



NEWS RELEASE
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HOUSING MARKET RENEWAL PARTNERSHIP TAKES ITS CASE TO THE TOP

A HOUSING market renewal project that is trying to pump new life back into local communities where the housing markets have failed is taking its case for Government intervention to Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott.

In advance of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review that will determine government spending streams from 2006 to 2008, Tees Valley Living is asking Mr Prescott to support its case for housing market renewal.

It has submitted a 20-page document highlighting the reasons why a multi-million, 15-year regeneration scheme is urgently needed to turn around 30 years of decline in many parts of the Tees Valley.

Tees Valley Living was formed in May 2003 after the area failed to be designated as a Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder in the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan.

This was despite the fact that of all the North-Eastern homes identified as being in failing areas in the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies' 2001 report on low demand, 27% (57,000 dwellings) were in the Tees Valley, which consists of the boroughs of Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton-on-Tees.

The Tees Valley Living document, entitled 'Building Sustainable Communities in the Tees Valley' reveals that the vast majority of local urban regeneration investment over the past 30 years has been poured into areas where conditions continue to deteriorate to an unprecedented degree.

In nine of the 94 Tees Valley postcode areas, average terraced house sale prices are less than £30,000 and in four of these areas prices actually fell by up to 18% between 2000-03 - despite one of the most buoyant nationwide housing markets for 50 years.

In estates such as Grangetown in Redcar & Cleveland and St Hilda's in Middlesbrough, 30% of properties are abandoned with houses not just lying

empty but virtually destroyed. Boarded-up buildings act like a magnet for vandals who steal roof tiles and then go back to steal the timbers and bricks.

Tees Valley Living is currently carrying out a host of evidence-based research projects to establish the statistics that will help drive forward any future regeneration plans. By looking at quality of life factors such as crime, health and education, the project team will identify those areas most in need of intervention, and identifying what sort of homes people want to live in.

This will lead to the implementation of a programme of housing market renewal creating new, modern, urban villages and seeing the best of the existing housing stock in designated 'intervention areas' being identified, maintained and improved. The programme, which will be rolled out over 15 years, will also include the demolition of up to 18,000 dwellings.

Tees Valley Living has a budget of £870,000 to fund strategy preparation and lobbying but additional funding of £1.5m is required to allow further work towards the preparation of a comprehensive prospectus.

Alison Thain, Chair of Tees Valley Living, said: "Our approach to the creation of sustainable communities needs to change. It must be bigger in scale, more holistic and we need to stay in an area long enough to make a lasting difference.

"To create a living environment suitable for the 21st century it will be necessary to invest many millions and make at least a 15-year commitment. It is extremely difficult to accurately estimate the funding requirement but at this stage it is vitally important that we register with the Government the fact that the Tees Valley will need substantial investment in the years to come.

"The case for housing market renewal in the Tees Valley is extremely strong and we are confident that we have the capacity to deliver. We anticipate the Government will recognise the strength of our submission and help the sub-region meet the challenges it faces."