



Newbiggin by the Sea Town Plan

2010 to 2015



Sustainability through Collaboration



Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Town Council Role	4
What is a Town Plan?	4
Town Council Mission Statement	5
Town Council Aims.....	5
Town Council Objectives	5
Understanding the Background.....	7
The Environment	7
The Economy	7
Social and Community.....	8
Transport and Accessibility.....	8
Change in Government.....	8
Research and Development of the Plan	9
Consultation	9
Results of the Town Survey.....	9
Results from the Town Assembly	13
Delivering the Objectives	14
Other Potential Projects	16
Service Delivery Adoption.....	17
Devolved Service Delivery	17
Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation	19
Acknowledgements.....	20
Contact Us.....	20

Introduction

Northumberland County Council was established as the new Unitary Authority for Northumberland on 1st April 2009. As part of this process, Wansbeck District Council was disbanded and Parish Councils were established in their place. Newbiggin Town Council was formed at this point and inception in June 2009.

Newbiggin Town Council will work with Northumberland County Council and other agencies to deliver a range of services and projects within Newbiggin by the Sea.

Following a survey of residents and businesses, and further consultation with key bodies, Newbiggin Town Council has created this Town Plan summarising its aims and aspirations for the next five years. This report provides a summary of those findings and the research that helped shape these plans.

Newbiggin by the Sea has a rich heritage of mining and fishing, the oldest working lifeboat station in the United Kingdom, a south-facing bay and key historical buildings including St Bartholomew's Church and Woodhorn Church. It has a population of approximately 6,500 and is located in South East Northumberland, with neighbouring parishes of Ashington and Bedlington.

It is important for the future and success of Newbiggin by the Sea and the Town Council that residents, businesses and other key stakeholders' voices are heard regarding the development and progression of the Town, and are involved in the process of developing the Town Plan. To this end, a range of stakeholders have been consulted in different ways and at different stages of this plan's development.

The Town Council has responsibility to represent our constituents and obtain the best outcome for them in any negotiations and service settlements. We aim to influence external agencies to undertake a range of work on our behalf for the benefit of the Town, thereby maximising our limited resources.

Town Council Role

The role of the Town Council is:

- To provide democratic and representational voice for the community;
- To support and contribute towards local regeneration and development;
- To provide quality and economic local council services;
- To liaise with other agencies providing public services.

What is a Town Plan?

A Town Plan is an action plan for the next few years. This document will include a wide range of plans covering topics including the local economy, tourism and community. It is important that this Town Plan reflects the needs and wishes of the local community, within the context of the Town, Region and National environment.

In addition to being developed through consultation with key stakeholders, the Town

Plan is to be kept under review and used as a guide and framework for developments and priority-setting. It will be used to influence and direct future policies and strategies, and should be used by other groups and organisations within Newbiggin by the Sea, plus by funding bodies and partnerships, to develop and deliver strategies, in reference to this working document.

It is based on research and local knowledge, community surveys and participation. It has been drawn up in conjunction with other key providers within Newbiggin by the Sea, such as the County Council, Health, Education, businesses and residents.

Town Council Mission Statement

The mission statement for the Town Council is:

Sustainability through Collaboration

Town Council Aims

The Town Council has adopted five main aims, following consultation.

1. To raise the aspirations and prosperity of all our constituents, especially the young.
2. To improve our environment, providing a clean, tidy and aesthetically pleasing place to live, work and visit.
3. To encourage and support an increase in tourism.
4. To increase the skills base within the town, supporting adults into work.
5. To support an ageing population.

The major finances of the Town Council are raised through the Council Tax and this is known as the Precept. This allows the Town Council to undertake its work after taking into account any income raised through other means such as rents, fees and charges.

Town Council Objectives

We have agreed objectives to help us to fulfil our aims.

Raising aspirations

We will:

- Encourage all children to participate in arts, sports, literary and other community activities, so that active partnerships are developed with key providers in the next two years.
- Provide tuition-based opportunities for all 7 to 10 year old children in the town

over the next three years.

- Facilitate the training of ten future community workers over the next three years.

Improving our environment

We will:

- Increase the area of woodland around the community by a minimum of one acre per year over the next three years.
- Work with other agencies to promote responsible dog control to reduce the number of complaints received by the Town Council.
- Maintain Northumbria in Bloom RHS Silver Gilt status annually for the next two years.

Increasing tourism

We will:

- Investigate the feasibility of hosting a regular town farmers' market, to decide on continued feasibility by August 2010.
- Support a programme of sporting, arts and community events throughout the year.
- Investigate tourist information, parking and toilet facilities, producing fully researched and costed proposals for consideration at the December 2010 budget meeting.

Increasing skills

We will:

- Support the creation of apprenticeships and training opportunities within the town, creating six opportunities for Newbiggin by the Sea residents within the next three years.

Supporting the elderly

We will:

- Investigate the requirements for community transport, producing a fully researched and costed proposal for the December 2010 budget meeting.

Understanding the Background

As part of the process we considered major areas likely to be influential or of concern. These included:

- The Environment;
- The Economy;
- Social and Community;
- Transport and Accessibility;
- Changes in Government.

The Environment

Newbiggin by the Sea benefits from a diverse environment including two extensive Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), but lacks significant areas of woodland. Some areas of Newbiggin by the Sea require a great deal of care and clean-up, including former quarry land behind the East Lea housing estate, and the land south of the West End Allotments. In 2007, a new beach was installed, and this dramatic feature requires ongoing maintenance and regular cleaning and combing.

Neighbourhood issues such as litter and graffiti are ongoing, but are tempered by high-profile and good quality bedding planting and grounds maintenance through the main entrances into the town, undertaken largely by Northumberland County Council. It is essential that this corridor remains well maintained to attract visitors to the town.

Greater community involvement, from residents, school children and businesses is required to sustain the improvements in the environment throughout the town.

The Economy

Newbiggin by the Sea has persistently high unemployment and comparatively low wages, with 80% of houses (2,500 of 3,300 properties) at band A. These factors combine to make it difficult to raise a significant precept without having high house-hold rates.

We are currently experiencing difficult economic circumstances, which will result in the reduction of services from Northumberland County Council and also contribute to empty premises within the town, including quite a catalogue of high profile buildings along the main roads. Empty properties will be added to over the next year or so as the school profile changes and a new school building is established.

However, we have a developing tourism industry within Newbiggin by the Sea, which will be assisted by the opening of the Newbiggin Maritime Heritage Centre in 2011. There has been intense regeneration activity throughout the town centre, and we have a growing calendar of events throughout the year for locals and visitors to participate in.

Social and Community

Newbiggin by the Sea has a thriving social and community scene, with many groups actively contributing to the spirit of the community. One group, the Maritime Heritage Centre and the installation of the Mary Joicey, is a fantastic example of the power of community within Newbiggin by the Sea, and is not alone in delivering high quality, diverse, community-led initiatives.

However, the Newbiggin Sports and Community Centre remains under threat from funding cuts at County level, and its loss would be a significant blow to our community.

Transport and Accessibility

We have influenced the development of the Local Transport Plan at Northumberland County Council by providing our three most important developments for this plan, namely: improving the foot and cycle paths along Spittal Farm; introducing a footpath and cycle way from the Moor Estate to the site of the new school; and introducing 20mph speed restrictions on all non-classified roads.

Challenges exist: Newbiggin by the Sea remains a cul-de-sac and detour off the main coastal route, and highways signs do not encourage tourists into the town. Additionally, significant changes in the bus routes from Newbiggin by the Sea, and the reintroduction of a local bus service, have proven challenges for our interconnectivity with other local areas.

Change in Government

The former Wansbeck District Council and Northumberland County Council were merged with other local authorities to create the Unitary Authority in April 2009. This, together with significant central government spending cuts, has led to extremely stretched resources at County level. In addition, the central government's 'Big Society' strategy, although incomplete in detail, will almost certainly result in the local community being required to accept responsibility for local services that had in the past been under the control of the County or District Councils. Our mission for sustainability through collaboration is likely to become ever more important in the coming years.

Research and Development of the Plan

Consultation

A number of consultation processes were undertaken during the development of this plan.

Town Councillors discussed and debated aspects of the town plan, potential projects, aims and objectives in informal meetings and during a strategy day during which the aims and objectives were drafted.

Members of the public, including all residents and many businesses and other interested associates of Newbiggin by the Sea were consulted via the town survey which was published in the Council Courier in June 2010. 185 responses were received (5.6% response rate), including 107 free-text comments. The responses have been analysed and the results are included within this plan.

The first Annual Town Assembly was held on 23rd June 2010 and feedback was sought via discussion tables on key areas of the town plan following initial survey result analysis. Responses from this event are included within this plan.

Several working groups have been established involving community representatives, investigating and working on projects including farmers' market trials, community transport, Woodhorn Church and seasonal lighting. The findings and recommendations of these working groups are reported back to the full Council and decisions are made as a direct result of the work undertaken by these groups.

The Town Plan has been drawn together through other research too, including reference to the Charter of Local Councils, as drawn up by the Northumberland Association of Local Councils (NALC) and agreed by NALC and the County Council. It considers the local, regional and national situation where appropriate, and draws influence from County Council policies and strategies, plus those of other existing and future stakeholders such as those involved in education, health and police. It also uses results and recommendations from other surveys conducted within Newbiggin by the Sea, such as the Community Area Partnership Neighbourhood Strategy, published following extensive local consultation in 2008.

The draft plan was disseminated to specific County Councillors and Officers, and local Parish and Town Councils, plus other key stakeholders, for their feedback and input.

Following the assimilation of this range of feedback, and the refinement of the plan as a result, the plan was formally adopted on 8th December 2010.

Results of the Town Survey

The Town Survey was conducted in June 2010 and 185 responses were received from the questionnaires that were distributed in the Council Courier.

Quantitative feedback

We asked respondents to rate the importance of our identified aims. On a scale of 1

to 5, where 1 was not important at all and 5 was very important, all aims were rated 4 or more (see Figure 1).

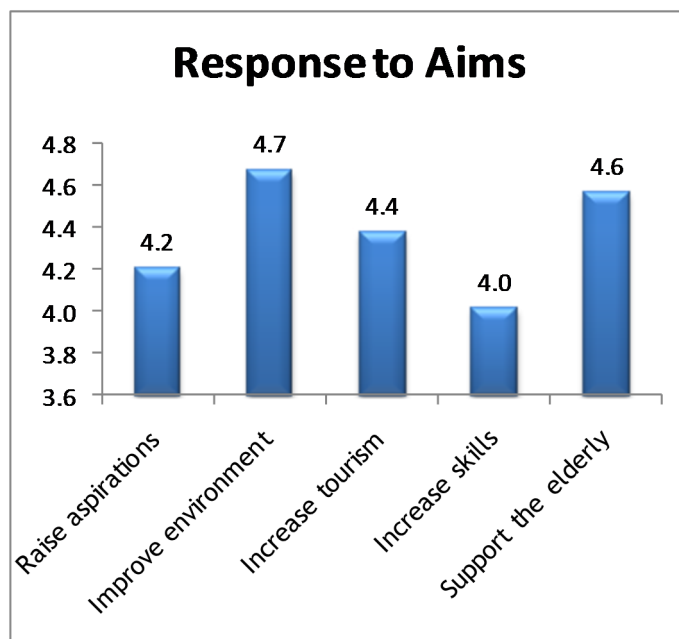


Figure 1. Response to Town Council aims in Town Survey, June 2010.

These aims were adopted formally by the Town Council on 11th August 2010.

Consultation of the Objectives took place alongside the aims. Thirteen project ideas were suggested, aligned to the objectives. Most projects received strong support, with five projects being rated most important and most desirable (see Figure 2):

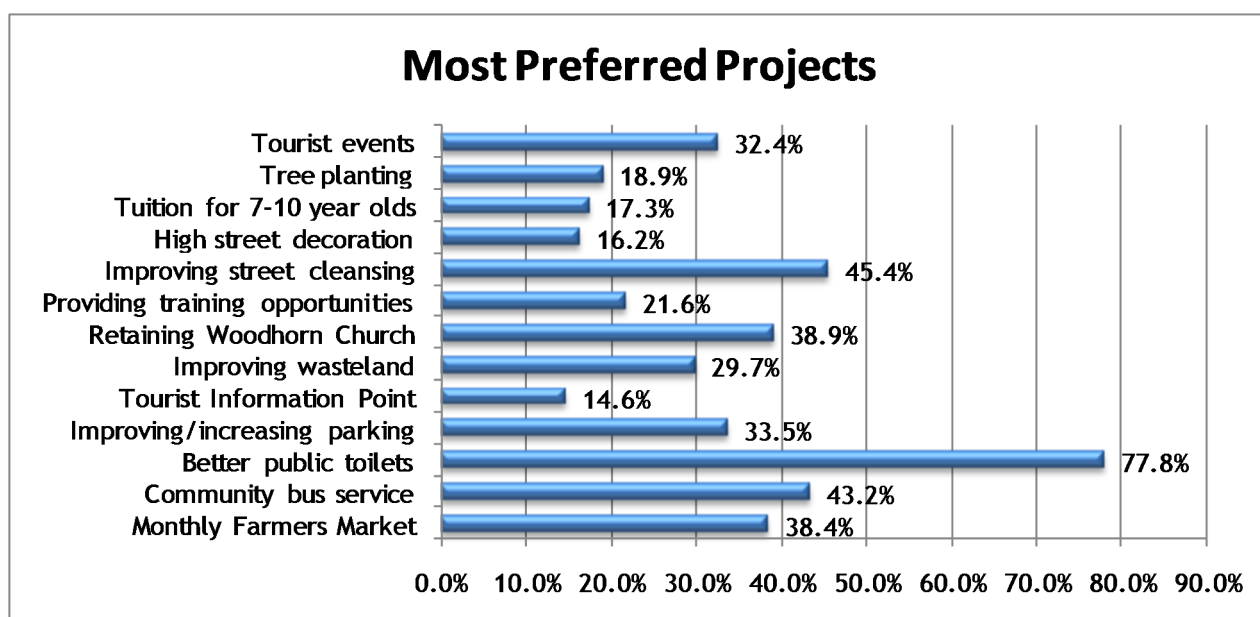


Figure 2. Most preferred projects, Town Survey, June 2010.

1. 77.8% Better public toilets.
2. 45.4% Improving street cleansing.
3. 43.2% Community bus service.
4. 38.9% Retaining Woodhorn Church.
5. 38.4% Monthly Farmers' Market.

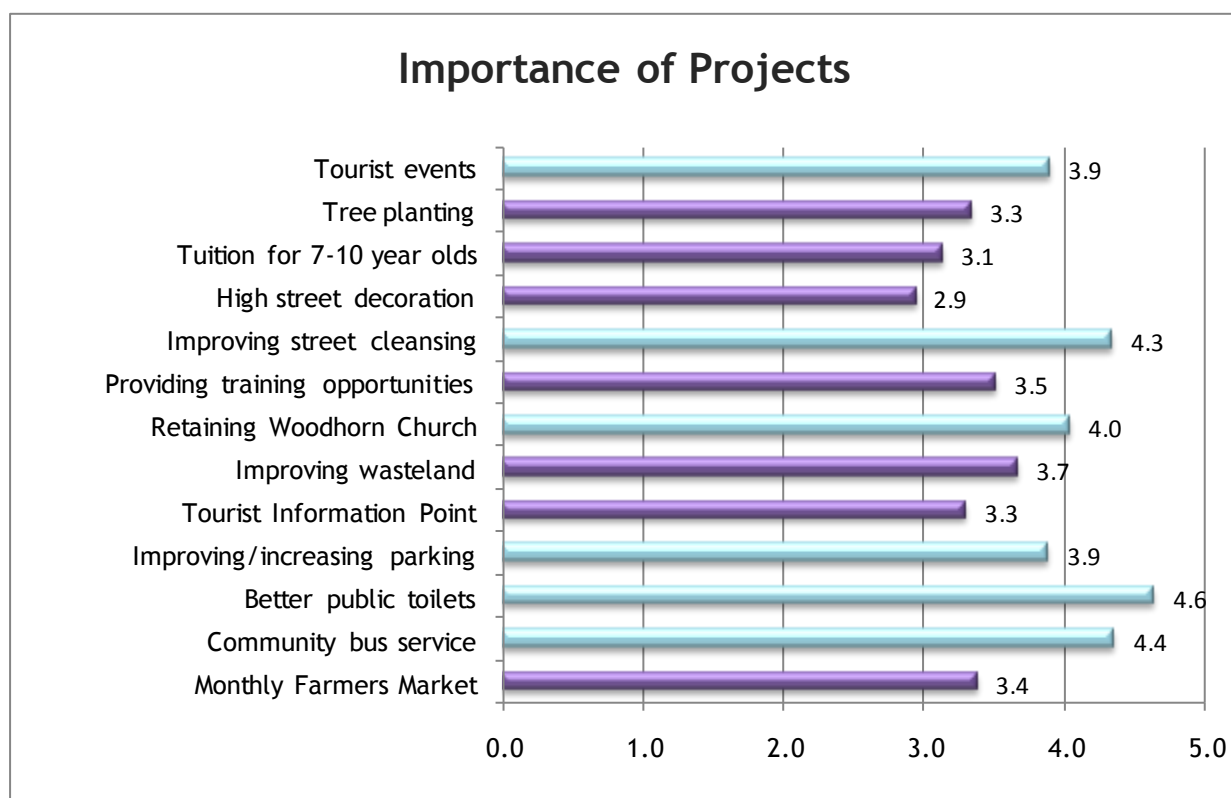


Figure 3. Most important projects, Town Survey responses, June 2010.

Of these five key projects, work began on four of them by mid-2010:

1. Better public toilets: facilities at Prospect Place were refurbished and decorated in July 2010, and the service level provided was increased by one cleaning a week throughout the summer months.
2. Community bus service: a working group was formed in July 2010 to investigate feasible options for reinstating a community bus service that was cancelled due to County Council cut-backs. Agreement with the County Council and local users, in conjunction with the Town Council, has ensured that this bus service has initially been reinstated from end of October 2010 until March 2011.
3. Retaining Woodhorn Church: a working group has been established to investigate options for using this deconsecrated and historic church, within constraints of finance and a restrictive covenant on this grade II listed building.
4. Monthly Farmers' Market: two trial markets were held in August and September 2010 to great success, and following further consultation with traders, plus

extremely positive feedback from stall holders and visitors, we are considering continuing funding this market next year.

However, further work is necessary, and approaches have been set out in the Delivering our Objectives section (see page 14).

Qualitative feedback

Free-text comments were received from 107 respondents. Responses were analysed and key topic areas taken from the feedback. These were grouped into 6 major areas:

- Activities;
- Community;
- Council;
- Street scene;
- Tourism;
- Transport.

Comments most frequently covered issues regarding Tourism (24.8%), Street Scene (21.2%) and Activities (19.8%) (see Figure 4). This included a range of topics, including the most frequently-noted subjects of public toilets (24 references), street cleaning (11 references), litter bins (10 references) and dog fouling (10 references).

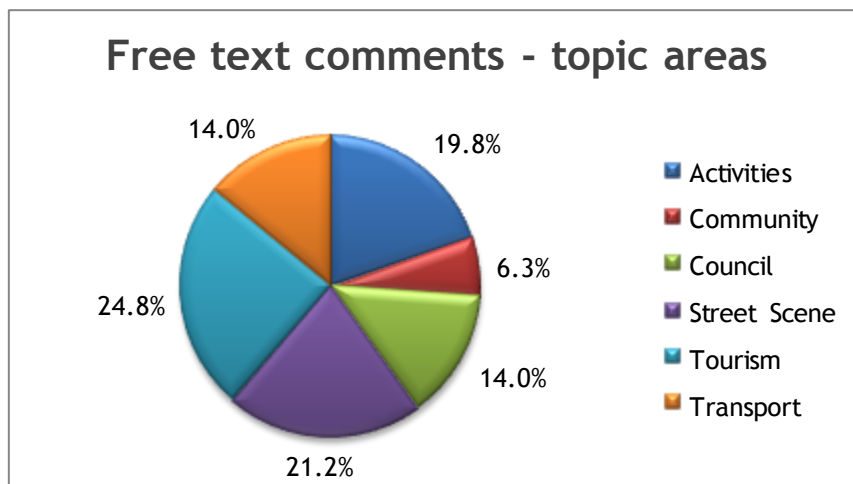


Figure 4. Free text comments grouped by topic area, from Town Survey June 2010.

Other issues that were commented upon several times over included no dogs on the beach (8), community bus (8), enforce anti-social behaviour laws (7), youth activities (7), dogs on the beach (6), bus shelters wanted (6), no more bus shelters wanted (5), fayre day (5), Farmers' market (4) and dog litter bins (4).

These comments largely align themselves with the qualitative feedback received in the survey.

Some interesting suggestions were made in the free-text comments. Ideas such as a

beach warden or coastal rangers, lifeguard, installing tourist telescopes along the promenade, combining activities for the young and old, asking traders to provide publically available toilets, improving cycle routes and providing deckchairs on the beach are all worthy of consideration too.

Results from the Town Assembly

The first Annual Town Assembly was held on 23rd June 2010 and was attended by Town and County Councillors, representatives from five community groups and members of the public. Following a series of presentations, four workshop sessions were held covering the topics Valuing the Environment, Public Toilets, Town Cleanliness and Tourism.

A range of ideas were generated from each of these exercises:

- Valuing our Environment: Nature reserves; woodland biodiversity; environmental volunteers; home composting; cycle tracks; retaining green spaces.
- Public Toilets: Provided by shops, pubs, cafes and heritage sites; town caretaker/town centre manager; staffing the toilets.
- Town Cleanliness: More dog litter bins; better bins at a more suitable height for children to use; use youth offenders to clean the streets and remove graffiti; tackle dog fouling, litter and fly tipping; include run down areas and back streets.
- Tourism: Better signage; cleaner environment and public toilets; better publicity for events; tourist information centre; tackling anti-social behaviour and litter; hotel; promoting existing features.

The Town Assembly will be an annual event hosted by the Town Council and will seek to inform future developments.

Delivering the Objectives

We will:...

Encourage participation of children in activities

Work with partners from the voluntary, education and leisure sectors to deliver a range of activities for children throughout the year.

Work with library services and schools to run a literary event for children.

Tuition based opportunities for 7-10 year olds

Work with partners from the voluntary and education sectors to expand existing tuition-based activities, to meet and increase demand.

Community workers' training

Work with voluntary and government sectors to create and promote opportunities for community workers.

Support community worker professional development by funding activities for children and commissioning workers in Newbiggin by the Sea.

Woodland planting

Work with Northumberland County Council on decisions affecting the location of tree planting and the variety of species through the Trees and Bees scheme.

Provide a dedicated area within Newbiggin by the Sea where trees can be planted in dedication to loved ones.

Dog control

Work with Northumberland County Council to enforce dog bylaws and encourage responsible dog ownership.

Northumbria in Bloom

Work with the voluntary sector, schools, Northumberland County Council, businesses, residents' associations and individuals to develop tailored schemes throughout Newbiggin by the Sea, including grow-your-own initiatives.

Review the Northumberland County Council service schedule for planting and maintenance and identify areas for service level enhancement or change of service for the improvement of Newbiggin by the Sea.

Work with the voluntary sector, schools, Northumberland County Council, businesses, residents' associations and individuals to redevelop wasteland areas in Newbiggin by the Sea for the benefit of wildlife, residents and visitors.

Establish and support a Seafront Strategy Group to oversee developments on the promenade and beach, maintain the area and seek funding for its continued

improvement.

Seek to instigate regular and frequent litter picks throughout the town, involving residents and other interested parties.

Continue to run an annual Gardens Competition.

Farmers' market

Support the Farmers' Market by continuing funding and promoting this event, and working with local traders and other interested parties to ensure its continued success.

Supporting community events

Support the creation of an annual events leaflet to advertise activities within the town throughout the year.

Continue to provide a small grants scheme to support activities for the benefit of Newbiggin by the Sea.

Continue to support key sporting events in Newbiggin by the Sea, including the Triathlon and Power-lifting competitions.

Commission groups within Newbiggin by the Sea to host events throughout the year.

Host an annual community meeting to promote groups and activities within the town, encourage links between groups, and develop a cohesive and comprehensive calendar of activities within Newbiggin by the Sea for the year.

Work with the voluntary sector, Police and Northumberland County Council to host an annual Action week to promote community cohesion, personal safety, community pride and individual responsibility.

Tourist information, parking, public toilets

Consider innovative ways of providing good quality public toilets throughout Newbiggin by the Sea.

Enhance the service level provision for toilet cleaning at the Prospect Place toilets.

Work with relevant organisations and Northumberland County Council to develop a Traffic Management Plan for the town, including tourist information and public parking.

Work with appropriate agencies to provide improved signage throughout the town, to identify and repair damaged road surfaces, to improve general road safety and to improve signage on major routes near Newbiggin by the Sea.

Set priorities and work with the Northumberland County Council Highways Authority to identify and deliver local traffic safety schemes including our Local Transport Plan priorities (see page 8).

Work with relevant partners, including Friends of Woodhorn Church, Northumberland County Council, English Heritage, the Church and building owners, to secure a positive future for Woodhorn Church.

Apprenticeships and training opportunities

Work with voluntary, business and government sectors to promote opportunities for apprenticeships and training in Newbiggin by the Sea.

Work with education, statutory and voluntary organisations to promote adult learning resources and opportunities.

Work towards the provision of business start-up units.

Community transport

Continue to contribute to the funding of the Newbiggin Nipper community bus to provide sustainable community transport, in conjunction with Northumberland County Council, provided that sufficient demand for this service is demonstrated.

Other Potential Projects

Consultation and Town Council meetings have highlighted a range of other projects that fall outside the areas already defined. These projects deserve individual consideration:

- Installing tourist telescopes along the seafront.
- Develop an effective Empty Buildings Policy.
- Community Allotment project with Wansbeck CVS.
- Improve childcare provision within Newbiggin by the Sea.
- Promote the Neighbourhood Watch scheme.
- Promote an effective scheme for recording minor incidents.
- Provide a gateway feature for the B1334 entrance to Newbiggin by the Sea.

The key to the success of delivering most projects is to ensure that sound and diverse partnerships are created with relevant organisations, in order to fulfil these priorities in conjunction with the Town Council.

Service Delivery Adoption

The following functions and services are expected under the Charter to be managed (where they exist and serve local needs) and financed by local councils.

- Allotments: statutory transfer in April 2009, generating a net income and managed successfully by the Allotments Association.
- Bus shelters: pre-2003 installations from 2011. We will develop a strategy to deal with these effectively.
- Public seats: from 2011. We will develop a strategy to deal with these effectively, including consideration of accepting donations and dedications.
- Burial grounds and mortuaries.
- Commons and village greens.
- Parks, playing fields, playgrounds and other open spaces for the local community.
- Public halls and community centres (where not run by a separate charity).
- Seasonal lighting: Adopted in 2009; we will work with the Traders Association, Churches Together, schools and other interested parties to provide effective seasonal lights and celebrations.
- Town twinning. We will consider opportunities for town twinning activities.
- War memorials and other monuments.

Services not yet scheduled for transfer from the County Council to the Town Council will be supported with well-researched strategies if service transfer is expected.

Devolved Service Delivery

Other service areas could be adopted from the County Council for delivery by the Town Council, although a special case would need to be made. Nevertheless, there is scope within these areas to augment the existing service level delivered.

- Arts facilities
- Car parking
- Closed churchyards
- Country parks
- Crime prevention measures
- Dog control
- Graffiti removal

- Grounds maintenance
- Libraries and museums
- Litter collection and enforcement
- Markets: wholly funded by the Town Council.
- Public access points/one-stop shops
- Public rights of way maintenance
- Public toilets: Prospect Place enhancement increase of service level.
- Road and pavement maintenance
- Road safety measures
- School crossing patrols
- Street cleaning
- Street signage maintenance and cleaning
- Tourist information and centres
- Waste recycling collection points



Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

It is critical that regular reviews of the plan and progress against it are undertaken to ensure and maintain success in achieving the many ambitious goals agreed. The following steps will be taken to ensure that the plan is regularly and properly monitored, reviewed and evaluated:

- Priorities will be set and projects instigated at Town Council meetings, involving a range of partners in the region.
- Progress will be monitored in Town Council meetings once every three months.
- Thorough evaluation of the progress of implementation and current priorities will take place annually in advance of the Annual Town Assembly.

Information relating to projects and feedback on progress will be distributed via the Town Council to its constituents and partners via a range of communication methods including newsletters, the website and formal public meetings.



Acknowledgements

We would like to thank officers and members at Northumberland County Council and other local Parish and Town Councils for their support in creating this Plan. We would also like to thank Newbiggin by the Sea constituents who contributed via the survey and Town Assembly.

Contact Us

You can contact us in writing or in person to our registered office:

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You can telephone us on 01670 811048, email the Town Clerk at TownClerk@newbiggintowncouncil.gov.uk or visit our website at www.newbiggintowncouncil.gov.uk.

A large text version of this document is available. Please contact the Town Clerk on 01670 811048 or at TownClerk@newbiggintowncouncil.gov.uk for a copy, or if you require it in alternative formats (such as Braille or Audio).



All information is correct at time of publication (December 2010).

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