



**Tarset and Greystead Neighbourhood
Development Plan
2015-2035**

Pre-Submission Draft – (March 2015)

Appropriate Assessment Screening Opinion

1st May 2015

1. Introduction

This screening opinion report has been prepared by the Northumberland National Park Authority in order to support the Tasset and Greystead Neighbourhood Development Plan which has been produced by Tasset and Greystead Parish Council in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. These state that submitted plans need to be accompanied by a statement explaining how the proposed Plan meets the 'basic conditions' set out in Schedule 4B of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act. These basic conditions include a requirement to demonstrate how the Plan is compatible with EU obligations (including Appropriate/Habitat Regulations Assessment).

The aim of this screening opinion report is to assess whether there might be any potential impacts on 'European Sites' that may be affected by the proposed Neighbourhood Plan. This report assesses, as far as practicable, whether there are any likely significant impacts on European Sites within relative proximity to the Neighbourhood Area designated by Tasset & Greystead Parish Council for the purposes of the Neighbourhood Plan.

This will ensure that the Tasset and Greystead Neighbourhood Development Plan does not contain any policies that might cause an adverse effect on the integrity of a European site. A European site is either a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designated under the Habitats Regulations (1994) or a Special Protection Area for Birds (SPA) designated under the Birds Directive (1979). The outcome of this assessment will influence the submission draft of the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

2. The requirement for assessment

Article 6(3) of the European Habitats Directive¹ requires that, in the event that a plan or project will result in likely significant effects upon sites under the provision of the Directive responsible bodies should undertake an 'Appropriate Assessment' of their impact upon the integrity of European nature conservation sites. This requirement has also been transposed into UK law. Although Ramsar sites (sites designated in accordance with the Ramsar Convention on wetlands) are not part of this European habitat network, as a matter of government policy and guidance, the same assessment processes are applied to such sites.

An Appropriate Assessment is only required where there is the likelihood of significant effects. Implicit within the wording of the Habitats Directive is the precautionary principle, whereby if an effect upon a designated site is inconclusive or uncertain, a full assessment should still be made. Only where it can be stated conclusively that there will be no likely significant adverse effects on designated sites will it be deemed unnecessary to undertake a full assessment.

¹ Directive 92/43/EEC - The Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (Habitats Directive).

3. Methodology

This report is focussed at Stage 1 of the assessment process – the objective is to ‘screen out’ those plans and projects that can, without any highly detailed appraisal, be said to be unlikely to result in significant adverse effects upon European sites, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, usually because there is no mechanism for an adverse interaction with European sites. The results are presented in a simple tabular form.

This assessment was carried out by officers at the Northumberland National Park Authority and is considered to have been carried out in sufficient detail to be fit for purpose. Guidance was followed from Department for Communities and Local Government via the document ‘Planning for the Protection of European Sites: Appropriate Assessment’ and from Natural England via the document ‘Draft guidance, the Habitats Regulations Assessment of Regional Spatial Strategies and Sub-regional Strategies’. A table of local relevant Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) in and around the parish was obtained from a Natural England Geographical Information System (GIS) download.

The Taret and Greystead Neighbourhood Development Plan is currently at the pre-submission stage and any recommendations from this assessment can be taken into account before the final document is submitted to the relevant Local Planning Authorities. Other plans taken into consideration as part of the assessment are listed in Appendix 1. There are no current projects that the Authority is aware of that were considered relevant to this assessment.

The Appropriate Assessment process can be separated into 3 main tasks:

1. **Likely significant effects** (also known as screening). This is to determine whether the further two tasks are required.
2. **Appropriate Assessment and ascertaining the effect on site integrity.** This is to determine whether the plan will have an adverse effect on the integrity of a European site.
3. **Mitigation and alternative solutions.** This task should be undertaken if an option is found to have an adverse effect on the integrity of a European site.

Task 1 was carried out by assessing each policy in the Development Plan and for the draft settlement envelopes. The results can be found in table 3. For task 2, if there was a possibility that a policy could have a significant effect it was examined more carefully and the results can be found in table 4.

Other plans were considered in combination and are listed in Appendix 1. There are no current projects that the Authority is aware of that were considered relevant to this assessment.

SACs within the plan area:

- Border Mires/Kielder – Butterburn. This SAC is made up of several constituent SSSIs. One of the constituent SSSI is partly within the plan area – Kielder mires. The units known as Bolts Law, Chirdon, Coom Rigg Moss, Hurtle winter, The Shanks, Muckle Samuel, Humble Hill, Paddaburn
- North Pennines Dales Meadows. Two of the constituent SSSIs are wholly within the plan area - Greenhaugh meadow and Thorneyburn meadow.

SACs near the boundary of the Northumberland National Park:

- Other constituent SSSIs in the Border Mires, Kielder-Butterburn SAC - Kielderhead and Emblehope Moors, Butterburn Flow, Spadeadam Mires and Lampert mosses are adjacent or close to the parish boundary.

There are no SPAs within or near the plan area boundary that would require consideration (see Maps 1 & 2 for further detail). There is one Ramsar site – at Irthinghead mires but this is within the Border Mires/Kielder – Butterburn site and does not need separate examination.

Table 1: SACs in and adjacent to Tarset and Greystead Parish and the qualifying features for inclusion under the Habitats Regulations.

SAC Name	Qualifying Habitat	Qualifying Species
Border Mires, Kielder-Butterburn	Blanket bogs. Petrifying springs with tufa formation. European dry heaths. Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> . Transition mires and quaking bogs	None
North Pennines Dales Meadows	<i>Molinia</i> meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils Mountain hay meadows.	None

Settlements in and around each SAC

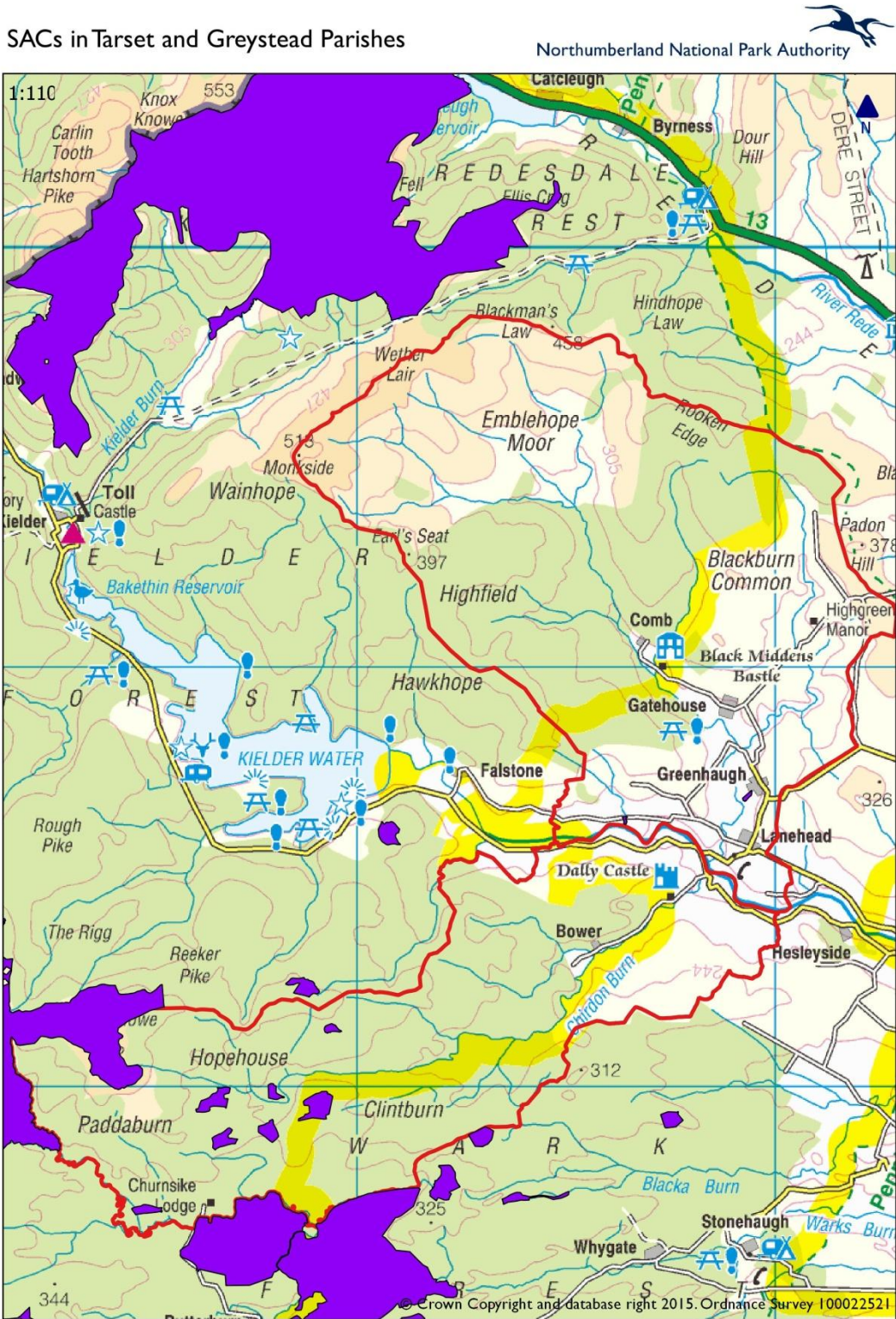
In order to screen the possible effects of the policies it was considered important to assess where the main settlements in the parish are with respect to the SACs as the majority of the policies relate to buildings and development. See table 2 below.

Table 2: Proximity of settlements in Tasset and Greystead to SACs

SAC Name	Settlements within	Proximity of settlements/ buildings to SACs	Buildings within SAC
Border Mires/Kielder – Butterburn	None	None within 5km	No
North Pennine Dales Hay Meadows	None	Greenhaugh main settlement approximately 0.5km from Greenhaugh Meadow. Nearest building c. 75m. Thorneyburn meadow approx 2.5km from the edge of Lanehead. Nearest building c.50m	No

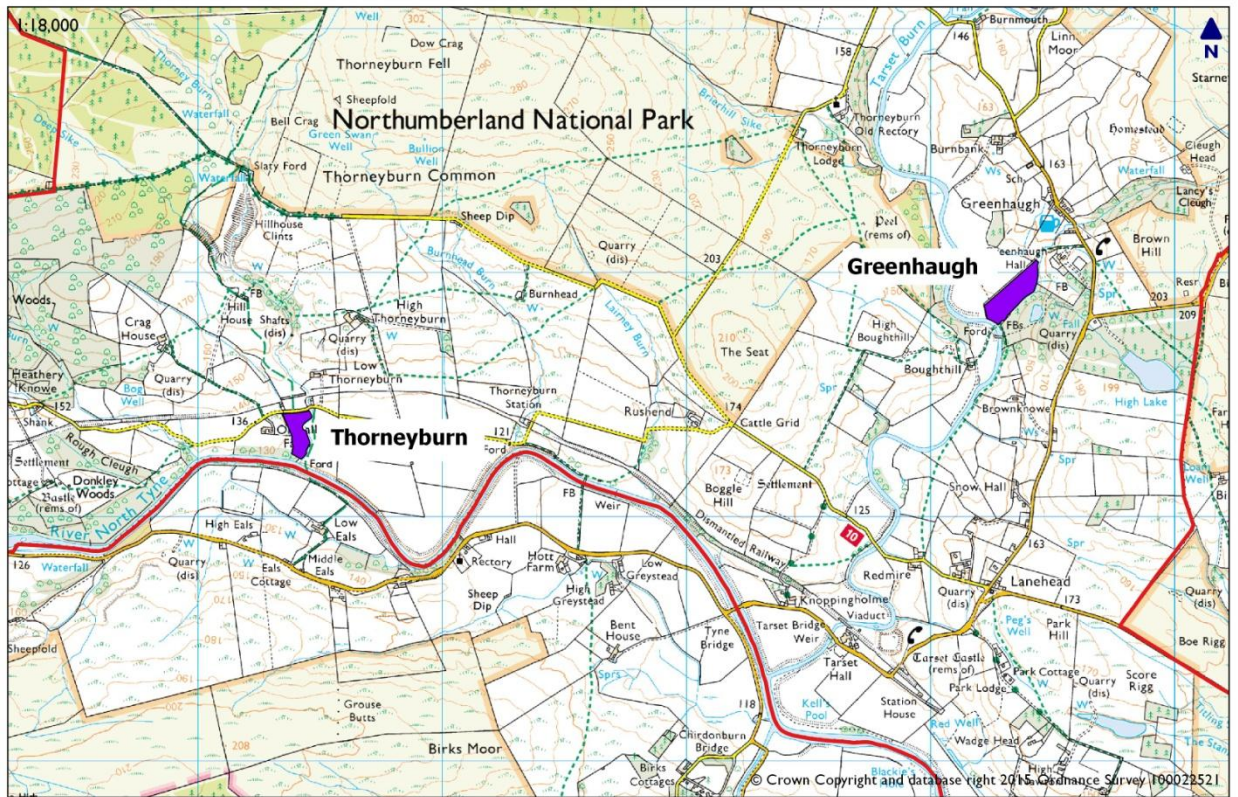
The SACs surrounding the parish were also examined to determine if there were any settlements or buildings within the parish that may have an effect and there were none.

Map 1: SACs in and around Tasset and Greystead Parish.



Map 2: Close up of meadow SACs

Greenhaugh and Thorneyburn Meadows (part of North Pennine Dales Hay Meadows SAC)



4. Screening of Individual Policies

Each Policy was examined in turn and if it was obvious that it was either a policy that would have a positive effect or no effect on the features of interest of the SACs it was screened out at this stage. If at the initial screening it was considered that there was a chance that a policy could have an adverse effect on the integrity of a European site either within or adjacent to the National Park, the policy was taken forward for further more detailed assessment. Table 3 shows the results of this screening and explains the reasoning behind the decisions.

Table 3: Initial screening of policies.			
Policy	Policy intention	Potential effect on European Site (ES)	Details about decision to screen out or take forward for assessment.
Policy TG1 – New Development in Tasset and Greystead	TG1: Policy Intention To provide an overarching, positive framework for new development in the Plan area to meet the needs of local communities through the encouragement of all types of development where compatible with the purposes of the National Park and its policies.	Possible adverse effect depending on location and the development type	Take forward. New development does have the potential to affect ES depending on location and other policies.
Policy TG2 - General Development Principles	TG2: Policy Intention To provide a general policy to be applied alongside other policies in the Plan, to ensure that all new development is positive and beneficial to the local communities, local environment, heritage and landscape of Tasset and Greystead.	No adverse effect	Screen out. This is a general policy to work in tandem with other policies in the plan. Criteria a, f, j in particular protect special qualities, drainage, surface and ground water and ecology, all relevant to protecting the ES in the area.
Policy TG3 – High Quality and Sustainable Design	TG3: Policy Intention High quality design which reflects the character of the settlements and highly sensitive landscapes is central to all new development. This policy seeks to explain what is meant by high quality design and seeks to ensure that all new development incorporates the criteria identified below where relevant to the application.	No adverse effect	Screen out. This policy focuses on design in new development.
Policy TG4 – Protection of open space between Greenhaugh and Lanehead	TG4: Policy Intention This policy seeks to ensure that no development takes place in the open countryside between Lanehead and Greenhaugh except those proposals that accord with Paragraph 55 of the NPPF. The	No adverse effect	Screen out. This is a specific policy about keeping open space between the two settlements. This has no potential to cause an impact on an ES.

	purpose is to prevent a gradual merging of the two settlements and to keep a clear definition of character in terms of open countryside, settlement, and 'outliers' (see Policy TG5) and maintain the character of those areas.		
Policy TG5 – Spatial development in Lanehead	TG5: Policy Intention To provide a positive framework for new development in Lanehead which reflects the identified character of the settlement and to ensure that development is confined to the identified settlement areas.	Possible adverse effect depends on location	Take forward. The exact impact and scale depends on the type and location of the development around the settlement.
Policy TG6 – Spatial development in Greenhaugh	TG6: Policy Intention To provide a positive framework for new development in Greenhaugh which reflects the identified character of the settlement and to ensure that development is confined within the development edges as defined on Map 4.	Possible adverse effect depends on location and type of development.	Take forward. The settlement is adjacent to ES although none are within. Effects from outside ES should be investigated.
Policy TG7 – Conversion of Redundant Buildings	TG7: Policy Intention To provide a positive framework for the conversion of redundant buildings in the Plan area, giving an equal status to residential and business use. To ensure conversions are carried out sympathetically to maintain the historic integrity of the building and ensure the conversion has a minimal impact on the wider landscape.	No adverse effect	Screen out. This policy relates to redundant buildings and there are none within the ES or adjacent likely to affect the features of interest.
Policy TG8 – Heritage Assets	TG8 :- Policy Intention The purpose of this policy is to protect, enhance, and where possible interpret the historic environment of Tasset and Greystead, ensuring that new development	Possible adverse effect, depends on location	Take forward. Specific policy relating to heritage assets including the setting which has the potential to affect a ES. Assess with Policy TG10

	maintains the quality and distinctiveness of these assets, whether designated or not, and their settings. The policy seeks to reinforce local distinctiveness and character in planning decisions where changes are proposed which affect the historic environment.		
Policy TG9 – Tarnet and Greystead Bastles	TG9: Policy Intention To ensure that the important setting of the Bastles and the Tarnet Bastle Trail is maintained, and that future development does not prejudice the re-introduction of sight lines between groupings of bastles in the future.	No adverse effect	Screen out. This is a specific policy regarding the bastles and their setting which has no likely effect on the ES.
Policy TG10 – Archaeology	TG10: Policy Intention To ensure that archaeological remains are documented as part of any development proposal, and that remains of schedulable quality are not ignored because they are not scheduled.	Possible adverse effect, depends on location	Take forward. Assess with Policy TG8 for similar reasons.
Policy TG11 – Development in the Rolling Upland Valleys	TG11: Policy Intention To protect and enhance the special features of the Rolling Upland Valleys, and ensure new development reflects the special features identified in the Plan.	No adverse effect, could be positive	Screen out. This policy aims to protect and enhance features including hay meadows, criterion i) specifically mentions supporting and enhancing biodiversity and habitats
Policy TG12 - Development in the Rolling Uplands	TG12: Policy Intention To protect and enhance the special features including historic features of the Rolling Uplands landscape and ensure new development respects them. To ensure that the role of the Rolling Uplands as a 'setting' to the Rolling Uplands Valleys is respected for proposals for new development.	No adverse effect	Screen out. None of the SACs are found in this part of the parish.

<p>Policy TG13 – Development in the Moorland and Forest Mosaic</p>	<p>TG13: Policy Intention To preserve the quality of the landscape in the Moorland and Forest Mosaic, ensuring historic and archaeological features are retained/enhanced, and ensuring the special ecology of the area is improved. To ensure the special qualities of this landscape are preserved in new development proposals.</p>	<p>No adverse effect, could be positive</p>	<p>Screen out. This policy aims to protect and enhance features including mires, criterion d) specifically mentions improving biodiversity of the moorland and that development that affects the Border Mires will not be permitted.</p>
<p>Policy TG14 – Our Sustainable Local Economy</p>	<p>TG14: Policy Intention To create a positive framework for the local economy, whilst ensuring that any new business respects the special landscape in the Plan area, and the living conditions of local residents. To encourage more young people to stay and live and work in the Parish in order to maintain sustainable communities</p>	<p>Possible adverse effect</p>	<p>Take forward. Although this policy is about sustainable and small scale development there is the possibility that ES could be affected if the local economy took precedence. Adding to the wording may help reduce any possible impact.</p>
<p>Policy TG15 - Sustainable tourism and recreational development</p>	<p>TG15: Policy Intention The proposed policy seeks to support appropriate tourism development in Taret and Greystead where the proposal is of a scale appropriate to the area and does not have any unacceptable adverse effects upon the character of the landscape, tranquillity and Northumberland Dark Sky Park, local amenity or the natural and historic environment.</p>	<p>Possible adverse effect</p>	<p>Take forward. Although the policy intention mentions having no impact on the natural environment the policy wording does not. A change to the wording should be considered</p>
<p>Policy TG16 – Protection and Creation of Community Assets</p>	<p>TG16: Policy Intention To protect existing community assets for future generations, and provide a positive framework for the provision of new facilities where the opportunity arises. To ensure community assets identified in the Community Consultation process are not lost</p>	<p>No adverse effect</p>	<p>Screen out. This policy focuses specifically on some community assets.</p>

<p>Policy TG17 – Small scale renewable energy infrastructure</p>	<p>TG17: Policy Intention To promote small scale renewable energy in the Plan area, whilst ensuring that new renewables schemes do not compromise the special landscapes or amenity of residents</p>	<p>Possible adverse effect, depends on location</p>	<p>Take forward. Whilst solar arrays and wind turbines are unlikely to have a detrimental effect on the features of interest of the ES in the vicinity, but others such as micro hydro schemes could. Some addition to the wording and consideration of such schemes should be made.</p>
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5. Appropriate Assessment

Policies that were identified as having possible adverse effects on the integrity of a European site were taken forward to task 2 and details of the assessment are shown in table 4. The relationship with other policies in the document was also considered when deciding whether a policy could result in any adverse effect.

Table 4: Assessment of policies which could have an adverse effect on a European site

Policy	Assessment	Details
Policy TG1 – New Development in Tarsset and Greystead	No significant effect.	This is an over-arching development policy that ensures that all policies and proposals are sustainable. This includes ensuring that the purposes of the NNP are enshrined and in line with existing NNP policies (which have already been subject to an Appropriate Assessment (2008). Given the NNP Statutory Purposes and the principles set out in TG policy TG2, no developments will be permitted that affect ES. Any major development would have to have a full Environmental Impact Assessment and would not be permitted or would be mitigated to prevent any detrimental effect on an ES.
Policy TG5 – Spatial development in Lanehead	No significant effect.	Proposals map 3 was examined and the ES all fall out with the areas A-D identified as locations for development. Therefore there it is unlikely to have any effect on Thorneyburn meadow, the nearest ES.
Policy TG6 – Spatial development in Greenhaugh	No significant effect.	The specific wording of the policy identifies that development on the west side of the road (the side of Greenhaugh meadow) should be close to the road and thus away from the ES. Given the NNP Statutory Purposes and the principles set out in TG policy TG2, no developments will be permitted that affect ES. Any major development would have to have a full Environmental Impact Assessment and would not be permitted or would be mitigated to prevent any detrimental effect on an ES.
Policy TG8 – Heritage Assets & Policy TG10 – Archaeology	No significant effect.	Map 1 was examined and there are no scheduled monuments close to the ES or likely to have an effect by way of their setting. It is also concluded that although protection and enhancement of other historic features (including those subsequently discovered) could possibly have an effect on an ES, each case would be considered individually and protection of the ES would take precedence.

Policy TG14 – Our Sustainable Local Economy	No significant effect if wording is changed.	Change wording to add protected sites and/or biodiversity as examples of when planning permission would not be given to give equal protection with tranquillity and dark skies.
Policy TG15 - Sustainable tourism and recreational development	No significant effect if wording is changed.	Change wording to add protected sites and/or biodiversity as examples of criteria that should be met to give equal protection with heritage assets.
Policy TG17 – Small scale renewable energy infrastructure	No significant effect if wording is changed.	Changes to hydrological regimes that could result from microhydro energy generation schemes have the potential to affect the features of interest of all the ES. Wording should be added to include protection of the natural environment in the criteria.

6. Conclusion.

The table above suggests that there is likely to be no significant effect of the Tarsset & Greystead Neighbourhood Development Plan on the highlighted European Sites, and therefore a full Appropriate Assessment will not be required. This conclusion is based on the assumption that the wording of the draft policies will be amended in accordance with the suggestions set out in Table 4 (above). It is also assumed that these changes will be incorporated into the submission draft plan before it is submitted to Northumberland National Park Authority and Northumberland County Council in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

Appendix 1: Other plans taken into consideration as part of the assessment

- Northumberland National Park Management Plan (2009-14) – contains an overarching aim is to protection and enhancement of biodiversity.
- Northumberland National Park Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy & Development Policies Development Plan Document (2009).
- Tynedale District Local Plan Saved Policies (2007).
- Tynedale Core Strategy (2007).
- Northumberland Local Plan Core Strategy - Full Draft Plan (2014)
- Northumberland National Park Natural Environment Vision (2014) – this contains a vision for the Park to contain connected habitats and a specific action to maintain healthy upland habitats including protected sites. Connections to areas outside the Park boundary, for example sites in the remainder of the Tarncliffe and Greystead parish, are also highlighted as important.