

June 2009



PARTNERS' BRIEFING



COMMUNITY ARTS PROJECT SEEN BY 400,000 PEOPLE

A high profile community arts programme that has helped give hundreds of local people a voice during North Staffordshire's massive regeneration programme has ended with a flourish.

Artists and members of the community gathered to celebrate the success of the Place, Space and Identity Stage 2 programme at a closing event held at the Burslem School of Art recently.

Place, Space and Identity aimed to harness people's thoughts and ideas and offer them the chance to reflect on their experiences during times of great change in their neighborhoods. Six artists were commissioned to develop a series of temporary public art projects in Stoke-on-Trent's areas of major intervention to engage local residents and encourage them to describe their feelings as North Staffordshire's multi-million pound regeneration programme transforms their communities.

Since part two of the project was launched in January this year, more than 650 local people have taken part in the projects, which have been seen by around 400,000 people.

Led by Arts Council England, West Midlands, and co-funded by RENEW North Staffordshire, Place, Space and Identity was delivered in partnership with B Arts, an arts charity based in Newcastle-under-Lyme. The initiative was supported by the North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership, Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.

Hardial Bhogal, Director of RENEW North Staffordshire, said: "We need to find as many ways as possible to engage with people around the regeneration projects planned for their neighbourhoods and this project has been a real success. Place, Space and Identity gave us a unique opportunity to reach local people and get their views on the changes that are having a profound impact on their lives. The project provided a platform for residents to respond to the changes and getting involved means they can feel part of the regeneration process."



Artists and members of the community celebrate the success of the Place, Space and Identity arts project

Front page picture: An artist's impression of how the new City Waterside development could look.

BOOST FOR CITY WATERSIDE

New boulevard-style walkways, a wide choice of new homes and a state-of-the-art new pottery for Emma Bridgewater are the highlights of regeneration proposals unveiled for the City Waterside area of Stoke-on-Trent.

The exciting proposals were revealed at a public exhibition recently, ahead of the submission of an outline planning application. Leader of Stoke-on-Trent City Council Cllr Ross Irving said: "The new factory is a huge boost for the city and demonstrates that the pottery industry here is alive and well. It's also good for the city's 'green' image, as the factory will be sited in a new ecologically designed development of homes, boulevards, parks, canalside shops, cafes and studios."

Sited next to the present Victorian Emma Bridgewater factory buildings, the new factory will use the latest 'green' technology to conserve and recycle heat, power and water. A new 'live, work and play' community will be created around the Caldon Canal and the Emma Bridgewater site, with new housing stretching north from the recently opened canal bridge along the new 'spine' boulevard to the city centre. Housing, employment, public open spaces and parks will all be situated close together.

It is expected that site preparation and infrastructure development of the £50m scheme will start in 2010, subject to obtaining all the required consents. Construction of the new Emma Bridgewater factory is expected to feature in one of the early phases of the scheme.



GREEN SHOOTS IN BURSLEM

Local traders say the launch of four new businesses in a week shows that Burslem is on the road to recovery.

A specialist ceramics shop, hobby store, fruit and veg seller and a re-launched pub all opened in the town recently. The openings come on the back of the official launch of the Burslem Regeneration Company, an NSRP (North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership) organisation that is supported by Stoke-on-Trent City Council and works to promote the town.

Glazed Art, a specialist ceramics and glass goods provider featuring 90 per cent local artists, has set up in the town's former Post Office and offers products designed and made on-site by a small group of independent makers. Owner Mark Nixon said: "A lot of hard work is taking place to halt the decline of the pottery industry in Stoke-on-Trent, and I believe the green shoots of recovery are beginning to show."

The Hobby Goblin, a model railway supplier, opened in restored premises on Queen Street and a dedicated fruit and vegetable shop opened in St John's Square. And The Swan pub in Swan Square has reopened after being closed for almost a year. The pub's re-launch follows a £268,000 transformation of Swan Square last year into an Italian-style piazza, with seating and a terrace.

Julian Read, regeneration and town centre manager for Burslem, said: "We are working extremely hard, along with our regeneration partners, to bring real improvements to Burslem that will pull people into the town and strengthen the economy. To have four such diverse businesses opening in a week is great for the town, and it builds on the success of a string of other premises that have opened recently."

EXCITING TIMES FOR THE OVER 55s

Staffordshire Housing Association, RENEW North Staffordshire's housing association partner in the Stoke town area, recently celebrated the start on site of its new extra care housing development, West End Village.

Paul Spooner, Regional Director of the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), and RENEW Director, Hardial Bhogal, were speakers at an event held recently to officially mark the start on site and the beginning of the regeneration of Stoke town. Local historian Ray Johnson talked about the area's unique history and local artist Rob Pointon and photographer Karen Sale screened an animated film.

Due for completion in early 2011, West End Village will be a 100 apartment complex with a variety of communal facilities including a gym, therapy suite, restaurant, bar, hairdressing salon and general store. Care and support will be available from on-site staff at all times, and will be tailored to suit residents' needs. Apartments will be available for rent and sale to people over 55 years of age.

West End Village is a partnership project funded by RENEW, Staffordshire Housing Association, Stoke on Trent City Council and the HCA.

Hardial Bhogal, said: "The West End Village will provide good quality, affordable and environmentally-friendly housing for the over 55s – and as the first major regeneration project in Stoke town, it will kick start the transformational change that RENEW is supporting so successfully in other neighbourhoods across North Staffordshire."

West End Village is regarded as a catalyst to regenerate the London Road gateway into Stoke, as well as a key element of the city's strategy to meet elderly residents' future housing needs.



From left to right: Hardial Bhogal, Director of RENEW; Rhian Hughes, Staffordshire Housing Association Chair; Paul Spooner, West Midlands Regional Director, HCA; Diane Lea, Chief Executive, Staffordshire Housing Association.

The first residents are looking forward to starting new chapters in their lives at Mill Rise, one of a few schemes in the country to combine extra care housing for the over 55s with a state-of-the-art primary care centre.

The scheme, in Lower Milehouse Lane in Knutton, is now open, enabling older people to maintain an independent lifestyle within a supportive environment and with vital services on site.

Alongside 60 one and two bedroom apartments for rent and shared ownership, Mill Rise incorporates three GP practices that are accessible to residents as well as members of the wider community. It has a pharmacy, restaurant, café, bar and hair salon. It will also host physiotherapy, podiatry, blood testing and community nursing services, while a fitness suite provides rehabilitation services and physiotherapy.

David and Doreen Sharman, who have been Aspire Housing tenants since 1962, will be renting an apartment at Mill Rise. Mrs Sharman said: "We are really looking forward to a life where we can live independently in our own home, but take part in an active social life if we want to."



PROGRESS IN MEIR

Great Places Housing Group, in partnership with RENEW North Staffordshire, is working hard to ensure that the homes of residents still living in a clearance area in Meir are safe and secure during demolition.

RENEW and Great Places have also run a project that has brought extra peace of mind to residents in Meir. Alleygates have been fitted across the neighbourhood and now residents can lock the passageways around their homes, which had previously been a magnet for anti social behaviour.

Some residents in RENEW's Phase 1 clearance area are waiting to be rehoused, either in new bungalows being built nearby or in the refurbished properties in Woodville Road.

Work on The Woodlands - a development of refurbished houses that will offer affordable homes has started. Once the refurbishments are completed, families and individuals will have the opportunity to buy their own home through the national home share scheme, HomeBuy Direct. A show home will be available for viewing once the first homes are complete.

Finally residents in Meir are being encouraged to enter a competition to name a street on the estate. With £100 in high-street vouchers on offer to the winners, householders can put forward their ideas for the name of a new street behind Lyme Road and George Avenue.

SOWING THE SEEDS

RENEW North Staffordshire is funding the creation of a 'green area' for local youngsters to play in Charter Road, Cross Heath.

More than 20 properties owned by Aspire Housing, RENEW's housing association partner in the Newcastle-under-Lyme area, were cleared before the housing market renewal programme was announced by the Government in 2002. The site had been identified as a potential site for a new health centre, but as plans were drawn up to locate the new Medical Centre on Lower Milehouse Lane, the Charter Road site was left vacant.

Residents suggested that the area was flattened and grassed over, to provide an area for youngsters to play. Local resident Jenny Elson said: "Work has progressed really well. The kids - who currently play football in the street - have been told that they must wait to allow the grass seed time to establish itself. Hopefully the new grassed area will be ready for the school summer holidays."

ENGAGING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE IN KNUTTON AND CROSS HEATH

An activity scheme that aims to engage young people who have been affected the regeneration programme in Newcastle-under-Lyme took place during May half term.

Youngsters living in the Knutton and Cross Heath area were invited to take part in a range of outdoor sporting activities and indoor sessions, including T-shirt printing and Nintendo Wii gaming.

The pilot scheme has proved such a success that other activities are planned to help keep youngsters occupied during the forthcoming summer holidays.



Children in Knutton enjoy holiday activities.

LISTENING TO CUSTOMERS

Aspire Housing - RENEW North Staffordshire's housing association partner in the Newcastle-under-Lyme area - has developed a range of training courses to help its customers develop the skills and knowledge they need to get fully involved in community activities.

Subjects covered in the courses include community consultation, chairing meetings, understanding housing 'jargon' and secretarial skills. All courses are free of charge, include refreshments and lunch for full day courses, and people may also be able to get help with childcare costs and travel arrangements.

Tim Edwards, Head of Operational Support at Aspire Housing, said: "This is a fantastic opportunity for our customers to enhance their skills and knowledge in a supportive and fun environment. Customers are at the heart of everything that we do and it is imperative that we work together to create sustainable communities."



A WATERSIDE TOUR

City Waterside residents got the chance to see where their neighbours live during a tour of area. The event was organised by RENEW North Staffordshire, its housing partner the Sanctuary Group and Stoke-on-Trent City Council's Neighbourhood Renewal Team.

The event, which was also attended by local councillors, gave residents the opportunity to visit seven neighbourhoods - Belmont Road, Parkhouse Street, Chatham Street, Harley Street, Hazelhurst Street, Well and Ludlow Street and Seymour Street - and give their views about the improvements they are seeing as a result of the regeneration programme's refurbishment works.

Around 30 residents from the Upper Shelton Residents' Association, City South Steering Group and Hanley Residents' Action Group took part in the tour, and their feedback will help the City Waterside project partners continue to carry out refurbishments that meet residents' needs.

BUSINESS BOOST COMPETITION 2009

Small businesses based in Newcastle-under-Lyme are being invited to enter a competition that aims to reward local enterprise.

RENEW North Staffordshire and Aspire Housing have joined forces to help support Newcastle Borough Council's annual Business Boost competition, which encourages businesses to think strategically about their future development. Winning entries are awarded cash prizes to allow them to develop future income and employment opportunities.

Deadline for entries is July 31st – for further information, visit

http://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/online_showform.asp?fm_fid=174

HAVE YOUR SAY

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

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