The Parish of Bembridge

Age Friendly Communities Report

Autumn 2017

Age Friendly Island

LOTTERY FUNDED

As the older population on the Isle of Wight increases, Age UK IW's Age Friendly Island project funded by the Big Lottery is seeking to ensure that the Isle of Wight is an age friendly place to live, work and grow old. This report reviews the age friendliness of the Parish of Bembridge and is based on the World Health Organisation's[1] eight Age Friendly Communities domains of housing, outdoor spaces and building, transport and mobility, civic participation and employment, community support and health services, communication and information and respect and social inclusion, social participation.

The report also assesses Bembridge's age friendliness against the Ageing Better Programme 'Age Friendly Island' four outcomes of:

1. Older people will feel they have improved connections within their local community and reduced Isolation.
2. Older people will feel empowered to co-produce local policies and services which become more responsive to their needs, now and in the future.
3. Older people will feel the Island is age friendly; those under 50 years will see older people as an asset, recognising their contribution to the community.
4. Older people will feel an increased sense of health, wellbeing and quality of life.

The Parish of Bembridge

BEMBRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL

The parish of Bembridge lies at the eastern most point of the Isle of Wight and comprises of an area of 915 hectares, 322 of which are designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Surrounded on three sides by water with 7 km of coastline, the parish has scattered and dispersed residential dwellings within its outer lying rural areas.

According to the 2011 census over fifty percent of the population of the ward in which Bembridge sits are over the age of 50 years with 48% of the resident population over the age of 60 (Source: 2011 Census). This is considerably higher than the national average of 23% or the Island average of 31%. Bembridge Parish Council has appointed an Age Friendly Champion and as a council is committed to ensuring Bembridge is an age friendly community in which to live, work and grow old.[2]

Executive Overview Recommendations

- **Undertake Age Friendly training and develop an action plan**
- **Review rights of way and promote Age Friendly footpaths**
- **Assess the accessibility of shops and services within the High Street and Lane End**
- **Audit all assets and services provided by the Parish Council to ensure that they are age friendly**

Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

This domain is important because:

- Around 50% of people aged 65 and over **face problems getting outdoors**
- People living in care homes or sheltered accommodation are **more than 3 times less likely to get outdoors for more than 5 hours a week** than people living in their own homes
- Those living within 10 minutes' walk of a local open space are **twice as likely to be satisfied with life** compared with those whose open space is further away
- Access to natural environments and, particularly, green spaces, **directly correlates with improved sense of well-being and quality of life**
- Uneven road and pavement surfaces can inhibit access for older people, particularly those who use wheelchairs, and can **contribute to falls, fear of falls and social isolation**[3]

Outdoor Spaces - Outdoor Safety

Older people are attracted to Bembridge to live, work and retire because of its community support, pleasant environment, shops and services and a safe place to live. There are low levels of crime, which encourages older people to go out, stay independent and participate in community life.

Police attend full Council meetings monthly or provide a report to Full Council.

The sense of safety is further enhanced where outdoor spaces are well cared for. Residents of all ages benefit from the Green Towns steering group project (an initiative of the Parish Council). Supported by twelve older volunteers, this project has enhanced the beaches and outdoor spaces around the Parish, ensuring accessibility to green and open spaces through improved footpaths, litter picks and beach cleans.

Another dedicated group of older volunteers, Bembridge Weeders, maintains the hanging baskets, various planters and the war memorial gardens.

The importance of older people accessing outdoor spaces for health and well-being is important. Bembridge Parish Council is working closely with Isle of Wight Council and East Wight Landscape Partnership to improve and maintain the rights of way network. Three to four projects are conducted per year, some of which are wheelchair and age friendly. These rights of way provide safe routes for older people to gain exercise and stay healthy. Older people particularly mention enjoying the coastal path.

Older people have access to over forty benches in and around Bembridge, which will allow older people who rely on, or enjoy walking to get out and about and rest if needed.

Outdoor Spaces - Community Assets and Buildings

The retention of community assets is important to promote social inclusion and participation of older people. The Parish Council has secured the future of green spaces and local toilets which encourages older people and visitors to get out and about, which can lead to improved health and well-being.

To remain healthy many older people also participate in sports and exercise. Bembridge benefits from community leisure facilities include the bowling club, Steyne Park recreation ground home to the Bembridge Football Club and the Bembridge Cricket Club. There is also a Petanque terrain and a children's play area where older people can spend time with younger generations.

Case Study

Community library

The Village library was under threat of closure due to Isle of Wight Council funding cuts. Its future was secured by Community Action IW and is now run by 30 volunteers aged 16-80 years, with a waiting list of potential volunteers.

The library offers an essential service to older people in Bembridge. It not only offers traditional library services, but ICT classes,books, jigsaws, green sack sales, photocopying service and social groups such as sewing, colouring and music and offers a lifeline to lonely older people who come in for a chat.

The library works closely with the thriving Bembridge Heritage Centre which opens during the summer and offers further volunteering opportunities for older people with volunteers returning year on year.

Bembridge Harbour is a well-used asset by older people both locals and visitors for sailing, walking, fishing and water sports.

Outdoor Spaces - Shops and Services

Case Study

The spiritual well-being of the community is supported by local churches, which are ecumenically linked – Church of England, Roman Catholic and Methodist. Their congregations meet together frequently for celebrations and services. Collectively, they produce the Bembridge Parish Magazine.

Regular social activities to support older people within the Parish take place at the Cloisters. Funding was raised to adapt the Cloisters into a modern accessible space including a catering style kitchen used by the popular Luncheon Club.

Unlike the decline of local shops in some villages, older people living in Bembridge benefit from a thriving range of independent and national chain shops and services including a variety of pubs, restaurants, cafés, chemist and mini supermarkets located within the two commercial areas of the village centre and Lane End Road. These centres can be easily accessed on foot by many older people. Local services benefit from the influx of seasonal visitors, many of whom are older and own second homes or stay in holiday accommodation locally.

As with many small communities, the loss of the bank in Bembridge will create difficulties for some older people who prefer face to face banking. A mobile bank is provided by Lloyds twice per week and parked at the Methodist church.

Transportation and Mobility

This domain is important because:

- As people grow older, **their reliance on both walking and public transport increases**
- Older people find their **mobility, and the regular distances they travel from their home, decreases** with age
- **Two thirds of all trips** made by older people **are restricted to the local neighbourhood**
- Older people are at **greater risk of serious and fatal injury** from traffic than any other generational group
- **Fear of falling** is a major barrier preventing older people from getting outdoors
- **Social participation** is in many situations dependent on access to appropriate transport [3]

Access to a private car may be an issue for some older people as we know that as people grow older, they are less likely to drive. Therefore, access to public transport is essential for many older people.

The village is served by an hourly bus service during the day and 2 hourly during the evening, which gives older people access to shops and supermarkets in Ryde, Lake, Sandown and Newport as well as to onward travel links on the Island and to the mainland. People aged 65 or over are able to use their Islander cards to travel free on Southern Vectis buses after 9.30am.

However, for many people, bus stops are some ½ mile distance from their home, which makes buses less accessible than they might otherwise be, particularly for those who are frail or disabled.

Tesco's supermarket at Ryde offers a bus service two days per week from the Parish to the store. The popular bus collects older people from the village, which allows them to do shopping easily and provides social contact.

For those reliant on public transport, journey times and routes can make accessing appointments difficult. However, other transport options provide an alternative to public transport. This includes the Optio voluntary car scheme which has approximately 40 members in Bembridge but is restricted by the number of volunteer drivers.

There is also a local taxi service which is appreciated by older people in Bembridge, as the driver takes time to assist older people and will go the extra mile to carry their shopping to the door.

Car parking is an issue for older people in the village. The Parish Council has identified this and additional car parking has been explored but suitable locations are limited. There are disabled parking spaces available in the shopping areas.

Unlike other parishes on the Island Bembridge has its own unlicensed airport where private light aircraft can land with permission. The airport also has a glider club and heritage society connections with the restoration of the Islander aircraft.

One notable example to improve social participation is the Friendship Circle Bus purchased through lottery funding. The bus is driven by older volunteers and used daily by community groups and older people to ensure access to social events such as the coffee mornings and luncheon club. The Friendship Circle bus is accessible and can accommodate wheel-chairs. However, there is concern about the long-term availability of the bus when the current bus is no longer road worthy.

Housing

This domain is important because:

- **Time spent at home indoors increases in older age:** 80% of a day for those 65 and over and 90% for those aged 85 and over
- Older people are more likely than any other age group **to live in homes that are in a poor state of repair,** that lack reasonable bathroom and/or kitchen facilities, that are not sufficiently warm in winter, and that pose a significant risk to health
- **Risk of falls and winter deaths** are closely related to poor housing[3]

Within Bembridge there is a range of traditional housing and specialist accommodation available, and suitable to meet the needs of older people.

Older residents who require specialist care and support, benefit from care and residential homes in and around the village which cater for a variety of older people's care needs. The Elms, Inver House, Abbeyfield and The Limes are residential homes. The Elms also has a unique feature of bungalows for sale that come with the warden assisted service.

These privately run homes offer private rooms with access to the garden. They also provide social activities. However, priority is given to paying clients with a limited number of spaces for those of limited means.

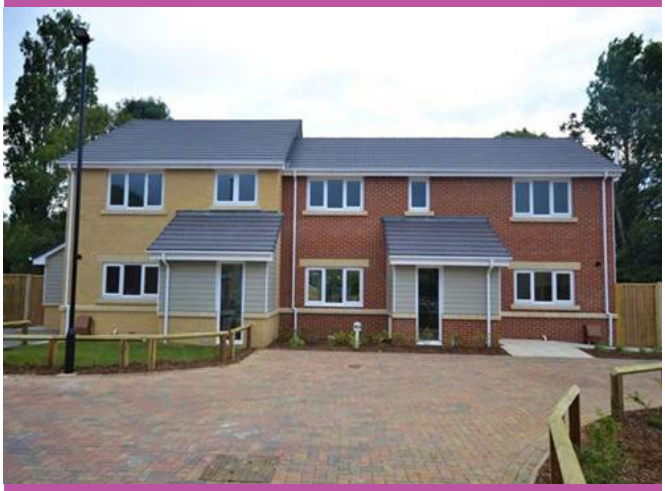
Developers McCarthy & Stone have built sheltered housing accommodation within the village, which includes support from a house manager and maintenance of the outside areas. Social activities are also provided.

There is also a wide range of private housing offered for sale within Bembridge. From a snapshot of Rightmove.co.uk February 2017, most of the properties on offer were 3+ bedroom houses or house boats with a fifth of the properties being bungalows or apartments. Of 111 properties offered for sale there were 11 designated retirements apartments and houses for older people.

For older people who are unable to buy or rent in the private sector there is some social housing available within the parish. Nine affordable homes to rent are available and four homes for purchase via Vectis Housing Association located centrally at Steyne Road.

To help keep homes in good repair older people can access the minor repairs and adaption service available through Age UK IW Good Neighbour Scheme.

To ensure new builds and adaptation are age friendly, planning applications which come before the parish council are assessed against the Neighbourhood Development Plan age friendly requirements. [4,5,6]



Social Participation, Respect and Social Inclusion

This domain is important because:

- The number and variety of **social interactions tends to decline** with advancing age, even as the need for social support and participation increases
- Social isolation is associated with a **higher risk of death** among older people
- **Negative attitudes** towards older people are still widespread, overlooked and accepted
- Structural inequalities (poverty, deprivation, material disadvantage) put older people at a heightened risk **of social marginalisation and exclusion** – more so than for any other age group.[3]

The Parish Council promotes older people positively and makes financial contributions to various community groups and events which support social participation in the parish. For example, without support to the Village Hall, many community groups would not have suitable facilities in which to meet.

To improve understanding of the needs of older people the Parish Councillors have undertaken Age Friendly training. The result of which will be a Parish action plan to review and ensure local amenities and activities are age friendly.

Older women are welcome to join groups such as the Women's Institute and Townswomen's Guild, both of which offer activities and interesting speakers.

The Village Hall located in the village centre, is accessible for many older people and is in constant use for bazaars, coffee mornings, keep-fit classes, line dancing, art society exhibitions, and meetings of various clubs and societies. People over 50 years regularly attend these activities.

The Village Hall also hosts the award winning Bembridge Theatre Group which offers older people the chance to get involved either on stage, behind stage or attending productions.

A monthly Friendship Circle coffee morning is held in the Village Hall to raise funds for the Friendship Circle Bus which supports older people to attend social activities. Volunteers run stalls and older people attend for coffee and to meet friends.

A life line for many older people is the twice weekly Luncheon Club in the Cloisters. With access to the Friendship Circle Bus to allow for transport, residents receive a hot meal. Average attendance is forty people. Those who have not attended are contacted to ensure that they are safe and well.

Bembridge Youth and Community Centre in Steyne Park is used for art classes and keep fit activities, which attract older people.

Civic Participation and Employment

This domain is important because:

- By 2021, close to 32% of the working-age population will be aged 50-65
- Older people experience discriminatory attitudes in the workplace which makes work difficult for them
- Volunteering in older age supports both physical and mental health and well-being
- Over time, the more volunteering older people do, the greater the likelihood of improved well-being
- 58% of people aged over 65 volunteer in some way each year – this compares to 37% of the whole adult population[3]

Within the Parish of Bembridge older people are employed within local shops and services including leisure services.

The skills and experience of older people are utilised within the marine industry based around the harbour and local industry based at the airport. Some older people run their own small business from home, online or in the community, whilst others commute to towns across the Island and to the mainland.

Many older people retire to Bembridge and contribute a great deal to Parish life through volunteering. Older residents of Bembridge say that as a community they are relatively self-sufficient as older people undertake many voluntary roles, which provides vital services to local residents and visitors alike.

Older people for example support Bembridge Library, the Heritage Centre, coffee, lunch clubs and other social groups and activities. Older people also volunteer for national charities such as the National Trust at Bembridge Windmill.

Volunteering to ensure coastal safety

Retired people volunteer to support the Bembridge Lifeboat which is an essential lifesaving service for those using the busy waterways of the Solent and English Channel. Older people are an integral part of the crew and on shore support including volunteering at the lifeboat shop.

Volunteer coast guards support professional coast guards at the Coastguard station.

Clean beaches provide a pleasant safe environment for people to enjoy and are essential for marine wildlife. Older volunteers contribute their time and energy to organise beach cleans through the Green Town initiative.

Civic Participation

Older people actively participate in voluntary civic duties. 90% of Parish Councillors are over 50 as are 70% of school governors.

The Village Hall management committee is made up of older volunteers. Older volunteers help out at the local school and preschool in various roles including trips to the local library, fire station and RNLI.

To acknowledge and reward the vital contribution volunteers make to village life a celebration event takes place annually.

Communication and Information

This domain is important because:

- Good quality information and communication provides older people with the necessary resources to **make informed decisions, secure rights, and act in their own best interests**
- Communication by **word of mouth is among the most effective** forms of communicating and generating opportunities for certain kinds of activities in older age
- Access to good quality information leads to **specific gains in health and wellbeing**
- Failure to access information and advice when it is needed can increase the risk of long-term, multiple problems, increasing the risk of **social exclusion** [3]

As a close knit community informal word of mouth for older people who may not attend other social settings is important. This informal community exchange often takes place in local shops and services and is a vital part of village life.

Word of mouth information is available from trusted individuals such as the local library volunteers and via the Local Area Coordinator drop in session and any other professionals.

The Parish benefits from an accessible Parish office open weekdays where residents can access local information and speak to staff of the Parish Council. Residents are also welcome to attend the Parish Council Meetings.

Communication between the Parish Council, community groups, and residents is good and takes a variety of forms, for example:

Articles and press releases in local newspapers and magazines, including the widely read Isle of Wight County Press, The Beacon, Parish News produced by the Churches which provides information on church social activities, services and general information of interest.

Information can also be gained from:

- The four noticeboards around the Parish
- Posters displayed around the Parish where local people go, for example in the library, village halls, churches and local stores
- Internet and social media. The Parish Council has a web site where news and information can be shared along with Parish Council meeting minutes and other council documents. Older residents can also email councillors and raise issues through the web site.

Public consultations have taken place where local older people can have their say on proposed changes and threats to local services and activities.

Community Support and Health Services

This domain is important because:

- Over the next ten years there is likely to be a **significant increase in the number of people** aged 65 years and older. (IW Council joint strategic needs assessment)
- **People are living longer** which brings other challenges around social isolation, the need for care, medical services and community support.

Community Support

Support within the community for older people is good and many active older people support others in their own homes through the Age UK IW Befriending Service and Good Neighbour Scheme. Support is also available through the Care Navigator based in the Doctors' surgery and the Local Area Coordinator who also helps older residents access social activities. The Bereavement Triangle Group meets monthly to offer support over tea and cakes. Others within the community also provide support; for example, mobile hairdressers not only cut hair but also make house calls and run errands for older people.

Medical Facilities including Doctors Surgeries

Medical facilities are available within the village from a branch surgery of St Helen's Medical Centre located in Foreland Road. Older residents also have access to St Helen's surgery. Other health professionals include a local dentist on Station Road who is currently taking on another 300 NHS patients. A chiropodist is located within the village that will make house calls. Physio care is located behind Lane End shops.

Community Emergency Planning

A comprehensive Community Emergency Plan has been established by the Parish Council. There are at least 12 defibrillators in and around the Bembridge that provide emergency support as the hospital is 10 miles away.

References

1 http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf
2 https://www.iwight.com/azservices/documents/ward-pack-population-brading-st-helens-bembridge.pdf
3 S Handler A Research and Evaluation Framework for Age-Friendly Cities (2014) reproduced with kind permission of Age Friendly Manchester, Manchester City Council
4 Bembridge Neighbourhood Development Plan
5 Bembridge Housing Needs Survey 2014 -2019 https://www.iwight.com/azservices/documents/2777-Bembridge-and-Bembridge-HNS-Report-Final-2014-v1.pdf
6 https://www.iwight.com/azservices/documents/2879-Bembridge-Neighbourhood-Development-Plan-BNDP-examination-report-170414-FINAL.pdf

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Age Friendly Island

Community Action Isle of Wight at the Riverside