

PRESS RELEASE

6 DECEMBER 2007

MINISTER TOURS RENEWED NEIGHBOURHOODS

Iain Wright, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Communities and Local Government Department, was today shown how neighbourhoods in Stoke-on-Trent are being transformed by RENEW North Staffordshire and its partners.

Mr Wright met residents, staff, council members and schoolchildren who attend the recently-opened Waterside Primary School. The school has been provided by Stoke-on-Trent City Council as part of the new City Waterside neighbourhood.

Housing market renewal pathfinder RENEW North Staffordshire is leading work with partners in City Waterside, which will provide up to 2,400 new homes alongside revitalised Victorian terrace communities.

The £5 million school replaced a dilapidated Victorian building and it teaches children from both the new and old housing in City Waterside. It boasts an array of eco-friendly features and high quality design, including award-winning gates created by an artist and the schoolchildren.

The school was highlighted to Mr Wright because it is an example of how RENEW is working with partners to provide high quality community facilities alongside the building of new homes and the renovation of older properties.

Mr Wright also visited other examples of RENEW's work, including new homes at City Waterside, a new community hall, homes under renovation, the Bridgewater Pottery that is proposed for conversion by Urban Splash and land that where new homes are being designed through the European 9 architecture competition.

Mr Wright said: "It is great to have the opportunity to see how RENEW North Staffordshire is working with partners and local communities to link different types of regeneration. RENEW's work demonstrates the importance of better schools, health centres, transport and community facilities to complement the work being done to provide new and better homes."

Hardial Bhogal, director of RENEW North Staffordshire, said: "We know we have to improve the whole neighbourhood if we are to stop people moving away from central parts of Stoke-on-Trent.

"We have shown the minister today how we attracting people back to live in areas that have been decline for decades. We are doing that by building new housing and renovating older housing, but also by providing the community services people look for when they choose where to live."

Councillor Mervin Smith, Stoke-on-Trent City Council portfolio holder for regeneration, said: "We have seen today a fabulous new school, a new health centre, a new community hall and examples of how the environment around the Caldon Canal is being greatly improved.

"Regeneration is working in North Staffordshire because partners are working together to support each other and the local community. We can see the effects on the ground and a strong sense that we are making real progress."

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For further information please contact:

Michael Howard at Staniforth on 0161 919 8034,

michael.howard@staniforth.co.uk

Lindsey Shaughnessy at Staniforth on 0161 919 8033

lindsey.shaughnessy@staniforth.co.uk

Notes to editors

1. Photography will be available after the visit.
2. A note to explain the places visited by Iain Wright is available separately.
3. 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.
4. 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.