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START AUDIO

[0:02:22]

Ian: So thanks very much for your time, first of all. I sent out some information about what we are doing and why we are doing it, and I suppose [[ANON} 0:02:35] has spoken to you as well. So just do you have any questions for me?

Respondent: No, no. I have read it all, and it seems fairly clear and straightforward. Thank you.

Ian: Great. So when you came on the call, you obviously got an announcement saying the meeting was being recorded.

Respondent: Yes.

Ian: I just set that up, to do it automatically. Otherwise, I forget to press 'record'.

Respondent: (Laughter)

Ian: Yes, so you are aware of that. If you have got any questions at any point, just give me a shout. I am just going to go through some questions. I am asking everyone the same sorts of questions.

Respondent: Yes.

Ian: Some things, you might have more to say on, and some things, we will pass over quite quickly.

Respondent: [Okay 0:03:20].

Ian: So I will just get a pencil. So the first question is how long have you lived or worked in the [REDACTED ORG NAME] area?

Respondent: It is just over 10 years and 3 months. (Laughter) It is very specific. We were only talking about it the other day. (Laughter) Somebody else was [saying 0:03:51] how long we lived here, and we actually worked it out to the day, actually, (Laughter) but, no, [with this], just over 10 years.

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

Respondent: [REDACTED PLACE NAME],

Ian: Yes. So in your words or in your experience, what do you think are the main differences between the four villages?

Respondent: Well, [REDACTED PLACE NAME] and [REDACTED PLACE NAME] are both typical pit villages. [REDACTED PLACE NAME] has coped a little bit better than [REDACTED PLACE NAME] and seems to have been a little bit more prosperous, and there seems to be a good community spirit there. It could well be that they are actually quite well out in the country and fairly isolated, so people are stuck together.

[REDACTED PLACE NAME] is quite deprived. It suffered badly when the pit closed. There is not much work there and there for local people. A lot of the people who did live there moved away to get work, and it tends to be- Got to be careful how I phrase this. (Laughter) People who are in the lower scale of achievability, if you like, and ability seem to move there. The house prices are very cheap. Yes, you can get a three-bed semi-detached house for £30,000 these days, extremely cheap, and the whole village is a little run-down.

[REDACTED PLACE NAME], although it had a pit and it was probably one of the most successful pits in the UK, it was never a pit village because the workers who came to [REDACTED PLACE NAME], when they owned it, came from the other villages, [REDACTED PLACE NAME] and [REDACTED PLACE NAME] and Ashington.

So it was never a pit village. There weren't a lot of miners living in the village, so it has a different character. It is quite affluent. House prices are fairly high, up with some of the higher ones in the region, and it is a very sought-after village. People like to live here, and most of the housing is fairly modern. Built probably since the late '50s onwards.

Most of the people living here commute or are retired, (Laughter) like myself. There are very few jobs round the area, so most of the people here commute into the big towns. So it is a bit of a commuter area in that respect, but fairly affluent.

[REDACTED PLACE NAME] tends to be- It is right by the sea, it is the smallest village of the four, and very small. There are no young people living there at all, there are no children, no schoolchildren. They tend to be the older generation, mostly retired, and it is a seaside village. Most of the people who go down there now tend to be visitors and holidaymakers. There are two large caravan parks [ now 0:08:06], so it is a bit of a holiday location, really. So that is the four villages.

Ian: Yes, great. So what do you think, if anything, the four have in common then?

Respondent: On the surface, they don't have very much in common at all, and there has been, traditionally, very little interaction between the two. [REDACTED PLACE NAME] and [REDACTED PLACE NAME] are probably the closest, the closest geographically, they run into each other almost, and there seems to be quite a bit of cross-fertilisation between the people who live in [REDACTED PLACE NAME] and [REDACTED PLACE NAME].

[Aside conversation 0:08:58 - 0:09:14]

So traditionally there hasn't been a lot in common. [REDACTED PLACE NAME] and [REDACTED PLACE NAME] share the same parish council, but the two villages are quite different. Social-wise, there has been very little interaction. There is a two- or three-mile distance between them, and there is no public transport between them so there are no natural links. [REDACTED ORG NAME], in fact, has brought the whole thing together.

[REDACTED PLACE NAME], as I said, is a fairly deprived village, and I think traditionally people from [REDACTED PLACE NAME] try not to go to [REDACTED PLACE NAME] (Laughter) because it is quite depressing. There is a lot of unsocial behaviour from [REDACTED PLACE NAME], and I think people try to keep away from it rather than mix with it. Again, through [REDACTED ORG NAME] we have been getting it closer.

One of the things I did with [REDACTED ORG NAME] is start the scout group up in the area for [REDACTED ORG NAME], and we have got a lot of [REDACTED PLACE NAME] people now coming to the scouts. So there is more interaction now between [REDACTED PLACE NAME] and [REDACTED PLACE NAME], but it tends to be [some of the more 0:10:42]- I am trying to think of the best- People with better intentions, looking for the best for their children, want to get scouting and that sort of thing, yes. So people have got ambitions to improve themselves, rather than people who have no ambition at all.

Ian: Yes, I understand, that makes sense. Just moving on, you mentioned scouts there. I know you are part of the [REDACTED ORG NAME] partnership currently.

Respondent: Yes, yes.

Ian: How would you describe, including those things, your role in the [REDACTED ORG NAME] area?

Respondent: Well, when [REDACTED ORG NAME] first started, I looked to get involved, and I decided that I didn't want to be on the partnership because I was still working at the time. I stayed involved in the peripheral- Just helping out here and there. Then I joined the housing group because I personally have very strong feelings about housing. I mean I believe that everybody is entitled to a decent home to live in that is warm and that has got decent living conditions for them, and that they can go home and feel happy and comfortable in it. Too many people unfortunately are not in that position.

So I do feel quite passionate about housing, so I decided to get involved in that. At the time, I was involved in the management of the Morpeth scouts, which is our principal town, and I thought it was sad that we didn't have scouting in the four villages. So I used to come home from meetings in Morpeth, where I had just seen perhaps 100 kids thoroughly enjoying themselves and having great times, and coming home and seeing our kids sitting on street corners with nothing to do.

So I proposed at the partnership meeting that we ought to be looking at starting scouting in the village, and they supported it, and we got it off the ground. That was a terrific success. That was my first real success in the [REDACTED ORG NAME] arrangement.

The housing didn't seem to be getting anywhere. We recognised the housing needs of the four villages were completely different. [REDACTED PLACE NAME] needs a lot of upgrading and support. A lot of houses in [REDACTED PLACE NAME] are run-down and need a lot of repair work, where in the other three villages the housing stock was a very good standard. The biggest problem in [REDACTED PLACE NAME] is that local families, the young people, can't afford to stay in the village. The house prices are too high for them.

So what we decided was that [REDACTED PLACE NAME] needed a fairly big injection of upgrades and support, [REDACTED PLACE NAME] needed low-cost housing, [REDACTED PLACE NAME] could do with some low-cost housing, and [REDACTED PLACE NAME], there is no point because the people that live there are fairly affluent and there is no new building going on there. It is never going to change. When houses come up for sale there, they are gone in no time at all, and there is no local community as such.

So the housing needs were different, but the previous chairman, because I chair the group now, tried to get a housing trust started. We couldn't get a lot of support for it at that time.

So what we decided to do, we spoke to the county council, and they suggested we paid for a housing manager to be based in the area for three days a week, to try and get to see what they could do to try and improve [REDACTED PLACE NAME] for a start, and some of the other problems.

One of the biggest problems is that all the houses in [REDACTED PLACE NAME] were built for the pit, they are all pit houses. In basic design, they are quite significant and quite nice family homes, but they have just been allowed to degenerate. A lot of the problem is that landlords from away, because they were so cheap, bought them up. (Laughter) They don't ever visit; they don't care who moves into them. A lot of the people moving into the area have a lot of social issues. They have no respect for themselves or other people in fairness. A lot of them have come out from prisons or other institutions and are put in [REDACTED PLACE NAME]. It seems to be the place where the council seems to put them. (Laughter) So the whole area is degenerating.

Anyway, we have the house manager. She has been there now, working on it, for four years. It will come to an end this Christmas, when [REDACTED ORG NAME] comes to an end, because we won't be able to pay for it anymore.

What she has done, she [has done 0:16:32] a lot of good work. She has road-mapped and pointed us where she thinks we could do something, to a point where we managed to get support to actually form a trust.

It is going to be a community trust with a priority initially to look at housing, particularly in the [REDACTED PLACE NAME] area. The aim is that we are going to purchase houses in [REDACTED PLACE NAME], renovate them, do them up. A number of them, quite a few of them, are owner-occupier, but because they are all ex-miner stock, they are obviously getting on in life, (Laughter) and they can't maintain their properties.

So we are looking to see if the trust can form some method of helping them maintain their properties to improve them. We are looking to get grants and aid from various sources, which is accessible, to see if we can improve [the lot 0:17:49] for the people in [REDACTED PLACE NAME] and gradually lift the property out of the malaise it has got into, lift the village into the [sic] malaise it has got into.

There is a fairly strong community spirit amongst the old mining stock, particularly through the institute, Miners Institute, that sort of thing. There is a lot of good work being done by a number of volunteer organisations, and we are planning to work with those, to see if we can lift the whole ethos, the whole area.

We seem to have got a tremendous amount of support for doing this now. I think people realise it was perhaps last chance saloon. So that has been my major contribution to [REDACTED ORG NAME], apart from supporting all the other initiatives that other people have come up with, [ \_\_\_ 0:18:40] work. But that has been the area I have been concentrating on.

Ian: Yes, that is great. I mean I heard a little bit about that from some other members of the partnership.

Respondent: Yes, sure.

Ian: It sounds great, and, as you say, it is a shame that it has just come at the end.

Respondent: Yes.

Ian: It would have been a great thing to have built more momentum over time, but it sounds like it is hopefully going to be successful.

Respondent: Yes. I think as well, [when you have got 0:19:15] [REDACTED ORG NAME] coming to an end, \_\_\_ local, coming to an end in January, I think it focused all our attention on- That this was the last chance. What we discovered over the years, there is a lot of money available to support the community, if you are a constituted body. Of course, [REDACTED ORG NAME] isn't a constituted body, so, therefore, a lot of the money that could have come in, we couldn't attract because we weren't a constituted body.

The difficult thing was getting people who would be prepared to sit on the board as a director. Obviously, a trust, we needed a number of people- well, 12 is the actual number we need, and getting suitable and volunteer people who were prepared to do that has been a big struggle, but we have managed it.

I think people, with what we have got left to spend before the end of the year, we have got enough to perhaps get started. Then, as I say, the trust should be formed- well, it is formed now. By the time we have got everything ready, we should just about have enough money to last us until we can apply for grants from the local authority and other bodies to help us in our funding for our initial stages. So I think we are in time, but it is literally just by the cat's whisker. (Laughter)

Ian: Yes. So apart from the scouts stuff, do you get involved in things in the community? Not as the organiser and the leader, but do you tend to get involved in stuff in the community?

Respondent: Oh yes. Well, I always have. I am a strong believer in community is only as strong as what people put into it. So I do get involved in quite a bit of community stuff. I am not as young and able as I used to be, and I do like to have some time for my own interests as well, but, no, I do get involved in community matters and try and support and encourage a strong community.

Ian: Great. We will just take a sidestep now and just think about- I just want to get an idea of, I guess, the uniqueness of the area or the characteristics of the area. So do you consider where you live to be rural?

Respondent: Yes, I do. I mean you have got to think where I come from. I am a Londoner by birth, and when I was working my work took me all over the south of England, and always lived in fairly built-up areas. So moving to somewhere like here, it seems extremely rural to me. (Laughter) I can walk out the door here with the dog, and within a few minutes I am either in woods or in fields, or I can be down by the coast in 15 minutes. So, yes, I would say this is rural.

Ian: And I know you just gave a couple of examples there about where you could walk to and stuff, but what do you think, in a bit more detail, makes where you live rural?

Respondent: Well, there is this field. I mean I look out my back window, and we are overlooking wheat fields. Beyond that are numerous other fields with different crops in, all the way round. As you come into the village, it is all agriculture, so it is all around us. We have got livestock, we have got cows, we have got sheep, you have got people, [equestrian 0:23:41], with horses and with fields. So all round us is countryside.

They are mainly big farms. The Crown own quite a bit and, also, there is another large organisation that has got a lot of farms, but there are some small farmers as well. So there is a mixture of industrial farming and family-owned farms.

Ian: Great. This might be a difficult thing to answer, but we will give it a go. What does being part of a rural area mean to you? Or I will ask two questions at once and you can choose which one to answer. What does being part of a rural area mean to you, or how does living in a rural area affect your life? Especially interested in people that have lived in a very urban area answering these questions.

Respondent: Well, I think the fresh air and the quietness, not having a lot of traffic noise, having space where you can just go off and walk and not meet anybody else for a very long time, I mean that is what I like about it. Lack of traffic, or compared to large cities the traffic is fairly light. Unfortunately, it is getting heavier and heavier, as it is for everybody, but it is still very quiet. When I go out the village, if I get behind another car, it is obviously rush hour. (Laughter) It is that sort of [thing 0:25:34].

It is the pace of life, and it is not just because I am retired, but the pace of life is a lot slower. Certainly, living in [REDACTED PLACE NAME], where I live, I think everything looks clean and fresh. Where in urban areas, things, buildings, look tired and dusty and dirty, everything is clean and fresh. I would say the fresh air is lovely, and the greenness, I like the greenness as well. Whenever you look out, you can see green fields, green trees. It is just nice, open spaces. So that is what I think living in a rural area means to me, if that has answered your question.

Ian: Yes, absolutely. I was getting images of idyllic postcard pictures there.

Respondent: (Laughter)

Ian: I have done a whistle-stop tour around the villages with [ANON}, staying on basically the main road, because she was trying to show me the contrast and differences, but after speaking to people, how people are describing the villages, I really feel I should have a proper walk into a…

Respondent: (Laughter)

Ian: So it was interesting that you mentioned a pace of life, living in a rural area or living in your particular village. I wonder, just so we can move onto these things, do you think living in a rural area affects how technology is used or how technology is accessed?

Respondent: I think it depends upon the individual, in all fairness. Those of us that are fairly savvy with a computer, and I am not a professional but I mean I can use a computer and do what I want to do, technology is very important to us. We tend to do most of our shopping, for example, online, and we did this before the pandemic so it wasn't because of COVID. But, yes, we try not to have to go into town to get shopping. I mean certain things, you have to go for, I mean big items and furniture and cars and things like that, but we try and do most of our purchases online.

We use technology quite a bit. Our internet is not too bad here in [REDACTED PLACE NAME], so we don't have a problem with internet access in [REDACTED PLACE NAME]. I know some of the other villages do. I think [REDACTED PLACE NAME] and [REDACTED PLACE NAME] have a bit of a problem, and in [REDACTED PLACE NAME] the biggest problem there is affordability. I think we are doing- well, you know. We are doing the inclusion programme to try and help those people who either can't afford it or haven't had training in technology to do it. Like I say, personally I am fairly happy, but there are a lot of people who are not.

Ian: So you mentioned that, as far as you understand, in [REDACTED PLACE NAME] and [REDACTED PLACE NAME] the internet is a bit flaky there, is it?

Respondent: Only because of their- well, [REDACTED PLACE NAME] is a bit more remote, and I think there is not such a strong network there. [REDACTED PLACE NAME] is a long way from the exchange. I know people who live down there, and they do tend to have problems.

I mean during COVID we have been playing bridge with friends, and they tend to have problems with the internet down there. Very often we are playing bridge and then they are gone. (Laughter) We have to reconnect and eventually get them back on.

I think they come from the same exchange, telephone exchange, as we do. I could be wrong here, I am assuming that is the case, and of course they are just that bit further away from it. They don't have such a good, strong signal as we get. I mean we are probably only about half a mile away from the exchange, so we tend to get a fairly good signal here, but others that I know who are further afield don't get that strong signal.

Ian: You mentioned playing bridge with friends online. I suppose that used to happen in person.

Respondent: It used to happen in person. We belong to a [ \_\_\_ 0:31:13] bridge club that meet in [REDACTED PLACE NAME], in the village hall, but because of COVID we have not been meeting. So we broke it down into groups so that we could play bridge regularly, and I play twice a week, in the evenings, with different friends, (Laughter) with different people from the club.

Ian: Bridge always reminds me- I spent a bit of time living in London, and the Tube stop I used to get off at, at Parsons Green, I don't know if you know it…

Respondent: Yes, I know it.

Ian: … and that has a big, purpose-built bridge club. So it is not like a village hall that gets used. It is this bridge club, and whichever time of day I have walked past, it was always people sitting at all the tables. I just thought, "Yes." I just thought, "One day, I will learn to play bridge", because that was a big part of my life for a while, just seeing other people play bridge as I got off the Tube.

Respondent: (Laughter) I think it is a fantastic game. I have not played it all my life. I really only took it up when I retired. I had played a little bit, but having the time when I was- We ran our own business for years, so never really got the time. When I retired it was one of the things I said I want to do, I want to take up bridge properly, and that is [Crosstalk 0:32:39].

Ian: It is on my list hopefully when my busyness slows down with work and children.

Respondent: Yes, exactly.

Ian: Great. So I know that your [REDACTED ORG NAME] meetings have been happening online because of speaking to other people in the partnership, and you have been playing bridge using video conferencing software like this, I guess.

Respondent: Yes. The bridge, there is a big programme that we can play online, but we also have Zoom as well so we can see each other. So we split the screen in half. So the computer deals the cards out and only you can see your own cards, of course, but we split the screen so that we can chat and talk about the hands and talk about each other, that sort of thing. (Laughter)

Ian: Yes, yes, of course. So, yes, you could have just played online without doing the Zoom call, right?

Respondent: Yes.

Ian: But you would have missed…

Respondent: The interaction.

Ian: … some important aspects of when you played bridge in the club.

Respondent: Yes, yes.

Ian: So you use Zoom to try and fix that shortfall.

Respondent: Hmm.

Ian: And are there any other kinds of technologies, messaging technologies, anything like that, that you have started using, just because of the pandemic?

Respondent: Yes, yes. I have used Outlook and Zoom for this type of communication, quite a lot with family and friends during the pandemic. I keep in touch with my family. I have got family flung round the world, and we keep in touch on Facebook. We have a family group, and obviously we have got our children and grandchildren who we have been keeping in touch with as well through all the media.

I play golf as well, and during the pandemic I started a WhatsApp group with the guys we play with. There is up to about 24 of us who play on a regular group, so that kept us in touch during the pandemic, and we now keep it going so that we arrange our golf matches (Laughter) over WhatsApp. So we use WhatsApp quite a bit.

Obviously, emailing all the time. I mean I do that on my mobile phone mainly because it is easier for me to carry that round with me and get messages. I use Messages a bit, but we do most of our communication on WhatsApp. It seems more convenient.

Ian: And has that just happened since the pandemic?

Respondent: No, I think Facebook and messaging or WhatsApp, obviously did that before the pandemic. When we were in lockdown, I probably did it more, but, no, I have been doing that for some time. Emails, obviously I have been emailing ever since it first started back in the 1990s. (Laughter) I reluctantly got dragged into technology. Because we ran our own business, we needed to do that. I remember we hired a guy to come and teach me how to use the computer back in the '90s, (Laughter) and he taught me how to use spreadsheets and all the basic stuff.

Ian: Ex[REDACTED ORG NAME]ent. So, yes, I think that is enough about the pandemic. Yes, so, actually, you talked about you use WhatsApp to organise games of golf and keep in touch with people from the golf club and the other things you have talked about. [Are any of these technologies that you have used to keep in touch with friends and family technologies 0:37:04] that you use to keep up to date with what is happening in the [REDACTED ORG NAME] area?

Respondent: There is a couple of local- well, there is a Facebook one, but there is one called Neighbours, and there is the local Facebook one, that you can keep in touch with what is going on in the area. Is it Good Neighbour? I forget what it is called now. It is neighbour something. That started during the pandemic, and I joined it. Initially, it was quite good because people- Things like, 'Oh, my dog has gone missing', and things like this, 'Can you keep an eye out for it?" and that sort of thing.

Unfortunately, over the course of time, it drifted into where people are trying to sell you something. (Laughter) You can't blame them. People who are local, like decorators or gardeners, pushing their services, and it lost a lot of its local neighbourhood stuff, which was a shame.

I mean one of the things we got talking about in the early days of the neighbourhood one- Is it called Good Neighbour? Something like that. I made a comment about dog litter. People don't pick their dog litter up. We have a dog, and obviously we always pick up after the dog has done its business. I made a comment on that, and the number of people that came on and supported it, (Laughter) said, 'Yes, this is a problem. What can we do about it?'

It got the whole community talking about that, and a number of other issues like that got raised. We were making comments and making suggestions, and people who needed- 'I need a plumber badly. I have got a leak. Can somebody recommend me somebody?', and that sort of thing. That was good, and that made a good local network. As I say, unfortunately the commercial aspect seemed to have taken over, and it is such a shame.

Ian: Yes.

Respondent: Now, I don't use it anymore, which is a shame.

Ian: I will try and find out what that is. Something neighbours. I will have a look at it. Does that work a bit like Facebook, where you could post messages?

Respondent: [Well, it is just like 0:39:38] Facebook. Yes, you have an account, you make comments, and you put pictures on. Yes, it works just like Facebook, but it is just a local thing.

I am on the local Facebook pages for the villages and things like that, just to see what is going on, but, again, I am finding some of that is being misused, and the people who put videos on, where they are playing pranks on people, okay, it was amusing the first time, but it gets a bit wearing. I tend not to look at those things.

Ian: Yes.

Respondent: We did do TikTok, because, again, during the pandemic our grandchildren used to do stuff and then they would put it on TikTok, and we used to look at it, but they got tired of it. Again, people are doing very similar stuff and just chucking it out there. It got very boring. Perhaps I am just getting old (Laughter) but…

Ian: Oh, no, it-

Respondent: So we have been in for those sorts of things. I can see the benefit of it, but it tends to, I think then, get into misuse. Not in a nasty way, but it just becomes uninteresting after a while. It loses that connectivity.

Ian: So we will talk about that [ in a sec, actually 0:41:19], actually, but, just before, as a resident of [REDACTED PLACE NAME] do you feel it is important to know what is happening around the other villages?

Respondent: Yes, I do. I think, and certainly talking to my neighbours here, they really don't know what is going on around them, and they are missing opportunities where they could participate because they just don't know what is going on. People don't seem to read leaflets that are put their doors or newsletters. We haven't got a village newsletter or an area newsletter, other than the [REDACTED ORG NAME] magazine, and when that stops we won't have that.

I think the community needs to get itself organised. Before we moved here, we lived in [ANON PLACE], in a little fishing village. The church did it, in fairness to them. They produced a monthly newsletter, and everything that was going on in the village was in there, with a contact person so you could contact them if you were interested. Every time that little magazine came through the door, we used to read it (Laughter) and see what was going- It was a tremendous way of communication.

We need something like that. Now, if that could be electronically, it may be better in today's- But we need to have some way of producing that so that everyone can see what is going on and [Crosstalk 0:42:59]-

Ian: Yes, and, as you know, that is one of the big questions that [ANON} and I are trying to think through. So let's go on to the type of- So you touched on the fact that certain types of information, like people trying to sell something, are less appropriate maybe for these community online spaces.

Respondent: Hmm.

Ian: Is there any other sort of information that you think is less useful or less appropriate or that you would like to see less of in these community pages?

Respondent: I think there is room for the tradespeople to advertise themselves, but I think it needs to be in a separate box, if you like. So if I wanted something done, it would be nice to be able to go onto a local website and get a local person rather than somebody from Newcastle, [if I wanted 0:44:11]. So some sort of trade directory incorporated in it would be a great idea, but not that comes up, in your face, every time you switch the thing on.

If you want to find out what is going on, it would be nice to have a structured format so that you can have what is on this month or what is coming on- If a group are starting up, 'This group is starting up, we want people to join in, yes, anyone interested', that sort of thing. So what is going on.

An issues page, like I said, with the dog litter, where people can air their views and people can respond to that. So I think it would be nice if, electronically, you can do that, if you can do that, to have some sort of directory of different things you can go into, an index, and you can choose which one you want to go into without having those things thrown at you, without you wanting them. So I think it needs to be multifunctional if it is going to serve a community well. It just doesn't want to be just everything in one place.

Ian: Yes. So that is interesting. I was going to basically ask you again, what sort of information would you like to see more of, but I guess what you have said there is it is not about having less of something or more of something. It is about just being able to choose what you want to look at when you go there.

Respondent: Yes, yes. So I might want a tradesperson to come. Yes, [as I say 0:46:06], I would like to use somebody local if I could. I might want to find out what is going on in the various villages in case there is anything of interest to me. I might want to have a moan that there are certain things happening that I am not happy with. (Laughter) It could be when the council redid the road, they put the humps back in. The bane of my life are these speed bumps. (Laughter) There are other ways of slowing people down, and why do we have to have bumps that we have to drive over? Just to have a rant about that and see if there is support for that (Laughter) from other people.

So I think it wants to try and have different sections. I describe it as having an index you go into, which one do you want to go to, and if you want to have a chat and see what is going on in the village or what people's comments are, you can join that, or if you want to find out what is happening, you can go into another section. If that could happen, it would be nice.

Ian: Yes. So when you do see some interesting information, for example something that is going on, like you said, what sort of actions are you likely to take [or do you do 0:47:36]? So say you see something interesting on Facebook, do you ever share that with more people or take any other kinds of actions based on what you read on the Facebook-?

Respondent: Yes. I mean if I see something that I think might be interesting to, say, my golf guys, I would copy that and share it with them. If I see something that I think my cousins in Australia would be interested in, I might copy that and send it to them.

So I do share it with people if I think it is going to be of interest. So if, for example, I saw there was something on in one of the villages that would interest me and, "Oh, I know so-and-so would like to see that, might be interested", I would let them have that, 'Have you seen this?', and share it with other people.

Ian: So what sort of stuff are you more likely to share?

Respondent: Well, in my family, for example, it is usually- It can be historical stuff, what affected us all growing up after the war. Sometimes you see things that bring back memories, and so I will share those with my family abroad and that sort of thing.

When I saw some stuff about London after the- Because I was brought up in London after the war, and all the streets that were bombed. I mean my parents' house was bombed. When my father came out of the forces, my mother came back from- She was sent to Wales, to keep away, with my sister, to keep safe.

We lived in a prefab, and the prefabs were built on bomb sites. My playground as a child was four roads that were completely bombed out, and we used to play on the bomb sites. The only two buildings that survived in four roads were the pub and the village shop. Not the village shop, the corner shop, and they were the two businesses, the only two buildings, that were still standing. To get to them, you had to go down these roads that were completely bombed out.

It was a weird childhood, looking back, but I mean that was my childhood. I mean we used to play in the bomb- These houses were all bombed. They are all terraced houses in London, and they had [REDACTED ORG NAME]ars. We used to dig our way into the [REDACTED ORG NAME]ars because they were filled in, and we used to find all sorts of stuff down there that was owned by the people who lived there. It is very macabre, but I mean (Laughter) we were kids.

Ian: Yes, that was all you knew, I guess.

Respondent: Yes. So anything like that, that I see, I share with my family, and then I share some with my grandchildren and say, "Look, this is how I grew up." They just can't believe what we used to do, but I mean that was the way it was in those days. (Laughter)

Ian: That same kind of question again then, but from the local groups.

Respondent: [ \_\_\_ 0:51:25]. I mean I started up a cribbage group a few years ago. Now, I could have shared that, anybody interested in playing crib, and we have got about 20 people who meet up now, but to share that to the wider community would have been good because I am sure there are a lot of people out there who like playing cards.

So I think social stuff, what is going on. We have fundraising stuff if we are trying to raise money for scouts, or some other community action group would want to advertise itself if it is putting on a fundraising event so local people go and support it.

I mean yes. I mean the church does a fairly good job of publicising what it is doing, but I mean there are lots of other community groups who don't have that vehicle for publicising themselves, apart from sticking notices up in the shop that nobody reads. (Laughter) I think it would help generate a much tighter community and create more community life if we had some way we could share information like that.

Ian: Do you think some of these smaller shops then, that they don't, for example, post on the local Facebook group about things so they are missing an audience? Is that the kind of point you were making?

Respondent: Yes. I think there are lots of groups that do go on in the village that I have only heard about, but I don't know where to go to find out any information about it. An art group, for example, sprung up in the village, and it didn't last very long because not enough people went, but there are quite a few amateur artists in the village who, if they had known it was on, might well have gone along to it. I think that type of activity could generate a lot more community spirit and action. It would be more people being involved.

Also, if you are looking to raise either money or awareness for a good cause, a charity, I mean you need a vehicle to let everyone know it is there. I mean a parish council might want to get information out to people. No one reads the parish council notes on the board. (Laughter) I mean there is a board there. No one reads it; I don't. But if they wanted to get [something to happen 0:54:18] or something was happening, they could actually publicise it. So I think it would be a very good community communication tool.

Ian: So the examples you have given are of people and groups that have not publicised or promoted themselves beyond, I guess, traditional things that, like you say, people no longer read. Is it that these groups aren't willing to go on the local Facebook groups and post on there, or is it that they do but they don't get noticed or…?

Respondent: I think it is a bit of both. I think certainly the art group was never on the Facebook page. I think a lot of people won't use Facebook because they have got turned off of it, and they forget the local stuff. They just can't be bothered with it because a lot of it- I mean I keep my Facebook purely for my family, and I don't have anybody else other than my family on my Facebook page. I don't go out to the world. I think a lot of people are using it that way now. They don't tend to look outside of their own little Facebook group.

I think if we had a really good local one that was purely for social interaction types of things and local community events, I think it would probably be a good way of getting the word out.

Ian: So you mentioned that you have a Facebook profile and you keep that quite restricted to just your friends, but you will use that profile to look on, for example, the local Facebook page.

Respondent: Oh, yes. I look at the local area, Facebook. I mean I look at Morpeth, Ashington, [REDACTED PLACE NAME], an area, so I look in the local area to see if there is anything of interest going on, that I would be interested in, but I would say the problem is a lot of it, you can't be too specific. You just get all the notices, and a lot of them tend to be advertising, decorators and plumbers and that sort of thing. Then it is very hard to actually see what you want to see.

I think if we had a local one, if we had something local, that is why I would like to see it compartmentalised, so that actually when you want something, you want to go to find a tradesperson, you know where to go. I know probably one of the problems is that you are very often reliant on advertising to support these things, and if you are not careful it gets too much advertising and not enough meat in the sandwich, so to speak.

Ian: Yes. Yes, exactly. So you use Facebook in a very specific way, and you have created a very specific way of using Facebook. Are there reasons, beyond what you have said about the noise of everyone posting things, why you do use Facebook in that restricted way?

Respondent: I will give you an example. (Laughter) Happened to me about three years ago, and I had to get my grandson to come and help me sort it out. (Laughter) For some reason, I suddenly started getting targeted for porn sites. (Laughter)

Ian: Okay. (Laughter)

Respondent: I don't know how it happened. Just people who want to try to be my friend. I mean obviously you didn't see porn on Facebook, but you could subscribe to it. I thought, "I don't want this." I don't know how it got even- I suppose they just send it all out to everybody. Anyway, my grandson helped me sort it out so that I cut it out.

So I think the fear is you tend to get this, and, of course, you get the scams and things like that, that people talk about, and it is nice- I mean at the moment I am still fairly savvy (Laughter) to those sorts of things, and I hope it continues, but I have known people who are pretty intelligent and savvy and have fallen for these scams. So there is the fear of that type of problem.

I get a lot of people I know come forward and say, 'Would you be a Facebook friend?' It is not I don't like them, but I just don't want to have too much time on wasted communications.

A number at the golf club, for example, who are not in my immediate playing circle, I mean they have said, "Oh, yes, why can't you be my friend on Facebook?" I don't have the time to keep all those- I don't want to read about their vegetable patch and that sort of thing. (Laughter) I know them and I get on well with them, but they are not intimate friends of mine. I don't really want to know too much about their life. I think there can be too much information, and then it dilutes the message and what you are trying to use it for.

Other people have different views, they love that sort of thing, but it is not for me. (Laughter)

Ian: Yes. Yes, yes, I mean that makes complete sense. You have explained it really well. I don't use Facebook myself. I got rid of my account a few years ago. My concerns were a little bit about I am wasting time, I don't even know these people and I am seeing pictures. For me, it was like everyone was having babies or taking pictures of what they had for their lunch.

Respondent: Yes.

Ian: Yes, and I mean I had other concerns as well about privacy, but, yes, so I completely understand where you are coming from. Well, I have just got a couple of questions to finish on, if that is all right.

Respondent: Yes.

Ian: So if we are thinking about if we could really transform a Facebook group and make it ideal or, in the same vein, if we were to build something completely new which was an online space, what three values or characteristics or something would you say were the three most important for us to think about?

Respondent: I think you have got to make sure that it is relevant to the needs of the community and that it is easily accessible to people who perhaps are not as technology savvy as the average person. I am thinking more of the older generation. So it wants to be something that can be accessible from various devices, such as a phone. It would have to be a smartphone, of course.

I know a lot of people who don't have computers, and they don't use the internet because they haven't got a computer. Well, they are some of the people we want to be communicating with.

As I said before, I think whatever it is, it needs to be compartmentalised so that you can go in and see what you want to see, when you want to see it, and not have everything just thrown at you. I think you need to be able to make choices on what you are looking at and what you are communicating with.

I think it needs to be supported in some way, even from people within the village, who can help people who are either having problems accessing it or using it. I think it needs to be a supported- Hopefully, even volunteers from within the community, to help people use it and get to know it and to be able to use it.

It needs to be helpful. If someone needs help, then it will be something- They can put a- not a plea, but go on there and say, 'Look, I need this help. Can anyone suggest anything?' It could be a young mother who is a single parent, who wants to do things, go out one evening to go to some sort of activity but needs a babysitter. There are all sorts of usefulness for it in my opinion, but a person doesn't want to go and put- 'Oh, I am desperate for a babysitter, [so I am going to just 1:05:11] put it out to everybody'. It needs to be done in a careful, controlled way because otherwise they could be open to abuse, and old people could be as well if they are not careful.

Ian: Yes, okay. Well, thank you so much for speaking to me. It has been really interesting.

Respondent: [Good 1:05:36].

Ian: And, yes, I mean that hour has flown by for me. I just found that really interesting. Thanks for your time and thanks for your honesty in answering the questions as well.

Respondent: Okay. I am sorry about the mess-up earlier. (Laughter)

Ian: Oh, no, that is fine. I mean organising things like this just using email and stuff, I am surprised it has gone so well so far, to be honest.

Respondent: I don't know why- I mean I had your previous one in my email thing, but the reminder that you got, I wasn't alerted. When I looked in my spam file, I found it. I don't know. Just that is something that I am going to have to talk to someone about, because sometimes, when we play bridge, we play bridge twice a week, and the link- The guy who organises the Zoom bit, one week out of three it will go into trash, and I am waiting for his email. (Laughter) I mean it must be something that my computer- Either my security system or something is misbehaving itself. But no. So, anyway, I am glad that you got them. I hope you have a nice holiday. (Laughter)

Ian: Yes, I hope to, too. Great. Well, if you think of any questions or you want to follow up with anything, just send me an email or get in touch with me through [ANON}. I am sure, once I have put together this initial report for [ANON} based on these things, that, as a member of the partnership, you will be the first to see it anyway. So…

Respondent: Okay.

Ian: Great. Thanks again for your time then.

Respondent: Okay. Thank you. Bye-bye.