

Newlands Executive Briefing

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Newlands is rapidly becoming one of the top regeneration schemes in the UK, and the foremost of these programmes to use forestry as the basis for change.

Launched in the summer of 2003, Newlands is a unique £59 million scheme that is reclaiming large areas of brownfield land across England's Northwest; responding to local and regional economic and social needs by transforming sites into thriving, durable, community woodlands.

Newlands is the 21st Century face of land regeneration: carefully planned; intelligence-led; and delivering widespread public benefits through partnerships, most crucially that between the Northwest Regional Development Agency and the Forestry Commission. Newlands is one of the activities within the Regional Economic Strategy 2006 and contributes significantly to the Manchester, Liverpool and Central Lancashire City Region plans – enhancing the economic viability of these regional hubs by helping to create quality living environments across the Northwest.

Newlands is cited within the UK Sustainable Development Strategy – ‘Securing the Future’ as an ‘innovative and integrated approach to tackle inherited degradation’.

The Government's Sustainable Communities Plan credits the initiative with ‘bringing a new lease of life to the Northwest's urban areas, through a combination of environmental improvement, derelict land reclamation and, vitally, the development of new opportunities for leisure and recreation.’



Moston Vale after Newlands

How did Newlands start?

Following a comprehensive survey of brownfield land across the Mersey Belt area, a number of potential sites were identified as prime targets for regeneration. These were assessed using the Public Benefit Recording System (PBRS) – a cutting edge, strategic regeneration tool – and then filtered according to the objectives, priorities and themes agreed by the NWDA with Sub-Regional Partnerships (SRPs). From this, the sites that are the priority for regeneration under the Newlands scheme were identified.

In addition to the PBRS system, Additional Value Assessments (AVAs) have enabled Newlands to consider the functionality of each site, and ensure designs more closely address the social, economic and environmental needs of the area. Newlands is rapidly becoming one of the top regeneration schemes in the UK, and the foremost of these programmes to use forestry as the basis for change.

Newlands Funding

In 2003, NWDA committed £23 million to the first phase of Newlands; to transform over 400 hectares of brownfield land across the Mersey Belt area of the region. In May 2007, NWDA and the Forestry Commission re-affirmed their partnership, with the commitment of a further £36 million to extend the scheme across the whole Northwest region.

This takes the total NWDA investment into Newlands to over £59 million – creating a scheme that will have unprecedented impact across the region. And in addition to the initial development investment, NWDA have shown great foresight by agreeing to support maintenance works for 15 years after the initial capital development period. To further enhance the sustainability of the Newlands projects, the Forestry Commission is also entering into 99-year management arrangements for each site.

So where is Newlands working?

The first phase of Newlands is already delivering across a number of sites in the Mersey Belt.

The 21-hectare **Moston Vale project** in North Manchester has been transformed into a new 'urban countryside' – significantly contributing to the Manchester City Region plan to create better living environments with an enhanced economic value. A former domestic landfill and most recently blighted by anti-social behaviour, Moston Vale is now a significant contributor to the area's economic regeneration – at the heart of 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 regional economic hub of Central Park Business Park. Through Newlands, Moston Vale is now a quality setting for investment, with economic inclusion projects also critical to its future management. High quality new access, sports and recreation facilities are also serving local communities and improving their physical environment.

Work at the **Bidston Moss project** in North Wirral has transformed an area within the top 5% of the national IMD into a key site for Merseyside's economic and social regeneration. In line with the Liverpool City Region Plan, Bidston Moss encourages dramatic economic transformation and root and branch physical and social regeneration. Located on a key gateway for Liverpool – along the M53 corridor and a main rail route, Newlands at Bidston Moss has also helped to transform the image of the city and support other projects for the Capital of Culture 2008. This work will lead to increased inward investment, boosting its locality and adding value to the adjacent Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder.

A recent addition to the Bidston Moss site is the planting of the world's first green billboard – an environmentally sound advertising medium, made entirely from a living willow hedge and upon which any kind of advertising or art installation can be placed.



Moston Vale with new path and lighting



Aspirations for the LIVIA project



LIVIA before Newlands

Work has started on the **Lower Irwell Valley Improvement Area (LIVIA)** in North Salford and parts of Prestwich and Bury. By uniting a series of smaller development projects and creating one cohesive, well maintained parkland, Newlands at LIVIA is creating a green corridor for Central Salford Urban Regeneration Company and improving the appearance of this key gateway site. The LIVIA project will also encourage businesses to locate at the nearby Agecroft Commerce Park and Clifton Industrial Estate, as well as contributing to the creation of the Croal Irwell Valley Regional Park. For an area that is within in the top 10% of national deprivation, Newlands regeneration is set to attract investment to the area and the physical improvements will significantly benefit the New Deal for Communities areas of Charlestown and Lower Kersal as well as the adjacent wards of Pendleton and St. Mary's.

The latest project to be launched, **Belfield**, will create a clean and green river corridor from Rochdale town centre to the Belfield and Clover Hall Estates in the heart of East Rochdale's Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder area. The project links different woodland sites with greenways to enhance investment into the Kingsway Business Park and help assist the transformation of the East Central Rochdale Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder – an ethnically diverse area in the top 10% of the national IMD. Together with other planned improvements to housing in the area, this project encourages economic and social regeneration and nurtures local wildlife.

Brickfields incorporates much of St. Helens' post-industrial landscape, and the regeneration of the site will not only enhance the investment potential in the St. Helens Strategic Investment Area and address the needs of a national top 10% deprived ward, it will attract further investment from ERDF Objective One funding. Brickfields will link the jigsaw of other community woodlands in the South St. Helens area and create safe public access routes.

At the **Town Lane** project in Southport, regeneration will encourage local investment and provide the setting and backdrop for Southport Commerce Park, helping to create and sustain new job opportunities and new recreational facilities at the same time. All the regeneration work is to be delivered against Southport's Community and Crime Reduction Strategies. Notably, the site is also a designated Red Squirrel Refuge.

A former gravel extraction site near Preston, **Brockholes** is the latest Newlands project, developing in partnership with Lancashire Wildlife Trust. The land has been purchased with Newlands funding and there are plans to develop the site using Newlands 2 investment. Located next to the M6 and encircled by the River Ribble, this key gateway will be transformed into a landmark centre of excellence for green tourism, recreation and wildlife, as well as a critical driver for economic and social development.

Newlands across the region

The second phase of Newlands, which was approved by NWDA in Spring 2007, will see the scheme taken across the whole region; building on the successes of phase one, and transforming a further 520ha of derelict or previously used land.

As well as continuing to deliver brownfield land regeneration on a dramatic scale, this second phase of Newlands will introduce new elements to the scheme to add value to the developments on site.

One of these will be 'Setting the Scene for Growth' – an urban greening programme developed by the region's Community Forests. It will improve the region's ability to attract economic development through improved green infrastructure around all of the Newlands project areas, creating green corridors to the new community woodlands and having a direct, and very tangible impact on the local communities.



Town Lane at present



Artists impression of Town Lane after Newlands

The Next Step

Newlands is now fully established as an exemplar of brownfield land regeneration and a key initiative for tackling the environmental deficit in the Northwest. The work carried out so far and planned for the coming months will continue to make an impact on the ground. The partnership of the NWDA and Forestry Commission, Groundwork and the Red Rose, Mersey and Pennine Edge Forests continue the capital development phase – building on the existing success stories.

The expansion of Newlands across the whole of the Northwest creates an unprecedented opportunity to deliver dramatic change within the region.

Find out more

For more information on the Newlands initiative, contact:

Forestry Commission
Delamere Area Office
(NW England Regional Team)
Delamere, Northwich
Cheshire. CW8 2JD

Tel: 01606 889912
Fax: 01606 301081
Email: fc.nweng.delamere@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

www.forestry.gov.uk/newlands
www.pbrs.org.uk