

your future YOUR SAY



MAY 2006

Start of a better
neighbourhood
page 2

Making a safer
community
page 3

Financial help
explained
page 4

GO AHEAD FOR RENEWAL PLANS

RENEW North Staffordshire has been promised £67.5 million Government funding to revitalise neighbourhoods over the next two years.

The announcement of funding for 2006-08 was made by Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott on March 24.

It will mean RENEW North Staffordshire - working in partnership with a wide range of organisations - can get on and make the major improvements to housing conditions that have been planned with local communities.

The funding from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister will also kick start the building of hundreds of well-designed new houses, with a much better local environment.

The £67.5m is the latest phase of funding for the housing market renewal programme in North Staffordshire. It will trigger further investment of more than £400 million by house builders and regeneration partners during 2006-08.

Across North Staffordshire, the money will be used to:

- improve around 6,000 homes
- build around 2,000 new homes
- clear around 700 properties
- buy around 900 properties in readiness for clearance.

RENEW North Staffordshire chair Peter Bounds said: "Local people have strongly supported plans for the future of their areas and we will now get on and make those plans happen.

"This investment will help neighbourhoods that are run down to become popular and attractive places to live.

"Our plans will also create many jobs for local people in construction and related businesses and we will help attract new business investment by radically improving the city environment."

Announcing the funding Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott said: "We are seeing confidence return to these neighbourhoods and a reversal in the cycle of decline.

"However, challenges still remain. This is a long-term challenge to create places where people want to live and work, not leave. That is why we have allocated a further £67.5 million today in North Staffordshire to support that commitment."

Vision for the future

In Hanley, Middleport, Burslem, Shelton and surrounding areas of Stoke-on-Trent one in 10 homes is now empty - and that figure is predicted to get much worse without action.

To attract people back to live in these central neighbourhoods, a new 'vision' has been agreed by regeneration partners.

The city centre will be developed with a new business quarter to attract well-paid jobs, while surrounding neighbourhoods will become thriving centres for urban living.

The unique North Staffordshire landscape of rich industrial heritage, distinctive towns, hilltop views, green space and the many parks, canals and rivers will all be used to attract both new housing and new businesses.

Work is already underway on the ground to make this vision a reality.

New houses and apartments are being built in Burslem town centre and alongside the Caldon Canal in City Waterside - off Lichfield Street, Hanley.



New homes, converted old factories and high quality public space along Caldon Canal

Investment in central areas will benefit everyone because of the new jobs created and the better choice of housing.

And there will be benefits for the suburban estates too with housing improvements, a more attractive environment and better community facilities.



START OF A BETTER NEIGHBOURHOOD

The Government's funding announcement for RENEW North Staffordshire means work to improve Knutton and Cross Heath can begin in earnest.

This money can be used to:

- buy properties in readiness for clearance
- help people move to new homes
- buy and prepare land for new homes
- renovate older homes
- improve the local environment.

The Government funding is on top of other work already being paid for separately, such as the new health care centre and older people's flats.

It means many millions of pounds funding is now committed to making Knutton and Cross Heath a better, more popular and attractive place for existing and new residents.

Local partners are working to create a priority action programme for the coming two years. There will be an opportunity for residents to have their say about the proposals through a consultation process in early summer.

Details have not yet been decided, but it will continue the work already begun. Over the past year this has included environmental improvements like:

- installing railings around properties
- fitting alley gates behind terraced houses
- providing new car parking spaces
- removing vandalised outbuildings
- building a community garden.

In addition 22 houses on the Lower Milehouse estate have been demolished. Many were empty and they had become blighted by vandalism and anti-social behaviour. Tenants affected have been compensated and rehoused in an area of their choice.



New railings installed around Gordon Court sheltered housing scheme in Knutton - making the area look better and feel safer

£10m apartments and health centre planned

A state-of-the-art health centre and complex of 60 modern apartments for older people is being planned for Knutton and Cross Heath.

The health centre and apartments are planned for the former Collins and Aikman factory site, near Morrisons. Discussions are currently underway with English Partnerships, one of RENEW's public sector partners, who own the site. A planning application is to be submitted this spring and it is hoped that work could start before the end of the year, with completion in 2008.

The health centre forms part of the Primary Care Trust's LIFT programme of new health facilities. Funding to build the older people's apartments is expected from

the Housing Corporation (which funds affordable housing), Staffordshire County Council and Aspire Housing.

The health centre will be a base for four GPs and it will also offer dentistry, podiatry (foot care), physiotherapy and a pharmacy.

The new homes will be part of an "extra care" village - similar to the very successful Berryhill Village near Bentilee and will offer a type of housing that does not currently exist in Newcastle.

KEEP IN CONTACT

There are many ways to keep in touch with what is happening in Knutton and Cross Heath, but perhaps the best way is from your neighbours. RENEW North Staffordshire and the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder have set up a network of street reps to keep you in the know and to feed back community views.

Street reps are local volunteers who have agreed to be points of contact about the RENEW programme. Their role is to help ensure local people have accurate information and to pass on local issues or concerns.

If you are interested in becoming a street rep please get in touch with Laurence Reardon at the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder on 01782 611033.

Newcastle Borough Council is co-ordinating local RENEW work. Contact them on 01782 742457.

Aspire Housing is supporting RENEW in Knutton Cross Heath. Contact Dan Gray, AMI Manager, on 01782 635200.

Residents' Friend Emily Tomkinson, who works for the Citizens' Advice Bureau, will offer free and independent advice. She holds advice surgeries on Tuesday 9.30am-12.30pm Community Development Association, Robertson Drive, Tuesday 1.30pm-4pm Ramsey Road Community Centre, Friday 11.30am-1.30pm, Knutton Community Centre (Knutton Road). Emily will also be able to offer a home visit. Call her on 01782 408787.

The Neighbourhood Wardens can be contacted on 01782 742515.

For general inquiries about RENEW North Staffordshire please call 01782 232024 or email renew@stoke.gov.uk

www.renewnorthstaffs.gov.uk

This newsletter can be provided in different languages, and in different formats including Braille, large print and on audio cassette. If you require a version of this newsletter in one or more of the above, please contact us on 01782 232024.

如果您需要本通讯的国语简体版，请拨打 01782 232024。

જો તમને આ સમાચાર-પત્રની એક કોપી ગુજરાતીમાં જોઈતી હોય, તો મહેરબાની કરી ટેલિફોન નંબર 01782 232024 પર કોલ કરો.

اگر آپ اس نیوز لیٹر کی ایک کاپی اردو زبان میں لوٹنا چاہتے ہیں تو براہ کرم ہوائی 01782 232024 پر فون کریں۔



The recently cleared former Collins/Aikman site – proposed location for the older persons apartment complex and health centre.

The complex of 45 two bedroom flats and 15 one bedroom flats will offer everything older people need for independent living.

Facilities will include a therapy suite, craft and hobby area, a coffee bar, lounge, restaurant and hairdresser's.

Twenty of the apartments will be available for sale on a part-ownership basis, with the remaining 40 available for rent.

The combined cost of the projects to build the health centre and apartment complex will be more than £10million.

Getting ready for new homes

RENEW North Staffordshire has chosen eight of Britain's best developers and eight local and national housing associations to build thousands of new homes and to provide affordable housing.

A competition is now being held to choose one house building company to work in Knutton Cross Heath with RENEW and the community to provide the right homes for local people and to attract new residents.

Other companies have also been chosen to carry out work like renovation, environmental improvements and designing the new homes. And professional companies like architects, researchers and lawyers have also been selected to bid for contracts.

These organisations will support local people to gain the skills needed to access new jobs created by RENEW North Staffordshire's work in the area. This will ensure that the hundreds of millions of pounds to be invested in new and better housing makes people wealthier too.

A formal planning policy must also be agreed for Knutton and Cross Heath - called an Area Action Plan. This takes forward the proposals in the masterplan so it can be used to plan the future with confidence.

Newcastle Borough Council is preparing a draft Area Action Plan. This will be submitted to the Government and a public inquiry may follow. The Area Action Plan is expected to become formal council policy in early 2008.

The first new homes will be built on the former Collins and Aikman site off Lower Milehouse Lane. Some of the houses will be for local people whose homes are cleared over the coming years and some for new residents. New homes will be for sale, part-ownership and for rent.

MAKING A SAFER COMMUNITY

Service providers like Newcastle Borough Council, Aspire Housing, Staffordshire County Council, the police and fire brigade are working together to make Knutton and Cross Heath a better place through the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder (NMP).

The NMP helps these services be more responsive to local needs, and we always welcome local views. The street reps (see 'Keep in contact') system will help give good information to the NMP about what local priorities are.

We know that community safety and anti-social behaviour are big concerns. Since June last year a team of Neighbourhood Wardens funded by RENEW North Staffordshire has been making regular patrols.

They tackle problems like litter, fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour and they work closely with the NMP to tackle problems.

Financial help explained

RENEW North Staffordshire wants to keep communities together, improve housing conditions and help people to stay close to friends and family.

We have researched the views of local people about the sort of help they would like. As a result a range of support is available that will be tailored to personal circumstances. Trained advisers will talk through the options personally.

RENEW North Staffordshire will help people in priority areas who own older homes in need of modernisation with a range of interest-free and low interest loans.

This will mean property owners can improve their homes or move to a replacement home without a commercial loan like a mortgage.

The value of the loan will grow as the value of the property grows and an increased amount will be repaid to RENEW North Staffordshire when the property is sold. This money will then be available to improve other people's homes in future years.

These loans will be combined with other options including new affordable homes, provided by developers, shared ownership and homeswaps.

For people whose homes are to be improved, there will be a similar system of loans and support to allow them to improve the inside and outside of the house.

Work may include structural repairs like a new roof, windows and doors. Or it could be internal work to help meet the "decent homes standard".

"Decent homes" work could include a new bathroom, kitchen and central heating.

What work is done to your home will depend on what is needed and what you want. If your street is one of those identified for renewal work you will be contacted separately.

If you are a private tenant you will get help to ensure you know your rights and can move to a home rented by an accredited landlord.

Council and housing association tenants will get help to move to a new home and a choice of where they go.

Help to move...

Brian and Dawn Ollerhead moved recently from their terraced home in Leek Road, Hanley, after a survey recommended clearance.

Mr Ollerhead, a former pottery worker, said: "We had been in the house since 1974 and we were quite happy there, although some other houses in the terrace were empty and not in good condition.

"We didn't much like the idea of moving because it was our house and we didn't want a mortgage at our time of life.

"A man from the council was very helpful in talking to us about the extra help on offer and we were able to buy another similar house nearby without taking out any loan. The new house had been renovated and is in good condition."

Mr and Mrs Ollerhead were also worried about losing contact with their next door neighbour Margaret Dokic, but they still see each other regularly after Mrs Dokic moved to a new bungalow near Hanley Park. Mrs Dokic bought the

bungalow under a shared ownership arrangement with Beth Johnson Housing Association.

She said: "I had lived in the house for 50 years and brought up my family there. At first I did not want to move but there were bad things happening in the empty houses in the terrace and it wasn't like it used to be.

"I was very lucky to get this bungalow which is perfect for me. I'm much better off here than where I was before."



Brian and Dawn Ollerhead (centre) with Margaret Dokic (right)

...And help to stay



Margaret and Ken Bradbury

Margaret Bradbury's house in Burslem, was renovated as part of a £460,000 project to improve 78 homes in Park Road and Hamil Road.

The whole of each terrace was improved with work such as new roofs, windows, boundary walls and doors. The appearance and safety of the area has been improved too with work such as new street lights and traffic calming.

Mrs Bradbury said: "I have lived in the house for 20 years and had kept it in good condition, but I knew I needed a new roof because it was leaking.

"I couldn't quite believe it when a man came to say they would replace the roof and carry out other work too at no cost to me."

A surveyor checked what work was needed to Mrs Bradbury's home and arranged for replacement of the roof, gutters and down pipes, the side boundary wall, two windows and the back door.

She added: "I can't fault the workmen - nothing was too much trouble for them. They even painted the railings on the front wall. It has definitely made the whole street look better and it must have added thousands to the value of the property."

In future, improvements will be funded through loans - see "Financial help explained" above.