

TARSET & GREYSTEAD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN: PRESS RELEASE

Residents of Tarset and Greystead are being asked by the Parish Council to help develop a 'Neighbourhood Plan' which will inform future planning decisions in the area

In 2011 the Government's *Localism Act* gave local communities new powers to produce their own Neighbourhood Plans - the key aim of which is to give local people a major statutory say in helping to shape development in the area in which they live. If the Neighbourhood Plan is adopted, its policies will have significant weight in future planning decisions – standing shoulder to shoulder with the policies put in place by the Government and the Local Planning Authority.

Tarset & Greystead was identified by Northumberland National Park as a 'front-runner' parish for the development of a Neighbourhood Plan. [REDACTED], Northumberland National Park Authority's Head of Planning, says: "Tarset and Greystead has a strong and well-informed community that is already actively involved in a range of issues, including planning. Neighbourhood Planning is billed by Government as a significant new part of the planning system. The work being done by Tarset and Greystead Parish provides a very good opportunity to test Neighbourhood Planning in a deep rural area."

In October 2012 the Parish Council established a six-member Steering Group to work towards the delivery of a draft *Tarset & Greystead Neighbourhood Plan*. Chaired by a member of the Parish Council, this holds fortnightly meetings at Tarset Village Hall. The Plan aims to put power into the hands of local residents, businesses and parish councils, and to give them a meaningful, statutory say in: what developments are appropriate for their area; where they want new homes or businesses to be built; what new buildings should look like; and what planning priorities should be. A Design Statement based on the wishes of residents will form an integral part of the Plan. At the same time the Plan will address issues relating to how Tarset & Greystead can remain a sustainable community into the future, including issues over employment; conserving the natural beauty and historic features of the Parish; the protection and management of its wildlife; local energy production and energy conservation; maintenance of 'dark skies'; and issues relating to road traffic and maintenance, walking, cycling, signage and litter.

On the advice of the Steering Group, it was decided that the Neighbourhood Plan should cover the whole Parish of Tarset & Greystead, including areas of afforestation. The Parish, which covers an area of over 75 square miles, yet has only 145 houses, and a population of less than 300 (2011 census), is made up of a number of diverse areas, mainly forestry, open moorland and hill farms, with settlements in the village of Greenhaugh and the hamlet of Lanehead. However, residents maintain close ties, and as a whole share the same aspirations for the Parish – a key reason for the Parish Council to ask the National Park Authority and Northumberland County Council to designate the whole of the Parish as a 'Neighbourhood' area.

The key to the Plan's success is community engagement. Following the production of a leaflet distributed to all in the Parish in November 2012 explaining how the Plan would be delivered with the help of residents, questionnaires have now been distributed to each household in the Parish, for completion by all those aged 16 and over. Engagement with younger members of the Parish has already begun with discussions held with children at Greenhaugh First School in July 2012. [REDACTED], Chair of the Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group said: "Our Group is very excited about the potential of this whole exercise, and we want to encourage everyone in the Parish of Tasset & Greystead to return their questionnaires so as to give us the fullest possible picture of what residents want for the future of the Parish." On completion, questionnaires will be analysed by the Steering Committee, and, together with feedback from an Open Day held at Tasset Village Hall in January 2012, and from businesses and young people, the information will inform the preparation of the draft Neighbourhood Plan. This will ensure the Plan really does reflect the wishes of residents, whilst taking into account national and local statutory policies and frameworks in relation to planning. The draft Plan will then be presented to the local community for consultation, as well as being independently examined.

A local referendum will then ensure that the community has the final say on whether the *Tasset & Greystead Neighbourhood Plan* comes into force in this area.