

<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>TOWN &amp; VILLAGE CENTRE REGENERATION</b>
<b>TO/ON:</b>	<b>EXECUTIVE – 7 NOVEMBER 2005</b>
<b>BY:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES</b>
<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	<b>HEALTH</b>
<b>STATUS:</b>	<b>REPORT</b>

## 1. SUBJECT MATTER AND PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report seeks members to agree a framework for the allocation of resources totalling £1.5million from the Capital Programme to assist the regeneration of town and village centres across the District.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In 1998 the Council commenced work on the Upper Derwent Street, Blackhill Regeneration Scheme which over the subsequent years resulted in a transformation of that area. Using largely local authority capital resources, long standing vacant and derelict buildings including a public house, shop units, a funeral parlour and a former cinema were acquired and demolished, disused commercial accommodation was converted into new residential units and unsightly residential properties were improved and repaired. A new aged persons housing development was constructed on the site formerly occupied by the cinema. Most of the conversion and improvement works to the properties that remain were funded by way of grant awards under the Council's then Improvement Grant Programme.

- 2.2 More recently a similar approach was taken in relation to Front Street, Leadgate. Whilst many of the improvements that have taken place in that street can be largely attributed to the boom in the local housing market, the Council has been instrumental in promoting a coordinated approach to regeneration often acting as a broker between property owners and prospective developers. The Council's greatest contribution to the scheme was the acquisition and subsequent demolition of a large derelict building within the centre of the terrace and the construction of a new stone gable wall to the adjoining building.

- 2.3 In 2004/2005 a sum of £300,000 was identified within the Capital Programme for town and village centre regeneration initiatives. This has been provisionally allocated as follows:

• Contribution to Stanley Bus Station Development	£75,000
• Catchgate Streetworks	£35,000
• North Road, Catchgate Property conversion/improvements	£30,000
• Front Street, Annfield Plain Property improvements	£30,000
• Front Street, Annfield Plain Property conversions	£70,000
• South Moor Streetworks	£35,000
• New Kyo Streetworks	£25,000

- 2.4 In deciding on the allocation of these resources recognition has been given to the availability of complementary funding from other agencies and individuals in particular Durham County Council under its Urban Renaissance Programme, Stanley Green Corridor Neighbourhood Partnership and individual property owners.

- 2.5 Whilst some of the allocations are direct unconditional awards others, primarily those for works to privately owned properties, are grant awards which carry conditions that can lead to them being repaid if, for example, improved and converted properties are sold within 5 years. These grants are made in line with the Council's Housing Financial Assistance Policy.

- 2.6 Within the Council's current 3 year Capital Programme a sum of £1.5 million has been identified to enable further town and village centre initiatives to proceed. The project has been given a 'high priority' classification within the 3 year Capital Programme and whilst it remains as yet un-resourced, it is considered appropriate to have some guidelines in place to ensure that, when resources are allocated, the initiatives that are to be funded have the support of the authority.

### **3. RELEVANT MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 3.1 Theoretically any works undertaken in a town or village centre should be considered to be aiding the regeneration process. As resources are limited it is appropriate to set certain guidelines which should be adhered to when assessing projects to be funded by way of this initiative. Given the limited resources available from the Council it is also necessary to adopt a partnership and enabling approach to the task with the authority not acting as the sole instigator and funder of projects.

- 3.2 Recognition must also be given to the contrasting challenges facing our town and village centres. The larger towns of Consett and Stanley fulfil a much broader economic and community role within the District and hold the potential for much larger and varied regeneration programmes. The projects contained within these programmes may require long lead-in periods and involve a number of funding partners. It is therefore necessary to adopt a range of approaches to achieving the desired results in both our larger towns and smaller village centres.

- 3.3 Drawing upon the experiences of the last few years I would offer the following as factors that should be taken into account when decisions are to be taken:

- The location of the project
- The visual impact of the completed project
- The economic impact of the completed project
- Is the project remedying dereliction or a long-term void situation associated with a building or buildings by way of acquisition and demolition, conversion or renovation?
- The availability of complementary funding.

#### **3.4 The Location of the Project**

- 3.4.1 As the proposal is to use these resources to aid the regeneration of town and village centres, it is suggested that we target such areas and refrain from using the resources on more isolated buildings and land outside of established and recognised centres. It is also evident that some town and village centres exhibit greater degrees of dereliction and need than others and it may therefore be appropriate to concentrate resources on such areas.

#### **3.5 The Visual Impact of the Completed Project**

- 3.5.1 The overall aim of this initiative is to improve the appearance of our town and village centres encouraging people to use the facilities that are available locally. Visual impact is therefore an important element. By way of illustration I have attached as an appendix a number of photographs of properties within Front Street, Annfield Plain that have or are about to be renovated using resources allocated by Derwentside District Council and Durham County Council. The before and after photographs of premises occupied by AMH Angling in Annfield Plain show the visual impact that can be achieved by the type of project we are aiming to promote. A similar approach to enhance shop frontages in other town and village centres can impact significantly on drawing more people into the centres.

#### **3.6 The Economic Impact of the Completed Project**

- 3.6.1 An initiative of this nature can have significant economic benefits for both the immediate locality and the District as a whole. The regeneration of town and village centres must be seen alongside other major regeneration brought about, for instance, by the recent boom in house building in the area. Whilst in some areas regeneration will occur without the need

for public funding, in others the award of modest grants can provide the incentive for individuals to commit further investment in the community.

3.6.2 In recognising the economic impact it must be borne in mind that the Council has embarked upon implementing a strategy aimed at regenerating Stanley Town Centre. Within the next few years it is likely that the Council will have to allocate resources to enable elements of this strategy to be implemented particularly in relation to individual buildings that perhaps no longer have a use in the community. With the impending adoption of a multi pronged approach to improving the core shopping centre it may be appropriate in Stanley to primarily target this funding at building acquisition and development.

### 3.7 Dereliction and Voids

3.7.1 As indicated earlier in this report much of the work that has been funded by the Council under the regeneration banner has involved dealing with derelict properties and bringing vacant accommodation back into use. Giving priority to this type of project can have many benefits:

- Reoccupation of previously void living accommodation.
- Conversion of no longer required commercial accommodation into new dwelling accommodation.
- Removal of eyesores.
- Reduction in antisocial behaviour and 'envirocrime' associated with such properties.
- Economic benefits to individuals and the Council (increase in Council Tax).
- Redevelopment opportunities in some instances.

3.7.2 Given these benefits this type of project should continue to figure highly within the town and village centre initiative programme.

### 3.8 Complementary Funding

3.8.1 Whilst, initially, the Council set off to tackle this issue on its own, in recent years Durham County Council has embarked upon a programme of works under its Urban and Rural Renaissance and Conservation Area Programmes which in part are funded by English Heritage. The work currently being undertaken on properties in Catchgate and Annfield Plain is in partnership with the County Council, with work to the building frontages being grant funded by the County Council. Derwentside District Council's funding works are to the first floor accommodation, to bring either disused accommodation back into use or provide living accommodation for the first time.

3.8.2 In a similar way a joint approach has been taken in both South Moor and New Kyo in relation to undertaking street scene improvement programmes.

3.8.3 Many other communities are scheduled to benefit from the Urban and Rural Renaissance Initiative within the coming months and years.

### 3.9 Allocation of Resources

3.9.1 While a significant amount of money, the £1.5m allocation will have a limited impact and it is therefore necessary to effectively target this resource. The two principal town centres of Consett and Stanley should figure highly in the allocation process. Recognition must however be given to the smaller village centres which, in many cases, can often benefit from the injection of relatively modest amounts of public money.

3.9.2 I therefore offer the following as a provisional allocation of the resource to be reviewed as and when appropriate.

Stanley Town Centre	£550,000
Consett Town Centre	£550,000
Remainder of District	£400,000

#### **4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 That members accept the approach that has been adopted in relation to town and village centre initiatives.
- 4.2 That for future projects the factors outlined in Section 3 of this report be taken into account when decisions are being taken in relation to the availability of local authority funding.
- 4.3 That the allocation of funding is dependent upon further reports being considered on the merits of individual projects.
- 4.4 That the resources available for town and village centre regeneration be allocated in line with that indicated in paragraph 3.9.2 above.

Peter Reynolds  
Director of Environmental Services

Report prepared by Norris Oyston

NO/ALT  
08.06.2005



AMH Angling  
Front Street  
Annfield Plain



AMH Angling  
Front Street  
Annfield Plain  
Before  
improvements



24 Front Street  
Annfield Plain



14 Front Street  
Annfield Plain



Geordies Taxis  
6 Front Street  
Annfield Plain