



PRESS RELEASE

PHOTO CALL: 12 NOON, FRIDAY, JUNE 22, CORNER OF LUKE STREET AND SLATER STREET, MIDDLEPORT

JUNE 21, 2007

CLEAN-UP LAUNCHED IN CLEARANCE AREA

A major clean-up and security operation is to begin in a proposed clearance area.

The Slater Street area of 236 houses in Middleport was proposed for clearance due to poor housing conditions and low demand in May 2006.

Since then the owners of a large number of properties have sold or agreed to sell and around two thirds of residents have moved out.

However, the empty properties have become vulnerable to break-ins by burglars who steal items such as copper piping and wiring. The rear yards of properties and the green space in the area have also been used for fly-tipping.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire Police have worked together to manage the area, but further support is required.

Now RENEW North Staffordshire, working with training organisation Project Management, Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire Police, has announced a three month pilot project to tidy the area and combat the criminal

behaviour. If successful the programme may be used in other clearance areas in future.

The £30,000 project, paid for by RENEW North Staffordshire, will be launched by the partners, Joan Walley, MP for Stoke-on-Trent North, and ward councillors on Friday, June 22.

A team of 10 supervisors and 30 apprentices working for Project Management's Homeworks project will carry out the work, starting on July 2.

The Homeworks project is a partnership between Project Management and Stoke-on-Trent City Council. Homeworks provides maintenance and environmental services for Stoke-on-Trent City Council's rented homes and provides school leavers and unemployed people with experience in decorating, gardening, construction and maintenance. As a result apprentices gain the skills needed to find jobs in the construction, engineering and manufacturing industries.

The Homeworks teams will initially spend a week talking to residents to identify the problem areas, clear away the fly-tipped rubbish and generally tidy up the area.

After the clean-up they will provide a team of around five people to liaise with local residents, tidy any further rubbish and deal with the consequences of vandalism. The apprentices will be drawn from the local Middleport and Burslem areas.

RENEW North Staffordshire and its partners are continuing to explore other security measures to combat the criminal behaviour in the area.

Hardial Bhogal, director of RENEW North Staffordshire, said: "Residents have sold their properties and moved to new homes more quickly than has ever happened before in a Stoke-on-Trent clearance area.

“That has led to a serious problem of criminal and anti-social behaviour that has got worse in the past few months.

“It is clear we must adopt an innovative approach to managing the area and supporting the remaining residents.

“This project will initially clean up the area and then ensure it is kept tidy, while providing work opportunities for local people. That will also discourage further fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour.”

Mark Meredith, elected mayor of Stoke-on-Trent, said: “The city council and police have worked hard to manage the Slater Street area in the same way as other clearance areas are managed.

“However, it is clear the existing resources we have available are not enough. I am very pleased with the launch of this project. We will not tolerate the criminal and anti-social behaviour that is taking place now in the Slater Street area.”

Ends

You are invited to send a reporter and photographer at 12 noon, Friday, June 22, to the junction of Slater Street and Luke Street, Middleport. The scheme will be launched with RENEW North Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent City Council’s Neighbourhood Renewal Team, Stoke-on-Trent North MP Joan Walley, ward councillors, Staffordshire police and a team of Homeworks apprentices.

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.