



# Northamptonshire ACRE

## Village Survey 2021



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Covering Parishes within Northamptonshire

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# INTRODUCTION

“The previous survey carried out by the charity helped to build up a detailed picture of life in our villages ten years ago. It showed many communities as vibrant and neighbourly places, but worried about loss of services, potential development and transport. It will be interesting to see to what extent things have changed over the last ten years and what sort of impact the pandemic has had.”

Elaine O’Leary, Chief Executive of Northamptonshire ACRE

The last village survey that Northamptonshire ACRE (NACRE) carried out was in 2011 and it gave a picture of villages that were having to adapt to new challenges in order to keep their community going.

Transport, provision of services and the environment were all identified as key issues for many villages. With much new development it was felt it the right time to complete a new survey. We asked a range of questions about life in a rural community, in a brief survey to:

- inform, develop and enhance our current toolkits to support local future needs including climate change, transport, energy and more recently those seeking refuge/asylum, in difficult global circumstances.
- highlight any issues that communities may have experienced as a result of the impact of COVID-19.
- establish local evidence of how communities are currently faring.
- identify what current services and support exist in parishes and rural communities in comparison to 10 years ago and how they are evolving.

# SUMMARY

Our survey was formulated by listening and learning from local people. The survey focused on ten key areas helping to build up the picture of rural life in 2021.

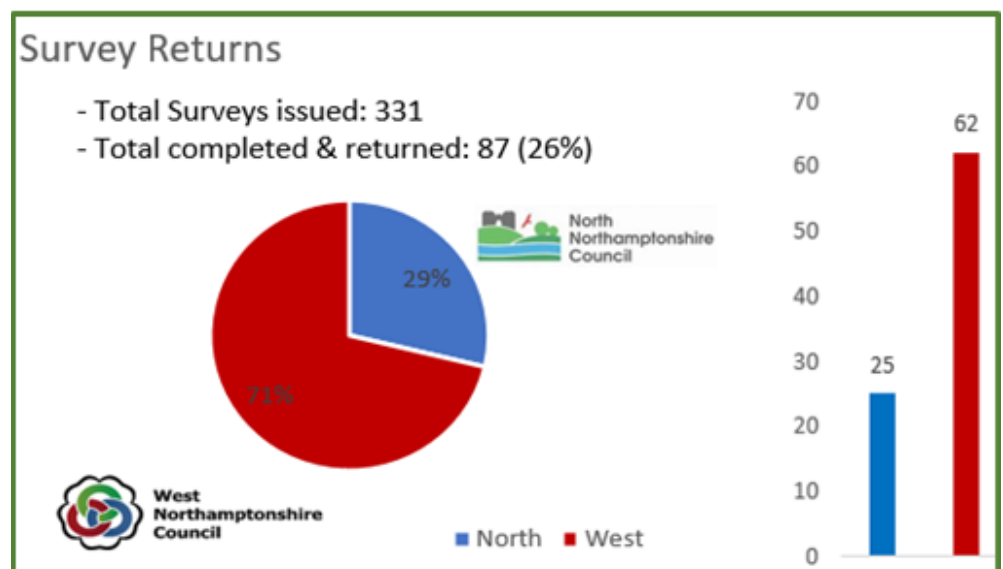
The aim is to establish local evidence to assist in targeting rural needs. A robust knowledge base is needed to champion rural interests and also to help policymakers such as Local Authorities and other statutory agencies make provision for rural needs in Northamptonshire today.

The survey was sent to 331 Northamptonshire Parishes, with 48 questions relating to the following areas:

- Your community
- Community Buildings & Recreation
- Retailing & Business
- Public Services & Education
- Transport
- Food, Hospitality & Tourism
- Housing & Utilities
- Communication
- Community Led Plans

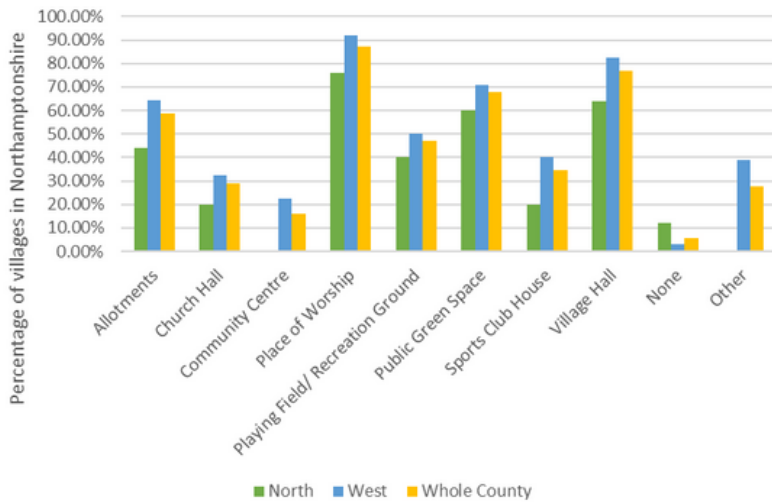
Thank you to everyone who was able to take part, a total of 87 (26%) completed surveys were received.

Please see below the total Unitary breakdown of the completed & returned surveys.



# Your COMMUNITY

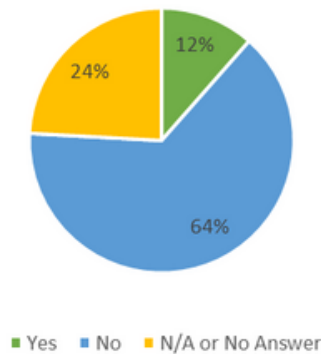
What Facilities do you have in your village?



## 1 What Facilities do our villages have?

Places of worship, village halls and green spaces remain an important feature in rural life. This remains unchanged since the last village survey in 2011.

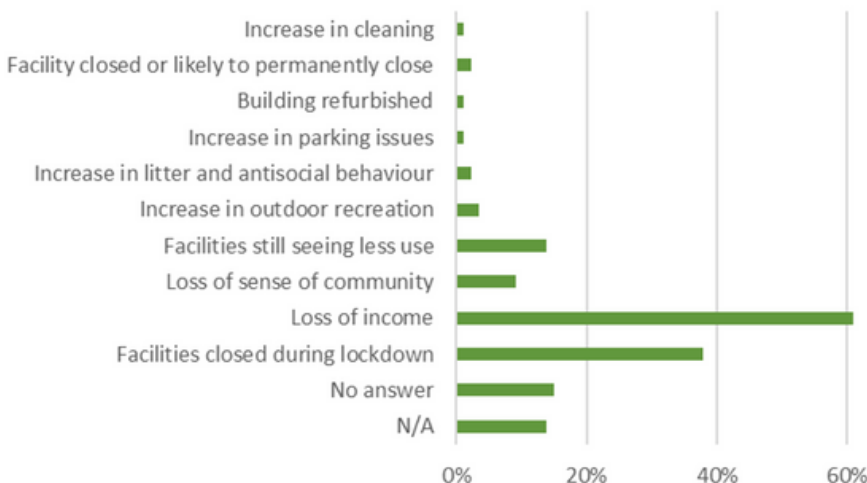
Has your village lost any facilities in the last 10 years?



## 2 Lost Facilities

In the 2011 survey 7% of villages reported that community facilities had closed in their village, in 2021 this figure was up to 12%. The loss was similar in the North (12%) and West (11%) reporting that they had lost facilities. However villages in the North were less likely to have the facilities to begin with.

How have your local facilities been impacted by Covid 19?

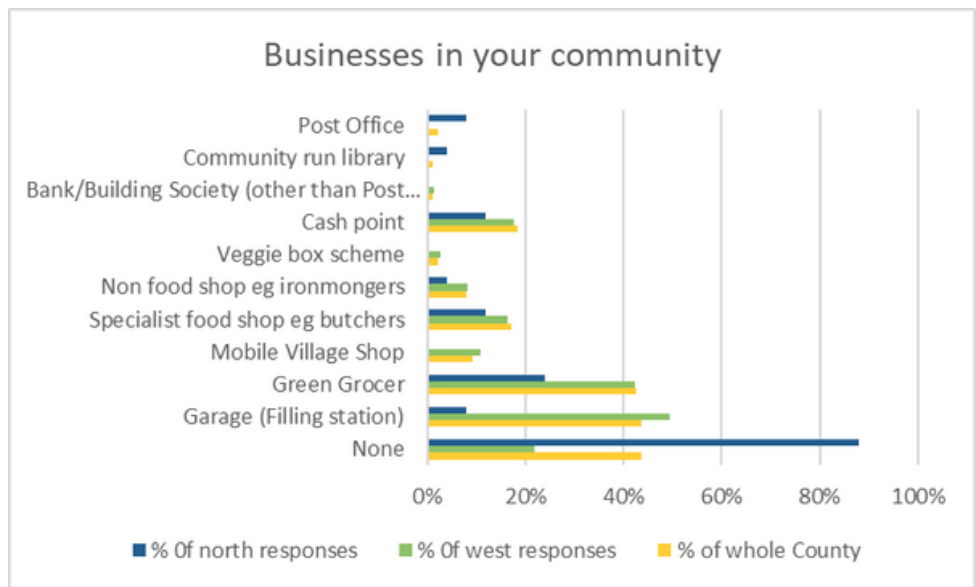


## 3 The impact of the pandemic

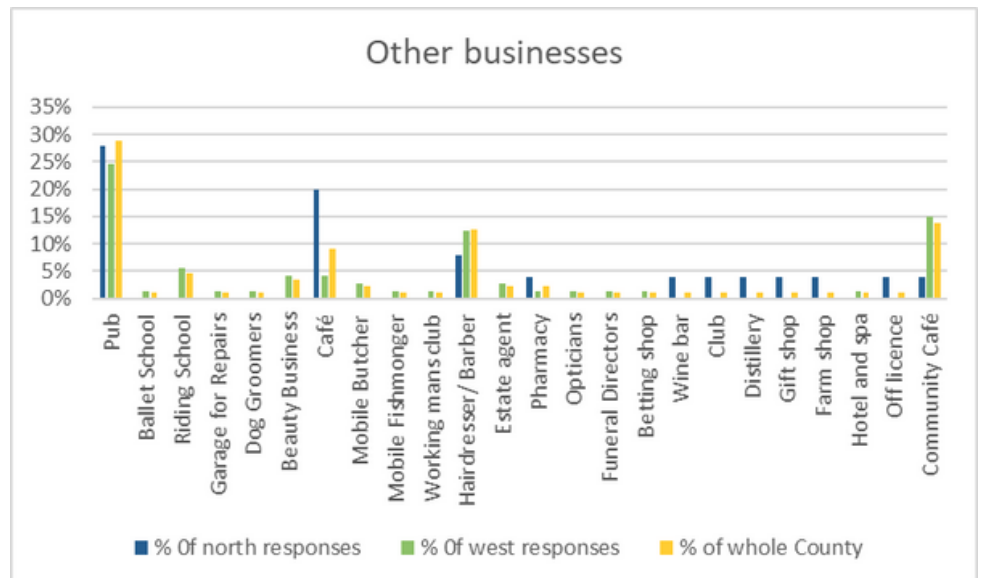
Respondents reported that facilities in their village closed during the pandemic and that this had a knock on effect on income. The impact of this is likely to be ongoing as many facilities reported that they were still seeing less use.

This was an open ended question in the survey, and whilst only 3% mentioned an increase in outdoor recreation, the actual number is likely to be much higher.

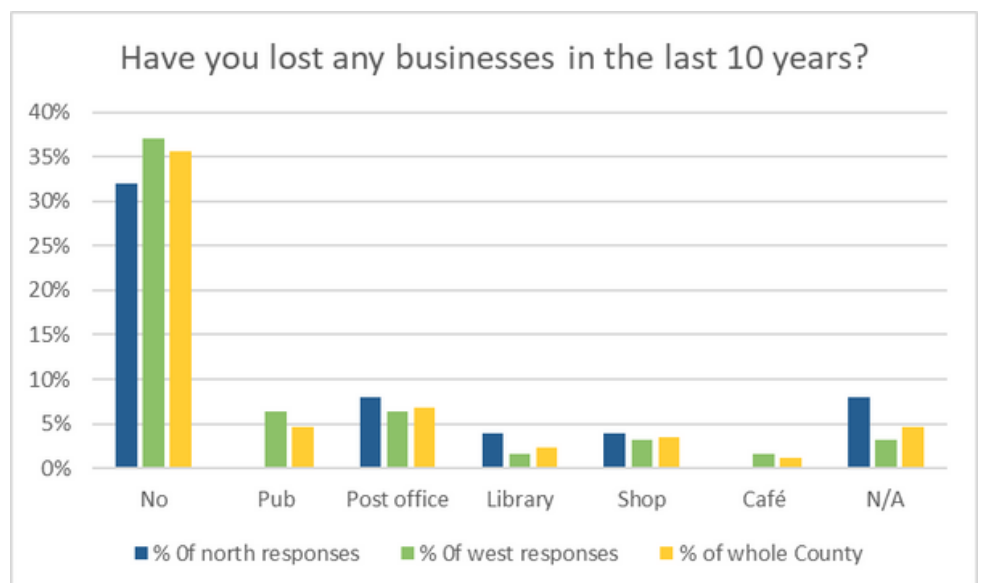
# BUSINESSES



80% of respondents in the North had no businesses in their community. The breakdown of businesses remained broadly the same as the last survey (2011) with no major changes.



The most common businesses in the 'other' category were pub (29%) hairdressers or barbers (13%) community café (15%).



Although the North and West lost similar numbers of businesses, the North reported less businesses to start with.

# Local BUSINESSES

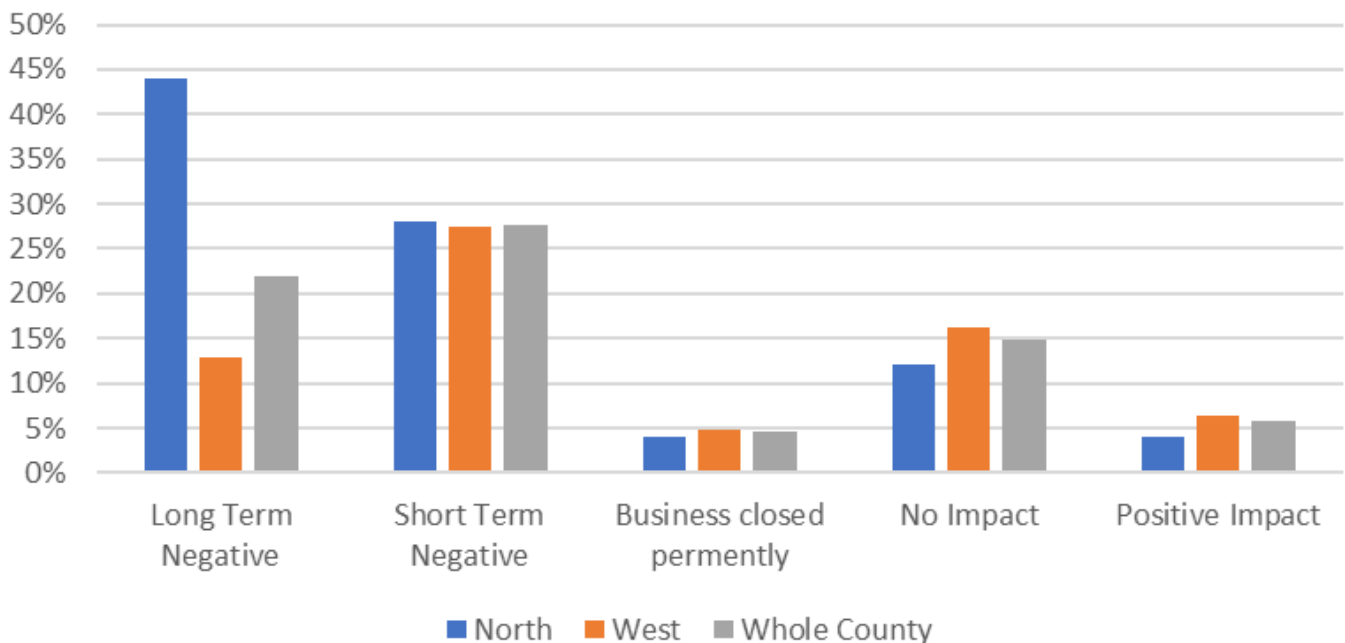
## Impact of COVID on business

The story in Northamptonshire villages reflected the national picture, many businesses were shut due to restrictions and this caused a loss of income and some to shut permanently.

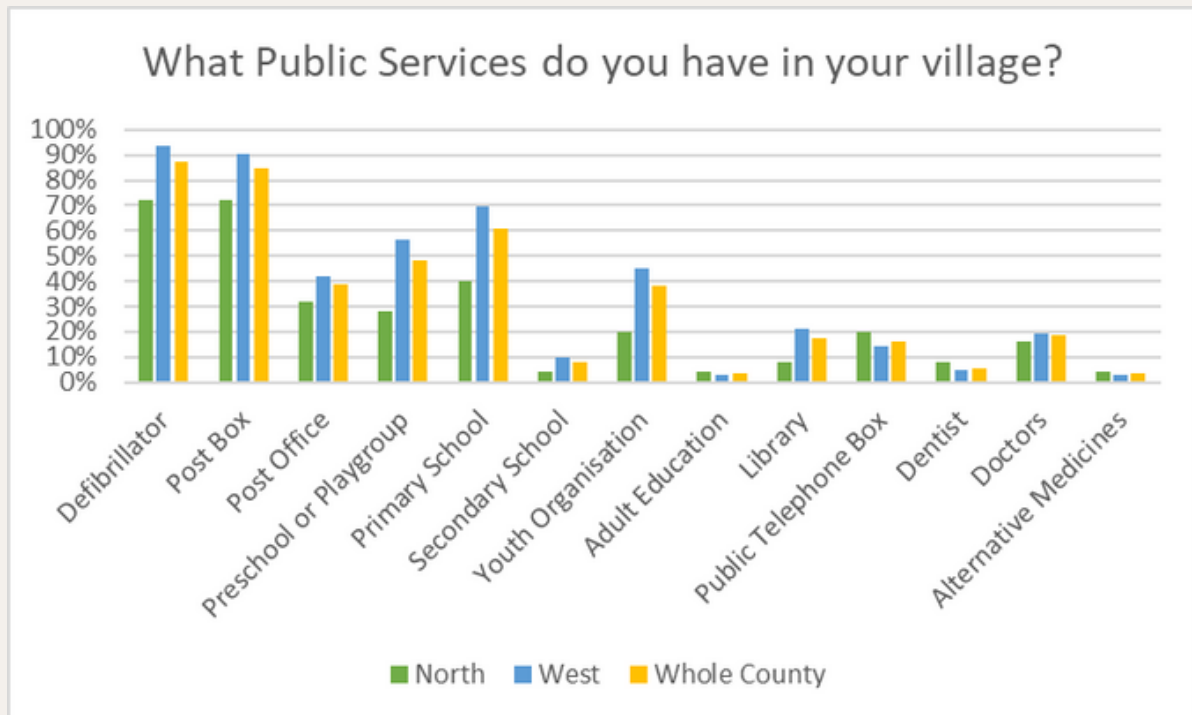
Some villages reported that the pandemic helped local grocery stores by boosting business. Some businesses are suffering long term impact and are still seeing loss of footfall.



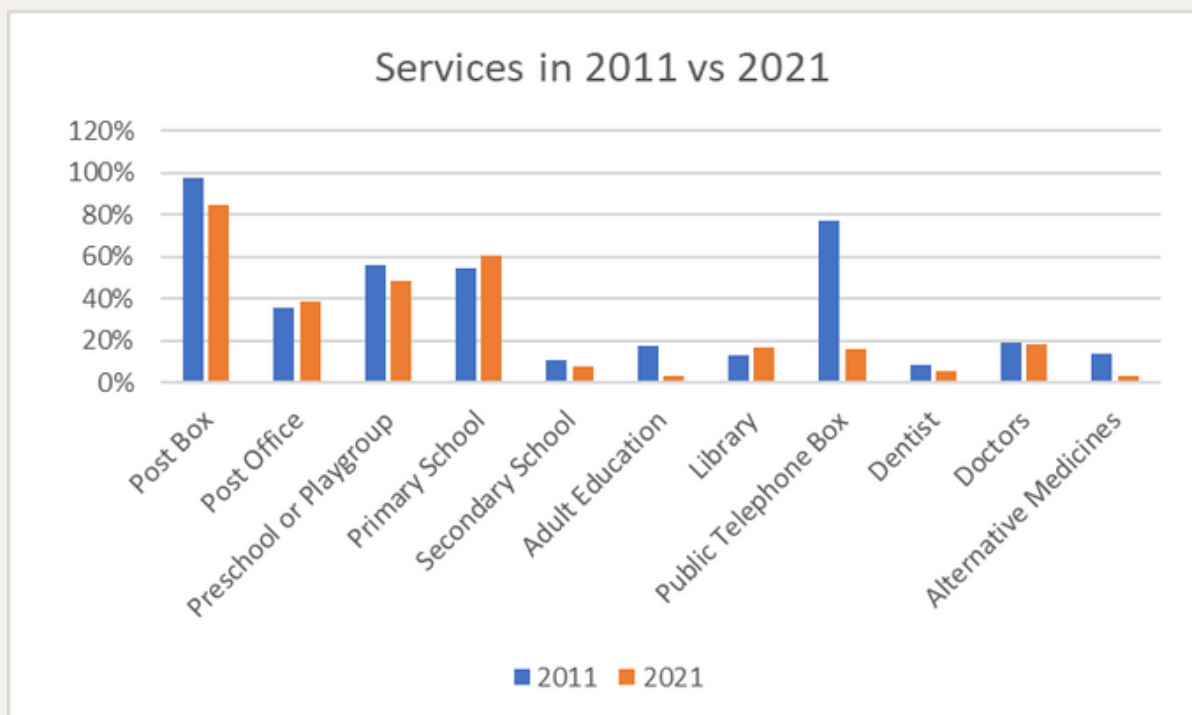
## How were businesses impacted in your community?



# PUBLIC SERVICES & EDUCATION

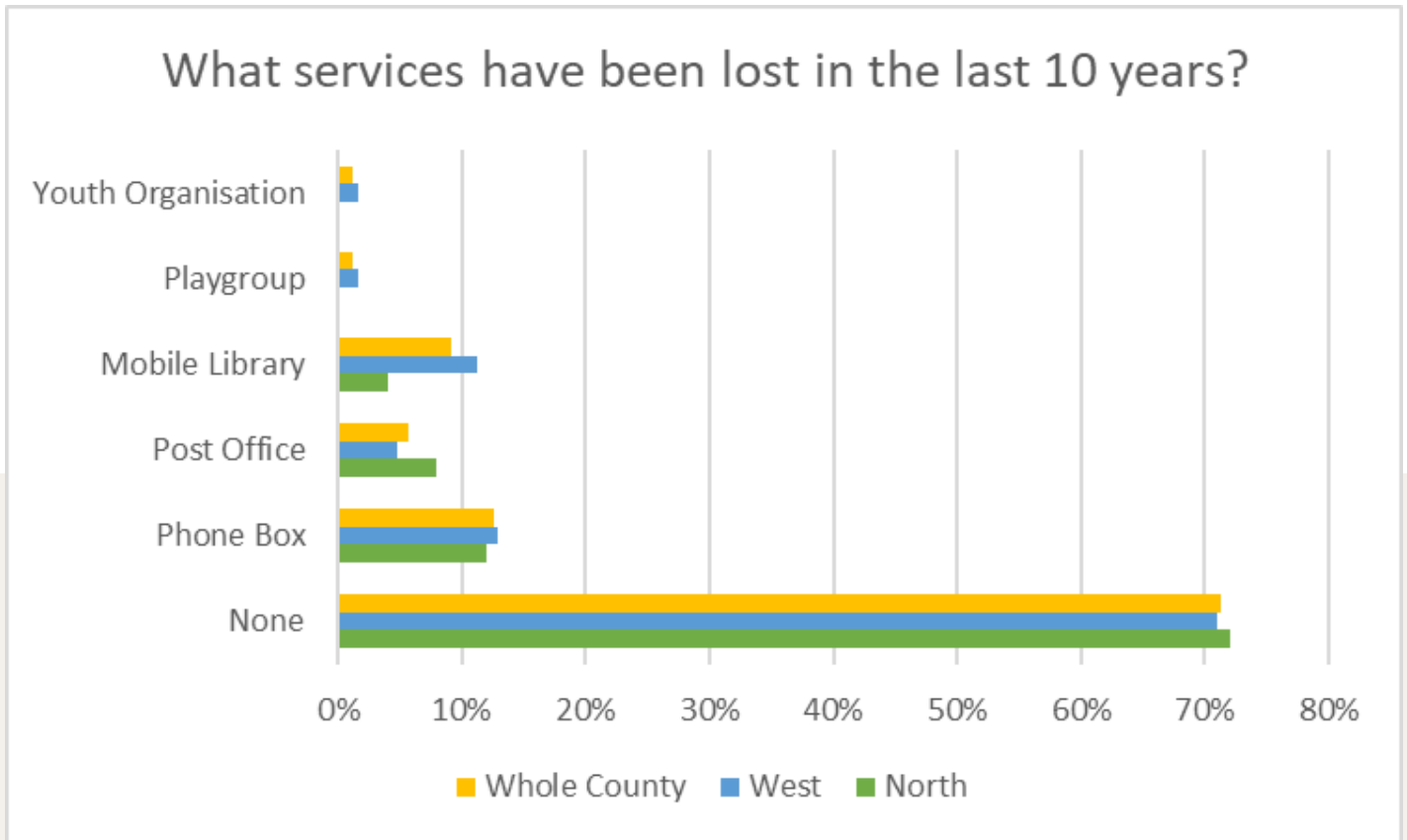


The 2011 survey didn't include defibrillators, however it is fantastic news that 87% of respondents reported their community had a defibrillator in 2021.





# PUBLIC SERVICES & EDUCATION



Unsurprisingly change in availability of mobile technology has had a direct impact on the number of phone boxes across Northamptonshire.

Aside from phone boxes, libraries were the most lost public service, with 9% closing in rural communities. To combat this some communities have created community libraries- often in decommissioned phone boxes.



## What Impact did COVID-19 have on your village services?

We had planned first aid training (for our defibrillator) and this has been postponed.

Only the mobile library stopped visiting.

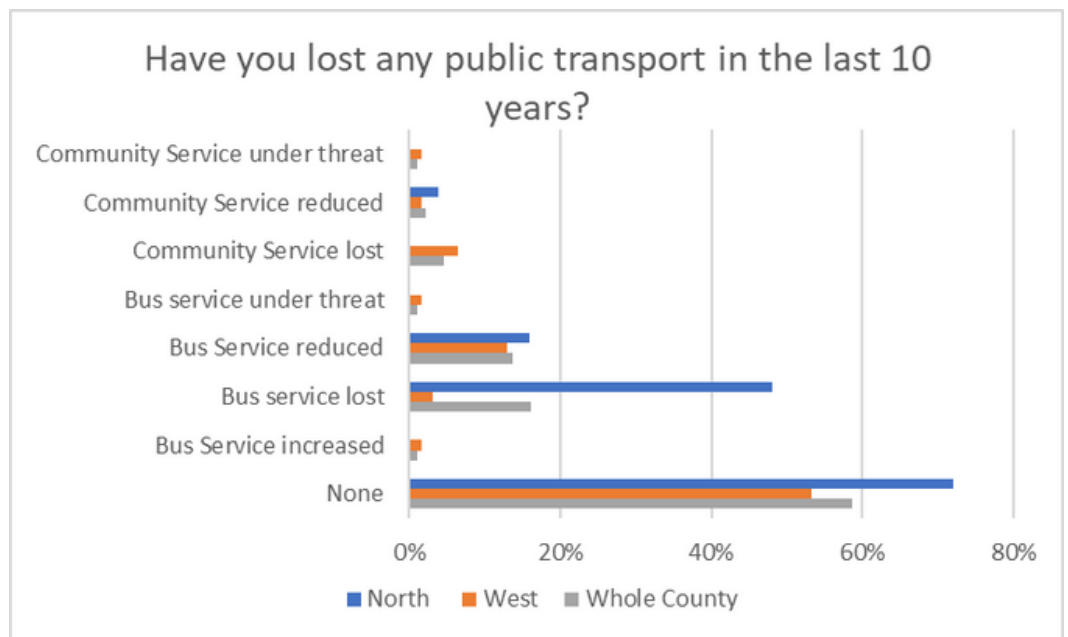
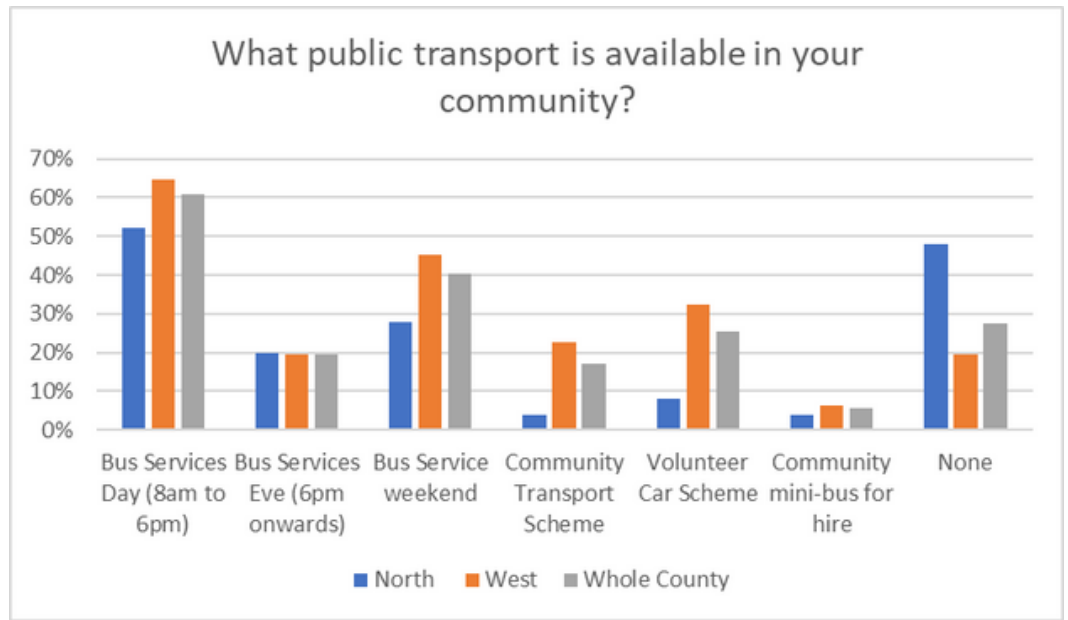
Brownies/Guides has been stopped.

Loss of Library and no meetings of the Youth Groups. Particular difficulty with young children who have missed sports clubs and school.

School has coped very well even with the uncertainty & has also helped greatly with the education of the children of key workers from other parishes.

Toddler playgroup stopped during Covid and might struggle to 're-establish.

# TRANSPORT



The bus service was in danger of being lost due to funding issues. It is currently being funded by the Parish Council in conjunction with other Parish Councils from nearby villages.

Daily Bus service stopped but we still don't know why it was not viable, when most days it was filled with bus pass holders.

People, like many others in rural villages, are dependant on their own cars for shopping, medical centre etc.

Community monthly mini bus scheme has ceased,

Bus service has been radically reduced over the years.

Free Tesco bus service lost, Tesco said it was a policy change.

Volunteer transport scheme is sporadic and not very well used as a result.

The bus service has actually increased & we are installing new & more protective bus shelters to encourage use.



# HOUSING

The previous survey looked at affordable homes, and sheltered accommodation and did not split the data between North and West.

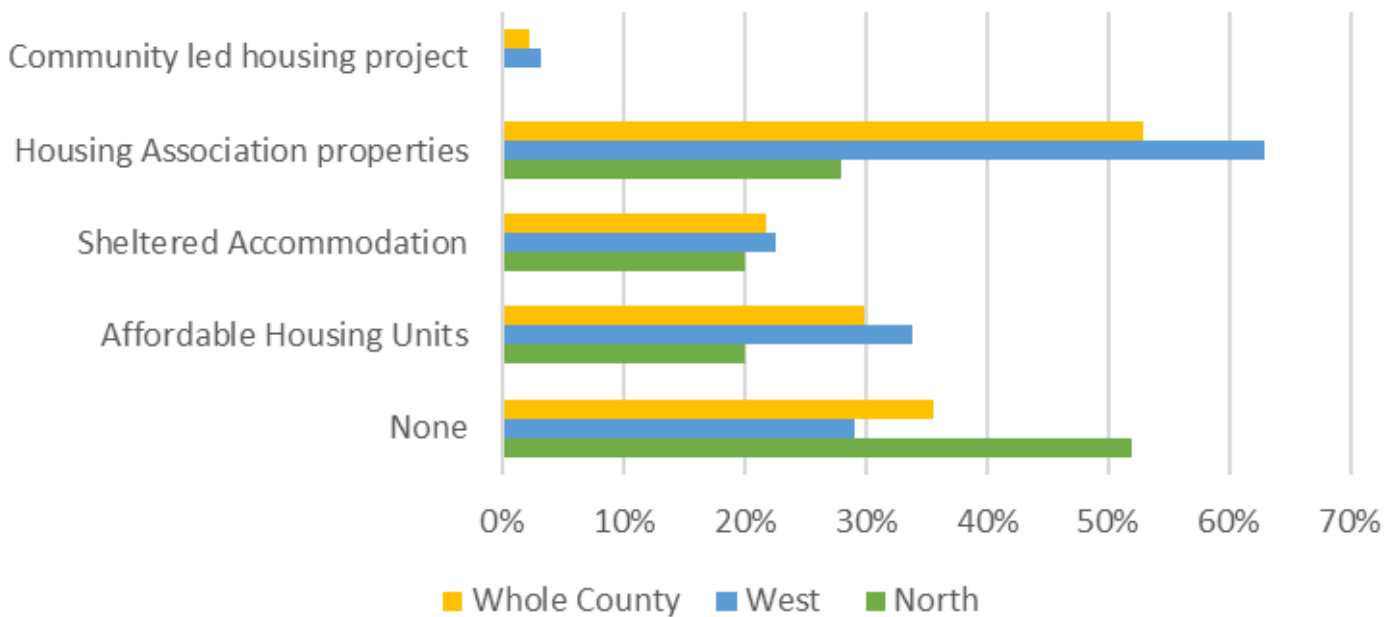
There is little change in the % of respondents reporting these housing types in their community.

Affordable Homes  
2009- 34%  
2021- 30%

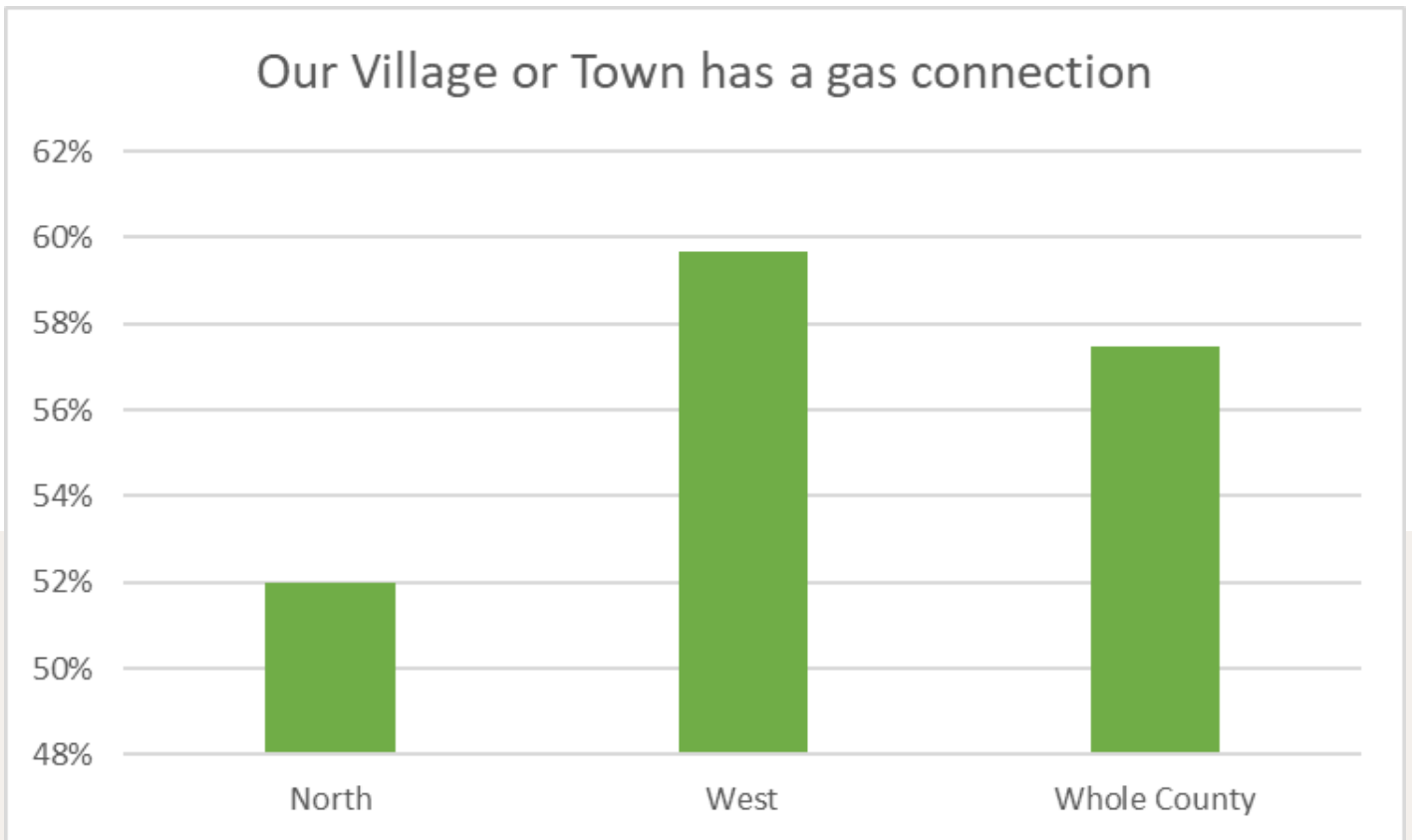
Sheltered Accommodation  
2009- 20.9%  
2021- 22%



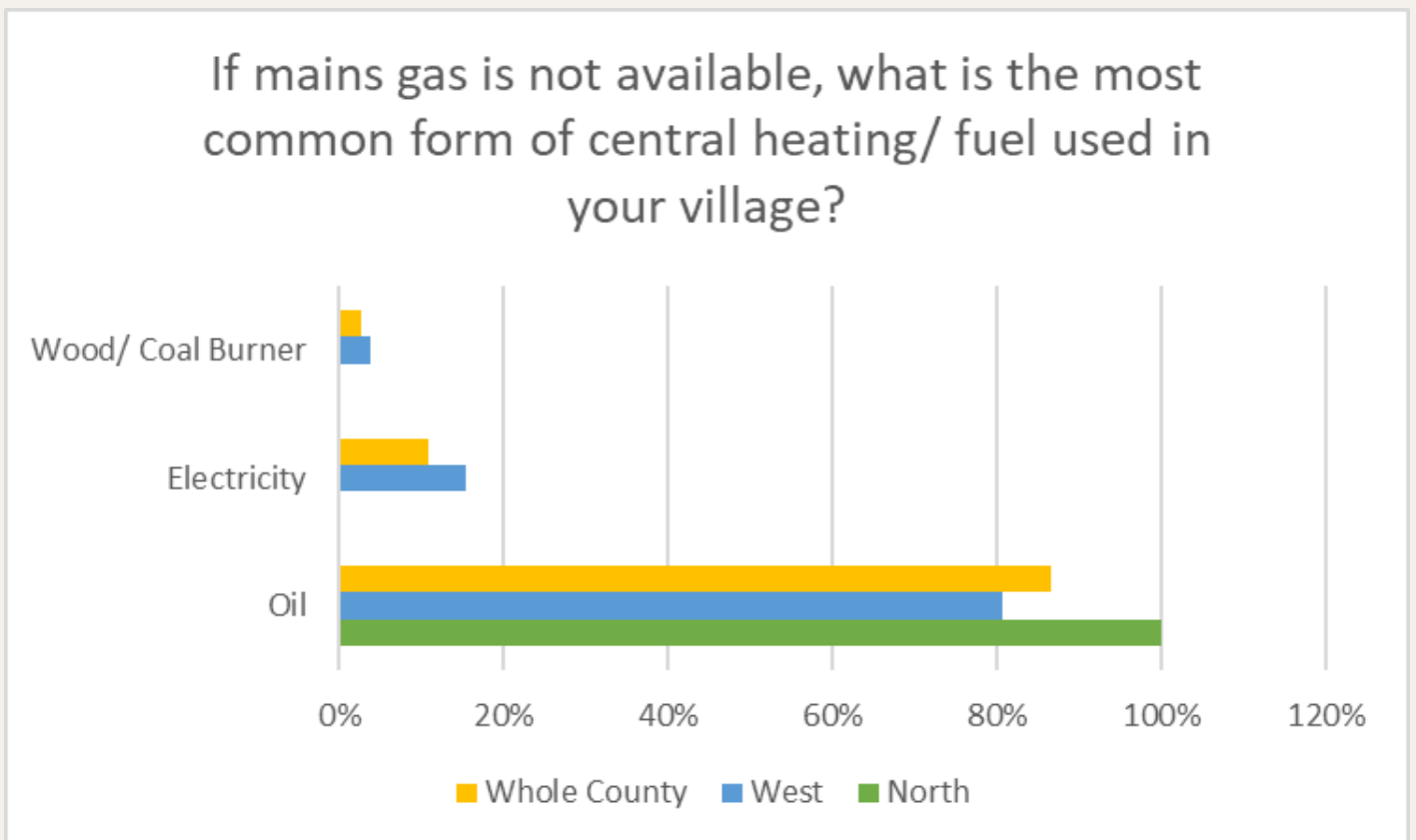
## Do you have any of the following in your village/town?



# UTILITIES



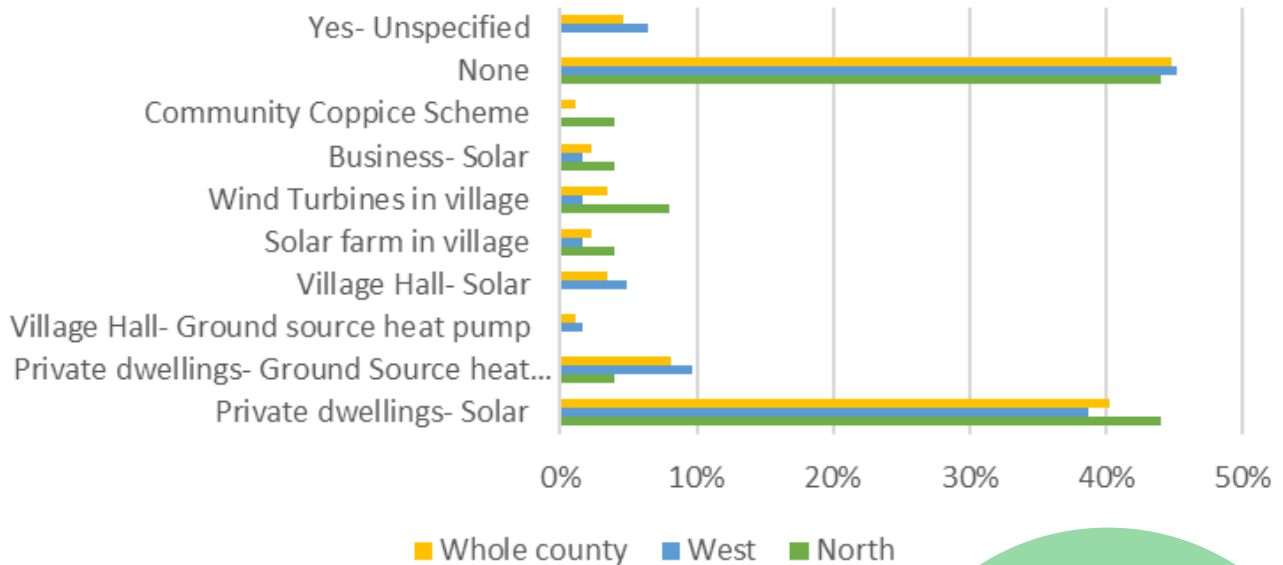
Villages in the North were less likely to have a gas connection.



Oil was the most common form of heating when gas was not available.

# UTILITIES

Do any of the buildings in your village have renewable energy sources?



This was a new question for the village survey, no data is available for 2009

Only 2 communities (of those that responded) had communal electric car charging points.



Various properties have solar panels. The village hall is looking into an air to air heat pump.

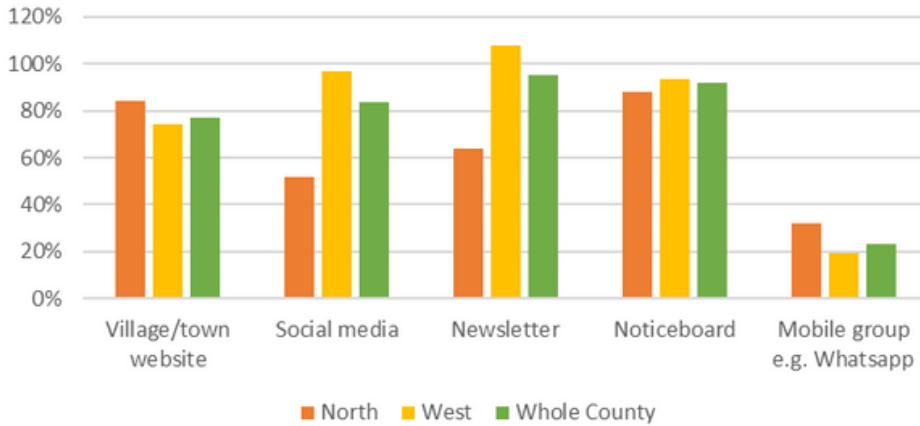
Limited use of Solar Panels & we are searching for grants to Solar Power the village hall .

Solar panels on the Community Centre. Installing Electric points for e cars is in the pipe line.

One or two outlying farms have private solar panel areas or ground source systems.

# COMMUNICATION

What forms of communication do you have in your village?

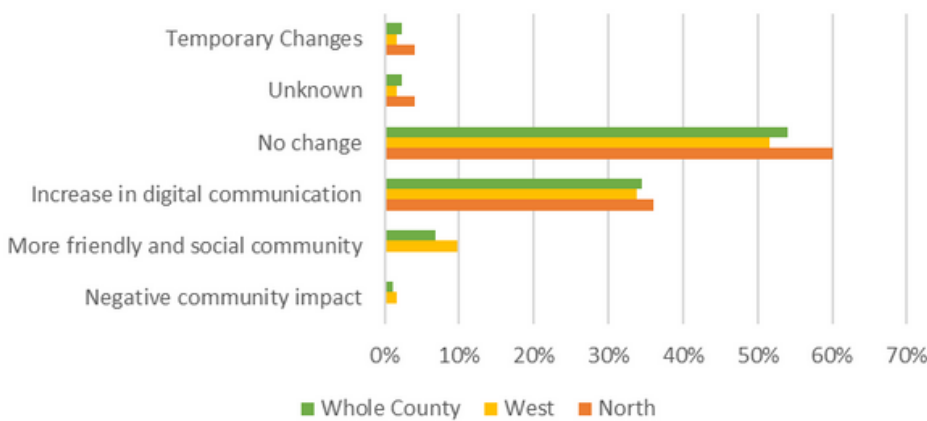


What forms of communication do you have in your village?

This was a new question for the village survey, no previous data is available.

Villages are using multiple different methods to communicate with each other.

Has COVID-19 changed the way your village communicates with each other?



Has COVID-19 changed the way your village communicates with each other?

The pandemic has increased digital communication methods in communities. Some respondents reported that this has improved communication and created a more social community. Other respondents expressed concern that digital communication risked excluding older people. Digital access and literacy is a key concern for Northamptonshire ACRE.



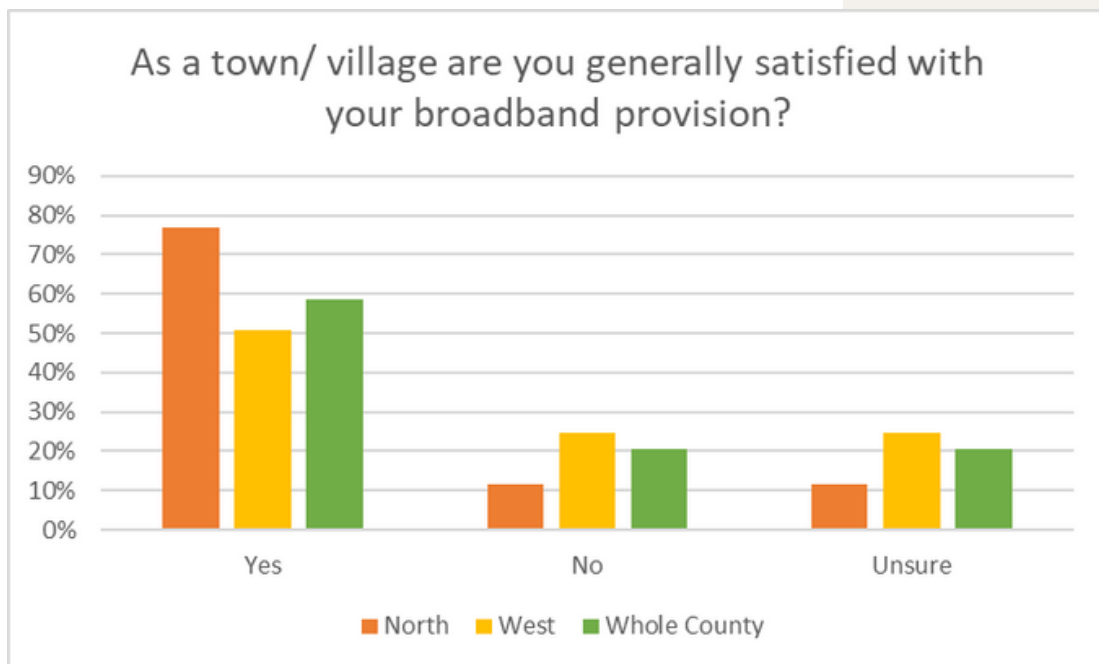
We set-up a WhatsApp 'help line' during the Covid outbreak. The Parish Clerk has telephone and email contacts for 95% of those with digital connections, this enables us to broadcast messages quickly to most residents. Hard-copy is delivered to those without email. ironically, the latter tend to be very elderly and probably in most need of connectivity.

The social cohesion of meeting face to face has severely impacted on many residents, especially those new to the village. However, neighbourliness is still much in evidence.

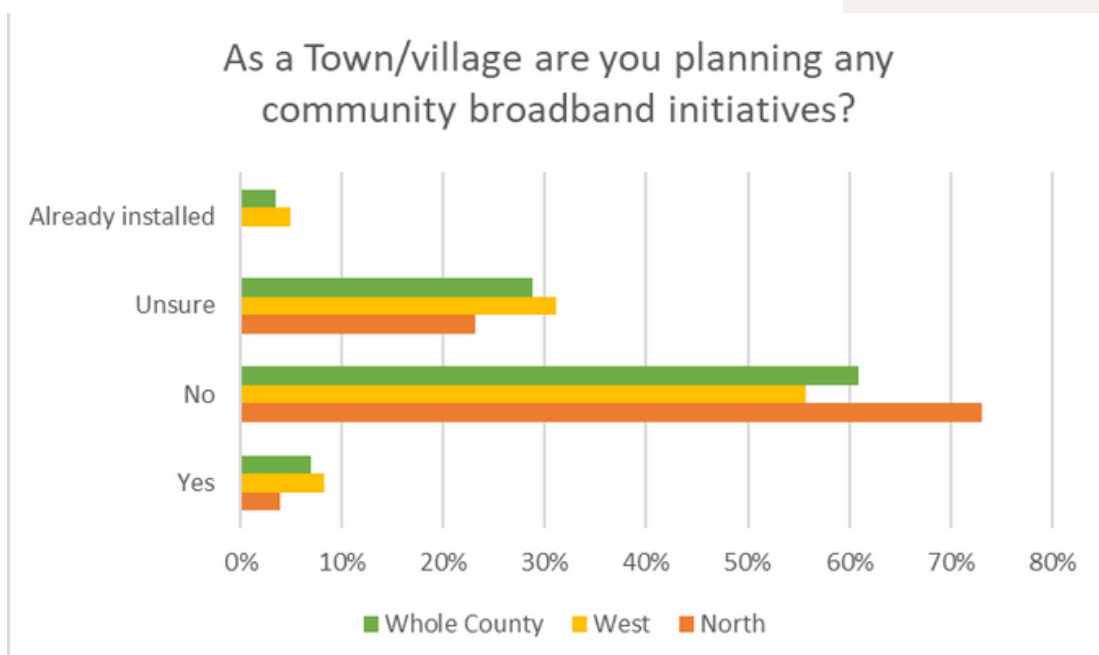
Yes, has become friendlier and more pleasant to one another. Not so much of a social divide.

# BROADBAND

As a town/ village are you generally satisfied with your broadband provision?



As a Town/village are you planning any community broadband initiatives?



A community broadband service was started in 2003 by local volunteers which over the last 18 years has grown into Tove Valley communities superfast broadband service, still run entirely by volunteers: [tovevalley.com](http://tovevalley.com).

We are at the start of the process and it's proving lengthy.

One of the estates in the village have got together to sort out fibre in their area..

# BROADBAND



If your community building has an broadband connection what is it used for e.g. pre-school, e.g. parish council meetings, e.g. drop-in sessions for the community



The connection pot is installed outside but there is no definite demand for broadband in the village hall, so it has not been installed in the building.

WiFi in the Village Hall for all users including Parish Council meetings.

The broadband service has been installed in the village hall and pub as a community service and is free to all users.

Gigaclear's "fibre to the premises" has only just "gone live" in the last few days, and they are now offering us a "community hub". The management committee of the Village Hall will now be considering this offer.

Broadband is available to all users of the hall.

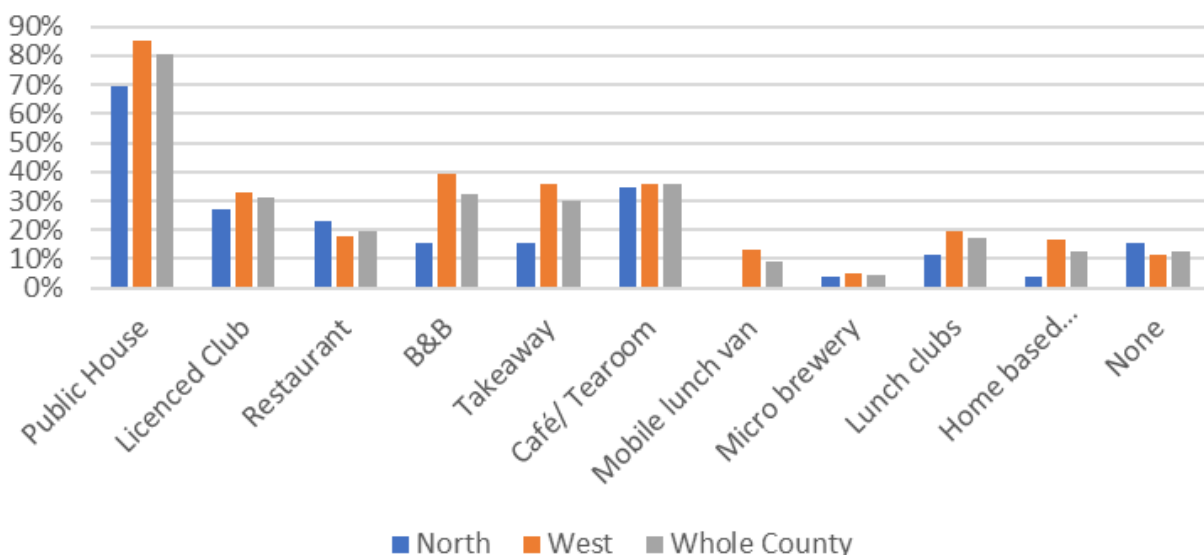
Parish Council Meetings & for the use of hirers which can be private functions or small business events.



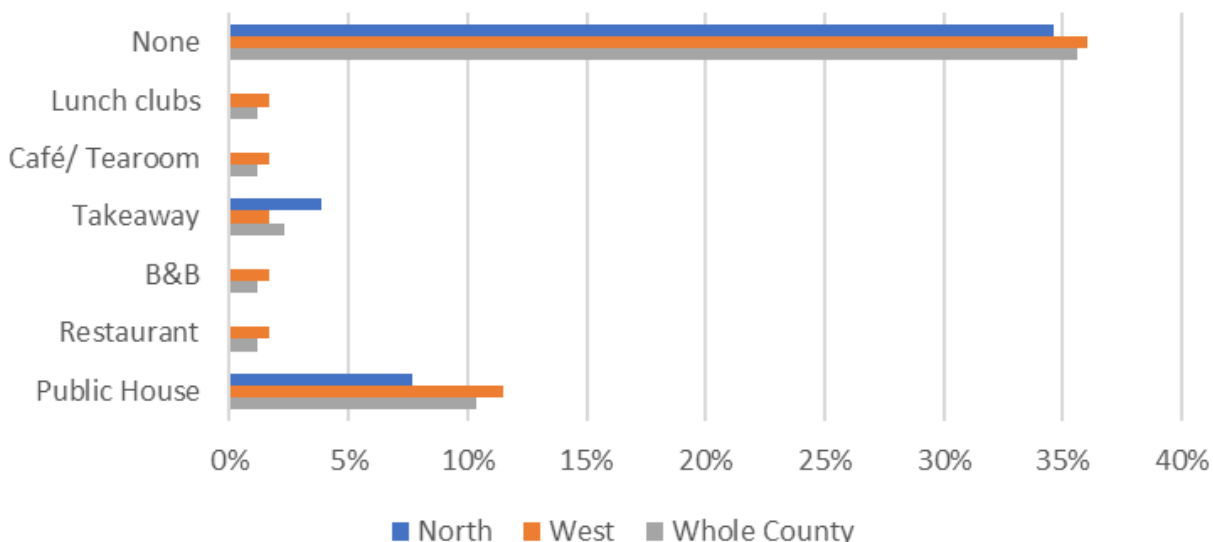
# FOOD HOSPITALITY & TOURISM



Please indicate whether you have any of these services.

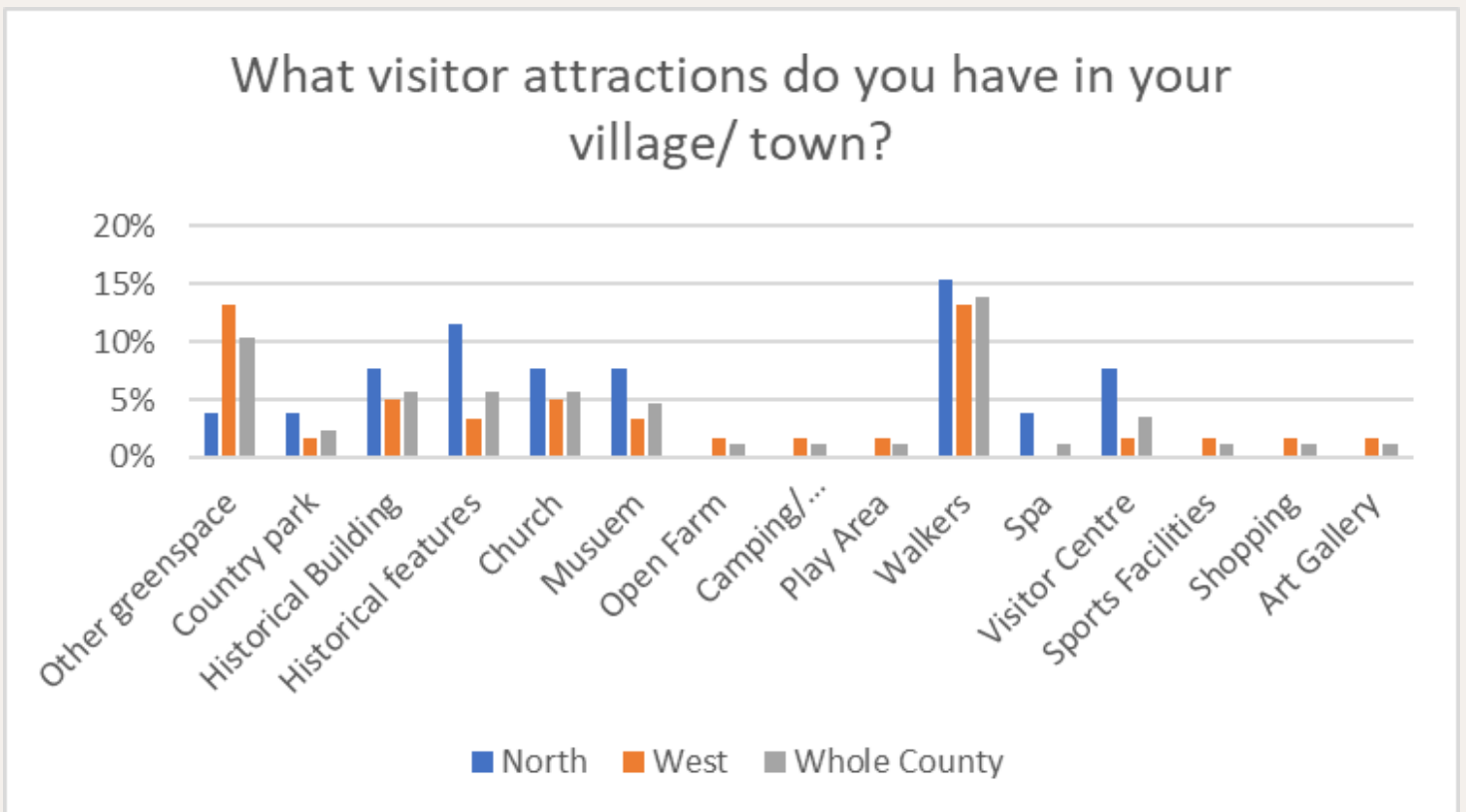


Have you lost any of these services over the last 10 years? Please indicate what you have lost.



# FOOD, HOSPITALITY & TOURISM

Green spaces and walking are frequently referred to by respondents, highlighting their importance in Northamptonshire's rural economy,



Our pub is now a restuarant and is less of a locals meeting place.

Lose pub on a regular basis. Changes tenants all the time. Would be great if it were village owned instead of brewery.

The pub has a reasonable menu and attracts mainly visitors from outside the village.

Church with a one handed clock.

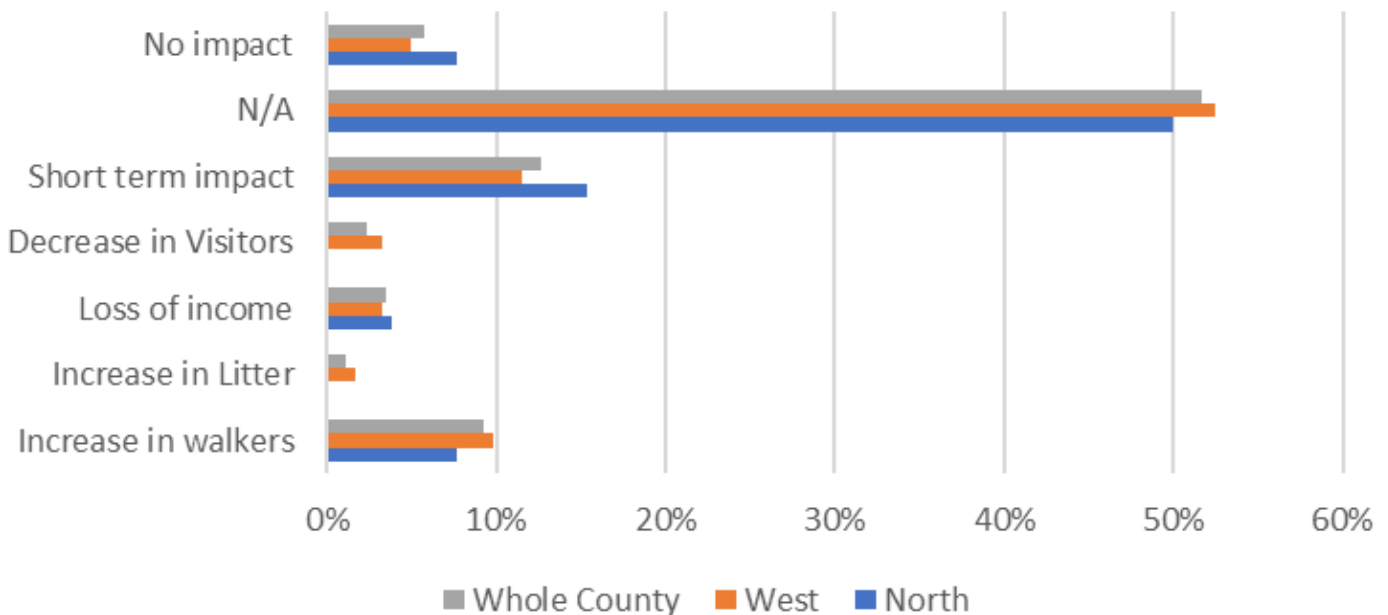
Carpetbagger Aviation Museum relating history of action in World War II dropping agents and supplies in occupied Europe. Site of demolished Manor House in 1745 with fishponds and remains of terraced gardens. Tours at gin distillery.

Many well used footpaths and bridleways, website with village information organised walks since Aug 2021.

# FOOD HOSPITALITY & TOURISM



## Have any of these services been impacted by COVID-19?



Many well used footpaths and bridleways, website with village information organised walks since Aug 2021.

Nene river and canal and has lots of footpaths so is visited by walkers.

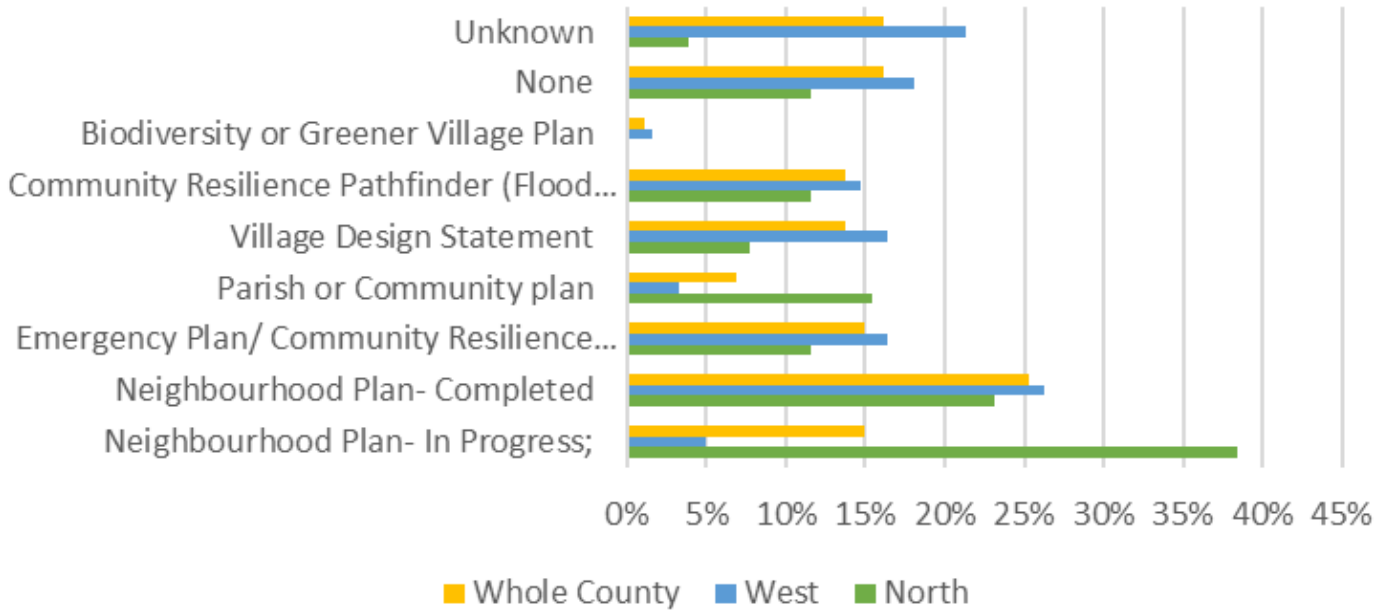
Yarn Bombing; heritage trail with information boards.

Pocket Park (disused canal and riverside walk and Picnic areas)

Some of the walks and locks on the Grand Union Canal are included in the Northamptonshire Walks list online. We also have the Berry/Bury which is one of seven surviving medieval ringworks in Northamptonshire. It has a long history of occupation and is in essentially undisturbed condition. A number of the arable fields within the village have evidence of 'ridge and furrow'.

# COMMUNITY PLANS

Does your parish or town have any of the following?



Need to adopt a parish emergency plan as the Resilience Forum Plans did not coordinate efforts at grass roots level.

As stated previously, the neighbourhood plan is in progress, but not initiated by Covid or climate emergency. It was started predominantly so that the village could have more say over planning issues.

No. We don't know enough about emergency plans to judge whether we should create one. We do not qualify for a Neighbourhood plan.

Our emergency plan is being reconsidered and we have agreed a Climate Change Committee

Northamptonshire ACRE offers support to villages with a wide range of plans. For more information please visit our website or email us at [acre@northantsacre.org.uk](mailto:acre@northantsacre.org.uk)

# COMMUNITY PLANS

Please tell us about any new services or facilities that you are developing to meet the needs of your community? For example a play area, community shop or biodiversity project.



Village hall has had wooden gazebo's fitted for outdoor bookings and access to a toilet and kitchenette, re-done patio and path.

New changing rooms for sports. Pocket park, wild flower areas..

Village Hall survey planned to try and discover what the community requires of a village hall in the 21st century.

Community connectors, now working with health and wellbeing for all age groups.

Play, woodland/sensory garden, community managed library, refurb hard surface games area/courts.

Enhanced play area and MUGA.

Biodiversity group emerged from the Neighbourhood Plan work

Just rolled out changeover from SOX to LED lighting on 60 lamps around the parish. Area around the allotments has been seeded as a wildflower meadow.

Community minibus.

We are looking into a biodiversity project and installing some community electric charging points.

# COMMUNITY PLANS

Please tell us about any new services or facilities that you are developing to meet the needs of your community? For example a play area, community shop or biodiversity project.



Recreation Area / MUGA, Events Group, Environment Group.

Longer term and much more planning, trying to wild flower verges as appropriate.

We would very much like a play/green space area but have no access to land.

Parish council is looking at developing a green strategy.

Memorial garden, linear village green.

The village playing field is a newish project, 4 years, we are hoping to improve wildlife area, the old playing field, which is on edge of village, Also planting bulbs and did flowers to enhance the verges.

Renovation of local pond to provide dipping platform and better environment for wildlife and residents.

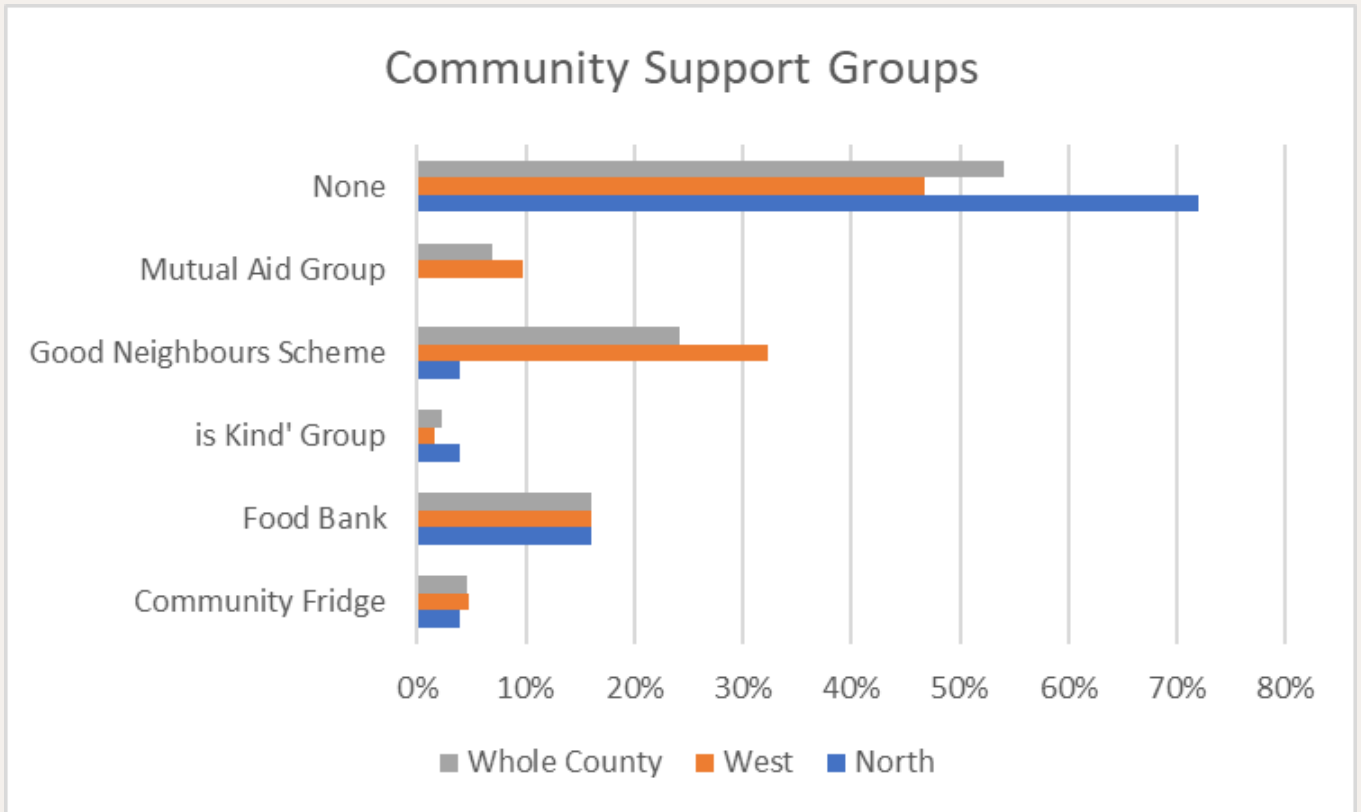
Bus stop shelter has become the Village Library.

Looking at our communications approach, to make sure we reach all residents.

A separate charity has been set up to develop a children's play area and community open space. Although separate this group updates the Parish Council on progress. The Parish Council are in the early stages of a biodiversity project and all councillors are keen to try and encourage residents to set up a biodiversity group. The Parish Council are working to bring a Memorial Garden under the management of a charity committee.

The social aspect of our village is very badly affected by a dangerous & unsuitable main road which bisects it. The inability of the County Council to deal with this over 30 years has made planning very difficult. We are hopeful that the provision of a bus pass will change this. We keep our fingers crossed.

# COMMUNITY SUPPORT GROUPS



There are no formal schemes, but support for neighbours is good.

Covid Support Group - evolving into Good Neighbourhood Scheme.

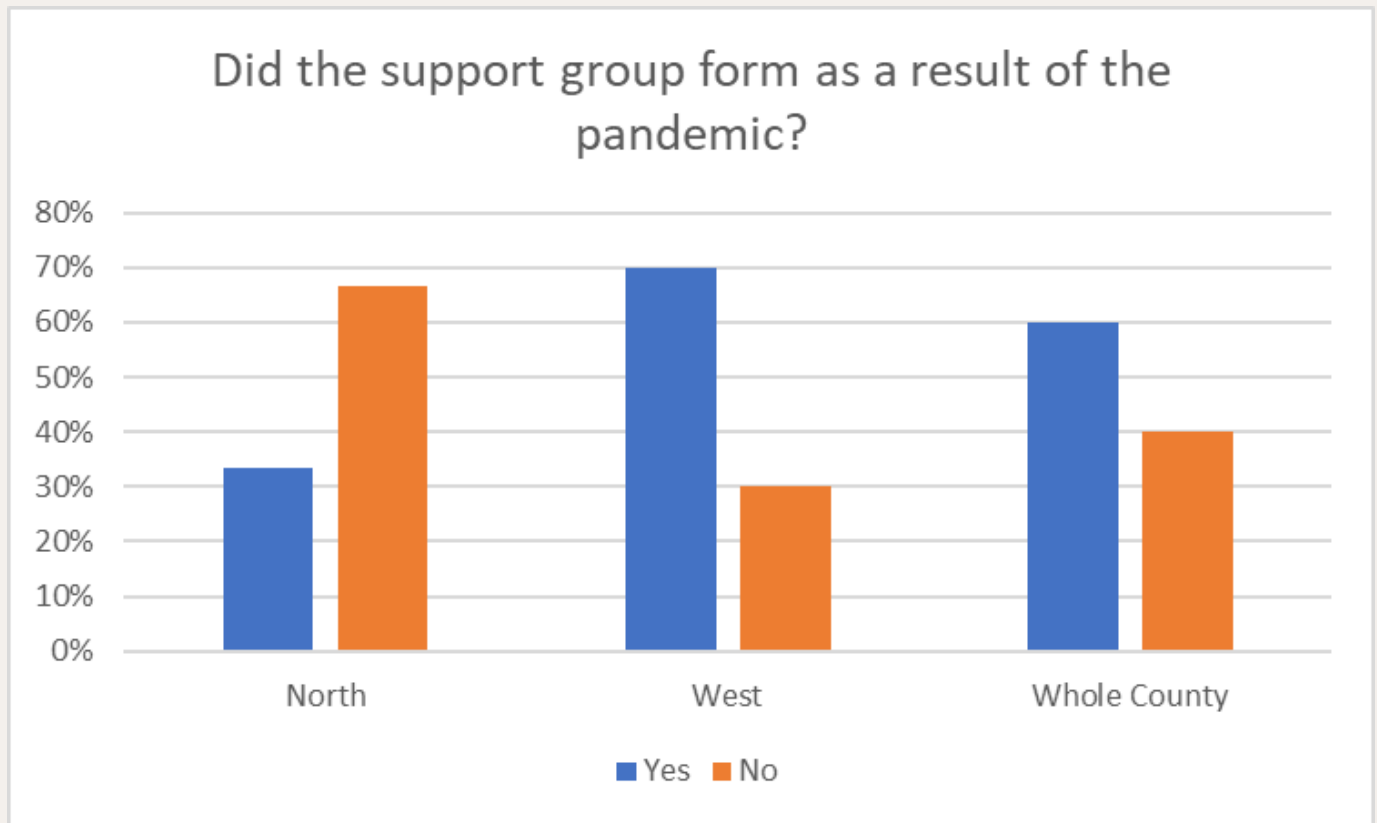
Community is so small, we are able to keep an eye on everyone.

Community Spirit tried to keep an eye on everyone during the pandemic.

Villages donate to food banks for others to use. We don't have anything here for villages to use.

Good Neighbours Scheme - not formally registered and set up in response to Covid-19.

# COMMUNITY SUPPORT GROUPS



From August 2022 our Good Neighbours Schemes (GNS) start up support for new and existing community support groups in the north of the county, is now available countywide!

Our funding of up to £700, (to cover group start-up costs), together with support & guidance from our Fieldworkers, includes assessment of need (how many people could benefit from a scheme in your area) and every step of the way to becoming a Good Neighbours Scheme. We don't stop there; we are also available to provide on-going assistance after joining our growing Network. With our regular newsletters, lively zoom meetings, we aim to provide a wealth of useful information and get people connected across the county sharing ideas, experiences and supporting each other.

Any eligible community support groups that could benefit from our help may be considered, to enable them to start up or to continue to offer that added value they can contribute to their communities.

For more information about the Good Neighbours Schemes, how to apply or for a general chat, please contact our Fieldworkers, either Claire on 07546788475 or Joanna on 07763407217, who are more than happy to help!



Thanks to ACRE for supporting our village hall over the years.

Raising funds for the new village hall

Village needs housing for young people not more 5 bed detached. Too many older people here with big houses no one can afford. Village is dying.

Nothing specific, but it appreciated with the bulletins and newsletters. Fab.

Village hall is very outdated and needs significant improvements

The overriding concern of the village is heavy and fast traffic on the A427, and dangerous lack of pedestrian footways.

If there is any help to support us in creating an updated and robust village/plan vision.  
We would also appreciate continued signposting to grants and support that help village development. Potential support with a village audit to advise what we could do to improve.

Finding a solution to the ongoing traffic problem

ACRE provide a superb advice service to village halls and have been essential during Covid in providing advice and guidance. Please continue the good work (hats off to Frances Harris)

Community Food Larder would always appreciate help

We are looking into a biodiversity project and installing some community electric charging points

# Northamptonshire ACRE

(Action with Communities in Rural England).

We are a countywide, independent charitable organization working with rural communities in Northamptonshire to improve their quality of life, especially for the disadvantaged.

We offer a range of rural services including:  
Good Neighbour schemes and Rural Wellbeing  
Community Support for village halls and parish councils  
Neighbourhood Plans  
Development of community shops and pubs  
Sustainable food networks  
Biodiversity support and green plans  
Training and Networking events

Registered Charity no: 1080038  
Companies House: 3937576

## Contact Information



 01604 765888

 [acre@northantsacre.org.uk](mailto:acre@northantsacre.org.uk)

 [www.northantsacre.org.uk](http://www.northantsacre.org.uk)

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