from the community surveys was the need for more employment opportunities, particularly jobs that 'enable people to pay a mortgage and raise a family'. The nature of the Trentham economy, its local base and the importance of tourism all need to be drawn together in an economic development strategy. The potential for 'social enterprise' should also be explored. Streetscape issues are intimately connected with business viability and tourism. While many responses to the community surveys identified Trentham's intrinsic qualities, there was a great deal of concern about its generally 'down-at-heel' appearance.

Trentham has great potential to become an important local centre of a prosperous sub-region. The existing business mix, supplemented by banking services, a butcher and fresh food outlets, together with its outstanding lifestyle options marks the town for steady development.

Action:

- 20 Business and general communities endorse and implement the strategies and recommendations in the report on the BSP.*
- 21 Over the coming year, develop an economic development and employment strategy.*
- 22 In association with the High St traders, the Shire and incorporating an integrated signage strategy, develop a Streetscape Plan*

Provision of enhanced Banking Services

The lack of banking services beyond deposit and withdrawal facilities was identified as an issue by two-thirds of the businesses interviewed through the BSP. Community survey responses also identified the lack of banking services as a limitation on the viability of Trentham, with many making the observation that any resulting 'out trading' obviously has a flow-on impact on other businesses.

Local support for the current Community Bank initiative seeks to remedy this situation and to harness a share of the 'social dividend' for community projects.

Action:

- 23 Community to support the establishment of a Community Bank branch in Trentham and, when established, ensure its success and the consequent flow of support for community projects.*

Tourism product & positioning

Trentham is located in the centre of the Daylesford – Macedon Ranges tourism region, currently the focus of a major State-funded tourism promotion campaign. Trentham is 15-20 minutes from the three surrounding towns, an hour from Ballarat, Bendigo and Melbourne and close to the attractions of the region, the Wombat State Forest and Trentham Falls. Aside from these natural advantages, the existing tourism 'product' is relatively modest with a number of tourism operators, mainly in accommodation and dining, but no local coordination or strategy. Such tourism connections as have existed have been divided between Macedon Ranges to the east and Daylesford and the Spa Country to the west.

Fundamental to the need for a tourism strategy are issues of identity and promotion. Trentham – Cool Country is strongly supported within the community but not promoted to any significant extent with the consequence that there really isn't a Trentham 'brand' out in the marketplace. The community recognises the importance of tourism as a key economic driver for the regional and local economy and contributes to its promotion through a voluntary Visitor Information Centre and several events. Spudfest is probably the most uniquely authentic event in Trentham as both an attraction for visitors and engaging a wide spectrum of the local community. Trentham also offers the Cool Country Classic, an Art & Craft Show, the Spring Festival and two monthly

Markets which all attract visitors. These activities absorb a huge amount of volunteer effort and are a great measure of community spirit. Spudfest and the Cool Country Classic probably offer the greatest potential for growth and suggestions have been made for how these or new activities might develop.

There is some diversity of opinion on the importance of tourism. Though clearly identified by the Business Support Project as fundamental to the future prosperity of the local economy, others argue that tourism doesn't provide real employment and is too sensitive to economic downturn – a positive critique was the suggestion that 'rather than promote tourism to make our town flourish, we should concentrate on becoming a flourishing town . . . (which would) then . . . attract . . . tourism naturally' – an argument for tourism to be integral in future strategy?

Action:

- 24 *Prepare a tourism development and promotion strategy in association with emerging regional initiatives.*
- 25 *Community groups responsible for existing tourism events meet to review and coordinate how these might be better promoted and developed.*

Signage

Current signage to and within the town is not satisfactory and needs a total re-vamp. Good signage is fundamental for promoting tourism and the presentation of the town for visitors and locals alike. Hepburn Shire has indicated the possibility of a major review of signage using Trentham as a pilot.

Action:

- 26 *Develop and implement a signage strategy for Trentham and surrounds.*

**Infrastructure & Relations with Council;
Overdevelopment & Local Input to Planning & Development.**

These issues are grouped because meaningful action can only proceed in association with Council.

As one respondent to the community surveys stated in relation to the streetscape, road and footpath issues, 'we need \$2m spent on infrastructure'. That estimate may be accurate but it does not recognise the realities of funding. Trentham's recent experience in seeking to have its priorities included in a fair and equitable Council budget allocation provides a strong case for a better and more respectful process between Council and the community, with clear mutual obligations (see also Working Together under 6.1 Community and recommendation 9). This Plan and community process must demonstrate the local capacity to represent community priorities to Council, which should then reciprocate by either responding to these priorities or providing satisfactory explanations for why it cannot.

Concerns about future water supply, heating costs, retaining the built and community character of the town, fire protection measures and the retention of productive agricultural land all argue for an engagement, rather than adversarial, approach between Council and community particularly in relation to planning. Increasing State intervention with development and planning issues provides further argument for a strongly collaborative approach between Council and community.

Action:

- 27 *Trentham establish 'a town committee' responsible for coordinating and representing priorities for and input into the future development of the town,*
- 28 *Commitment be sought from Council for a fair and equitable funding model for all ratepayers and to a genuinely consultative process for determining priorities for spending.*
- 29 *This Plan be developed over the next 1-2 years to incorporate long-term limits to growth and the influence of external factors on the town and surrounding districts.*

- (i) the recommended action to establish 'a town committee' should **not** be read to mean TRATA which may be the nearest we currently have to a progress and development committee, but cannot really discharge the suggested 'whole of community' role without a mandate, some necessary re-structuring including the basis for membership and, as has been suggested, a name change. A 'town committee' presumably would also have the role of 'the keeper of the Community Plan'. Refer also the section on Working Together.
- (ii) the suggestion is to review the Community Plan at 12-18 month intervals and a major renewal every 3 years.]

6.3 ENVIRONMENT

[This section draws on both the Surveys and current initiatives to coordinate the management of natural reserves and weed management. Streetscape issues overlap with Development. However, the devastating February 2009 fires have taken a clear priority in community thinking and therefore re-ordered the priorities of the Plan.]

Trentham is located in close proximity to forests (Gateway to the Wombat State Forest), productive agricultural land and a spring-fed water supply – all priceless assets which distinguish our town. Local heritage and town character (interesting buildings, tree-lined streets and Town Square) further enhance the environmental appeal of the town and districts and contribute to the quality of lifestyle for residents and attractiveness to tourists. As so many responses to the community surveys identified, Trentham is a friendly, welcoming community nestled in some truly picturesque countryside. Some survey responses also identified our weather (Trentham: Cool Country) and the stars among our natural assets.

Nonetheless, there are limitations to this arcadia. Global population growth and the ever-increasing sprawl of Melbourne will discover our secret. Projected climate change impacts, largely mediated through water, will influence all our futures; future water supply may not meet projected long-term demands; population growth will potentially alter the character of the townscape; and community facilities, heating and transport costs need innovative solutions or will have serious impacts on the town's future development. The potential for conflict in how we address these issues locally (and more generally as a society) can best be managed by being respectful of the environment and seeking to determine how human needs can be satisfied without compromising future options.

The suite of issues: population, climate change, and peak oil were a major focus at the community workshop with recommendations for action to promote greater sustainability across a wide range of community activities and future development. Some of these issues are addressed through recommendations in section 6.2 Development, and see also the section on Affordable and Sustainable Housing.

The issues listed and discussed below also overlap with some earlier issues, for example weed control is addressed here as an environmental concern but it obviously connects with fire safety under 6.1 Community.

- maintaining the natural environment
- links to surrounding forests
- maintaining heritage & character
- overdevelopment
- streetscape
- future water supply
- sustainability
- weed management

Maintaining the Natural Environment: Links to Surrounding Forests

Trentham township is close to the Wombat Forest and Trentham Falls, key assets in our tourism mix. Trentham's aspiration to develop as 'a walking and cycling town' has relevance for residents and tourists – the latter in terms of walking trails and mountain biking. Currently the Domino Trail is the only designated walking trail. Requests for walking trails, particularly to Trentham Falls, are one of the most common enquiries at the Visitor Information Centre. The Trent and Stoney Creeks link the forest to the south directly into the centre of town and help define its character. The creek reserves, until recently badly overgrown with weeds creating an eyesore and fire hazard, require sensitive management if they are to provide the multiple services the community expects. Council is currently completing a consultant study re the management of the Bath St Reserve. Recent initiatives to better coordinate the management of these reserves should be encouraged and extended.

Action:

- 30 *Develop an Open Space Strategy which promotes the concept of Trentham as a walking and cycling town.*
- 31 *Investigate the development of additional walking / cycling trails including to the Falls, a rail trail to Lyonville/Bullarto and in the adjoining Wombat Forest to the south of the town.*
- 32 *Implement the proposed single committee of management for the three natural reserves within the town boundaries.*
- 33 *Instigate an annual Trentham FutureCare forum involving all the groups with interests in protecting and managing the natural environment.*

Overdevelopment

As already noted under Development, residents are concerned to have some influence over the future development of the town and community so that the character and environmental values of Trentham and districts are retained. Overdevelopment is identified as the major threat. This is a difficult issue in a market economy where the responsible regulatory agencies are constrained by legislation that limits the influence of citizens. Nevertheless the community should seek to work with these agencies to ensure that such controls that are available are used to protect the community and environmental qualities that everyone, presumably also including developers, recognise as valuable.

Although receiving almost no direct mention in the survey responses, the issue of protecting productive agricultural land has subsequently emerged as a concern *per se* and in relation to population growth and the continuing sprawl of Melbourne. This issue is subject to current State inquiries and should be kept under review. Trentham and districts' attractiveness for future development is obvious but the value of productive land so close to >5 million people in an uncertain future is an asset society generally should seek to protect.

Action:

- 34 *Consultative processes between the community and Council as recommended above to ensure provisions for community consultation and input to planning and development.*

Streetscape;

Maintaining Heritage and Town Character

Streetscape issues, particularly the generally rundown appearance of High St, were, in aggregate, the most frequently raised concerns in the community surveys. Many responses also commented positively on the pleasant ambience of tree-lined streets outside High St. The presentation of the town is important for residents and visitors and, while it is acknowledged that many individuals and agencies have responsibilities and contributions to make, some basic agreed guidelines will give the community the means for coordinated action.

Action:

- 35 *Consistent with Council planning provisions, the Open Space Strategy and recommendations emerging from the Business Support Project, develop streetscape, heritage and town character guidelines.*

Future Water Supply

Trentham's spring-fed water supply is one of its chief assets. Yet, in a presentation by Coliban Water (May '08), based on projected yield, likely climate change impacts and population growth, demand is expected to outstrip supply by 2050. This is one of the major constraints on the future growth of population in Trentham, which should be incorporated into overall planning strategies. Recent experience of prolonged low annual rainfall and reduced groundwater yields also have major implications for potato growing and other agricultural production. Coliban Water will instigate a further program of testing yields from the existing two urban supply bores and exploring other sources.

Apart from maintaining 'a watching brief' no action is proposed in this first Community Plan.

Sustainability

Sustainability is a complex concept (often best dealt with as an adjective), although the World Commission on Environment and Development gave a useful and ethical explanation in stating that *humanity has the ability to make development sustainable – to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their . . . needs* (Our Common Future, 1987). Concerns expressed through the community surveys and workshop are probably best addressed in the short term by raising awareness of sustainability issues and exploring approaches such as the Transition Town concept. Peak oil, household heating costs and future threats to energy security argue for the development of strategies, including distributed generation, which should be taken up in future iterations of the Plan

Action:

- 36 *Promote awareness of sustainability issues and seek to have sustainability considerations as an overlay on all future development in subsequent iterations of the Community Plan.*

Weed Management

Gorse, Blackberry, Cape Broom and English Broom collectively are the major blight on Trentham's green and pleasant land. We might choose to define a weed as a plant in the wrong place, but the ecological, agricultural and amenity damage done by these plants puts them in an especially negative category. But by far their most dangerous quality is in the risks posed for the spread of fire and its control. In particular, dense stands of these weeds provide the 'ladder' for fire to reach the eucalypt canopy and create a crown fire.

Following the 2009 summer bushfire much has been said and written about who or what agency is responsible for weed control. It is necessary to be clear on responsibilities but, with further dangerous fire seasons threatened, action is imperative. Coordinated action, endorsed by an informed and supporting community, has the best prospect of successful implementation. Landcare has endorsed a 'Weed Free Trentham' campaign which will involve the responsible agencies, land managers and citizens in a voluntary capacity. This may sound unrealistically ambitious but it is in all our interests to back the initiative. [Note that weed control is only one of a suite of actions that must be taken to ensure maximum fire preparedness.]

Action:

- 37 *Community and responsible agencies work cooperatively to implement the Weed Free Trentham initiative.*

7 SUMMARY OF ACTIONS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND TIMELINES

NB The 37 actions / recommendations listed here give the scope of the aspirations and needs identified in this first iteration of the Trentham Community Plan. The left-hand column identifies priorities for the 2009-2010 year – NB some of these are closely connected.

2009-2010 Priority	Action / recommendation	Who ?	When ?
✓	1 Build on the CFA-community collaboration established during 2009, community awareness and support for the CFA to promote widespread ‘ownership’ and implementation of the Township Protection Plan.		
✓	2 Establish a broadly-based community steering committee to drive the Multi-function Indoor Facility project (and develop a professional concept proposal, including a feasibility study, for the Facility).		
	3 Develop a public transport strategy which encompasses travel to nearby towns, links to rail transport, and a community network.		
✓	4 Develop a local response and strategy complementary to the Hepburn Shire Positive Ageing Strategy.		
✓	5 Address specific and urgent access needs, particularly to retail premises.		
✓	6 Endorse the ‘awareness-coordination-support’ initiative between community groups. (Refer also Action 27)		
✓	7 Develop a ‘welcome-kit’ and strategy to engage new residents.		
	8 Review the effectiveness of existing communications and explore the potential for web-based and mobile communications		
✓	9 A youth engagement strategy based around a concept of a ‘Kidspace’ be developed, with direct input from young people, and requiring all community projects to be subject to review for their relevance to youth and youth involvement.		
	10 Opportunities for widening the range of activities for young people to be pursued through both the sports facilities review (Action 14) and the youth engagement strategy.		
✓	11 Establish processes for on-going communication and collaboration with the Shire. (Refer also Actions 13 and 34)		
	12 Review the existing inventory of community facilities, their ‘fit-for-purpose’, maintenance needs, funding and management structures (Cross-ref to Action 2)		

✓	13 Establish a funding agreement with Council for equitable pro-rata maintenance funding for community facilities		
	14 Seek a collaborative definition of the concept of a community 'hub' and how this might be provided.		
✓	15 Undertake a review of sports facilities and prepare a development strategy as a matter of urgency.		
✓	16 Community groups collaborate to provide training in the recruitment, management and recognition of volunteers.		
	17 Encourage an on-going discussion regarding community values.		
	18 Investigations be undertaken into how the community can work with Hepburn Health Service to encourage the provision of increased health services		
	19 Explore the avenues that may be available for the community to influence the provision of affordable and energy-efficient, sustainable housing.		
✓	20 Business and general communities endorse and implement the strategies and recommendations in the report on the Business Support Project.		
✓	21 Over the coming year, develop an economic development and employment strategy.		
✓	22 In association with the High St traders, the Shire and an integrated signage strategy develop a Streetscape Plan		
✓	23 Community to support the establishment of a Community Bank branch in Trentham and, when established, ensure its success and the consequent flow of support for community projects.		
✓	24 Prepare a tourism development and promotion strategy in association with emerging regional initiatives.		
	25 Community groups responsible for existing tourism events meet to review and coordinate how these might be better promoted and developed.		
✓	26 Develop and implement a signage strategy for Trentham and surrounds.		
✓	27 Trentham establish 'a town committee' responsible for coordinating and representing priorities for and input into the future development of the town.		
✓			

	28 Commitment be sought from Council for a fair and equitable funding model for all ratepayers and to a genuinely consultative process for determining priorities for spending.		
	29 This Plan be developed over the next 1-2 years to incorporate long-term limits to growth and the influence of external factors on the town and surrounding districts.		
✓	30 Develop an Open Space Strategy which promotes the concept of Trentham as a walking and cycling town.		
	31 Investigate the development of additional walking/cycling trails including to the Falls, a rail trail to Lyonville/Bullarto and in the adjoining Wombat Forest to the south of the town.		
✓	32 Implement the proposed single committee of management for the three natural reserves within the town boundaries.		
	33 Instigate an annual Trentham FutureCare forum involving all the groups with interests in protecting and managing the natural environment.		
	34 Consultative processes between the community and Council as recommended above include provisions for community consultation and input to planning and development.		
	35 Consistent with Council planning provisions, the Open Space Strategy and recommendations emerging from the Business Support Project develop streetscape, heritage and town character guidelines.		
✓	36 Promote awareness of sustainability issues and seek to have sustainability considerations as an overlay on all future development in subsequent iterations of the Community Plan.		
✓	37 Community and responsible agencies work cooperatively to implement the Weed-free Trentham initiative.		

We already have a lot of volunteers interested in making these priorities happen. As part of the process to agree and endorse the Community Plan we need everyone who is willing to get involved to volunteer their interest. Of course, there are several organisations to be identified against specific actions. A further column: 'How?' (including resources needed?) will also be needed to implement these priorities.

Acknowledgements:

Some 250-300 local people have had input to the Community Planning process – it is to their interest and contributions that the plan owes its existence. Different people have contributed variously to the development of the Plan and all of their help is greatly appreciated. The Plan does not name particular contributors – their acknowledgement will come from the community taking 'ownership' of the plan and contributing to its implementation. If contact information is required, please refer to the list of community groups in Appendix 2.

Thanks should go to TRATA – the Trentham Residents and Traders Association - which provided an auspice and resources to support the development of the Plan and to the Shire of Hepburn, which provided funding for some of the expenses, notably the cost of the facilitator for the workshop. Hepburn Shire also provided significant financial support for the Business Support Project.