

Parish Council Report: Village Fete Community Engagement Stand

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1. Overview

On 28 June 2025, the Parish Council hosted a stand at the Lockerley Village Fete, marking our first official appearance at this community event. A small team of councillors—Jo, Len, Jane, and myself—led the initiative with the primary aim of increasing engagement with the local community, raising awareness of the Parish Council’s role, and highlighting the ongoing need for volunteers across a range of community organisations.

2. Objectives

- Reintroduce the Parish Council to the community in a more personal, accessible way.
- Promote volunteer opportunities across six community-based organisations.
- Encourage residents to engage directly with the Parish Council—to ask questions, offer feedback, and understand our responsibilities.
- Begin to build a stronger connection between the Council and the parishioners we serve.

3. What We Did

The stand featured:

- Profiles of Parish Councillors, to “put a face to a name.”
- A clear breakdown of the Parish Council’s responsibilities.
- Information on volunteer needs across six key local organisations.
- A sign-up mechanism for volunteers and casual, friendly conversation with visitors.

While the materials and concept were well received, there were several logistical challenges worth noting:

- Location: Unfortunately, the stand was positioned away from the main centre of activity. This significantly reduced visibility and footfall. Despite this, we estimate the stand received between 30 and 40 visitors.
- Gazebo Set-Up: The gazebos provided were old, donated models and difficult to erect (tent poles with separate cover). The team spent over three hours attempting to put up two gazebos. This left us feeling hot, fraught, and with less time than hoped to properly prepare and present our materials.

Despite these challenges, all visitors to the stand were receptive and curious—many asked why the Parish Council was attending and the sense was they were pleased to see us there. There was a genuine appetite for information, and many appreciated the opportunity to speak informally with councillors.

4. Outcomes

- Volunteers: A number of residents signed up to express interest in helping across different community organisations. Notably, five individuals signed up specifically to support the Parish Council—a significant result from a single outreach event.
- Public Perception: Feedback was positive. Our presence helped humanise the Council and created space for constructive conversations with parishioners who might otherwise not engage with local governance.

We are confident that had we been located closer to the centre of activity, the number of conversations and expressions of interest would have been even higher.

5. Reflections and Learnings

While we are proud of what was achieved, especially with limited time and difficult conditions, there are several key takeaways:

- **Lead Time:** This entire effort was organised in around 10 days, largely due to holiday absences and the short time between the previous Parish Council meeting and the fete itself. With longer preparation time, we could further develop our messaging, presentation, and volunteer coordination.
- **Event Strategy:** For future events, it would be worth clarifying our objective (e.g., public outreach, promoting a campaign, hosting a public “surgery”-style Q&A).
- **Stand Positioning:** A central pitch near the main footfall is essential for visibility and engagement. We will request a better location for future attendance.
- **Parish Council/Councillor Visibility:** In future, we recommend that at least one or two councillors circulate around the fete, speaking to people away from the stand to spark conversations and draw interest—while also being mindful that this type of interaction may not suit every councillor’s style.
- **Equipment:** It would be beneficial to invest in a better-quality gazebo to avoid the stress and time-consuming effort experienced this year.

6. Next Steps

- Contact all individuals who expressed interest in volunteering, particularly those keen to support the Parish Council (see section 8 below ‘Forward Actions’).
- Share this report with the full Council to reflect on learnings and plan for future engagement and post on the Parish Council website.
- Consider setting up a Parish Council community stand as a regular feature at local events, possibly supported by a dedicated working group.
- Add a standing item to a future Parish Council agenda in January to agree on strategy, logistics, and messaging for next year’s fete. This will give a six-month window for planning and organisation.
- The Parish Council may consider assisting local organisations to attract volunteers, annually at the fete, in some capacity.

7. Conclusion

The Parish Council’s first attendance at the village fete was, overall, a positive and worthwhile initiative, despite some logistical challenges. It provided an invaluable opportunity for parishioners to meet councillors in person, ask questions, and better understand the role of the Parish Council. Most importantly, it successfully generated interest in volunteering and community involvement—both of which are vital to the long-term health of our village.

We believe this represents a genuine investment by the Parish Council and a strong, effective form of community outreach. As such, we recommend that the Parish Council invests in its own branded ‘pop out’ style gazebo, with the Parish Council’s name printed on the roof to ensure clear visibility and identity at future events. Costs are estimated to be in the region of £600 - £1000, depending on printing and specification of the gazebo (it will be necessary to establish artwork for the printing of the name of the parish).

Finally, we suggest that future efforts include collaboration with Jeff Hatcher and East Dean Parish Council, with a view to making this a joint initiative. A combined presence would demonstrate a united commitment to community and increase visibility for both councils.

8. Forward Actions: Community Clean-Up Event – ‘Lockerley in Action!’

As a direct outcome of the engagement and volunteer interest generated at this year’s fete, the Parish Council’s fete team is proposing to hold a community-wide clean-up event titled:

“Lockerley in Action!”

A village-wide tidy-up day for all ages – working together for our shared spaces. The intention this becomes an annual or twice yearly event.

Event Details:

- Date: Saturday 8th November 2025
- Focus: Litter-picking and a general tidy-up of the village in preparation for Remembrance Day on 9th November.
- Areas Covered: Village greens and commons, lay-bys, road verges, and the grounds of the Memorial Hall.

Volunteer Involvement:

- All volunteers who signed up at the fete will be personally invited to take part.
- An action-oriented, community-focused campaign will launch across:
 - Facebook
 - Parish newsletter
 - Village notice boards
 - Lockerley village shop

Community Collaboration:

- We plan to invite the local Scouts and Guides groups to participate, if available.
- We will also extend an invitation to Borough Councillor Alison Johnson to support and attend the event.
- Test Valley Borough Council will be approached for logistical support, including:
 - Litter-pickers
 - High-visibility vests
 - Gloves
 - Refuse sacks and collection
 - Risk assessments and safety guidance

Hospitality and Community Spirit:

To encourage participation and thank volunteers:

- Bacon sandwiches, vegetarian options, tea, coffee, and squash will be provided.
- Refreshments – the Parish Council to contact (for their help and support):
 - The Coffee Shop and Lunch Club organisers
 - The Fresh Cookery Kitchen team

Communications Plan:

- Promotion will begin 1st September, giving over two months to build awareness and momentum.
- Messaging will emphasise:
 - Community action
 - Visible impact
 - Family-friendly roles
 - Support for the village and Memorial Hall
 - Enjoyable, social atmosphere with free food and drinks

Allocation of Tasks:

- The Parish Council to take on responsibility for the organisation and execution of the day.
 - Roles will be divided into manageable tasks for:
 - Families
 - Teenagers/young people
 - Adult individuals
 - A simple rota and job list will be shared in advance and on the day, with risk assessment and safety briefings provided.
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