

18 October 2007

Photocall: 10.00am, Friday, 19 October, Community Hub, Compendium offices, Main Street, Weston Heights (formally Coalville)

A WILD TIME IN THE GARDEN

Children on Coalville, Weston Coyney are brushing up on their green credentials this week with a project that will help to maintain the estate's wildlife for generations to come.

The youngsters are playing their part in helping wildlife live successfully through a period of construction on the estate by installing bird houses and nesting boxes around the area. The project is part of the £55 million regeneration of their neighbourhood.

RENEW North Staffordshire, Compendium Group and Sustainability West Midlands are working together to ensure wildlife habitats are protected and improved during rebuilding.

The project provides 72 house martin bird boxes, which will be installed on new and refurbished properties, as well as houses managed by Riverside Housing. House martins have been nesting in the area for generations, but their nesting grounds are at risk of being lost during the construction work.

As part of the scheme, The Compendium Group is working with the local school and youth programme to inform and engage residents to encourage wildlife in their gardens. The developer and young people on the estate are

also installing hedgehog, butterfly, ladybird and amphibian houses, a squirrel feeder and nesting boxes.

To tie into the initiative, Weston Coyney Infants School is facilitating nature projects as part of a nature club. Dreamscheme, a youth project on the estate, has also carried out a “build your own bird feeder” task and set up wildlife monitoring as a learning experience for the children.

The bio diversity project complements other work to use and enhance North Staffordshire’s green spaces, parks, rivers and canals as part of regeneration.

Hardial Bhogal, director of RENEW North Staffordshire, said: “Much of urban North Staffordshire is close to the countryside or green space. That is good for residents, but it is good for wildlife too. This scheme will help protect and enhance wildlife habitats, improve the local area and encourage sustainability.”

Janet Phillips, head teacher from Weston Coyney Infants School, said: “It is important for children to recognise the importance of preserving and encouraging local wildlife in urban areas.

“The children have experienced a richness and diversity of plants, animals, birds and insects and have a better understanding of the natural environment that surrounds them.”

Dave Bullock, director of The Compendium Group, said: “We are delighted to be working with the community and local partners to bring about a transformation that will make Weston Heights a better and greener place to live.

“Wildlife will be encouraged in the natural and managed green areas and will provide essential contact between people and nature.”

John Sharpe, director of Sustainability West Midlands said: “We really welcomed the opportunity to support this exciting initiative because it is an example of sustainability in action with the enthusiastic engagement of Compendium, the children and local residents. It is also a visible demonstration of the close working partnership SWM enjoys with RENEW North Staffordshire in embedding sustainable development into the housing sector.”

Ends

Photocall:

10.00am, Friday, 19 October, Community Hub, Compendium offices, Main Street, Weston Heights. Children from the local school will be installing bird boxes on the new Weston Heights development. They will also have a selection of wildlife boxes and nature trail equipment.

For further information please contact:

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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.

3. **The Compendium Group** is a special purpose development company set up by affordable housing provider Lovell and social purpose housing and regeneration company The Riverside Group to carry out all aspects of major residential-led regeneration and place-making projects.

The Riverside Group owns or manages around 50,000 homes and has almost eighty years' experience in sustainable regeneration. The organisation has great expertise in managing projects so they have a positive impact on people's lives, through training and employment schemes, social enterprises and planning for long-term sustainability.

4. **Sustainability West Midlands** (SWM) is the Regional Sustainable Development Partnership with members from business, community, voluntary and public sector organisations which represent economic, environmental and social interests, including RENEW North Staffordshire. Through its members SWM acts as a champion body for sustainable development in the region and seeks to communicate, promote and champion the principles of sustainable development and good corporate governance. SWM works with partners to advance individual and collective commitments to sustainable development principles and actions in all policies, programmes and projects for the region.

website: www.sustainabilitywestmidlands.org.uk

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