**FFile:** **P4\_GMT20210726-115711\_Recording.m4a**  
**Duration:** **1:16:18**  
**Date:** **01/10/2021**  
**Typist:** **936**

START AUDIO

[0:00:45]

Respndent: Hi.

Ian: Can you hear me okay?

Respndent: Yes, I can, it’s good.

Ian: Right. Nice to meet you, I’m Ian.

Respndent: Hello, I’m Respndent, obviously.

Ian: Yes, good. It’s good to identify yourself, in case you weren’t who I was expecting. I can’t remember, is this the one where Claire has said that someone would be observing from Big Local?

Respndent: Yes, Respndent \_ was going to join us.

Ian: Right. Well, I’ll tell you what, we won’t wait for him, because if he’s just observing, that should be okay.

Respndent: Okay.

Ian: So, just first of all, you did reply to the email, saying you kind of give your consent to the recording. The other thing is, just based on what you’ve read or anything else, before I start asking you several questions, do you have any questions for me? Or about the project or me or anything.

Respndent: No, not really. Oh, here’s Respndent, on his tropical beach.

Ian: How nice.

Respndent: Hello.

Respndent: And his weird hairdo. It goes a bit odd with the wafting trees. No, I don’t really, Ian. Obviously, I volunteered because all the partners were asked if they would participate. I’m not very tech-savvy, so I might be or I might not be a good candidate, that’s all.

Ian: Well, I’ll take that as a question actually, because that’s something I can talk about. So, in terms of the interviews, I asked Claire to start with the partnership, but I’m really interested in speaking to people from all different backgrounds around the villages.

I want to speak to the partnership first, just to get a good setting and context. I want to speak to people that run community groups, that run community Facebook pages. And also, I want to speak to people that aren’t necessarily leading things in the community and things like that, but just residents of the villages.

And on what you said about knowing about technology, although the overall aim for us here is to think about- In terms of Claire and I, and some of my colleagues at the university, is what new technology could look like or might look like. These interviews are more about getting people’s experiences of both living where you live, because any technology or anything has to be specific to a context. Well, that’s one of the hypotheses I have.

So, it’s basically about your experiences of living in the villages or working in the villages, and your experience with some of the technologies that have been used over the last few months. So, basically in these interviews, I am treating people as experts in their own life and experiences.

I’m not a technology expert either, even though I work in a computing science department and work with people. So, I really am from the kind of social side of things. So, what I want to do is just get a bigger picture of what people’s everyday lives and experiences are, in a very small aspect of their lives.

So, I won't be asking you about your family and friends, but I’ll be asking you about how you particiRespndente in [REDACTED ORG NAME], in the villages and things like that.

Respndent: Sure.

Ian: Are you okay just to sit and listen there, Respndent, or…?

Respndent: That’s absolutely fine. I just had- Firstly, I want to say thanks for allowing me to sit in, Respndent.

Respndent: No worries.

Respndent: Just because obviously I connect in with the wider Big Local community across the other 140-odd areas we’ve got left now, I was just curious to see the nature of the sort of interview, just because obviously many other areas are looking at evaluating and understanding digital interventions in a bit more detail. So yes, I’ll just stay stum in the background and wouldn’t expect to ask any questions, that’s not what I’m here for.

Respndent: Ex[REDACTED ORG NAME]ent.

Ian: Okay then, Respndent, I’ll just start asking questions now. You can say you don’t want to answer a question at any time, or you can ask me a question at any time, etc. Hopefully we’ll have a kind of discussion and a kind of survey.

Respndent: Sorry, just to say – apologies – if you say, “Respndent, what do you think?” or, “Respndent, do you think that’s a valid opinion?” then by all means I’ll chip in, otherwise I will stay quiet.

Respndent: Okay.

Respndent: But feel free.

Ian: If I’ve got time at the end, Respndent, I might just ask you a couple of questions about-

Respndent: Yes, I’m happy to help, of course.

Ian: But if we run out of time, that’s fine. Otherwise, I might just drop you an email, just to get a bit of… Yes, it’s just I’m really interested in Big Local in general really. But I might get back in touch, if that’s okay.

Respndent: Actually, before you start, Ian, is Claire sourcing other people for you that aren’t the partnership?

Ian: Well, yes, but I was going to ask you-

Respndent: Okay, because- [ \_\_\_ 0:06:21].

Ian: Sorry. I’m asking everyone at the end if they have got any people that might be good to speak to, but if…

Respndent: Well, I was thinking, my neighbour down the road runs the [REDACTED PLACE NAME] [FACEBOOK GROUP] Facebook group.

Ian: Right. The stage I’m at with Claire, in terms of getting people to speak to, is I’ve asked her to try and get in contact with people that are admins on the Facebook groups. So, this might be someone she has already asked.

Respndent: It might. I’ll drop her a note.

Ian: Yes. But she’s said she’s got a couple of people, but I don’t know how many she has contacted. But apparently there are a couple of people that are admins of Facebook groups that are happy to speak to me. So, if the [REDACTED PLACE NAME] [FACEBOOK GROUP] is not one of them and Claire hasn’t asked yet, that would be brilliant.

Respndent: Yes. And he is very good at managing it.

Ian: Yes. And that is one thing I’m interested in doing. So, I won’t ask you a lot of questions about these unless you do run a Facebook group. But with those people, I want to ask them a lot of questions about how they run it, how they moderate it and things like that. Because I think that’s important in seeing how people work around with an existing thing, whether it’s perfect or not. Okay, ex[REDACTED ORG NAME]ent, thank you for that.

So, how long have you lived or worked in the [REDACTED ORG NAME] area?

Respndent: Ten. Just over ten years.

Ian: Is that living or working or both.

Respndent: Sorry, no, it’s more than 10 years, that’s how long we have been in the house. Sorry. We moved up in ’08, so we’ve been here 13 years.

Ian: That’s 13 years as a resident, yes?

Respndent: Yes.

Ian: And which of the villages is it you live in?

Respndent: [REDACTED PLACE NAME].

Ian: [REDACTED PLACE NAME], great. In your words, what do you think are the main differences between the four villages?

Respndent: The main differences? Well, [REDACTED PLACE NAME] is the only coastal one, and it’s also the only non-mining one, the other three are all ex-mining villages. So, I think those are the main differences, because that influences people’s thoughts about work and the sort of people who live there. Like [REDACTED PLACE NAME] people think only architects and such like live in [REDACTED PLACE NAME], that’s the sort of overall reputation that they would have, because, “We’re miners, but you're not,” is what they say.

Ian: And are you an architect, Respndent?

Respndent: No, I’m not sure we’ve got any architects.

Ian: Yes, but I get that. I guess it’s a kind of- Not necessarily class, but a kind of…

Respndent: Well, it’s an economic demographic, isn't it? Because the property prices are all higher in [REDACTED PLACE NAME], so obviously, as a knock-on effect, you have to have a better job, possibly, to be able to live here, or you're an in-comer, that came in with money, like we did, even though we’re Geordies.

Ian: Do you think that is a kind of-? How would you describe how that difference would play out? Is that a kind of prejudice or a discrimination or is it something less?

Respndent: I’d say so, yes. Because that was one of the things we have had to work quite hard at, when we started [REDACTED ORG NAME] Big Local, because it was the Big Local that put the four villages together. And the four villages would never have thought of themselves as a unit. So, it was just proximity.

And we have tried to make it so that the money could bring the four villages together and make it feel more like a unit. I’m not sure how much success we’ve had, to be honest. I think all the villages have become more aware of the other villages, and maybe that has helped reduce any prejudices.

Certainly for me, when I came in, I didn’t know anything about the other villages. So, I’ve learnt a lot through being involved in [REDACTED ORG NAME], but that might be because I was involved in it rather than being a resident, as part of it, if you get my drift.

Ian: Yes, I do. You kind of touched on it there, but what I was going to ask next was, what, if anything, do you think the villages have in common?

Respndent: What have we got in common? Well, a love of where we live, I think. We did a postal survey at the beginning of [REDACTED ORG NAME] Big Local, and we also did a couple of hundred, or maybe more, face-to-face surveys, one-to-ones with people. And the vast majority of people said they loved living where we live.

Ian: Ex[REDACTED ORG NAME]ent. Obviously, taking in mind what you said about the villages are put together under the [REDACTED ORG NAME] thing, etc., but do you think, if you were speaking about the whole [REDACTED ORG NAME] area- I think we’re about to be interrupted. My partner is going to come in, bringing my child back from nursery in a minute, so there might just be a bit of noise, but excuse that.

Respndent: (Laughter) Okay.

Ian: Do you think there is something unique or particular about the [REDACTED ORG NAME] area?

Respndent: Well, I think every village is unique really. I think each of the villages is quite unique, you couldn’t say that they- They have things in common, but they're not all the same, by any means. Is the area unique? Well, in as much as I think everywhere is unique, it is.

Ian: Yes.

Respndent: There are a lot of old prejudices though, that are going to take generations to shift. And maybe the whole [REDACTED ORG NAME] initiative has helped start to think about that. But in the early days, when we were talking about, for instance, a skate park – I was team leader for the youth element of [REDACTED ORG NAME] Big Local – the idea that one big skate park could be positioned so that all four villages could use it, was just anathema to them.

Because why would [REDACTED PLACE NAME] kids want to go to a skate park that was in [REDACTED PLACE NAME], because they don’t talk to [REDACTED PLACE NAME] kids? You know, they all wanted their own. And it wasn’t just because they couldn’t be bothered to go there, because the distance is nothing, they hop on their bikes and cycle everywhere, but that was the general thought – “Why would we mix with the other villages?”

Ian: So, the proximity wouldn’t be an issue between the two villages you mentioned there, but there is something that stops people crossing over.

Respndent: Yes, I think it goes right back to the old mining competition. You know, [REDACTED PLACE NAME] Mine is better than [REDACTED PLACE NAME] Mine, sort of thing.

Ian: Yes, that’s really interesting, thank you. How would you describe your role? I know you're part of a partnership, but how would you describe your role in [REDACTED ORG NAME]?

Respndent: One of the team. As I’ve said, I managed the team at the youth group. Which we tried to do in the beginning, just me and a couple of others and one of the workers from the NCC, but that was very hard work, trying to get anything up and running between the villages.

But then we linked in with the YMCA, who are experts in that sort of thing. So, in the end, we funded them, and they are the ones that have supplied the programme for youth for the rest of the [REDACTED ORG NAME] duration. And they have been much more successful

Ian: Yes, that’s interesting. Apart from being- Since you’ve been part of [REDACTED ORG NAME], so excluding that, do you consider yourself and active member of the community?

Respndent: Yes, I think so. I was delivering cakes to the opening of the Pele Tower yesterday and the church book and bake sale. I worked in the [REDACTED NAME] for five years, so I felt very involved with stuff then. I go to stuff at the village hall, I’m part of local yoga. Yes, I’d say I… I don’t hide in my big house and do nothing.

Ian: Just because you mentioned something there I hadn’t been aware of, and I’ve been working on and off in [REDACTED ORG NAME] for a while, you mentioned the [REDACTED NAME]. Could you just explain what that is? Is that just a normal café or is that kind of…?

Respndent: It is. It’s not a normal café, it’s an amazing café, it’s the only option in this village, certainly. And they took over the old [REDACTED NAME] building, which had been derelict for a couple of years. It had been a café, but it wasn’t very well run. And then they bought it seven or eight years ago now. And now, it’s the most successful café you can imagine. Within six months of it opening, it was number one in Northumberland.

Ian: Fantastic.

Respndent: Yes. I would say it’s a great asset to the village, but it would depend on which side of the fence you sit. You know, locals don’t necessarily want [REDACTED PLACE NAME] to have businesses, because it produces parking issues. It means people are coming through the village, and some folk live here because they don’t like people. So, you know, it can be a good and a bad thing.

Ian: Yes. Well, that kind of, I guess, takes me onto something else I wanted to talk about, which is about the nature of the type of area. So, just really simply, to start with, before I go on, just in case this is different to what I expect, do you consider where you live to be rural?

Respndent: Yes. Because we don’t have lots of facilities nearby, our public transport is not great, certainly in this village. So yes, I would say we lived rural.

Ian: And you just touched on it there around transport. But is there anything else that makes where you live rural?

Respndent: Space. You know, there are about 4,500 people, residents, altogether in the four villages. And [REDACTED PLACE NAME], I think, has about 200. We have about 100 properties, so it’s not very big. And we’ve got all the coastline and the- Because the properties are sort of centred around the T-shape really. So, we’ve got the whole of the village green plus the coastline. So yes, it’s space, I think.

Ian: What do you think being part of a rural area means to you, for example? What does it mean to live in a rural area?

Respndent: It means there is less hassle, there are fewer people. The downside is that you don’t have the transport system that, say, Cramlington has, where you can get a bus into town really easily and you're not very far. I mean, driving, we’re only half an hour from Newcastle, but that’s no good if you haven't got a car. So, what does rural mean? It means peace and quiet, I think.

Ian: Ex[REDACTED ORG NAME]ent.

Respndent: Which we don’t always get on a sunny weekend, I have to say, not when you're right by the beach.

Ian: Yes, so you have day visitors?

Respndent: Yes. And we’ve got two caravan parks and they swell the numbers of people quite a lot during the summer. But we’ve still got loads of space, we’ve got seven miles of beach, that never gets crowded.

Ian: Yes, so the two caravan parks- Do the people that use the caravan parks stay in a particular area or are they likely to come into the village and use the café and things like that?

Respndent: They do use the café, yes. And in fact, they use the café far more than locals do. A few locals use it, but I think the owner has always felt it was never supported a great deal by the people who lived here. But the caravan parks find it a real asset.

The folk in the caravan parks tend not to be part of the community though, they have their own communities. One of them is run very, very well and most of them are privately-owned, and the people who live there all know each other. So, they don’t sort of mix with village events.

And the other caravan park is- Although a lot of them are privately-owned, they're rented out, so we get different people all the time during the summer and the rest of the year. So, they just treat it like you would treat a holiday village.

Ian: Yes.

Respndent: But my husband was running the transport section of [REDACTED ORG NAME] Big Local in the early days, and one of the things that was pointed out, when we did the initial profiling, was that we had no transport to go to Morpeth, you have to get two buses to get to Morpeth, going through- Well, for us it would be three, we would have to go to [REDACTED PLACE NAME], then to Ashington, then to Morpeth.

So, he put on a community bus. And the caravan owners loved that, because it meant that they could get into Morpeth when they were hear at weekends and stuff. Actually, it was only on Wednesdays. It was on Wednesdays. But that’s the only thing really that they got involved with, village-wise.

Ian: Is Morpeth considered the closest bigger town?

Respndent: No, Ashington is closest, but they are such different towns. Morpeth is very much a market town with nice shops and a nice market on a Wednesday. Whereas Ashington is more of a- It’s got a supermarket, it’s got an Argos. It’s got all the basics, but nothing very twee, should we say?

Ian: Yes. I’m familiar with Morpeth and I guess, as a tourist, Morpeth has got more things to look at and spend your money on.

Respndent: Yes. And it’s very pretty and very well looked-after. And Morpeth in Bloom makes it look wonderful. So, you’d go there and happily spend a day enjoying yourself, but you probably wouldn’t do that in Ashington.

Ian: Just one more question about living in a rural area. Do you think living in a rural area, as the [REDACTED ORG NAME] villages, has an effect on the technology that you have, how people use technology.

Respndent: Does it help them, did you say?

Ian: Do you think it’s different? Do you think the way people use technology is different in rural areas like the [REDACTED ORG NAME] villages, compared to, say, people in Morpeth or Newcastle?

Respndent: Yes, that sort of question, I don’t feel as if we are that rural, to be honest. Because if you were very rural, you wouldn’t have access to lots of things, and therefore you might do a lot more, say, online shopping. Whereas you can actually get stuff in Morpeth or Ashington or you could go into Newcastle.

So, it’s not that we don’t have access to things that we need technology for. And I think- Well, I lasted lived in the South East, 13 years ago, we lived- A very non-rural, very urban- We lived in [ANON PLACE]. And I don’t think I use technology any more now than I did then, for that reason. The reason I would use technology more now is what has been happening over the last couple of years.

Ian: Yes, great. Let’s talk about that then. I assume I know what you mean when you say the last couple of years.

Respndent: So, the pandemic. Has the way that you have been able-? You mentioned particiRespndenting in the community in various ways and your role at [REDACTED ORG NAME]. Has the way your civic and communal activity, for example meetings, classes, things like that, changed because of the pandemic?

Ian: Oh yes, and if it wasn’t for technology, I’d have felt very cut off. Because all the things that I have done have continued because of Zoom. You know, we have had Zoom partnership meetings. Things that we have set up since the pandemic, like we’ve got a community land trust going now, that has been set up and is ongoing because we have been able to discuss it by Zoom.

I have been able to continue my yoga classes by Zoom, my French classes by Zoom. Because some face-to-face things haven't happened, like Pilates wasn’t happening on Zoom, now I do that through YouTube, which I didn’t have to do before. And keeping in touch with the family.

Respndent: Is keeping in touch with the family Zoom as well, basically?

Ian: Pilates on YouTube, how does that work? Is that pre-recorded classes, or…?

Respndent: Yes, it is mostly. I mean, you can subscribe to all these different teachers and things. Because I have been doing it for a long time, I don’t need instruction exactly, because most of them are doing positions that I already know. So, I don’t feel as if I’m having- I’m not trying to do something new, where I think it’s really important to be in a class, face-to-face.

You know, if I had started doing yoga, for instance, from scratch on Zoom, or Pilates, it would have been very difficult, because you never know if you're in the right position or if your hips are level, and all that sort of stuff.

Ian: So, just to be clear, you did some classes in the community and they switched to Zoom and carried on.

Respndent: Yes.

Ian: Great. The thing you're talking about on YouTube, your Pilates, that isn't with your local instructor, it’s moved to YouTube?

Respndent: Yes. That’s because my local instructor didn’t move to YouTube, so I’ve had to do that- No, he didn’t move to Zoom, so I had to do YouTube.

Ian: Yes. Just with different instructors from anywhere in the world, so to speak?

Respndent: Yes. Some with really irritating American voices. So, I chose the nice Irish girl.

Ian: Okay. So, I wonder if the person that ran the Pilates class… Do you think they thought, “This doesn’t work on Zoom, so I’d rather just cancel the classes”? Or do you think that was potentially a lack of skills or resource to be able to [ \_\_\_ 0:28:55]?

Respndent: I think it was the latter. I think it was the latter. He also takes a Nordic walking group, which in fact I could keep up. Because when things were really bad and you could only, two of you, meet outside, we took turns in meeting with him. But he is in his mid-70s now. And whilst he was happy to continue to do the classes, he didn’t want to have to, I suppose, teach himself how to do Zoom, find the right space in his house, get set up with computers and run a class in that fashion.

Ian: Right.

Respndent: And in fact, he has decide he’s not going back to one-to-one, because he has realised how tying everything was. Now, he is just- Lots of us are enjoying not having to be tied down to so many things, even though it was self-inflicted.

Ian: Yes. So, just staying on that note, what are the things-? Is there anything about this new way of doing things, apart from what you have already said, that you would keep and never go back to?

Respndent: Well, that’s difficult. The advantages of doing things on Zoom are that you're not packing all your gear up, putting it in the car, driving somewhere. Certainly on a Monday night, coming back late, so it’s too late to have any dinner, that sort of thing. It’s very attractive, the idea of continuing to do it from home.

But you miss seeing people. And I think you do get a better attention from the teacher if she can see what you're doing and can correct what you're doing. So, I don't think there is anything that I wouldn’t go back to. I think I will probably, when it all opens up in September, return to face-to-face on the activity things.

I think, as far as meetings go, I think we might do a bit of both. Maybe agree to meet up for some meetings but- For instance, the Scout Executive. I’m chair of our local Scouts Executive, and the meetings are far more efficient on Zoom. You know, we can get through the whole meeting in an hour. But when we meet up, it’s like two hours, two and a half hours.

Which is nice and social, but if you’ve got other things going on, or if they’ve just finished a meeting and they're already tired, then it might be an idea to keep up some on Zoom.

Ian: Yes. I think a lot of people have indicated similar kinds of opinions about meetings, in my area as well. You’ve talked about using Zoom and YouTube – and I’m talking about community and civic things here, not necessarily things in personal life – but have there been any other technologies that have supported any kind of community activity? Even simple things like messaging services and things like that, I wonder.

Respndent: We did set up a local group. At the very beginning, when nobody could go out and do anything, the chap who runs the [REDACTED PLACE NAME] [FACEBOOK GROUP] Facebook sent a message out. I can’t remember how he did it now. He might have done it through the Facebook. He must have. To say, was anybody willing to help out, for those who needed extra help?

So, the people who volunteered, we were then divvied up with the number of houses within the village, so that we could contact those houses and say, “If you need any help, let me know and I’ll do whatever I can.” So, we had a Messenger group for that set-up. So, that was something new and different. And in fact, virtually everyone in the village was sorted out, in one or another, through neighbours or whatever. But we’ve still got that group, and we chat sometimes.

Ian: That’s interesting. So, this was Facebook Messenger?

Respndent: No, that’s not Facebook, that was Messenger.

Ian: So, using the Messenger app, a smaller group of people, yourself included, organised on that, to identify people in the community, to kind of check up on in various ways?

Respndent: Yes. For my little group of houses, I just went and put notes through the doors, with my name and number on, saying, “If you need any help…” Because not everybody in the village has technology.

Ian: Yes. So, that was based on things like people that were identified as people who perhaps didn’t have the means to join in with the Facebook group and…

Respndent: Yes. We did physical notes through the letterbox, but another member of the village did the same thing with- I think it was her own Facebook group. So that, if people did have Facebook, they could contact her through that. So, there were a couple of initiatives going on around the village, to make sure everybody got some help.

Ian: And they were all coordinated through the person that runs the [REDACTED PLACE NAME] [FACEBOOK GROUP] Facebook group?

Respndent: The two set-ups weren’t, they were sort of run separately. So, I suppose people could choose, they could either contact [FACEBOOK ADMIN]’s group or contact [FACEBOOK ADMIN]’s group.

Ian: Okay. So, is [FACEBOOK ADMIN]’s group a Facebook group?

Respndent: I think so, yes.

Ian: Do you know anything about that? You mentioned, he is [REDACTED PLACE NAME] [FACEBOOK GROUP]?

Respndent: Yes. Actually, I’m not sure what hers is. If it’s a Facebook group, it’s one that I haven't clicked on. I might be wrong, it might have just been an email address, you know, so people could email her.

Ian: Yes. But that was something in response to the pandemic?

Respndent: Yes.

Ian: And it was something, like email or a Facebook page.

Respndent: Hmmhmm.

Ian: Okay, let’s move on from the pandemic somewhat. You have talked about a couple of places in the village, such as the café, and that you helped out at the- Is it the town hall or village hall?

Respndent: Village hall.

Ian: And then you’ve almost mentioned Facebook pages. What do you feel are the most important, either online or in real life, places or spaces for the village?

Respndent: Well, the village hall is our only option for a hub in [REDACTED PLACE NAME]. Well, you’ll hear about others from other villages about theirs, because they’ve all got different issues around community hubs and things. But the Pele Tower is open now, and they’ve got a really good volunteer set-up there.

So, I think that is possibly going to turn into a bit of a hub for [REDACTED PLACE NAME] because the volunteers are going to be meeting up and having a chance to chat, when the Pele Tower is open at weekends.

Then the other thing, of course, is dog-walking on the beach, that’s almost a hub in itself.

Ian: So, these important community places that you’ve mentioned, what makes them important? What is it about the ones you mentioned?

Respndent: Well, it’s our only place for activities. So, it’s hired out for things, but we do things then- We do something at Christmas. People in the village have organised things there, I used to do the Macmillan Coffee Mornings there. And it’s very central, so people come down, people are happy to come down, and attend events there. And it was recently refurbished, so it’s really smart.

Ian: Ex[REDACTED ORG NAME]ent. What is it about…? So, you have this space and there are events there, like coffee mornings. What is it about those, that are kind of- What are the important features of those kinds of things that make them important to the community?

Respndent: It gives people an opportunity to meet up. You know, sometimes it’s the only time you might see somebody that lives further up the village, if they don’t have a dog, for instance. So, you build up relationships with people by meeting them over and over again, if you like. And having events there mean that you get the chance to meet people again. And then you feel part of the community.

Ian: So, the events are important. For example, it’s the dog-walking, or it’s the coffee and cake morning.

Respndent: Yes.

Ian: And then, as a kind of by-product of that, people are having these social interactions.

Respndent: Yes, they feel connections. Because if you don’t meet up with people, you don’t find out what’s going on, if there is anything going on. You know, you don’t find out if new people have moved into the village. And if you do, then it’s nice to be able to say hello to them and welcome them, if you’ve heard that they’ve just arrived, that sort of thing. And if you don’t have those events, then there is much less chance of feeling part of the community.

Ian: So, you’ve mentioned that it’s important to know what’s going on in the village. Where do you find out information about what’s happening in your village?

Respndent: Well, we should find out from the parish council, for issues that bother people, like parking and such like. But parish councils, as you know, are made up of people who are willing to step up and stand on them. We’ve just had a change of members, and that’s really putting a new input into our parish council. Because the previous ones weren’t very good at communicating.

You know, the idea of sending an email out to tell everybody that there’s a parish council meeting going on was anathema to them. Whereas this one, they're already doing that. They sent a message out saying that there was an extraordinary meeting going on about a planning application last week.

Well, we’d only have heard of that before if we’d have gone into the website. And even then, they might not have put it up. So, the new parish council will be doing a lot more to communicate with the villagers.

Ian: Right, so that’s a certain type of information. That's really interesting, thank you. Actually, as a side note, are the parish council still running their meetings online at the moment?

Respndent: No, the last one, the extraordinary one that they had last week, was face-to-face. And the first one of either the monthly or the two-monthly one was the one before. Because the hall is big enough for everybody to be two metres apart. So, they are back.

Ian: So, I asked you about finding out what’s going on in the village. You’ve talked about the parish council, they're better at communicating now. And that’s things like, “We’re having a meeting about this,” planning applications, things of that nature. You’ve mentioned some other things as well in the last few minutes.

So, apart from those kinds of civic things- You mentioned, for example, finding out if someone new has moved into the village and things like that. So, apart from the parish council’s website or their communications, what other ways do you keep up to date with what is happening in the village?

Respndent: Word of mouth, really, that’s the only way. There is a Facebook something called Network something. Neighbourhood Network or something. Which I thought was- I joined because I thought it was going to be a way of neighbours talking to each other. But it hasn’t been really. It turns out it’s somebody wanting a plumber, or, “Have you seen the birds at Newbiggin?” and that sort of thing.

Sorry, what was your original question?

Ian: Just the other ways you find out what’s going on. So, you said the parish council, word of mouth.

Respndent: Right. Well [REDACTED PLACE NAME] [FACEBOOK GROUP] Facebook, that is probably the best information set-up that we’ve got, and that is run by [FACEBOOK ADMIN]. But you don’t find out about new people moving into the village with that. You might find out that there’s a race coming through on Cycle Route One, but it wouldn’t be a neighbourly sort of thing that would be posted on that. It’s really word of mouth, that you find out what’s going on.

Ian: Okay. So, you’ve got in-person word of mouth, walking dogs on the beach, you’ve got [FACEBOOK ADMIN]’s Facebook page and you’ve got the parish council. Between those three, does that about cover…?

Respndent: Well, there are the ones who go to church, because they would be meeting regularly, so they would be catching up with what’s going on. And as I said, the volunteers at the Pele Tower, because they meet up regularly. And they're renovating their walled garden as well, so you’ve got a group of people meeting up regularly there. But yes, I’d say that was probably it.

It used to be the community bus on a Wednesday, but it was the same dozen or 16 people that took that. So, they might know what’s going on, but nobody else.

Ian: Yes, okay. There are a couple of interesting things that you said there. Before I forget, I’ll write this down. Okay. So, you mentioned neighbourly information, like somebody is moving in, etc. So, that would be just the stuff you did from word of mouth? If that was neighbourly information, what would the information be that you get from Facebook or the parish council? If that’s not neighbour-focused, what is the focus?

Respndent: Right. Well, the parish council stuff is… What do we get through the parish council? Well, as I’ve said, we’ve not got much through the parish council. But they will be trying to get villagers’ opinions about stuff, that’s one of the things that they’ve said that they’d like to do.

I don't think their website is used very often, and they don’t- Oh, they’ve set up a Facebook site though. Yes, they’ve set up a Facebook site, so that would be things like voting. You know, the village hall is going to be used as a voting state, they would post on.

What do we learn from Facebook? We discuss litter a lot, because we do have a problem with littering on the beach, so we get posts about the disgusting things that some of the visitors do. Things that are lost, dogs that are lost, items that are lost.

We get a lot of historical things actually, on [REDACTED PLACE NAME] [FACEBOOK GROUP] and on the other Facebook groups. Because people have been coming to [REDACTED PLACE NAME] for a long time, so you get some lovely posts from folks who visited and remember doing things in their youth, and how they still love to come back.

Ian: Okay, so more kind of storytelling and nostalgia, than local history, so to speak?

Respndent: Including local history.

Ian: That’s nice. Do people put up old photographs of how things were and things like that?

Respndent: Yes, they do. And of course, we’ve got this fantastic historian and archaeological expert, Barry Mead, who is the chap that has project-managed the renovation of the Pele Tower. So, he managed to get all the Lottery funding, some from Big Local, but most of it from the Heritage Lottery.

And he posts a lot of stuff. You know, he does digs, and finds out amazing historical things about [REDACTED PLACE NAME] Hall and the Pele Tower and other archaeological digs that he’s done.

Ian: He sounds a really interesting person.

Respndent: He is, he’s great.

Ian: You mentioned all sorts of different things on Facebook there, from people complaining to history to personal narratives and stories. On these types of forums, what information would-? Is there any stuff that you think is inappropriate or you’d like to see less of?

Respndent: Ah, well that’s where [FACEBOOK ADMIN] steps in, he’s very good at can[REDACTED ORG NAME]ing things out. In fact, he did something just las week. There was a post that was started by a visitor, it might even have been someone from another village, I couldn’t be sure about that.

Because the parking gets really bad because we’ve got an enormous beach but not enough space for people to park, in order to enjoy the beach. And the post started off by saying, “We’re just not welcome. You villagers don’t want us to be here because we come and park on your verges and you're always moaning at us. And some people leave litter but not everybody.”

And then that started a chain of people complaining about locals not making them feel welcome. So, that’s when [FACEBOOK ADMIN] steps in and says, “We don’t want to hear about all this, that’s not what [REDACTED PLACE NAME] [FACEBOOK GROUP] is for, it’s for uplifting stuff and showing lovely photos that you’ve taken and things.” So, he steps down on that pretty quick.

Ian: So, that’s something that is inappropriate. You personally, just to stay on that subject, is there any stuff that comes up in these groups, that are not necessarily completely inappropriate, but that you’d maybe like to see less off, things that aren’t as important?

Respndent: No, actually, it’s all quite interesting.

Ian: Good. So, what stuff do you think…? Okay, all the stuff is interesting, where is the most interesting stuff most likely to come from? Which types of sources of information?

Respndent: The historical things come from people like Barry. But also the older residents, who have been here a long time, they’ve always got lovely anecdotes to put down, little- I mean, there has been a big flurry of them just this weekend, since the Pele Tower had its opening. You know, people remembering coming to it when it was derelict and climbing walls and climbing walls in the walled garden and that sort of thing.

So, older residents and people who used to live here post a lot of things that I find are interesting. And it’s always full of people’s lovely comments who have been here on holiday, because they’ve just loved being here and enjoying it, so that’s always good.

Ian: When you do come across a really interesting bit of information, do you ever act on that or do anything?

Respndent: Not usually. I do sometimes. [FACEBOOK ADMIN] posted something the other day that had come through from somebody else, I can’t remember who. And it was the planning application for the houses in [ANON STREET NAME] – I live at the end of [ANON STREET NAME] – from 1924. And there were 20 pages of it.

But it was just so interesting, I scrolled through it all, seeing all these different applications for the cottages and the gardens and things, and the little map, showing you them all. But I wouldn’t normally then follow through other posts, looking at stuff, particularly, unless it was [ \_\_\_ 0:53:56].

Ian: When I say accidentally, I guess- So, individually, would you ever write a comment under a post, for example?

Respndent: No, I very rarely comment. I like, occasionally, but I don’t comment. The only thing I’ve ever-

Ian: What-? Sorry, I keep interrupting.

Respndent: (Laughter) No, it’s okay. There’s only one Facebook group that I ask questions on actually, and that’s the breeder of our schnauzer, I sometimes ask her things through her Facebook.

Ian: Okay, you’ve got a schnauzer, they're nice dogs.

Respndent: They are.

Ian: Okay, so that’s kind of like asking an expert, kind of thing, it’s not…

Respndent: Yes.

Ian: What about sharing elsewhere? So, for example, would you see something on a Facebook group and then you might tell someone about something verbally because of that? Or share it in Messenger, or share it to a different Facebook page, anything like that?

Respndent: The only thing I would do would be to talk about it verbally with somebody. If I see something that I think would be interesting, I might go into the website that I’ve seen on Facebook. I don’t go into it through Facebook, but I might then look up their website. And if I was going to tell my daughter, for instance, I wouldn’t share it with her. Mostly because I’m not quite sure how to share.

And one of the reasons I don’t post is because I’m not quite sure whether I’m posting to the world or just to one person, because I don’t do it, so I haven't really learnt that.

Ian: Yes. On that then, how would you describe the way you use Facebook, or your relationship with using Facebook?

Respndent: I’d say I’m a bit like a voyeur, I just look.

Ian: Yes. And you talked about you're uncertain, if you're going to post something, it’s going to post to one person or a whole group or the whole world. Do you have any concerns or worries about using Facebook?

Respndent: Well yes, I suppose that’s why I don’t use it as it could be used. Yes, I’m just not a great fan of social media generally really. I don't think we should be allowed to be anonymous when we use any of these social media things, I think that’s just asking for trouble.

I don’t need lots of people to know what I’m doing, although I quite like to know what other people are doing. (Laughter) But I don’t necessarily want them to know.

Ian: The human condition, is it not?

Respndent: Yes.

Ian: Okay. So, you don’t want other people to know what you're doing, you don’t know where the posts are going. How would you characterise those concerns? You said with social media in general, so we can talk about social media in general or we can talk about Facebook. What are your main concerns or the main things that stop you really being very active on Facebook, let’s say?

Respndent: I think it’s a time-waster. I’m sure there are loads of other things that I and other people could be doing that are better for us and for the planet and people generally than spending time putting things on Facebook.

If I’ve had a lovely holiday somewhere, I’d send someone a postcard. You know, I’m old, I’d send someone a post card and say I’ve had a lovely time. I don’t need to be taking photographs all the time, to show were I am and what I’ve been doing. If I’m somewhere really nice, I might not want everyone else to know that it’s really nice, because then they’ll all go there.

But then, a friend’s husband has just developed this app for Thomas Cook, it’s the only one available, where the person would take a photograph and you can click on that photograph and go straight to the website where you can hire the thing that he’s at, so a hotel or a restaurant or whatever. And that is like- Well, it’s just madness to me.

Ian: Yes, that sounds very complicated.

Respndent: Yes. Well, instead of someone saying, “Here I am in this resort,” and then you have to go to the website to find that resort, you just click on this picture, and there it is. So, it’s taking out several steps. And those several steps are actually quite good fun when you're planning things. But nowadays, the younger generation want instant gratification, and they want it now.

Ian: Yes. You talked about Facebook having the potential to waste time or be a misuse of time, a source of worry about, “Should I spend time wasting time thinking about what to post?” for example. Do you have any other concerns about Facebook or any other kind of things, the limitations or issues you see with the use of it?

Respndent: Well, I think it can intrusive, intrusive to your life. You know, you don’t need everybody to know what you're doing. Concerns. Well, just things like you hear stories of people posting that they're on holiday and they are therefore not at home, are they? So, there’s an empty house that’s available. That would concern me.

Ian: Hmmhmm. So, your profile on Facebook in these local groups, things like that, would you describe that as a kind of limited or kind of restricted version of yourself?

Respndent: Well, I do have a profile on Facebook, otherwise I can’t look at it, can I? But because I don’t post anything… Oh dear. Sorry, I’ve got low battery, I’ll just shift over and plug it in somewhere.

Ian: No problem. I know the video streaming and stuff takes a lot of battery.

Respndent: Yes. There we are, I’m plugged in, I’ll just hold it.

Ian: Hopefully we won’t be much longer anyway. So, I was just asking- As you say, you have to have a profile on Facebook, to be able to be part of these groups and things. And you were just talking about that.

Respndent: Yes. Because I don’t post anything, I’m not apprehensive about it because I don’t really use it as other people use Facebook.

Ian: Okay. So, just finally then, if we were to think of having an online community space, and you could think of it as a completely blue-sky, from-scratch thing, what sort of information do you think would be most useful to have on such a thing?

Respndent: What sort of information?

Ian: Would it need to have everything that we’ve talked about so far, or would it just need to have a sub-set of those things?

Respndent: Well, things that are going on, like the opening of the Pele Tower at the weekend, the bake and books thing that happened at the church, the road closure that’s about to happen at Pegswood, that would affect people driving into Morpeth. Things like the [REDACTED NAME] opening hours, when the parish council meetings are.

Just anything that would affect what people might like to do in- Well, I’m talking about this village, but it could be in all the villages. What you're thinking of, would it be for the individual villages?

Ian: I don't know. This is why it’s important for me to speak to people first. Because I guess the simple thing that Claire spoke about is this idea of, rather than have several very local Facebook groups, what would one central thing look like?

Respndent: Well, it would be very crowded, wouldn’t it?

Ian: So, on that note, some of those things you’ve mentioned- Because you were focusing on your village there, as we have done for most of our conversation, are there any of those things you mentioned that would be super important for people in [REDACTED PLACE NAME] to know about? Or anyone in any of the other villages would need to know about or be interested in.

Respndent: Well, I suppose things like road closures and bus routes. Probably, things like what is going on at our village hall or what’s going on at our church, would interest folk in other villages. The Pele Tower might, because that is something historical, which everyone is interested in.

Ian: What about the other way around? Is there ever a time when you need to know what’s happening in the other villages, or make any attempt to find out what’s happening in the other villages, through Facebook or other means?

Respndent: To be honest, no, not really. No.

Ian: So, I just asked you about- We’ll be finished very soon. I asked you about the information that would be most useful and appropriate to have in an online space. What kinds of qualities do you think this sort of space could have? Because you’ve already mentioned concerns about anonymity and concerns about the intrusive side, maybe, of Facebook.

So, if we could have something new, what kind of qualities or functions do you think it would need to have?

Respndent: It would need to be easy to follow. You know, say if you're wanting to look up when the parish council meetings were, you’d need to be able to find that without too much trouble. But I don’t know if that’s the sort of thing you're thinking about.

Ian: I’m not thinking about anything really, I’m just trying to-

Respndent: (Laughter) Trying to work out what we might like.

Ian: Yes. You talked about the bus, people talking on the community bus, people talking at dog-walking, that kind of stuff that you talked about that is neighbourly information. Do you think that sort of information- Is there any room for that information as an online thing, or any need for it?

Respndent: You can’t really put up things like, “[Orphea Lodge 1:07:48] has just changed hands and the new family moving in are blah-di-blah, they’ve got a dog, you might see them,” that sort of thing. I don’t think that’s appropriate information. Whereas that’s something that you might mention in passing to a neighbour, if you're standing, having a chat. But to have it written down or put on a technology thing, just doesn’t seem right.

So, there is information that would be useful and then there is just general folk knowing what’s happening, keeping in touch. Two different things, I think.

Ian: Hmmhmm. Do you think, the way things are, Facebook is a good way for people to find out what’s happening in the village and particiRespndente in things?

Respndent: Yes, I suppose so. It’s totally reliant on what people post though, isn't it? Which doesn’t necessarily have to be accurate.

Ian: Hmmhmm. Do you think some information on Facebook groups is more trustworthy than others?

Respndent: Who knows? Maybe if you know the person who is posting and you know whether they like to just, I don't know, ramble on about stuff that’s not necessarily truthful, it might just be their opinions, that’s one thing. But if you don’t know them, you don’t know if what they're saying is either truthful or useful.

Ian: So, it’s the source of the information, basically?

Respndent: Yes, the source.

Ian: And is that just things posted on Facebook? Or I guess that could be extended to things that aren’t just online, in terms of the trustworthiness of information.

Respndent: Yes. There are scammers out there all the time, aren’t there, and people who are trying to con you in one way or another? And I think technology helps feed those people, because they're anonymous. You know, they can say what they like.

Ian: Very much so. And I think, especially we’ve heard a lot of stories during the pandemic of a real increase in these kinds of behaviours, haven't we?

Respndent: Yes. And when you’ve got vulnerable people, they're not necessarily vulnerable in your normal day-to-day life, but when it’s new stuff to them, my generation and older, who have not had any experience of dealing with such things, they just don’t know what’s true and what’s not true.

Because, if you talk to somebody face-to-face, you can often get an idea of what they're like, by their body language, the way they hold themselves, that sort of stuff. You can’t do any of that, either through technology or just stuff that comes up on the written word.

Ian: So, just finally then, are there any qualities from the real world, like things that you’ve talked about within my last couple of questions, that, in an ideal situation, you would like to recreate in a digital world?

Respndent: Oh, what a question. Is that possible?

Ian: As I say, try to think in an open way. So, if we are thinking a new online space, if you could choose one quality from the real world of where you get information or find out what’s going on- Yes, if you could just think of something, what quality would you like to be able to put into an online digital space.

Respndent: I’m trying to think how anything would cross over. No.

Ian: You don’t have to think practically really. It could just be-

Respndent: Well, honesty. But how can that transfer?

Ian: I probably asked the question terribly, but that’s just what I meant. In an ideal world, if you could just say to a magic designer, “If you're going to do something new, it needs to have these kinds of qualities or values,” I guess. So, honesty is a great example of that, yes.

Respndent: An impossible task.

Ian: Yes. I mean, there are whole worlds of computing study that have been thinking about that question for a very long time, around cyber security and anonymity and sources of information and stuff like that. So, having something to really aim at, like honesty, that might seem impossible, at least makes people point in the right direction and try and develop things.

Respndent: And definitely accountability. You shouldn’t be anonymous.

Ian: Honesty, accountability. Is there anything else?

Respndent: Well, positivity, but not everybody is positive.

Ian: Ex[REDACTED ORG NAME]ent. I’ve not really been following the questions for the last while and I’ve just realised I should have asked everyone that question of, give me three words that would be good qualities for a design. Between us there, we’ve just come up with a much better question I should start asking people, I think.

Respndent: Okay, glad to be of help. (Laughter)

Ian: Yes. So, honesty, accountability and positivity, that’s great. Okay, so that’s all from me. That’s been really helpful and really interesting, so thank you for your time and your honesty, in answering the questions.

Respndent: You're welcome. Good luck with it.

Ian: And thank you very much-

Respndent: So, I’ll check with Claire, if she’s got [FACEBOOK ADMIN]’s contact details. And I’ll see if I can find out what [FACEBOOK ADMIN]’s group was as well. And she knows about Barry Mead, our archaeologist, so she might have him in mind anyway.

Ian: Great. I think the person you mentioned, [FACEBOOK ADMIN], who kind of- These people that have done something new, because of the pandemic, and have used Messenger and Facebook and emails and things like that, I think are really interesting people to speak to, and we can learn a lot from what they did and see if we can apply it at a bigger scale.

Respndent: Right.

Ian: So yes, any of those people, if Claire hasn’t already got them on her radar, would be amazing to invite, for me to speak to.

Respndent: Okay. Well, best of luck.

Ian: Thank you very much.

Respndent: Are you alright, Respndent?

Respndent: Yes, I’m happy to- For another five minutes, if you want to catch up with me, in terms of the work you're doing for the university.

Ian: Yes, I can stay on the line a bit longer, if you-

Respndent: Yes, I’m fine, I can do that.

Respndent: Okay, I’ll say au revoir then.

Ian: Alright.

Respndent: Thank you very much, Respndent.

Respndent: Nice to talk to you, Ian. Nice to see you, Respndent.

Respndent: Thanks, bye. Love to John.

Respndent: Will do. Bye.

Respndent: Bye.