

**NEWTON ON THE MOOR AND SWARLAND
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP
REPORT TO PARISH COUNCIL
AUGUST 2023**

1. Membership of the Steering Group

Donna Corbin (Chair)
Barry White (Vice Chair)
Liz Simpson (Secretary)
David Rixon (PC)
Rob Simpson (PC)
David Francis (PC)
Liz Clark (SNAC and PC)
Jackie Stent
Michael Corke
Alison Cowen
Lesley Selfe
David Arkieson
Andrew Hastie
Jo Totton (on an advisory basis re housing)
Michelle O'Hara (on an ad hoc basis when needed)

2. The SG members

I am pleased to report that, following the agreement of Terms of Reference, and subsequent designation of the Parish as a Neighbourhood Plan area, the Steering Group has grown in number. We now have a good team of enthusiastic volunteers who are enjoying the various tasks that they have agreed to take on.

Sadly, Mark Whiteley(PC) decided that, because of his work commitments and PC duties, he did not have enough time to devote to the NP, given the considerable documentation that needed to be read and work that needed to be undertaken by each SG member. Consequently, he resigned as Vice Chair and from the SG on 23 June 2023.

Jo Totton (CBE) has been asked to take on the role of Chair to the Dumfries and Galloway Board of the Housing Trust in Glasgow that she has been an executive director of for some years. She remains interested in the work of the SG and will assist on all matters relating to housing, which is her specialism, but can no longer attend meetings due to her commitments with the Housing Trust.

3. The learning curve

All members of the SG commenced work on the NP by extensive reading of: the Locality Roadmap and other relevant Locality advice documents on neighbourhood planning; at least 2 but often more, of the made NP's in Northumberland and also made plans from across the country; the Parish Plan; the 2021 Census.

These documents and the discussion around then gave members a better understanding the NP process.

[Some SG members have read many other documents including: the NLP 2022 either relating to a subject area allocated to the SG member or in the summary that has been prepared; the NPPF in relation to their subject area.]

4. Information gathering

NP's have common themes and these include:

*How the history of the designated area informs the process by demonstrating that which makes the area, in this case the Parish and all the vibrant villages within it, the special place that it is today.

*The preservation and enhancement of the environment both natural and built - including habitats of interest; climate change; the need for green spaces and protected spaces; the potential need for additional housing for downsizing and affordable housing; design codes for new housing.

*The protection and enhancement of footpaths.

*Transport issues within the Parish and wider concerns about road safety at the A1 junctions.

*Consideration of the businesses within and economy of the Parish.

*The protection of the vibrant communities within the Parish and enhancing the facilities afforded to them.

The research into and reporting upon the different aspects of the NP have been split up between teams of members of the SG. The teams comprise those with the best skills and interests to enable the best information to be brought back to the SG.

Similarly, those with skills and interest in the promotion of the NP and the management of the project are working together to ensure that we are steadily moving forward to the end goal.

I am very pleased to say that because all SG members are making a good contribution to the process, we are moving forward more quickly than the original project plan indicated that we might.

5. Raising awareness of the NP within the Parish

By setting up a Facebook page; working with the PC to update the PC website with information; placing articles and flyers in The Column; using Posters around the Parish and appearing at local events (Newton on the Moor coffee morning and Swarland and Newton Show), we have already started to raise awareness. People within the Parish are now talking about the Neighbourhood Plan and SG members have been approached and asked what the NP is all about.

In due course, we will hold events to which residents of the Parish will be invited so that they can give their views on any policies that the SG propose are included in the plan. Following these events, we will look at whether we need to make any alterations to those policies.

5. Next steps

Once we have gathered as much information as possible, the SG will have to determine the policies that come out of that information. NCC and possibly consultants paid for by grant funding, will advise on the inclusion of and wording of the policies.

We will send out a questionnaire to all households based on the policies identified and seeking comment. We will also post an online version for people to complete.

We also intend to send a questionnaire to businesses inviting their comments and meet with any businesses who are willing to do so.

From the replies to questionnaires and any meetings that take place, the SG will consider further amendments to the policies if need be.

6. Conclusion

As you will have seen from the above, much work has been undertaken and the SG is moving through the project plan. We hope to report to the PC again in December/January.

Donna Corbin