

# Gloucestershire Parish & Community-Led Plan Case Study Newnham on Severn, completed 2008

## What is a Parish and Community-Led plan?

A Parish & Community-Led Plan is a document which sets out a vision for a community's future based on sound local research, looking at social, environmental and economic life.

It celebrates positive features and activities, highlights community needs and contains a detailed action plan to help the community meet those needs. A Parish & Community-Led Plan is produced by and for the community, based on a detailed survey and consultation process which involves the whole community. It prompts action and influences others.

A Parish & Community-Led Plan is inclusive and can demonstrate a robust process that ensures its quality. It is steered by a group of people from within the community, including representation from the parish or town council and follows good practice and advice from a neutral independent body. In Gloucestershire, GRCC is the lead provider of advice and support for parish and community led planning.



*A 3 day feedback event allowed the community to comment on the Parish Plan consultation.*

## Introduction

**Newnham on Severn** is a village on the west bank of the River Severn in the Royal Forest of Dean, west Gloucestershire with a population of a little over 1380. Because of Newnham's location on the Severn, the Ancient Romans built three roads through the location now the busy A48 Gloucester to the Severn Bridge runs through it.



Newnham, Gloucestershire

Newnham was a thriving port until 1827. Originally it was one of the five ancient boroughs of Gloucestershire, visited by William 11, Henry1, Henry11 (who launched an invasion of Ireland from Newnham) and Edward 111.

The core of the village is a 'Designated Conservation Area' with many Georgian properties with a modern houses estate off the main road. The present church replaces the original which burnt down in 1881 and children under 11 years attend St. Peter's Church of England Primary School and playgroup.

Businesses now include a general stores, a delicatessen, Post Office/newsagent, chemist, gift/craft shop, upholstery/gift shop, an antique shop, hairdressers and a café with book and toyshop, Equestrian Centre, a market research company many small self employed businesses and services such as a library, nursery, doctor's surgery and veterinary practices. There are two pubs in the village and a members' club, but the former listed Victoria Hotel stands empty and boarded up.

Heavy tolls on the Severn bridge crossings from England to Wales are responsible for traffic using the A48. Although for the past 150 years a railway linking to the national system has passed through the village, now the nearest station is 9 miles away at Lydney, with no direct bus link.

Newnham is a social village with many clubs and societies and a thriving amateur dramatic group. There are a range of buildings in the village that hold public events. The principal venue is the Armoury Hall, (owned by the villagers) the WI Hut, the Church and Newnham Club.

## The Process

In Feb 2008 the Parish Council discussed undertaking a Parish Plan. Two Parish councilors recruited volunteers to make up a steering group representative of the community. GRCC was on hand for advice and support and a grant from the Forest of Dean District Council secured. In April 'A Route to the Establishment of a Parish Plan' was agreed.

There was a range of consultations throughout the village. The Annual Street Fair provided an opportunity for a stall to publicise the Parish Plan, give feedback and do further consultation, mainly targeting young people.

By September 2008 a questionnaire was ready for distribution. They were delivered and collected by hand during early October. This resulted in an 81.7% response rate.

Communication has been ongoing through posters giving regular updates. Questionnaire analysis results were publicised at a three day exhibition. Steering group members were on hand to discuss any issues and comments were collected on post it notes. Over 300 people attended. The Parish Plan was adopted by Newnham Parish Council on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2009.

## Community benefits

The community are more involved with parish issues.

The working Parties and Task groups set up as a result of the Parish Plan have increased capacity and encouraged volunteers to come forward to work on them.

Newnham had no website before the Parish Plan. Volunteer skills have been used to create one. The website is regularly used by the community to find out what is going on in the village, rubbish days and to advertise their events. The library provides free internet access and has it on their home page.

## Newnham's achievements

### Communication

- A Parish website group was set up to cost, create and maintain a Parish website. The Newnham website went live in October 2009 providing information for residents and tourists and promotion for businesses. The website will also publicise Parish Council activities.

### Village Hall

- A Village Hall Task Group was set up to carry out an options appraisal for the village hall. Stakeholders from the existing 3 venues have been brought together to explore the options, look at sustainability and develop them. The results will be communicated to the community

### Parking

- A working party has been set up to survey parking facilities, usage and identify possible parking sites. The results will be reported to the Parish Council.

### Highways

- The Parish Plan identified HGV's on the A48 as one of the main issues. As a result the Parish Council agreed to refresh their A48 representation on the A48 Group who work with Gloucestershire County Council Highways and Transport. This group report regularly on progress.

### Transport

- A Transport Group has been set up to look at transport services serving the village. This group

has fed into the Forest of Dean Transport Action Plan and contributed to the county Local Transport Priorities consultation.

### Environment

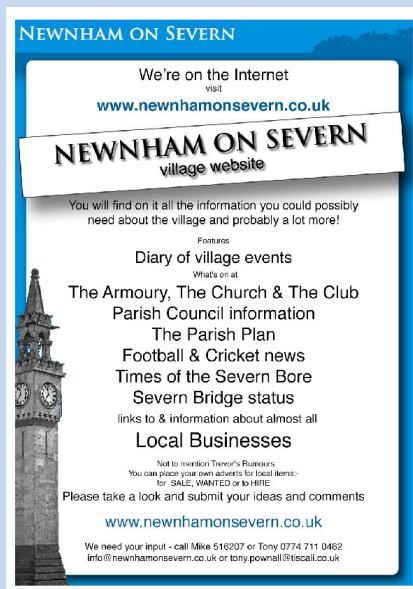
- A permanent Environment Group has been established to ensure that the appearance and environment of the village is maintained. It will also co ordinate fund raising activities in the village to reduce duplication and Parish Council liabilities.

### Quick Wins

- Newnham Christmas lights had been identified in the Parish Plan as a feature the community wanted to maintain. A working group was set up to find the best type of lights which will be cost effective and easily maintained. A quick Wins grant from the Forest of Dean District Council has enabled the first phase of this project and provided a boost to further fundraising.

### Consultation

- The Parish Plan survey achieved an 81.7% response rate. one of the highest in the county. This confirmed the level of engagement and gave a mandate for progressing actions.



Poster promoting the website



“The Parish Plan has increased the capacity of the community to fundraise, consult and communicate”

## Working with partners

### Key advice for others

**“Ensure the Parish Council are on board and fully aware of progress”**

**“Draw on any expertise at hand.”**

Parish Plan representatives sit on the Neighbourhood Panel and liaise with police. There are also representatives at the Forest of Dean Parish Plan Forum and have contributed to the Transport Action Plan.

Road safety issues are being discussed in partnership with the county highways department. A 17 year old resident's GCSE report on traffic has been added to Parish Plan information



The George Café entrance

**“The Parish Plan has given people an opportunity to have their say ..things have happened so when asked again they readily give their views. It has helped them to see they are part of a bigger society”**

**“We have been able to improve communication and enable community solutions”**

## Lessons learnt and future projects

We learnt that a strong initial consultation gave the Parish Plan a firm base and that we had to involve the community as one not sole groups

Securing a fit for purpose village hall for the future is an important issue for Newnham. The process of considering options has begun with the possibility of creating a community hub as a solution.

**With thanks to Newnham on Severn Parish Plan Steering Committee members for their contributions to**

GRCC is the lead provider of support for **parish and community-led plans** in Gloucestershire and can offer support to communities dependent on the location of the parish. If you would like further information please contact  
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