



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**24 March 2006**

### **RENEW NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE WELCOMES £67M FUNDING**

RENEW North Staffordshire today welcomed the Government's announcement of £67.5m housing market renewal funding for 2006-08.

The investment will revitalise communities in North Staffordshire by improving older housing, building hundreds of new homes and clearing old houses that are beyond repair.

It will also support economic regeneration in North Staffordshire by dramatically improving the environment close to Stoke-on-Trent city centre and making the most of North Staffordshire's unique industrial heritage and green, hilly landscape.

The investment will build on work already achieved. Since 2004 RENEW North Staffordshire has improved 1,221 houses, cleared 291 properties and acquired 354 properties in readiness for clearance.

Over 2006-08 RENEW North Staffordshire is proposing to:

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

The £67.5m funding from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister will be matched by at least £415m complementary investment from other public sources and from private business – making a total investment programme of at least £482m for 2006-08.

RENEW North Staffordshire's board will now consider revising the detail of the 2006-08 programme to take account of ODPM's evaluation of the scheme update and the funding available.

However, at least £47m of the funding will be for the key priority areas of City Centre South and Middleport and Burslem. These areas have the most problems with empty homes and poor housing conditions, but they also have the most potential to help with economic regeneration by offering a modern, urban living with a wide choice of new and old homes.

Peter Bounds, chair of RENEW North Staffordshire, said: "Our bid to ODPM last November was for £70m, in line with guidance at that time. After submitting the bid we but we were told the maximum we could receive was £67 million, so to get more £67.5million now is an excellent achievement.

"This funding award reflects the pressing need to tackle these problems, the high level of community support for our plans and the Government's confidence in our ability to deliver.

"It is also a tribute to the quality of the case made by RENEW North Staffordshire, the cross-party political support for the programme and the commitment of public and private sector partners to make this programme a success.

"Already the first new homes are being built in City Waterside and in Burslem town centre and we will now see the pace of change speed up

"In 2006-7 we will be investing £30m and in 2007-8 it will go up to £37m, so this programme will grow as the confidence of residents and business grows.

“With the help of our partners we are confident we can now deliver the whole programme in our scheme update and make a major contribution to the comprehensive regeneration of North Staffordshire.”

Mr Bounds added: “Our priority areas are neighbourhoods where not enough people are choosing to live. They are run-down, there is not enough choice of housing and there are many empty homes.

“This investment will help make them 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 because of the radically improved city environment.”

Mark Meredith, elected mayor of Stoke-on-Trent, said: “This is excellent news for Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire. It is the largest ever housing regeneration grant in North Staffordshire and it will mean we can really get on with delivering the improvements local people want to see.”

Mr Meredith added: “Hundreds of millions of pounds are now committed to the regeneration of North Staffordshire.

“Working with partners we are creating thousands of new well-paid jobs, creating a new University Quarter, rebuilding our schools, enhancing our heritage, refurbishing our parks and public spaces.

“This will help attract new people to live in Stoke-on-Trent and make previously run-down neighbourhoods popular again.”

Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott said: "Five years ago, some of these neighbourhoods were one step away from becoming ghost towns, blighted

by boarded up houses and anti-social behaviour. Now we are beginning to see real progress in getting these areas back on track, with better housing, improved public services and cleaner, safer streets. We are seeing confidence return to these neighbourhoods and a reversal in the cycle of decline.

"However, challenges still remain. There is still much to do. We are determined to ensure these estates catch up with the urban renaissance happening in our towns and cities. This is a long-term challenge to create places where people want to live and work, not leave. That is why we are allocating a further £67.5 million today in North Staffordshire to support that commitment."

### **Ends**

For more information please contact Michael Howard at Staniforth on 0161 274 0109 or 07876 590829, [michael.howard@staniforth.co.uk](mailto:michael.howard@staniforth.co.uk), or Linda Isted at Staniforth on 0161 274 0115 or 07956 667097, [linda.isted@staniforth.co.uk](mailto:linda.isted@staniforth.co.uk).

### **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@stoke.gov.uk](mailto:renew@stoke.gov.uk). Further information can be found on the website: [www.renewnorthstaffs.gov.uk](http://www.renewnorthstaffs.gov.uk).