



Firthmoor Community Partnership Board

Firthmoor, an area of Darlington in receipt of SRB funds, has developed a genuine community partnership, where local people have the final say in all major decisions.

Firthmoor Community Partnership was formed following a two year-consultation exercise funded by the housing division of Darlington Borough Council, with the aim of overseeing the regeneration of the Firthmoor estate. At the core of this was a successful bid for SRB6 funding, confirmation of which was learned in August 2000.

Firthmoor is a genuine community partnership. It is chaired by a local resident and has a majority of residents sitting on it. In addition, there is a commitment that all working groups of the partnership are led by a community representative, and that where a group does not have a community majority all decisions should be referred to the Board for ratification. This process is supported by an ongoing training process for professionals involved in the regeneration of the area, to help them understand the agenda of the residents.

The structure of the partnership has proved highly successful in delivering the aims of the SRB programme, with some of the five-year targets already having been met. For example:

- **Residents voting in estate elections to elect the residents members to the board.** Target was to raise this from 71 to 150 – however a total of 403 people voted in the recent elections
- **Reduce council house voids.** Aim was to cut this from 16% to the borough average (1.8%) - in fact voids have fallen to just 0.9%

Since the success of the bid the estate has attracted funds in the form of a new school being built on the estate. In addition:

- A Homezone is being developed on one of the streets on the estate
- A neighbourhood nursery is to be developed by Childrens Enterprises Ltd
- The area is to benefit from the childrens fund, which is supporting the provision of two workers, the building of the Maidendale Fishing Initiative and the Doorstep Green.
- A feasibility study was carried out into a doorstep greens initiative via the Countryside Agency and decisions are awaited from two funders to complete a funding package.

The community takes the lead in the mid-term evaluation of all projects and makes recommendations on any changes seen as necessary for the remainder of the term. This on-

going training and capacity building is seen as essential so that the community will have the skills to continue the regeneration of the estate once the SRB (5 year) period has come to an end.

Most ambitiously some of the residents aspire to take over the running of the estate by setting up a co-operative. However, FirstCall have carried out an options study to ascertain support for this or other models of participation among the residents in general and at the current time there is insufficient resident support to implement the option.

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