



SEATON VALLEY ACTION PLAN

SEPTEMBER 2015

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ABOUT SEATON VALLEY

Seaton Valley locality lies in the South East of Northumberland bordering Tyne & Wear and has a population of 15,040. In terms of area, it measures 28.4 km² (the largest of the 10 localities in South East Northumberland), and has a population density of 530 people per km². Seaton Valley locality includes Seaton Delaval, Seghill, New Hartley, Holywell and Seaton Sluice.

Seaton Valley Council came into being on 1 April 2009 as a result of the Local Government Reorganisation for Northumberland and the demise of Blyth Valley Borough Council. In South East Northumberland (SEN) eight new local councils were set up, one of them being Seaton Valley Council.

Some of the key socio-economic statistics of the area are set out below, showing how it compares with south east Northumberland, and the county as a whole

- > Seaton valley scores highly on community cohesion, with more people (85%) saying they got on with people from different backgrounds than was the case in South East Northumberland (74%) or the county (80%)
- > The economic activity rates, at 64.5% are almost identical to those of South East Northumberland and the County
- > Just over one third of people feel they can influence decisions
- > On health, Seaton Valley fares a bit worse than the wider area, with only 66% describing their health as very good, compared to 68% in South East Northumberland and 73% across the county
- > On education, Seaton Valley performs very well, with 80% of children getting 5 GCSE passes at A-C, compared to 62% for South East Northumberland and 68% for the County



BACKGROUND TO THE PLAN

In 2015 Seaton Valley Council commissioned Your Back Yard, a community regeneration company, to help them find out what people thought about their village, and also the Valley as a whole, and how it could be improved. This information was collected via a household survey delivered through every door in the Valley, interviews with over 30 key stakeholder organisations and workshops done with local schools to get the youth perspective.

This information has been used to provide the evidence base for 6 plans, one for each village and, this one, covering the whole of the Valley. The projects in this plan are the ones that are deemed to be better co-ordinated at the strategic level, and have the potential to benefit everyone in the Valley, rather than any specific village.



HEADLINE FINDINGS

Some of the 'headline findings' from the research carried out to underpin this Plan, a mixture of issues, opportunities and ideas, are:

- > The need for better transport links
- > The need for better provision for young people
- > Make more of the area's tourism potential
- > Improve the environmental management arrangements
- > Create a stronger identity, and brand, for Seaton Valley
- > Enable more people to influence decisions
- > Provide more opportunities for a healthier lifestyle



ACTIONS AND PROJECTS

This section sets out a number of possible projects, reflecting and responding to the headline findings, all of which are 'Valley wide' projects, which could have an impact across all the villages. They are also realistic, in the sense that they have been suggested in the context of the resources potentially available to fund and support their delivery.

1. Developing a Neighbourhood Plan for Seaton Valley

Aim	To increase local influence over planning decisions
Evidence of need	There is considerable local concern in all of the villages about the pressure to provide additional homes in the area, the impact of such development on the character of the area, traffic volumes and the capacity of local services.
Project description	Work with Northumberland County Council's Planning Department, to designate Seaton Valley as a Neighbourhood Plan area, and seek support to carry out the process in line with statutory requirements. This will entail gathering further evidence from local people, drafting policies for the Valley and for each of its villages, and then holding a referendum to agree the Plan.
Potential partners	Northumberland County Council.
Next steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) Seaton Valley Council to formally request that the Valley be designated as a Neighbourhood Plan area(ii) Seaton Valley Council and Northumberland County Council to seek resources to support local residents in developing the Plan.

2. Securing local stations on the Ashington-Tyne-Blyth train line

Aim Improve Public Transport Links

Evidence of need The problem of poor transport links came up frequently during the consultation, particularly from the household survey.

Project description Perhaps one of the most important links for the Valley, particularly in terms of improving access to jobs, is between Seaton Valley and North Tyneside. Anything that could address this, on a valley wide basis, would be a very positive step for the local economy within the Valley.

The South East Northumberland Rail Users Group (SENRUG) campaign to reinstate passenger services on the Newcastle to Ashington train line is well established. The reopening of stations at Seaton Delaval and Seghill is one of the options being put forward by SENRUG.

Potential partners SENRUG

Next steps

- (i) Make the case for both Seaton Delaval and Seghill stations being reopened if and when passenger services do resume on the line.
- (ii) Consider the potential for an additional stop at New Hartley
- (iii) Draw up outline plans to ensure the local bus service properly serves these new stations, making them accessible for everyone in the valley.

3. Seaton Valley Gateways

Aim Create a stronger identity, and brand, for Seaton Valley

Evidence of need Many consultees mentioned the fact that the area does not have a strong identity, or brand, and even the gateways still state welcome to Blyth Valley, rather than Seaton Valley. There is also evidence to suggest that, more broadly, South East Northumberland has the same problem.

There is a strong perception that Seaton Valley, and more broadly South East Northumberland, does not fulfil its tourism potential. Many residents and partner organisations commented on the need for the Valley to make more of its attractions. As a result, visitor numbers are lower than they should be and the area is losing out on a significant amount of inward investment and jobs.

Project description Create distinct, well defined, highly visible gateways at key road entrances to the Valley (see map at the end of this plan, which shows six suggested key entry points where the gateways could be located). The gateways would be developed and designed to capture the key features, and history of the area, including its rich industrial heritage. We envisage that sponsorship of the gateways and publicity material associated with the Gateways, would be a key component in the funding package. Community involvement, particularly from local schools, should be a key feature in the development of this project, for example in designing the logos and other gateway features. Websites such as the Council's own site (<http://www.seatonvalleycommunitycouncil.gov.uk>) and Seaton Valley Online (<http://www.seatonvalley.org.uk>) could also be used as online 'gateways' to the Valley.

Potential partners NCC, Proctor and Gamble, Seaton Delaval Hall and other local businesses.

Next steps

- (i) Draw up an outline of the project, setting out where and how the physical gateways could be created
- (ii) Set up a project steering group
- (iii) Review online gateways to Seaton Valley

4. Visit Seaton Valley

Aim To make more of the areas tourism potential.

Evidence of need Many residents and partner organisations commented on the need for the Valley to make more of its attractions, and in doing so attract most visitors and investment.

Project description Create and extensively market a 'Visit Seaton Valley' brand, including online and printed material distributed through local visitor centres. This could be linked to a package of events, such as the annual 'Chilli Festival', and a new 'itinerary package' for the Valley. The forthcoming visit of the Tall Ships to Blyth could provide a focus for the project, to maximise the potential benefits arising from that large scale event.

The itinerary package would set out different itineraries for spending a day/weekend in Seaton Valley, taking in various attractions such as the coast, Holywell Dene, the café, Seaton Delaval Hall. This would include providing better access to maps of rights of way in the Valley, including marked trails for walking, cycling and horse-riding.

In addition to physical attractions, the package could also include exploring the heritage of the area, for example the history of the mining industry, and set out a programme of walking and cycling routes of varying intensity. There could also be itineraries that could encompass nearby attractions, such as St Mary's Lighthouse in Whitley Bay, Woodhorn Museum in Ashington and Ridley Park in Blyth, to enhance the package.

Potential partners NCC, Visit Northumberland, Seaton Delaval Hall and other local businesses, Sustrans.

Next steps

- (i) Draw up an outline of the project
- (ii) Identify and get buy-in from potential partners
- (iii) Set up a project steering group

5. Investigating the potential for a destination facility for young people

Aim Improve provision of activities and facilities for young people.

Evidence of need

The satisfaction score for activities for younger people across the valley was lower than for any other facility.

The feedback from the sessions done at 3 of the local schools highlighted the fact that young people, particularly teenagers, whilst quite liking living in the village, feel that there is very little provision for them.

A preliminary audit of existing facilities does suggest that whilst toddlers and older children are very well catered for in the local parks, there is not much designed specifically with teenagers in mind.

Several comments from the questionnaires highlighted a lack of activities for young people, and linked this to problems of anti-social behaviour and vandalism.

Project description

The creation of a 'destination facility' for young people from across the Valley. The best location will depend on what sites are available and accessibility of those sites to people across the Valley. The users, predominantly young people, should be involved in the design of the facility, and possibly the management. The workshops done at local schools in the preparation of this plan could be a starting point for establishing a group that would facilitate that involvement.

Potential partners Youth service, Active Northumberland, CCG, local schools

Next steps

- (i) Create a project steering group
- (ii) Explore potential sites and project ideas
- (iii) Recruit a specialist company to assist in designing a facility.

6. Neighbourhood Management Forum(s)

Aim To improve the physical environment by involving more people in neighbourhood management.

Evidence of need Whilst most people were generally satisfied with the quality of life in their village, including the environment, there were a significant number of references to the problems of litter, dog fouling and fly tipping. Whilst Seaton Valley Council currently visit each village annually to discuss their service provision, there is no Valley wide forum, nor is there any forum that allows local people to feed into the design and delivery of other services, such as community safety, health, youth services etc.

Project description Set up a Valley wide Neighbourhood Management Forum, or local forums, with representatives from the council, community associations and any interested local residents. This would give local people and community organisations more and regular involvement in how local services are developed, delivered and monitored.

Initially the Neighbourhood Management Forum(s) could focus on local services, i.e. those delivered by SVC, with a view to this expanding to take in other service providers, such as the Police, health organisations, housing associations etc. The key aims of the Neighbourhood Management Forum(s) would be to:

- > provide a forum for each Village to agree or review arrangements with service providers
- > provide a vehicle for drawing in additional funding to enhance services
- > provide a regular forum for issues and ideas to be raised in connection with service provision (e.g. reporting dog fouling, or fly tipping, or problems with bin collection)
- > provide a regular channel of information between service providers and service users

Potential partners Northumberland County Council, Police, Community associations, local schools/children

Next steps

- (i) Create a project steering group to develop and refine the idea
- (ii) Investigate similar models that have been successful elsewhere in the North East.

7. Environmental Task Force

Aim To improve the physical environment by involving more people in improving their local environment, particularly volunteers

Evidence of need Whilst most people were generally satisfied with the quality of life in their village, including the environment, there were a significant number of references to the problems of litter, dog fouling and fly tipping.
There are relatively high levels of community activism across the Valley, i.e. people willing to get more involved in the upkeep of their neighbourhoods, and the environment generally.

Project description To create a volunteer led group, supported by SVC and other agencies, to assist in the upkeep of local neighbourhoods, and to carry out specific works (e.g. improving a 'grot spot')
This 'Seaton Valley Taskforce' could look to recruit volunteers from local schools, people on Community Payback orders as well as local residents.
There would be a significant overlap between this project, and the NMT set out in project 5, e.g. the task force could carry out works identified as priorities by the NMT.
The group, particularly if it were constituted, would also be a vehicle for drawing in additional funding to carry out works, and enhance environmental services.

Potential partners Northumberland County Council, Police, Community associations, local schools, Probation

Next steps Create a project steering group to develop and refine the idea

8. Provide more support to enhance joint working across the valley

Aim To strengthen valley-wide community cohesion

Evidence of need The Seaton Valley Community Partnership is currently the main platform for encouraging joint working between the villages. The SVCP is doing a lot of great work, but with more support could be further developed to enhance the range and quality of services it provides.

There was a feeling amongst some stakeholder agencies that one of the few weaknesses the Valley was its tendency for the villages not to work closely enough together.

Project description Look at ways in which the SVCP could be supported to do more, with the aim of enabling villages, and village based organisations (such as community associations) to work more effectively together.

One example of an initiative that could be taken jointly is to develop a 'What's On Locally' Guide, in print and/or online, that could be used to encourage more local people to be aware of and participate in the wide range of local activities, groups, clubs and events happening in the community. This could be used to welcome newcomers to the area into the community, and strengthen engagement with existing residents who are less engaged and involved.

The implementation of other projects in this plan, such as village gateways, and developing a brand for the Valley, could provide an impetus to this overall aim of getting the villages to work closer together on a more regular basis.

Potential partners SVCP, Community associations, NCC, local businesses

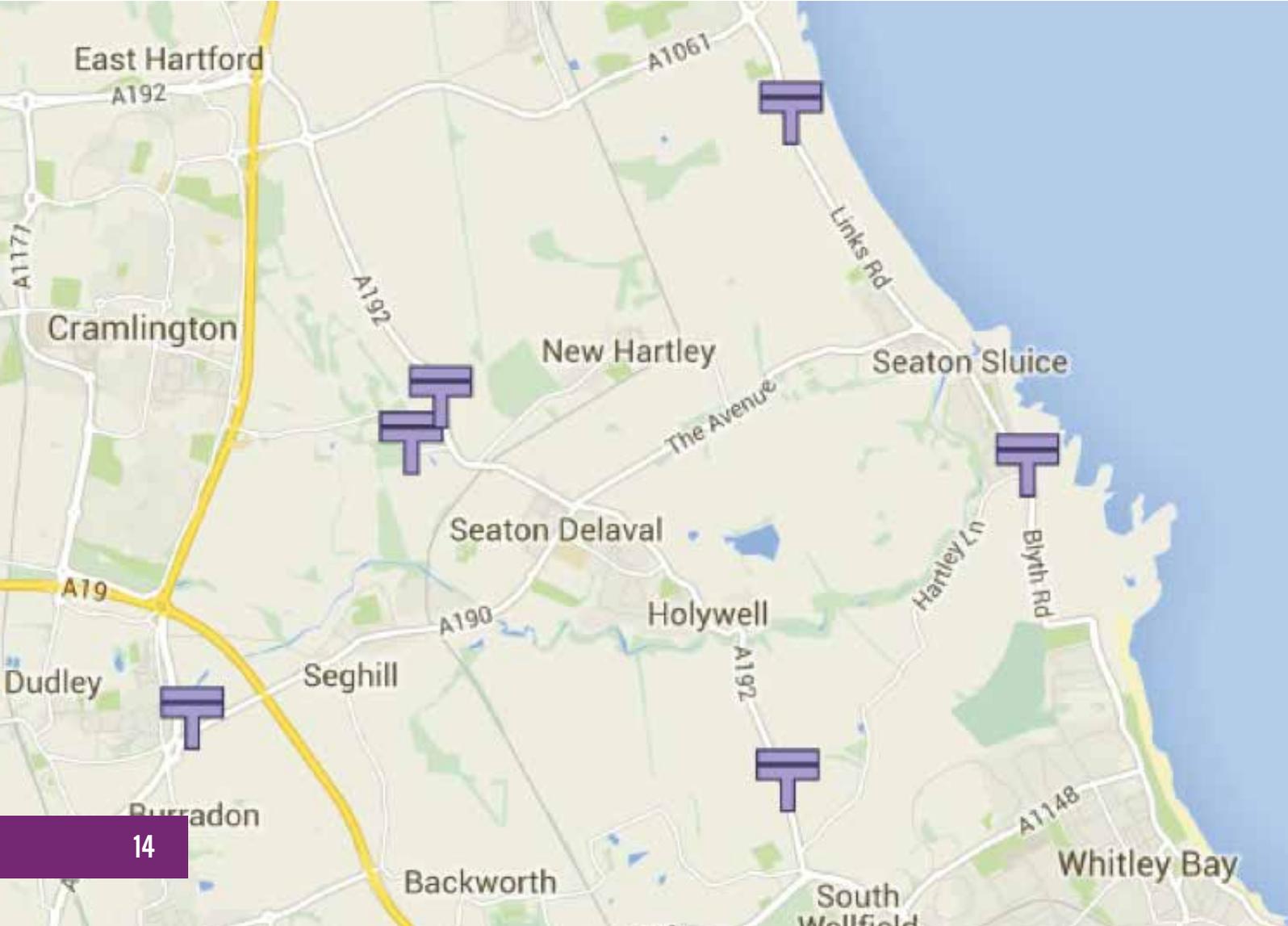
Next steps

- (i) Set up a project steering group
- (ii) SVCP draw up an outline plan highlighting the services they could provide, with more support

NEXT STEPS

Seaton Valley Council will work with local residents and organisations to deliver each of the actions listed in this Plan. Within one year, they will hold a public review of progress against the Action Plan, as part of a public Council meeting in Seaton Delaval. This meeting will consider any changes

MAP OF POTENTIAL GATEWAY SITES





GET IN TOUCH

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