

Newlands Executive Briefing

Transforming brownfield land into thriving, durable and economically-viable natural environments



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Launched in the summer of 2003, **Newlands** was a unique £32 million scheme that responded to local and regional socio-economic needs by transforming derelict sites into thriving, multifunctional community woodlands.

Holistic regeneration of this type is truly beneficial: carefully planned, intelligence led and delivering widespread economic and social impacts. Newlands worked through partnerships, most notably that between the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) – latterly BIS – and the Forestry Commission. Delivering across several of the activities within the then Regional Economic Strategy and making a significant contribution to the Manchester, Liverpool and Central Lancashire City Region plans at the time, Newlands enhanced the economic viability of these regional hubs by helping to create quality, economical living environments across the north west.

Connecting local housing estate to green space,
Town Lane, Southport (September 2009)



Newlands

Newlands was established to transform brownfield land, and therein deliver maximum economic, social and environmental integrated returns. Over its lifetime, the programme transformed eleven sites, proving its ability to deliver.

Against the backdrop of an ever-changing economic and political landscape, Newlands also learnt to adapt to realise new opportunities as they arose. For instance the development of the Setting the Scene for Growth and Green Streets projects, which were about planting individual trees in targeted streets and neighbourhoods. This was recognition of the value of well-planned and well-placed greening, rather than just regeneration on a large scale.

In terms of focus, in later years Newlands placed an even greater emphasis on the economic outcomes by actively seeking out opportunities where its brand of regeneration could result in direct economic development, including the creation of jobs, tourism revenue and improved house prices (such as Brockholes just outside Preston).

Over time, Newlands also became more flexible in the terms of its delivery partners. The Setting the Scene for Growth programme allowed Newlands investment to be delivered by partners, such as the north west's Community Forests. This opened Newlands up to work on sites that previously would not have been considered (such as **Mab Lane** in Liverpool), but which could still deliver considerable social, environmental and economic benefits.

Throughout the lifetime of the programme, Newlands kept sustainability and longevity at its core. It provided capital investment for the initial regeneration works and then uniquely revenue funding for 20 years of maintenance, as opposed to the more traditional and much shorter-term 'development only' grants. Where larger sites were developed 99-year leases ensure that the economic and social benefits sought are realised and maintained for the long term.



Fishing lake at LIVIA, Salford (September 2009)

Newlands is an intelligent, evidence-based programme of regeneration

347 hectares regenerated
(at April 2009)

Over £32 million invested in creating quality environments
in the Northwest from
October 2002 to March 2015

12 projects implemented
by March 2015

Average capital cost per hectare
approximately £37,000

From the outset the Forestry Commission, with partners, sought and created a GIS (Geographical Information System) methodology, which would combine social, economic or environmental needs and opportunities as an aid to strategic planning and investment. This evolved into the **Public Benefit Recording System (PBRS)**. The PBRS approach of marrying economic, social and environmental factors to provide an evidence based sifting and targeting programme for investment has now been widely adopted across the north west and nationally.

This level of site evaluation ensured that each site chosen was a high priority for regeneration; one that would deliver the maximum amount of economic and social returns per pound spent. It also helped to remove any emotional or political response to a site.

Site surveys proved useful, but the process of community consultation was found to be invaluable. Newlands used partner organisations, including Groundwork, Community Forests Northwest and the Wildlife Trust, to build on their existing links with local people to undertake consultation and engagement programmes. Through this, Newlands was able to manage expectations and deliver sites that met local need, in turn ensuring the longevity and use of these community woodlands.

Profile: LIVIA, Salford

Before Newlands intervention, LIVIA was home to heavy industry; the remains of the Manchester, Bury and Bolton canal also ran through the site. Although once well-used it became damaged and derelict. Fly tipping, vandalism and motorbike scrambling made the area dangerous, unwelcoming and ultimately forced down its value.

A large part of LIVIA has been completely transformed through Newlands. Paths and cycleways have made the varied terrain of this site much more accessible; they also link the site to the Irwell sculpture trail and other local country parks. LIVIA boasts a play area, climbing boulders and an outdoor classroom. All of these features are changing the local community's perceptions of the site, encouraging use by a wide range of people and making LIVIA feel safe and integral part of the local community.

The regeneration of LIVIA created a key gateway site on the M60 and helped to transform the Northern Way Growth Corridor and Manchester City Region. LIVIA also helped to attract business investment to the Agecroft Commerce Park and Clifton Industrial Estate and tackled the needs of an area in the top 10% of the national Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). The regeneration of LIVIA provided a green corridor to the countryside for Central Salford and much-needed green space for the New Deal for Communities area. LIVIA also helped to reduce worklessness through economic inclusion projects.

LIVIA (September 2009)



Newlands as an economically targeted programme

Newlands translated its sites into sustainable and economically ‘edged’ community woodlands. The regeneration of these sites stimulated the local economy. In terms of house prices, Newlands has had a positive impact – informal research showed that house prices for those directly abutting Moston Vale almost trebled thanks to the work carried out by Newlands.

Many Newlands sites were chosen due to their location being adjacent to business and industrial zones. For example, Central Business Park, a designated Strategic Investment Site in Manchester, sat alongside Moston Vale, which provided a quality environment for investment.

Newlands' investment was also able to enhance other regeneration funding. In Rochdale, HCA and NWDA investments in the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder scheme in Belfield were enhanced by the work carried out at the Newlands site. Over in Liverpool, Bidston Moss is a key site in the **Wirral Waters** and it was a key site in the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park and contributed to the improvement of three Super Output Areas in Inner Wirral that were within the top 5% of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD).

It's important to state that Newlands sites never sat in isolation, and the importance of Green Infrastructure (GI) was always taken into account. Careful planning of access, routes, street trees and open space created a coherent, joined up network of green spaces across the urban environment. Each site was well linked to other green assets in the area, creating connections between local communities, businesses and other areas of regeneration.

Newlands delivers against local, regional and national strategies

- Delivered Action 84 and 117 of the Regional Economic Strategy 2006
- Contributed to the Manchester, Liverpool and Central Lancashire City Region plans
- Contributed to the delivery of Housing Market Renewal programmes
- Enhanced a number of strategic sites including urban regeneration companies, key business parks and key transport corridors
- Contributed to the UK Sustainable Development Strategy – Newlands cited as an ‘innovative and integrated approach to tackling inherited degradation’
- Contributed to the Government’s Sustainable Communities Plan – Newlands credited with ‘bringing a new lease of life to the north west’s urban areas, through a combination of environmental improvement, derelict land reclamation and, vitally, the development of new opportunities for leisure and recreation’
- Improved the value of housing stock – a Valuation Office Agency survey found that community woodland in Merseyside had added £15 million to the value of local housing
- Delivered the Northwest Regional Forestry Framework – Action Area Two: Regional Image – Action 11.

Wildflowers at LIVIA
(September 2009)



New cycle path at Belfield, Rochdale
(September 2009)



Profile: **Brockholes,** Preston

Secured in 2006 using Newlands funding, **Brockholes** has now been fully regenerated. It is a varied wetland and woodland site, spanning 172ha at a gateway site to the city of Preston, Lancashire and across the north west, adjacent to the M6 and in the heart of a number of key strategic investment areas. Brockholes uses the sub-region's natural economy to boost local and regional growth, using the vision of a sustainable visitor and recreation destination to drive further investment to the area, boost local employment and raise the profile of Lancashire as a thriving economic catalyst.

Owned and managed by Lancashire Wildlife Trust, Brockholes unites a stunning natural environment with first class facilities to attract and impress visitors. It meets the needs of a diverse local community, as well as acting as a catalyst to stimulate and sustain the economies of Preston and Lancashire. By combining innovative design, outstanding wildlife assets and a commitment to high quality visitor offer, Brockholes is now a destination for hundreds of thousands of people. It forms a regional exemplar and a catalyst by which the local area can regenerate and grow. Brockholes also remains true to the principles of supporting local produce, encouraging healthy living, arts, culture, and protecting and promoting wildlife.

Aerial view of Brockholes



Plans for Brockholes Visitor Centre



Newlands encouraging social cohesion and health

What in many cases was ‘no-go’ land has been successfully reclaimed for the local community thanks to the work of Newlands. Anti-social behaviour and low-level crime – such as vandalism, joy riding and illegal motorcycling – have been actively discouraged and prevented by intelligent landscaping and lighting. Through regeneration of these sites, Newlands has helped to restore pride and encourage community cohesion.

Good quality environments encourage people out of their homes and into public spaces, where they can now interact and build social relationships. All the sites provide a place for people to meet, play, and even hold events. For example Brockholes has a ‘friends of’ group, who have invested time and effort in the area and were closely engaged with the Newlands process. At Belfield in Rochdale, the local communities produced their own film and held events to celebrate their new community woodland. While at Moston Vale residents contributed to a book about the area – the first time local people had been given the opportunity to express pride about where they lived.

Newlands encouraged the positive use of land. Healthier living was designed in, by both informal and formal means. Cycle paths, sports equipment and footpaths along with open spaces now provide plenty of opportunities for people to get active. Moston Vale has a youth football team using the site; Bidston Moss has dedicated cycleways that link with the national cycle routes and even Nordik Skiing on its slopes; Belfield is home to sports pitches, fishing lodges and walking routes to encourage people to make the most of this outdoor space; and Town Lane is adjacent to a local hospital.

All this was significant during the process, tying in perfectly with healthy living schemes such as Natural England’s Walk the Way to Health and the Forestry Commission’s Woods for People and Active Woods. It continues to be relevant today, in line with government strategies to get people active and tackle obesity.

Profile: Bidston Moss, Wirral

Until the 1990s, Bidston Moss was landfill, most recently classed as 'unsafe for public access'. Groundwork Merseyside had been working on Bidston Moss since 1995, but significant investment was still needed. There were problems with illegal motorcycling and vandalism and, as Bidston Moss could be seen by road and rail users alike and lies close to several large residential areas it was giving a negative impression of the area.

Thanks to Newlands, Bidston Moss has been transformed. Features include a newly renovated fishing lake, with its new 'recycled' boardwalks and fishing pegs; new cycle routes linking to the existing National Cycle Network; and a venue for Nordik Skiing. The site is now even more accessible for local communities, thanks to the addition of the footbridge over the mainline railway, whilst one of the main entrances to Bidston Moss lies within the Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority plant, meaning that it has become an integral part of the Authority's educational and community programme.

Bidston Moss remains popular with local people for informal use such as dog walking, exercise and family days out. A number of community events have been held on site including fun runs and family open days that have helped to introduce local people to their new community woodland.

Located at the headland of the proposed 'Wirral Waters' development, Bidston Moss is set to become part of a large scale Peel Holdings development programme, providing a green lung for the mixed-use development.

Bidston Moss following Newlands investment, (2008)



Newlands making local communities resilient to climate change

Increasing tree cover in urban areas is known to reduce a number of pollutants in the atmosphere, including ozone, nitrogen dioxide and particulates, while in carbon sequestration, trees absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen during the process of photosynthesis.

The urban heat island effect can also be mitigated. An influx of concrete and glass structures in modern towns and cities are resulting in ever increasing temperatures. Trees provide shade in summer and the evapotranspiration of water from the leaf surface has a general cooling effect.

With the likelihood of flooding becoming more prevalent, trees and vegetation play their part in reducing the incidence of severe floods. While hard, impermeable surfaces, such as concrete and asphalt, allow water to run off during heavy rainstorms and flood surrounding areas; trees, plants and grass slow the passage of rain to the ground and reduce run-off by absorbing much of the water.

The work of the Newlands programme has contributed to increasing the resilience of our communities. Trees, planting and green space will help to mitigate against the likely impacts of climate change.

Profile: Moston Vale, Manchester

Located in North Manchester's Housing Market Renewal Area, within an area in the top 5% of the national Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and next to the Central Park business complex, Moston Vale was an underused (ex landfill) green space; a place crying out for attention.

The 21ha site was transformed into an urban countryside with native woodland, wildflower meadows and recycled gravel footpath. A new sports pitch and changing facilities for Moston Valley football club have established the area as a valuable recreation space. Solar assisted lighting lines Moston Valley Way to form an eco-friendly safety measure. Street trees planted with assistance from local communities and the Green Streets project have complemented the major improvements on site.

Moston Vale



Moston Vale was designed and created in full consultation with the local community. The work carried out has created a quality setting for new investment. In the Housing Market Renewal area, Moston Vale is now a significant contributor to its economic regeneration.

The legacy

With over £32 million of regeneration funding Newlands was one of the largest land-based green infrastructure regeneration programmes in the country. Its impact continues to deliver against the economic and social needs of our communities. Its delivery was flexible, meaning that it was able to fit local, sub regional and regional needs, either through street trees and through small or large sites. It sought to, and succeeded in, adding value to regeneration schemes and other regional land regeneration programmes and continues to adapt to renewed policy frameworks as these emerge.

Via Newlands, partners committed to regenerating sites that had greater direct economic values within themselves and/or to the surrounding area. Brockholes in Preston has created jobs and now attracts large-scale visitor spend into the area. The investment in Bromborough in Wirral is directly linked to wider investment opportunities at Wirral Waters and there are other sites with economic merits, in addition to its inherent social or environmental ones.

In this way, Newlands was able to shift its raison d'etre, to become an even greater direct catalyst for economic regeneration.



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