



PRESS RELEASE

22 SEPTEMBER 2006

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A YEAR OF ACHIEVEMENTS

RENEW North Staffordshire refurbished more than 1,400 homes and helped attract £80m public and private investment into priority neighbourhoods during 2005/06, its annual report has revealed.

The housing market renewal pathfinder has helped encourage significant investment by house builders into run-down neighbourhoods. With the first new homes now approaching completion new residents will soon be moving to areas that have been losing population for years.

RENEW North Staffordshire launched its annual report for 2005/06 on the same day that the nine housing market renewal pathfinders in England launched their submission to the Treasury's comprehensive spending review.

The nine pathfinder chairs have produced a report to highlight their achievements since 2003 and to argue the need for continued Government support in the future.

Hardial Bhogal, RENEW North Staffordshire director, said: "We have made real progress during the past year in improving housing conditions and helping to create confidence in the local housing market.

“Confidence among communities and business in North Staffordshire is growing, thanks to the sustained work by RENEW and its partners to bring in new investment and to improve the quality of the local environment.

“By working in partnership with public sector and private sector partners we are making a real impact in the regeneration of North Staffordshire.

“However, despite our many achievements it is clear we have only just begun. When the housing market renewal pathfinders were established the Government made a long-term commitment to solving the issues of low demand. We now need to see that commitment honoured.”

RENEW North Staffordshire’s annual report provides an overview of progress during 2005/06. Among the achievements are:

- 1,408 homes refurbished
- start on site of City Waterside, a new neighbourhood of 1,600 homes
- 62 properties cleared
- 146 properties acquired for clearance
- £19.3 million invested directly by RENEW North Staffordshire
- £80 million of complementary investment in the pathfinder area (£25 million public and £55 million private funding)

In 2005/06 RENEW North Staffordshire was also allocated £67.5 million Government funding for 2006/08 and praised by the Audit Commission for its progress so far. This funding from the Department of Communities and Local Government is expected to lead to a further £430 million public and private investment during 2006/08.

Mr Bhogal added: “The RENEW North Staffordshire programme is growing quickly. Our success is due to the quality of our strategy, the support of our partners and the confidence shown by business and local communities in our plans to transform neighbourhoods.

“However, we are working to solve problems that will take at least 10 years of sustained effort to resolve.

“We hope the Treasury will see the clear evidence of the effectiveness of the housing market renewal programme and continue to support it in the comprehensive spending review.”

Ends

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Notes to editors

1. RENEW North Staffordshire is the housing market renewal pathfinder for Stoke-on-Trent, Newcastle-under-Lyme and Biddulph East. Our aim is to help make North Staffordshire a thriving, diverse conurbation where people want to live, work, invest and study. We do this by working with communities and partners to:
 - balance housing supply and demand
 - retain and attract population
 - provide quality housing that meets the aspirations of existing and new residents
 - transform the environment and make the best of our heritage and green space
 - support economic regeneration.
2. The RENEW North Staffordshire team can be contacted by the public on 01782 232024 or renew@civic1.stoke.gov.uk. Further information can be found on the website: www.renewnorthstaffs.gov.uk.