

## Newlands summary briefing

### **What is Newlands?**

Developed by the Northwest Development Agency and the Forestry Commission, Newlands is a unique £23 million scheme that will reclaim large areas of derelict, underused and neglected land across England's Northwest and transform them into thriving, durable, community woodlands.

Newlands is about new life and new environments. It will, in the years ahead, deliver new recreational areas, benefits for business, a boost to healthy living and a significant increase in the woodland cover of England's Northwest.

### **Where will Newlands happen?**

The five-year, first phase of Newlands will cover the Mersey Belt area, targeting sites in Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford, Wigan, Knowsley, Liverpool, St Helens, Sefton, Wirral, Ellesmere Port and Neston, Halton, Vale Royal, and Warrington. Phase two is under development and, once approved, will extend across the region to cover Cumbria, Lancashire and the rest of Cheshire.

Phase one aims to reclaim 435 hectares of brownfield land for community woodland uses in support of regeneration and economic growth.

### **How have the derelict land sites been selected?**

The scheme is based on reliable data and solid intelligence. A ground-breaking survey has been conducted of the region's extensive areas of derelict, underused or neglected (DUN) land – areas that are a blight on local communities, a drain on resources and a major problem for the region's image.

In total, 3,800 'DUN' sites of more than one hectare in size have been identified across England's Northwest, of which 1,600 are 'brownfield' and have been previously developed – these are the target areas for Newlands.

These sites were found through the use of aerial photography and other available sources such as the National Land Use Database or Unitary Development Plans published by local authorities. Once they were identified, these sites were filtered and checked through consultations with the region's local authorities – this consultation removed from the survey those sites that had been redeveloped, those that were intended for other land uses, or those that were unsuitable for community woodland due to their ownership or physical characteristics.

### **Which derelict sites will be prioritised within Newlands?**

With such a large number of sites (1,600 in total), covering so large an area (14,913 hectares), clearly the best use has to be made of the limited funds available under the Newlands initiative.

Firstly, the sites have been assessed using a 'Public Benefit Recording System' (PBRs), designed to measure the public benefit that could be delivered through their regeneration. This system identifies the issues of public concern in the locality of each site based on social, environmental and economic criteria.

Next, in order to maximise strategic impact, the sites have been filtered according to the objectives, priorities and themes agreed by NWDA with Sub-Regional Partnerships (SRPs). These themes include aspects such as more appealing gateways, transport corridors and settings for investment or perhaps the screening of significant areas of industry. Out of the survey, the PBRs, and the sub-regional priorities flow the projects which are the priority for regeneration under the Newlands scheme. This is another first for the Northwest.

### **How does the Public Benefit Recording System (PBRs) work?**

Once the sites have been identified and mapped using GIS software, a number of other geographically-specific identifiers of concern and opportunity 'layers' of mapping are introduced to give each site a public benefit 'score' across a range of social, economic and environmental factors and attributes. Some of the social factors include an index of multiple deprivation score, the site's proximity to schools or whether the land falls within health action zones. Economic factors include nearby employment zones or proximity to transport corridors while environmental criteria included factors such as the proximity to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) or air quality management zones, etc.

### **After the sites have been identified, what happens next?**

Newlands is not just about 'good' woodlands – it's about 'exemplar' community woodlands that offer real economic and social payback. After the PBRs has identified priority locations, those sites will be subject to an Additional Impact Assessment (AIA) which assesses each site's true potential in more depth, again focussing on social, environmental and economic issues, both in the long and short term. Put simply, every site is different and this needs to be reflected through the AIA. Projects are then compared to sub-regional priorities, and those which offer the best strategic impact proceed.

Newlands sites will be cleaned up and reclaimed via an integrated and innovative approach to derelict land regeneration. This will ensure that each site realises the full potential highlighted under the PBRs. Target sites will include a detailed community consultation programme to make sure that any development fully fits the social needs of the area – again, every site presents unique challenges, and unique opportunities.

### **Who is making Newlands happen?**

Newlands is a perfect example of how Government agencies can work together in partnership. The Northwest Development Agency is providing the £23 million for the first phase of Newlands, with the Forestry Commission undertaking programme development and management.

The transformation of the first 435 hectares across Merseyside, Greater Manchester and North Cheshire will be carried out through five key delivery partners, who are: The Red Rose Forest, The Mersey Forest, The Pennine Edge Forest, Groundwork Northwest and Forest Enterprise.

### **Why is Newlands unique and different?**

Newlands is the 21<sup>st</sup> Century face of land regeneration: carefully planned; intelligence-led; delivering widespread public benefits; enhancing the environment; and delivered through partnerships. Newlands will improve the quality of life for millions of people, delivering new open spaces and natural areas for increased community enjoyment, tourism and recreation

Newlands is about more than trees and people: it will benefit the region economically and will trigger new opportunities for businesses. For instance there are direct links between image and investment, and between derelict land and land and property values. Newlands also delivers against a wide range of policy objectives – beyond the purely environmental - from brownfield land regeneration to health, from business growth to biodiversity.

### **How can I find out more?**

For more information on the Newlands initiative, contact:

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