

December 2008



We wish our partners all the very best for Christmas and the New Year, and look forward to working with you again in 2009 on a range of projects that will continue to help transform North Staffordshire.

PARTNERS' BRIEFING



CITIZENS OF THE YEAR

Winners of the Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire's Citizen of the Year awards included a number of people involved in regeneration projects.

The Environment Award, which is sponsored by RENEW North Staffordshire was won by Jim Halliday.

Jim helped establish www.lovestoke.org, a ground-breaking project that aims to make the city a better place by improving local environments. With the motto 'Together We Can Do It!',

Jim's reputation has brought together partners from all walks of life, such as local businesses, RSLs, police officers, council officers, councillors, young people and residents associations to tackle projects for the benefit of the wider community.



He is committed to transforming the Abbey Hulton suburban estate and he is currently the Chair of the Masterplan Steering Group. Examples of projects that Jim has led include improvements to the children's play area off Abbey Road in Abbey Hulton, renovating a women's safe house, improvements to Trenham High School and a large-scale tidy-up of Joiners Square.

Most recently, he co-ordinated the Hulton Abbey Carnival, which attracted well over 500 revellers and other projects have included renovating community facilities, removing graffiti, helping the young and older people, and litter picking.

Over the past few years, Jim has been working alongside RENEW and the city council to develop two community/school gardens – Carmountside Community and School Garden and the Betty Rushton Community Garden – in Abbey Hulton. And he has been a leading light in the formation of the Hulton Abbey Growers Association

Neighbourhood worker Lee Carroll was a finalist in the Community Improvement Champion Award, for his endeavours in the City Waterside area. And Chris Hesketh, of CDT Architects, was a finalist in the Architectural Design Award for his work on the Knutton Heritage Works Project.

NEW POLICE OUTPOST FOR MIDDLEPORT

RENEW North Staffordshire has helped bring back community policing to Middleport.

A RENEW grant has helped fund a new community base for officers in part of St Paul's Church, in Church Square, after residents called for a greater police presence. Two police constables and two police community support officers will be stationed there.

The idea is to make the officers more accessible to people in the community – getting to know their local 'beat bobbies' will help residents feel safer. The officers will be holding surgeries every week.

RENEW Director, Hardial Bhogal, said: "This is a great example of how RENEW is working in partnership with the police in local communities to help make residents feel safer."

KNUTTON COMMUNITY FARM

A scheme to create one of North Staffordshire's biggest outdoor learning environments has received a huge cash boost.

Knutton Village Farm won £50,000 after reaching the finals of the Big Lottery Fund's People's Millions contest in November. The project has also been given £10,000 from RENEW North Staffordshire's biodiversity budget, to build a geodesic dome greenhouse.

The farm project will teach children and adults about greener living and aims to help develop a skilled workforce in the area. It will allow volunteers to grow food, look after animals and produce power through renewable technology.

The farm is being built on acres of derelict land next to Newcastle Children's Centre on Blackbank Road – a result of community consultation on what the land should be used for. Due to open next year, it will provide weekend, after-school and holiday activities for children and families, school visits, training courses and guided tours. Plans include a solar dome, vegetable plot, sensory garden, open-air classroom and rare-breed animals.

The farm will not only give local people the chance to grow and sell their own produce, but will also offer volunteers a variety of practical and business skills and the opportunity to achieve recognised qualifications, which will help to develop a skilled workforce to support a range of local businesses.

PAYING HOMAGE TO OUR HERITAGE AT CHRISTMAS

Visions of Christmases past will be on view when members of the old and new City Waterside communities got together to celebrate the festive season.



Residents and local school children joined a Victorian-themed procession through the streets north of the City Waterside development. Santa on a horse and carriage led the parade.

City Waterside Community Singers practised for weeks to ensure they were in fine voice for the event, and children and residents created lanterns from recycled materials to light the procession.

The procession was funded by RENEW North Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Beth Johnson Housing Association - a subsidiary of Sanctuary Group - and Hanley South Action Group.

The idea was to bring the community together for Christmas and acknowledge the cultural heritage of the area while celebrating the ongoing success of the successful urban regeneration project.

After the parade, residents gathered for a carol service at St Luke's Church and then enjoyed a festive party in the Dresden Street Community Hall.

COALVILLE CPO CONFIRMED

The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Hazel Blears, has confirmed Stoke-on-Trent City Council's proposed planning compulsory purchase order (CPO) for land at Coalville, near Weston Coyney.

The decision, which follows a public inquiry in July, means the regeneration plans developed with the local community can continue.

The CPO was proposed by the city council on behalf of RENEW North Staffordshire. RENEW's £55 million regeneration programme will provide 278 new homes along with new amenities such as better road layouts, recreation land and retail facilities.

The proposals were created under a masterplan supported by more than 80% of the local community. Partners in the project include the city council and RENEW's regeneration partner in the Coalville area, the Compendium Group.

Work started on the redevelopment, to be called Weston Heights, in spring last year and the first phase is already complete, with 52 properties built and occupied. The second phase of 42 new homes is due to be completed next year.

The aim of the regeneration programme at Coalville is to provide quality homes with a wide mix of housing types for sale, rent or shared ownership.

The CPO was issued so that the five-year programme could be completed and the public inquiry was held because some people objected to the order.

OUR FLOURISHING CITY

RENEW North Staffordshire is taking part in a national event that will examine what actually makes a city a good place to be.

The Flourishing City, a multi-faith symposium being held at Staffordshire University in the New Year, will look at the role of spirituality in regeneration. Various issues around regeneration will be explored, with a central theme being the role of spirituality and the contribution of faith communities to city life. Delegates will discuss issues around public safety, health, housing and how, when revitalising communities, it is important to maintain the 'essential spirit of place'.

RENEW is a main sponsor of the event on January 7, and will also be hosting a workshop on housing renewal. The event is the third national multi-faith symposium to be hosted by Staffordshire University and supported by the National Institute for Mental Health in England (NIMHE) Spirituality Project and the National Spirituality and Mental Health Forum.

RENEW BACKS POSITIVE PARENTING PROGRAMME

A project designed to support parents and children during the sometimes unsettling process of regeneration is being introduced in Newcastle.

Triple P – the Positive Parenting Programme - is designed to offer a friendly, supportive environment to families who may need help to work through anti-social behaviour issues.

As part of a multi-agency approach to tackling vandalism problems arising from the clearance programme at Lower Milehouse, Triple P will be available to help promote good communication between parents and their children. It can be run in a number of ways - from one-on-one sessions and phone calls, to coffee mornings where parents and carers can try out activities such as baby massage, or take part in arts and crafts sessions with their children.

The service, which will help parents handle misbehaviour when faced with difficult situations, has been put in place to promote better communication within families and complement the physical regeneration of the estate.

COMMUNITY HEROES REWARDED

Community heroes that have helped their neighbours through the regeneration process in Stoke-on-Trent have been rewarded for their efforts.



The annual Signal One and Signal Two Unsung Hero Awards took place recently, and the Public/Voluntary Sector Worker of the Year Award, supported by Stoke-on-Trent City Council, was presented to Craig Bloor - a full-time volunteer who gives up his time for young people from Coalville.

Craig helps young residents with problems and stages activities to improve the area as part of the Dreamscheme project.

The Contribution to the Community Award was presented to Lee Carroll, a RENEW North Staffordshire-funded neighbourhood worker for Beth Johnson Housing association, who is based at the Wellington Street Area Community Hall.

Lee has lived in the Wellington Road area of the city for almost 30 years, and uses his own experiences of moving as part of the area's regeneration programme to help and advise others in the same situation.

STAFFORDSHIRE HOUSING 99% REWARDED



Environmental campaigner David Bellamy officially opened the Chesterton eco-terraces project

Staffordshire Housing Association, RENEW's partner housing association in the Chesterton area, won Building Magazine's Building 99% Campaign Award for Refurbishment in the annual Sustainability Awards.

The accolade was awarded for an eco-homes project undertaken by Staffordshire Housing in partnership with RENEW North Staffordshire, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council and the HCA.

Making existing buildings more energy efficient is a huge challenge. Just over 1% of the built environment is replaced each year, which means reducing carbon emissions can only be achieved by significantly improving buildings that are already there - hence the 99% Campaign, which calls for action to improve existing stock.

Architects Axis Design teamed up with Staffordshire Housing to improve the energy efficiency of a row of terraced houses in Chesterton. The homes were improved from a rock bottom energy rating of G, right up to the top rating of A. Common methods were used, including wall and under floor and roof insulation, high performance windows and high efficiency heating systems – but the project included a radical improvement in the form of 'sunspaces' – single-storey additions to the houses that are intended to maximise solar gain and improve daylight levels inside.

GALLEYS BANK RESIDENTS TO HAVE THEIR SAY

RENEW North Staffordshire is helping to ensure a group of residents in Kidsgrove have a say on the future of their homes.

An independent consultant has been brought in to set up a community steering group with residents of the Galleys Bank estate.

Some homes on the estate suffer structural problems due to the way they were built, and this means that would-be buyers cannot get a mortgage. This has caused problems when some landlords purchase homes by auction, and then do not maintain them.

RENEW North Staffordshire, along with its housing association partner in the Newcastle area, Aspire Housing, and Newcastle Borough Council, are looking at how repairs to the defective properties can be funded.

Community engagement consultant Peter Bevington has already started to meet with residents' representatives with the aim of setting up the group, which will ensure that householders in the community are properly informed and involved in the decision-making process.

The group will look at ways to communicate with residents – both in getting information out to the wider community and by considering any residents' concerns.

NEIGHBOURHOOD TRANSFORMATION COMPLETE



From left to right: Harpreet Rayet (RENEW Programme Officer) and Julie Jeffries (RENEW Programme Manager for Newcastle area), Mike O'Connor (Principal Environmental Health Officer at Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council), Alex Phillips (Housing Market Renewal Officer at Newcastle council) Debbie Hope (RENEW Programme Manager) Chris Hesketh (Conservation Architect at CTD Architects) and Paul Newman (Poole Dick Associates) with members of the Knutton St Mary's Primary School choir.

The distinctive façades of 73 Victorian terraced houses in Knutton have been fully restored as part of a £1.17 million project to breathe new life into the area.

The project was funded by RENEW North Staffordshire and Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council, with input from English Heritage with the aim of lifting property values by improving the quality of the local environment.

The refurbished properties, in the John Street and Cemetery Road area, benefit from restored decorative brickwork and tiles using materials that complement and enhance the original features.

Chimney pots, doors and windows were also replaced and where appropriate, other architectural features, such as boot scrapers, have been renovated. Many of the houses have also benefitted from new rear alleyway boundary walls and gates.

The improvements are in line with the Knutton and Cross Heath masterplan, which was supported by the community following extensive consultation in 2005/6.

Locally sourced materials - such as stone, bricks and sand - and contractors were used where possible, and a number of local people were employed in apprenticeship and trainee schemes during the seven-month project.

Newcastle Borough Council organised a celebration party, when residents and contractors marked completion of the project with pupils from Knutton St Mary's Primary School, who have been keenly following its progress.

HAVE YOUR SAY

Please contact the RENEW North Staffordshire team on 01782 232024 if you have any comments or questions, or see www.renewnorthstffs.gov.uk

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