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Innovation Network

COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING

Sunderland City Council

Elemore Eco Park Regeneration – taking a Community Wealth Building approach

Sunderland City Council has its Community Wealth Building Strategy at the heart of a green recovery, regeneration project, in the heart of the City.

Sunderland Council undertook significant resident consultation during 2019/2020 – entitled Let's Talk Sunderland. The consultation reached over 50% of the city's population and informed the Sunderland City Plan and Neighbourhood Investment Plans. Residents across the City were very clear what they wanted to see improved.

Following Cabinet approval of the Coalfield Neighbourhood Investment Plan in March 2020, the Council and its partners have been working hard to deliver against the priorities within the plan – one of the priorities in the plan was to bring the former Elemore Colliery site back into use. As such, Council has committed to develop the Elemore site and has allocated funding from their Neighbourhood Capital programme.

The former Elemore colliery site, within the Hetton ward of Sunderland is a circa 60-hectare designated open countryside site - the site is home to several rare birds and rich fauna- Elemore has the potential to be transformed into an Eco-Park, Garden, Heritage and Visitor Centre, as well as cycling and walking/running hub linked to the City's iconic Stephenson Trail, which stretches from the Elemore site, for 11 miles, to the City's Riverside – the refurbished Stephenson Trail was originally George Stephenson's first railway line linking the Colliery to the thriving City's bustling centre and ship yards.

Utilising the Council's resident engagement strategy, Let's Talk, significant resident consultation has been undertaken under the banner Let's Talk Elemore. Engagement has been restricted due to Covid, however the reach has been extensive utilising Council and voluntary sector partner websites, social media, press and leaflets, as well as working with VCS partners who are supporting the City's COVID Community hubs around the area.



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Consultation activity commenced, asking residents what they liked about Elemore and what they would like to see changed. The feedback informed the designs for an Eco-Park, Garden, Visitor and Heritage Centre. The design proposals were then shared, and all feedback has been incredibly positive. All consultation information has now been used to support the final change of use Planning Application.

Social enterprise sits at the very heart of the Elemore project - the Project Manager is working with Bishopwearmouth Co-operative Community Interest Company to extend their enterprise to develop and deliver a garden and visitor centre, from the Building on the Elemore site which will also support Adult Social Care Day Services.

Bishopwearmouth CIC has, since its inception, provided supported employment opportunities to people with mental health and learning disabilities with a view to facilitating a move on to further paid employment. This is funded through the adult social care budget via direct payments. It is envisaged that similar opportunities will be made available as part of the Elemore offer. From a financial perspective this will offer an additional income stream for the Elemore project which will be needed to fund required support workers as well as wider site maintenance.



Following full planning permission in November 2021, the Council will procure local contractors to undertake the works on site, supporting local businesses in the heart of the community.

Elemore is a fantastic example of co-operative partnerships – the future for Elemore is bright and Sunderland looks forward to welcoming thousands of visitors over the coming years, to enjoy the wonder that is ‘Elemore Eco-Park’.

Social partnership: the co-operative partnership between residents, communities, social enterprise and the Council, based on a shared sense of responsibility for wellbeing and mutual benefit is driving the Elemore project

Democratic engagement: We have actively engaged with residents to develop the designs and to support the Elemore site in the future through a local trust and offering local volunteering and employment and training opportunities

Co-production: Residents are equal partners in designing and commissioning the site and the services to be delivered and offered therefore determining the use of public resources

Enterprise and social economy: Elemore is promoting community-based approaches to economic development through the creation of the Bishopwearmouth CIC – which is providing an environment for co-operative and mutual enterprises to thrive

Community leadership and a new role for councillors: Elemore has enabled the Council to act as a platform to helping the local community to contribute to the Elemore project outcomes, the local ward Councillors have been central to the project - community connectors, brokers, and leaders

For further information contact:

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