

Beth Johnson Housing Association Barge Tour of Housing Market Renewal Area

Residents and Stakeholders took part in an innovative barge tour through the City Waterside neighbourhood in the heart of North Staffordshire's Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder area. Members of staff from Midlands based Beth Johnson Housing Association and Stoke on Trent City Council's Neighbourhood Renewal Team stepped aboard a barge dressed in traditional Victorian costume to give key stakeholders and area steering group members the chance to view sites for future canalside developments in areas in that Beth Johnson, a subsidiary of Sanctuary Housing Association, operates.

Wearing Victorian attire, provided by Lee Carroll, Neighbourhood Worker who is based at the Wellington Street Area community centre which lies in the heart of this area, highlighted that many of the sites along the Caldon Canal boast former pottery industry warehouses and bottle kilns, a legacy of the world famous pottery industry which dominated this area.

As lead RSL partner working in the RENEW North Staffordshire Housing Market Renewal Area of Major Intervention (AMI) labelled 'City Centre South', Beth Johnson rented the narrow boat (barge) from 'The Beatrice Charity' a Staffordshire based organisation which runs a purpose-designed passenger boat that provides day-trips for children with a need to get afloat.

Two trips took place on Monday 22nd October at 10am until 12pm and the return route retracing the route took place between 1pm until 3pm. The barge set off from the Etruria Industrial Museum, Etruria, Stoke on Trent which is adjacent to Etruria Locks, a Beth Johnson owned canalside sheltered scheme and travelled along the Caldon Canal to the close proximity of the Beth Johnson-managed Wellington Street area Community Centre where refreshments were provided. The afternoon session reversed the original route back to Etruria.

Neighbourhood Worker Lee Carroll and Beth Johnson Housing Association Regeneration Officer, Jim Wright provided a commentary about the local area outlining what improvement work is currently taking place or is likely to be carried out using funding from RENEW North Staffordshire and the City Waterside partners, including national regeneration agency English Partnerships, Stoke-on-Trent City Council, the North Staffordshire Regeneration Zone, the Housing Corporation and British Waterways.

Regeneration Officer, Jim Wright said: "Viewing this part of the city by waterway is a great opportunity. Barges like this would have picked up goods from the pottery warehouses that line the canal when the pottery industry was in its heyday. These are exciting times of change for this area and we wanted to share our optimism and show our commitment to improvement in an innovative and visual way."

Ends

For further information please contact Alex Phillips, Communication & Research Officer on 01782 203484.

Notes for editors:

Founded over 30 years ago **Beth Johnson Housing** provides affordable homes and services to residents of all ages throughout the Midlands.

Beth Johnson joined Sanctuary in January 2006 and owns nearly 4,500 homes in Shropshire, Staffordshire and South Cheshire, including family homes, single person's accommodation, sheltered and special needs housing and home ownership schemes, managed from offices in Stoke-on-Trent, Stafford and South Cheshire.

Beth Johnson also manage over 6000 homes in Ashton-under-Lyne, Herefordshire, Northamptonshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Midlands and Worcester from the West Bromwich regional office.

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.

Established in 1969, **Sanctuary Housing** is a successful leading-edge housing provider, managing over 68,000 homes throughout England and Scotland including general rented, sheltered and supported accommodation, student and key worker accommodation.

As a not for profit organisation, all income goes into maintaining high standards and updating and developing services.

Sanctuary is a fast growing organisation and, in addition to the core of social housing, has diversified in the additional business areas of Care and Management Services.

Sanctuary Housing Association is an Industrial and Provident Society, an exempt charity under the Charities Act 1993 and is regulated by the Housing Corporation.