

People and Places

The Community Planning Bulletin for Northumberland Mid November 2009

Welcome to this latest edition of the community planning bulletin for Northumberland.

This issue brings you up to speed with the current work that is being undertaken across the partnership to update and review some of the county's key thematic strategies.

The Community Planning Framework for Northumberland

In the first issue of *People and Places*, we tried to make sense of the world of strategies by introducing the Community Planning Framework for Northumberland.

It identified a hierarchy of plans that are all designed to contribute to making the county a better place to live. The tiers within the hierarchy have been defined according to the scope and scale of this contribution.

So within this, tier 1 consists of the two main countywide strategies – the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and the Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy – which together provide the overarching strategic policy framework for the county in the longer term (i.e. 15-20 years). Essentially, they provide the context for all the other strategies produced within the county.

The tier 2 strategies are more focused in nature and generally have a medium term perspective i.e. 3 – 5 years. They provide the strategic framework for partnership activity with their main focus being the development and delivery of bespoke programmes of action.

This layer contains the broad thematic-based strategies which include:

- the Economic Strategy
- the Local Transport Plan
- the Housing Strategy
- the Culture Strategy
- the Climate Change Action Plan

Each of these strategies is currently going through some form of update or review process. Whilst these slightly differ in terms of both methodology and timescale, they all have two core principles at their heart.

Firstly, although much of the work is being coordinated by the Council, the effective engagement of stakeholders whether they be partner organisations or communities is fundamental to their development. Much of this work is therefore being facilitated through the NSP and the network of Community Forums.

Secondly, the policy links to the SCS and LDF Core Strategy are inherently recognised whereby an iterative process between the two tiers has to inform their content. There is a further understanding that this integration also has to take place across the thematic strategies – for example, identifying the overlaps and joins between economic activity and transport planning.

The rest of the bulletin highlighting what's currently going on within each of these processes and where you can get more information if you want to get involved.

STOP PRESS

There are still places available at all six of *The Perfect 10* debates launched in the last *People and Places*.

Please see the back page for more details as to how you can register!

Promoting economic prosperity

Promoting economic prosperity is founded on building the appropriate connections between people, business and place. In the case of Northumberland, the priorities in this regard are:

- To create the right conditions for business growth;
- To improve economic performance and tackle worklessness, particularly in the most deprived areas; and
- To create sustainable places where people want to live and can work and where business want to invest.

With this in mind, the County Council is in the process of preparing the first comprehensive Economic Strategy for Northumberland.

Initial stakeholder workshops have highlighted that for such a strategy to be effective, it needs to focus on the county's distinctiveness and its economic strengths. This premise has been translated into the following core objective:

“Using Northumberland’s environmental assets to develop a Low Carbon Economy”

Ultimately Northumberland's economy is based on its environment. In the past, farming, fishing, and coal mining provided the industrial foundation. In the future, this sense of place will be just as relevant but “green” technology across a range of sectors and tourism development will be more important as business drivers.

Within this, recognition also needs to be afforded to the fact that Northumberland will continue to be a business destination for certain entrepreneurs simply because of the quality of life it can offer – particularly within the context of the Tyne and Wear City Region.



In addition, the development of a Low Carbon Economy has to be built around the underlying principles associated with the county's response to climate change (see later article). These include the need to:

- **reduce CO₂ emissions**
- increase **energy security** – e.g. by developing renewable energy resources
- maximise **economic opportunities** from climate change
- ensure businesses are well placed to undertake **mitigation and adaptation** required by the impact of climate change
- **protect the most vulnerable in our society** – e.g. by addressing child poverty through such economic factors as fuel poverty.

This last issue is particularly significant as the approach that is advocated within the Economic Strategy has to be such that everyone can benefit and the “deprivation gap” between communities is significantly narrowed.

This next step in meeting this considerable challenge is the preparation of a draft strategy which will be available early in the New Year. In the meantime, more information is available at www.nsp.org.uk/economicstrategy or by contacting Rob Strettle in the Council's Regeneration Service – tel. 01670 533959 or email: rob.strettle@northumberland.gov.uk.

Planning the county's transport network

The Local Transport Plan (LTP) sets out the strategy for highways and transport in the county. This embraces the road, footpath, cycleway and bridleway networks, as well as providing facilities to enable their safe use, such as street lighting, dropped kerbs, signs and road markings.



The County Council must prepare a LTP that identifies the key challenges for Northumberland's network against the following national transport priorities:

- To support economic growth
- To reduce carbon emissions
- To promote equality of opportunity
- To contribute to better safety, security and health
- To improve quality of life and the natural environment

The current LTP for Northumberland covers the period 2006 to 2011 with "accessibility" identified as the main priority. Those in rural communities can find it difficult to access jobs, education, shops and services because of limited public transport services and due to the distances that need to be travelled to main centres. People in parts of south east Northumberland may also suffer from social exclusion because of the effects of poverty and the decline of local industry. The document can be accessed by following this link:

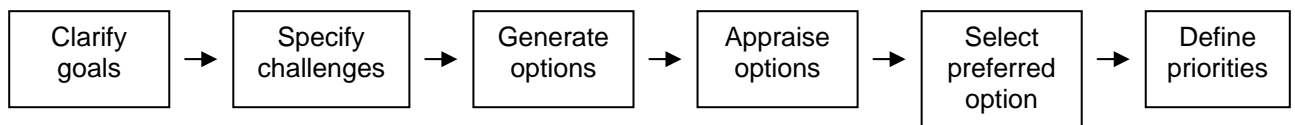
<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=1425#NorthumberlandLocalTransportPlan20062011>

Work is now commencing on the next version which is due to be published in April 2011. This will consist of two component parts:

- a strategy covering a fifteen year period (2011 to 2026) that corresponds with the time horizon for the Sustainable Community Strategy; and
- an implementation plan that will be produced every three years in accordance with the Local Area Agreement cycle.

Whilst the LTP will have a Northumberland-focus, it will also address cross-boundary travel issues jointly with neighbouring authorities. As in previous versions, it will also reflect the different transport needs of the remote, rural and urban parts of the county.

The review process will consist of six key stages:



The Council is currently updating the evidence base that will inform and underpin this work. Initial consultation with key stakeholders will start early in the New Year.

This engagement will be broadened to include parish councils, user groups and transport providers with the circulation of a draft LTP in June 2010. This will be subject to a full consultation process that will include public meetings and road shows across the county. The final document will be produced for adoption by the Council and subsequent submission to Government in advance of April 2011.

For further information on the LTP please contact Margaret Robinson (LTP Coordinator) by email at margaret.robinson@northumberland.gov.uk or telephone on 01670 533976.

Special Focus: The Housing Strategy

By ensuring that housing is of the highest quality, located in the right place with the necessary infrastructure and support, local authorities can create vibrant and mixed communities. Councils can perform this strategic role by using the full range of their housing and land use planning powers.

In Northumberland, the Council is working with partners to meet the needs of residents by ensuring the delivery of new and affordable housing whilst making the best use of existing stock. This requires vision, leadership, planning and delivery to:

- assess and plan for current and future housing needs of the local population
- make the best use of existing housing stock
- plan and facilitate new supply
- plan and commission housing support services which link homes to support and other services that people need to live in them
- have working partnerships that secure effective housing and neighbourhood management.

The intention is to capture all of this in a comprehensive Housing Strategy for Northumberland. However, defining coherent housing solutions is complex and multi-faceted, particularly as the market is driven by the wider economic dynamics of supply and demand, which do not neatly correlate to the administrative boundary of a local authority.

The initial step therefore is to build a robust evidence base that allows a shared understanding of the county's housing challenges and issues to be developed. In Northumberland, a key component of this work is the preparation of a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), with the panel overleaf providing more details.

In tandem with this, a number of strategies relating to a particular housing issue are being prepared. These are listed in the table below.

Strategy	Purpose	Adoption
Homelessness Strategy	To prevent homelessness from occurring and to help homeless people to finding permanent or temporary accommodation.	December 2009
Vulnerable Persons Housing Strategy	To set out the services which will be provided to vulnerable people in the county and how those services will be provided, improved and planned for.	December 2009
Older Persons Housing Strategy	To address the needs of the older persons' housing market, by ensuring this population have choice and support to continue having active and independent lives.	December 2009
Empty Homes Strategy	To set out a robust plan for tackling the issue of empty residential properties across the county	December 2009
Private Sector Housing Strategy	To provide a framework for the development of private sector housing; including a set of standards relating to the management and physical condition of privately rented accommodation.	April 2010
Affordable Warmth Strategy	To outline the steps that will be taken to ensure residents can afford to heat their homes and identify how fuel poverty can be eradicated.	April 2010

This considerable body of work will subsequently inform the preparation of an overarching five-year Housing Strategy covering the period 2011 to 2016. In the meantime, an interim strategy for 2010 is being put in place pending the review of the SCS.

For further information on any of this housing policy work please contact Joy Lockhart by email at joy.lockhart@northumberland.gov.uk or telephone on 01670 533349.

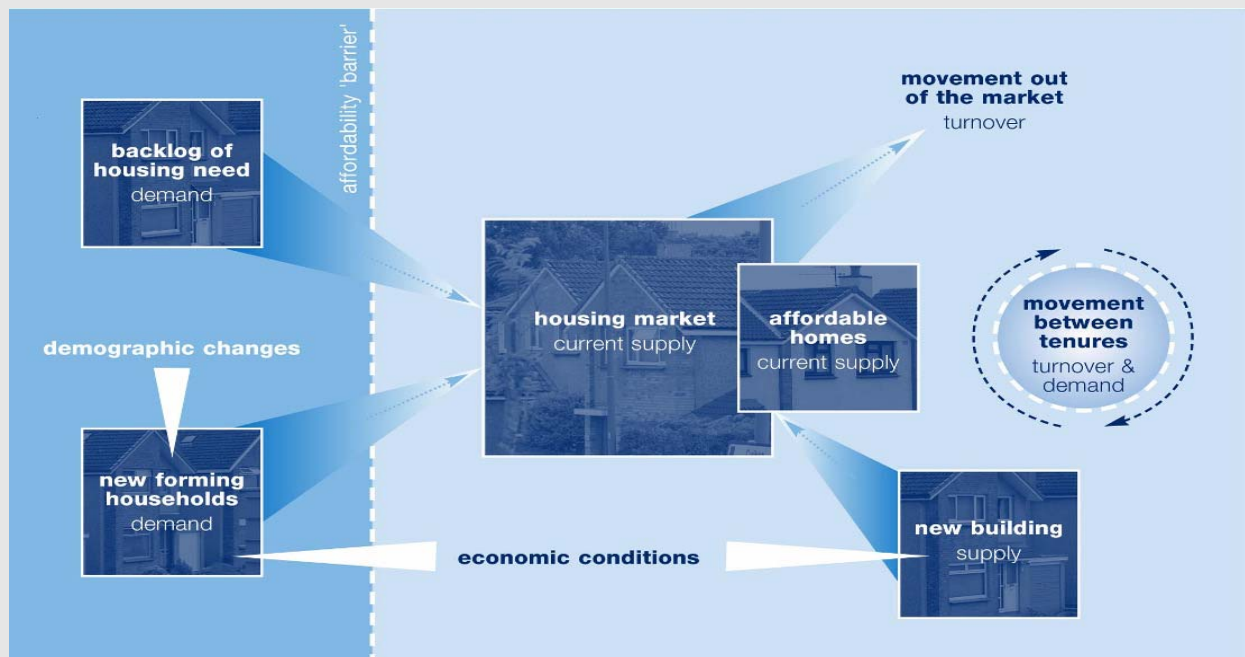
Strategic Housing Market Assessments

SHMAs do not provide definitive estimates of housing need, demand and market conditions. They do, however, offer valuable insights into how housing markets operate both now and in the future. They provide a fit for purpose basis upon which to develop planning and housing policies by considering the characteristics of the housing market, how key factors work together and the probable scale of change in future housing need and demand.

The value of undertaking SHMAs is that they assist policy development, decision-making and resource-allocation processes by:

- enabling local authorities to think spatially about the nature and influence of the housing markets in respect to their local area;
- providing robust evidence to inform policies aimed at providing the right mix of housing across the whole housing market – both market and affordable housing;
- providing evidence to inform policies about the level of affordable housing required, including the need for different sizes of affordable housing;
- assisting in quantifying those residents who have particular housing requirements e.g. families, older people, key workers, black and minority ethnic groups, disabled people, young people, etc.
- supporting authorities to develop a strategic approach to housing through consideration of housing need and demand in all housing sectors – owner occupied, private rented and affordable – and assessment of the key drivers and relationships within the housing market; and
- drawing together the bulk of the evidence required for local authorities to appraise strategic housing options including social housing allocation priorities, the role of intermediate housing products, stock renewal, conversion, demolition and transfer.

The diagram below illustrates the processes involved in preparing a SHMA.



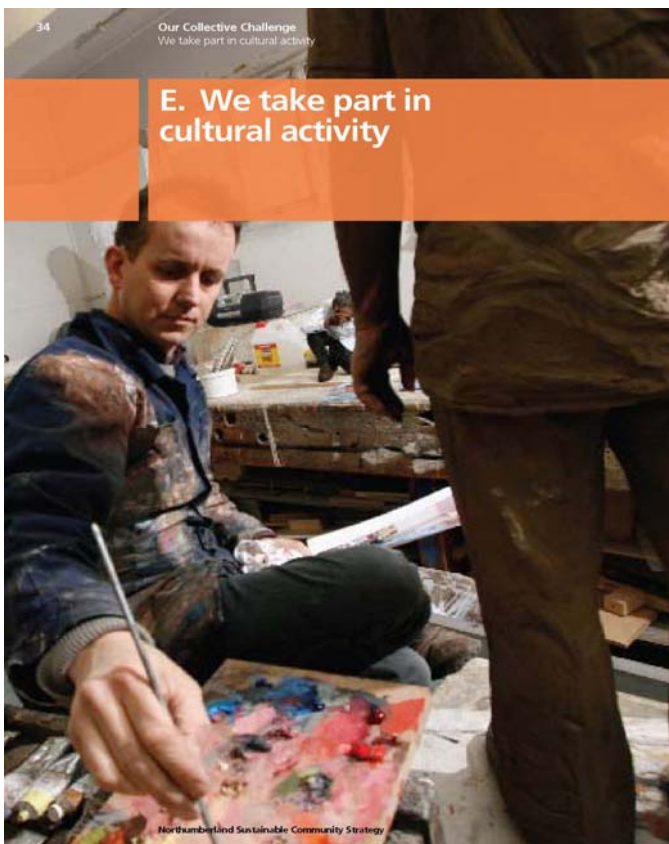
It is anticipated that the SHMA for Northumberland will be published and posted on the County Council website (<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=3725>) before Christmas.

Keeping culture on the map

Culture can be defined in many different ways.

It has a material dimension: the performing and visual arts, craft, and fashion, media, film, television and video, museums, libraries and archives, design, literature, writing and publishing, the built heritage, architecture, landscape and archaeology, sports events, facilities and development, parks, open spaces, wildlife habitats, water environment and countryside recreation, children's play, playgrounds and play activities, tourism, festivals and attractions and informal leisure pursuits.

However it also has a value dimension: relationships, shared memories, experiences and identity, diverse cultural, religious and historic backgrounds and what we consider valuable to pass on to future generations.



The current Sustainable Community Strategy identifies participation in cultural activity as one of its seven long-term visionary aims:

“By 2021, more Northumberland residents will have broader opportunities to enjoy their leisure time. They will be regularly gathering to enjoy acclaimed events or quality venues and be equally passionate about actively cherishing their heritage and trying new things. They will be welcoming and open to sharing the considerable cultural delights on offer with visitors.”

This is founded on four core objectives:

- *Celebrating our distinctiveness*
- *Providing inspiration*
- *Making the most of our creativity*
- *Welcoming visitors*

This formed the basis of a Culture and Tourism Action Plan which is available at: <http://www.nsp.org.uk/page.asp?id=871>.

The intention now is to build from this solid platform to produce a new Cultural Strategy for Northumberland.

This is because if culture is to make a difference we must ensure that conditions are right for the sector to flourish and that the appropriate cultural infrastructure is in place. The action plan resulting from the cultural strategy will balance the needs of the sector with that of the contribution culture can make to wider long term economic and social objectives.

To this end, an engagement process is about to commence with the distribution, before Christmas, of a discussion paper. It will start to challenge how best to demonstrate the value of culture, does the existing vision still hold, what are our priorities for action, and do we need to target programmes of work to particular communities, and so on.

For further information on this process, please contact Nigel Walsh by email at nigel.walsh@northumberland.gov.uk or by telephone on 01670 534111.

The Heat is still on!

Climate change is the most pressing environmental, social and economic problem facing the planet today. Avoiding dangerous climate change requires immediate and sustained global action that takes place at an international, national and local level.

The Greenhouse Effect

Climate change occurs naturally over millennia but the build up of atmospheric carbon dioxide and other “greenhouse gases” are having an alarming additional effect and unnaturally accelerating climate change.

Carbon dioxide is one of a number of greenhouse gases, so called because they keep our planet warm by absorbing and re-emitting infrared radiation that would otherwise escape into space. This is called the *greenhouse effect* and keeps the Earth at an average of 15°C, rather than an average of -18°C if there were no greenhouse gases. It is generally accepted that human activities, principally the burning of fossil fuels to generate energy, have increased the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, which has already led to a 0.7°C rise in the global average temperature during the 21st century. This *global warming* is already changing the climate, presenting challenges and opportunities to the environment, society and the economy.

As it takes at least 40 years for carbon dioxide to be removed from the atmosphere, the carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere today are partly due to emissions from the last century, and today’s emissions will still be influencing the climate in the middle of this century. If carbon dioxide levels continue to rise, then the atmosphere will continue to warm. Additionally, the changes to the climate may become more severe, particularly if positive feedbacks, such as the melting of polar ice and permafrost occur, as this will release additional greenhouse gases stored frozen beneath the ice.

Addressing climate change presents two challenges:

- **mitigation** – limiting further climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- **adaptation** – preparing for the changes that are now inevitable and may increase further if we do not reduce our emissions

This has to be complemented with continued **awareness raising** which maintains the profile of the contributions we can each make in contributing to this agenda and keeps everyone informed of emerging threats and risks. It also has to be recognised that our responses present **economic opportunities**, particularly in developing “low carbon” approaches and technologies (see earlier article).

In December 2008, the NSP published *The Heat is On* – the strategic framework for climate change planning in Northumberland (available at <http://www.nsp.org.uk/page.asp?id=871>). It identified a number of key strategic actions for cross sectoral and multi-agency delivery relating to: Leadership; Emergency planning; Transport and utilities; Spatial planning; Delivering for rural areas; Business resilience; Protecting our natural environment; Addressing future energy needs; Communicating climate change; and Trading carbon for community and environmental benefits.

Many initiatives have been taken forward as a result of this Framework but it is now recognised that in order to maintain momentum a coherent Action Plan needs to be put in place. To start the ball rolling on this, technical workshops are being held in November. The ideas emerging from these brainstorming sessions will then be collated and presented in a draft document early in the New Year. This will prompt a wider engagement process on what needs to happen next.

For further information on this process, please contact Ruth Machen by email at ruth.machen@northumberland.gov.uk or by telephone on 01670 533004.

Planning our communities together

In the last edition of *People and Places*, we invited registrations for a series of “open to all” engagement sessions to discuss the future of Northumberland.

PLACES ARE STILL AVAILABLE!

AND WE’VE EXTENDED THE REGISTRATION DATE BY A WEEK!

PLEASE COME ALONG IF YOU WANT TO INFORM THE NEXT SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND NEW LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

THE PERFECT 10 DEBATE

If you’re interested in shaping the future of our wonderful county then please register for one of the following events. Places will be reserved on a first come basis.

**TUESDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2009, 1pm to 4pm
HIRST WELFARE CENTRE, ASHINGTON**

**WEDNESDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2009, 1pm to 4pm
CONCORDIA LEISURE CENTRE, CRAMLINGTON**

**THURSDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2009, 1pm to 4pm
TOWN HALL, MORPETH**

**TUESDAY 1 DECEMBER 2009, 1pm to 4pm
HEXHAM RACECOURSE**

**WEDNESDAY 2 DECEMBER 2009, 1pm to 4pm
THE MALTINGS THEATRE AND ARTS CENTRE, BERWICK-UPON-TWEED**

**THURSDAY 3 DECEMBER, 1pm to 4pm
ST JAMES’S CHURCH CENTRE, ALNWICK**

Please register with Susan Lockey by Friday 20 November 2009
Tel: 01670 533393 Email: susan.lockey@northumberland.gov.uk

THE CLOSING DATE OF *THE PERFECT 10* DEBATE IS FRIDAY 15 JANUARY 2010

Views will be gathered from these sessions and all the other forums.

If you want to submit comments *in writing* then please direct them to Janice Rose (address and email detailed below).



People and Places is designed to keep all those with an interest in making Northumberland a better place to live informed of the work being done to harness the county’s collective might to make this a reality

It is produced by the Council’s Place Shaping Policy Steering Group on behalf of the NSP.

All previous editions can be accessed at: <http://www.nsp.org.uk/page.asp?id=811>

For more information please contact:

Janice Rose, Corporate Policy Manager on 01670 534029 or janice.rose@northumberland.gov.uk