

COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING



E3M working with Oldham Council

E3M Alchemy – supporting councils to harness place-based social enterprise innovation

E3M Alchemy supports the development of new, place-based social enterprise solutions to work at scale. It uses an event-based methodology developed with the E3M partners: an intense, 24-hour, place-based innovation event that brings together social enterprise leaders, bold commissioners and social investors with the local council and other stakeholders to explore solutions to local challenges. The relationships established during the Alchemy events are then a resource that people can draw on afterwards, to support the development and implementation of new ways of working.

Prior to Covid, E3M organised Local Alchemy events working with councils in Oldham, Rotherham and West Lindsey. Participants collaborated to discuss and work through the development of a range of exciting and transformative ideas, and the events levered in over £12m in social investment to support local partners tackling issues ranging from domestic abuse (in Rotherham) to addressing blighted, privately owned and poorly maintained social housing (in Gainsborough).

In Oldham, the Alchemy process supported the development of [Northern Roots](#), the UK's largest urban farm and eco-park on 160 acres of green space in Oldham – a unique new community asset and visitor destination. Holding the Alchemy event engaged and empowered people to think differently and gave the council confidence that such a project could work.



E3M Alchemy (Oldham 2018)

With support from the Council, a new, charitable social enterprise was established to take the project forward. In October 2022 Oldham Council issued approval of planning permission for the scheme, which includes detailed planning permission for a Visitor Centre, Learning Centre, Forestry Hub, solar array and sports pitches, and outline planning permission for a market garden and swimming pond.

The project has now won significant additional investment from the Towns Fund and Levelling-Up Fund for capital works, including the Visitor Centre and the Learning Centre. Work is underway to improve access to the site and a range of activities are already happening, engaging the local community. Work will start on the Visitor Centre and other elements in late 2023.

Covid put E3M's Alchemy events on hold for a while, but we are now looking for other councils to work with, so if you would be interested in holding an Alchemy event, please do [contact us](#).



E3M Alchemy (West Lindsey 2019)

For further information contact:

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