

Newlands Summary Briefing

What is Newlands?

Launched in the summer of 2003, Newlands is a unique £23 million scheme that is reclaiming large areas of derelict, underused and neglected (DUN) land across England's Northwest, and transform it into thriving, durable, community woodlands.

It is the 21st Century face of land regeneration: carefully planned; intelligence-led; delivering widespread public benefits; enhancing the environment; and delivered through partnerships, most crucially that between the Northwest Development Agency and the Forestry Commission.

As well as forming a key activity within the Regional Economic Strategy, Newlands has become one of the top regeneration schemes in the UK, and the foremost of these programmes to use forestry as the basis for change. The scheme is also helping to deliver on the goals and objectives outlined in the government's 'Northern Way' report on sustainable communities.

How did Newlands start?

The first five-year phase of Newlands covers the Mersey Belt area, and resulted from a comprehensive survey of the region's DUN land. The sites identified by the survey were then assessed using the Public Benefit Recording System (PBRS), which is designed to measure the public benefit that can be delivered through their regeneration. This system identified the issues of public concern in the locality of each site based on social, environmental and economic criteria. The sites that scored highest were then selected for regeneration.

In order to maximise strategic impact, the sites were then filtered according to the objectives, priorities and themes agreed by the NWDA with Sub-Regional Partnerships (SRPs). These themes included aspects such as more creating appealing gateways, transport corridors and settings for investment, and screening 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.

What are the Additional Value Assessments?

The AVAs have been the main area of activity since the launch of Newlands. They have taken forward the PBRS as a filtering tool by looking at the functionality of each site, and assessing more closely the social, economic and environmental affecting each one. Ultimately this will help ensure that the potential benefits of each site are fully realised. The AVAs have also allowed the SRP to develop a much clearer picture of which sites merit extra investment in terms of both time and money, in order to transform them from quality to exemplary woodlands.

So where is Newlands working?

Since the launch, seven sites have been prioritised:

The **Lower Irwell Valley Improvement Area (LIVIA)** is the largest of these sites, and the epitome of the Newlands Ethos. Socially, the site is set to become a new 'central park' for Greater Manchester, with new recreational facilities and woodland that will screen noise from the M60 and improve air quality. Economically the landscaping will add value to the nearby Clifton Industrial Estate, while environmentally a reclaimed LIVIA will provide important new wildlife habitats.

At the **Town Lane** site in Southport, regeneration will encourage local investment, creating new job opportunities and new recreational facilities at the same time. The site is also a designated Red Squirrel Refuge.

Brickfields incorporates much of St Helens' post-industrial landscape, and is another site that will be both economically and socially transformed by Newlands, as well as being linked with other community woodlands in the area.

The former landfill site at **Bidston Moss** in North Wirral will be regenerated and linked up to the National Cycle Network, while at the same time offering extra protection to birds such as lapwings and barn owls from an adjacent Site of Biological Interest.

A derelict car park in **Ellesmere Port** is to be transformed into a community woodland, screening a nearby manufacturing plant from the M53 at the same time, while a new river corridor is to be developed from the **Bellfield Estate** to Rochdale town centre, linking together a

series of new woodland areas. The site will also include a much-needed children's play area and encourage local wildlife, which includes Kingfishers and Dippers.

The seventh site to be tackled is **Moston Vale** in North Manchester, which will undergo environmental improvements to create a new 'urban countryside'.

Regional vision – national recognition

The success and originality of Newlands has not gone unnoticed. The programme has been praised by the Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott as the latest in cutting edge thinking, particularly the way in which issues and opportunities are presented, particularly the durability of new uses, and the quality of the landscape that is ultimately created.

It also features in the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan where it is described as: "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."

The principles of Newlands are also being used to set the scene for growth along the Mersey Belt, and are helping to contribute to similar objectives along the larger Northern Growth Corridor. And clearly Newlands is helping to deliver brownfield regeneration in line with the National Brownfield Strategy.

The next steps

Newlands is a key initiative for tackling the environmental deficit in the Northwest. Over the coming months the programme will begin to make its first impact on the ground, as the delivery partnership of Groundwork, the Red Rose and Mersey Forests, and Forest Enterprise begins the capital development phase.

And at the same time the merits of Newlands will continue to reach both the national and international arenas, as other regions, Whitehall departments and foreign Governments see more of the 21st Century face of land regeneration.



How can I find out more?

For more information on the Newlands initiative, contact:

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