



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**9 MARCH 2007**

### **Photocall and interview opportunities:**

**9.30am, Monday, 12 March, Main Street, Weston Coyney. Partners and the community will mark the start of work by breaking the ground with a coal pick. Local schoolchildren will also bury a time capsule.**

## **COMMUNITY CELEBRATES START OF £55M ESTATE TRANSFORMATION**

Work to completely transform a run-down housing estate with new homes, a new layout and new green space is to begin with a ceremony on Monday, 12 March.

The community in Coalville, near Weston Coyney, Stoke-on-Trent, is to join with housing market renewal pathfinder RENEW North Staffordshire, developer the Compendium Group and Stoke-on-Trent City Council to mark the start of a £55 million, five-year regeneration programme.

The project is the first to be commissioned by RENEW North Staffordshire from its developer panel. A development agreement between Compendium – a specialist resident development company jointly owned by Lovell and Riverside Group - and RENEW was signed earlier this year.

The redevelopment, to be called Weston Heights, will provide a wide mix of housing types for sale, rent or shared ownership.

Coalville has been blighted by empty homes because the construction method of the former National Coal Board houses means they are difficult to mortgage. Seventy per cent of the 400 homes on the estate were owned by private landlords and the community has suffered from serious problems of poor housing and anti-social behaviour.

Under a masterplan supported by 81 per cent of the local community, 250 homes will be demolished and replaced with 278 new homes in a completely new layout. When complete 70 per cent of housing will be owner occupied, making the new community much closer to the national balance of privately-owned and affordable rented housing.

To mark the beginning of the transformation, Stoke-on-Trent South MP Rob Ffello and Stoke-on-Trent elected mayor Mark Meredith will join Compendium and RENEW North Staffordshire in formally breaking the ground with a coal pick – to symbolise Coalville’s heritage as a mining community.

Children from nearby Weston Coyney Junior School will bury a “time capsule” containing their poems and drawings of their ideal neighbourhood.

And resident Dario Ferrari, who is swapping his old house for one of the first new homes, will also join the celebration.

Hardial Bhogal, director of RENEW North Staffordshire, said: “The redevelopment of Coalville shows how we are working together with residents and developers to transform neighbourhoods blighted by empty homes.

“This regeneration will provide replacement homes for people whose houses are cleared and attract the new residents who will revitalise the existing community.”

Mark Meredith, elected mayor of Stoke-on-Trent, said: “For years the city council and its partners have been seeking a long-term solution to the problems caused by bad housing on Coalville. Now this major investment by RENEW North Staffordshire and Compendium will bring about changes that have been supported by more than 80 per cent of local people.”

Dave Bullock, Director of Compendium, said: “We are delighted to be working with the community and local partners to bring about the transformation everyone wants to see here. Weston Heights is in a great location on the edge of Stoke-on-Trent and we are confident it will become a very desirable place to live.”

Ernie Clarke, chair of Coalville Residents’ Association, said: “We are over the moon that work has started and the exciting future for Coalville is within our grasp.”

Mr Ferrari, whose old home will be demolished after he moves into a new three-bedroom home later this year, said: “I will be able to watch my new home being built, which is very exciting. This is the chance of a lifetime for my family and for whole community. It is a lovely part of the city to live but the estate has gone very downhill over the past 10 years and it needs to change. We need new people, new life and a new image for this area.”

### **Ends**

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Further background information on the development is available from Staniforth.

**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](mailto:renew@civic1.stoke.gov.uk). Further information can be found on the website: [www.renewnorthstaffs.gov.uk](http://www.renewnorthstaffs.gov.uk).