



# There's something about Maryport

Northern Housing looks at the changes underway in Allerdale

Change is certainly afoot in Allerdale, where the borough council is working through plans for the regeneration of the area. A vision for the borough is well on the way to becoming a reality, and feedback suggests local people now have more pride and confidence in the area than in recent years. Naturally, as the work is tackling decades of neglect, the regeneration process will take some time to complete, but the natural beauty and rich heritage of the area is starting to shine through.

The modern town of Maryport was the creation of the Senhouse family in the 18th century, who developed the small fishing village into a coal port. Maryport was a planned town with terraces of cottages built in a grid system, with employment generated around coal mining and shipbuilding.

In more recent times, Allerdale Borough Council has been working to bring Maryport into the modern age. With the decline of the traditional

industries, Maryport suffered the all too familiar social problems experienced by similar towns reliant on now defunct industries. The area suffered from a long period of neglect but, encouragingly, the council is now actively tackling the problems and is dedicated to once again making the area a place where people genuinely want to live.

The council has increasingly used statutory powers to force owners of dilapidated properties to do something about these eyesores. The effects on a community of derelict and abandoned buildings should not be underestimated, as they can lend an area a depressing air and nurture a lack of care and respect for the neighbourhood.

The council is, therefore, currently working to bring many of these buildings in the area back into use. Although there are still several prominent dilapidated properties, some have been renovated and are already back in use. Works include



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*We are pleased to be working in Partnership with Allerdale Borough Council, along with their Contracting Partners, in achieving improvements to the local housing stock by the implementation of the programme of Group Repair Schemes in Maryport and Workington*



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converting disused shops into town houses and the renovation of a pensioners' club with financial help from Allerdale Housing Services, Allerdale Planning Section and Regeneration Maryport.

of long-term derelict buildings including the old Matthew Brown brewery, which became a mixed development including four apartments for outright sale and 17 houses and flats available at affordable rent. The schemes have been funded by Housing Corporation grants as well as Heritage Lottery funds and commercial loans. The schemes have worked in conjunction with Workington Regeneration. For the first time in Cumbria, rental and sales have been targeted at people who work in the town centre.

Allerdale Housing Services uses group repair schemes to drive success in renewal areas. Under these schemes, the council can arrange for repairs and renovations to the outside of properties. Improving the outside of the properties makes them warmer and drier, giving them a longer life. Works include re-slating roofs, renewal of windows and doors, rebuilding of boundary walls and relaying yards.

Group schemes can include owner-occupied houses, rented houses and commercial properties. In a group repair scheme owner-occupiers pay a contribution of no more than 25 per cent. No

Allerdale Housing Services uses group repair schemes to drive success in renewal areas.

In Workington too, Impact is working to bring derelict buildings back into use. Now in its 30th year, Impact has a long track record of involvement in regeneration projects in West Cumbria and has recently finished the conversion

residents are under obligation to take part in a group repair scheme until all the preparation work has been done and the exact cost of the work, together with any contribution, has been calculated.

A major problem in areas of decline is the collapse of the housing market. In response to this The Furness and West Cumbria Housing Partnership (F&WCHMP) brought together the leading development agencies in Furness and West Cumbria to restructure the housing markets. The partnership was initiated by Allerdale Housing Services, which worked with the ODPM and the treasury on the National Housing Market Restructuring Strategy, which includes nine formal market renewal pathfinders across Britain.

In 2004, F&WCHMP commissioned an economic and housing research study of Furness and West Cumbria. This piece of work suggested how to move forward in the face of a rapidly and fundamentally changing economy.

The report identified a number of priorities including improvements to the existing supply of social housing; the identification of sites for new development opportunities; an increase in the supply of aspirational housing; more options for low cost home ownership; neighbourhood management programmes and the promotion of truly mixed use developments as vital to help retain and create more sustainable communities.

The regional housing board has allocated provisional investment worth £18 million over two years from April 2006 for the partnership. This represents 50 per cent of all the money set aside in the northwest for non-Pathfinder market renewal partnerships.

Allerdale Housing Services is leading the Cumbria Housing Group's Strategy Task Group. This group is developing a formal county-wide housing strategy to replace the six individual district council housing strategies. The idea is to

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Eden Housing Association is pleased to support Allerdale Council in tackling the growing need for affordable housing in the borough.

As well as assisting with the Council's Maryport town centre regeneration through rehabilitation schemes, we are also providing much needed affordable housing in the high cost town of Keswick. This is being provided by innovative shared equity sale, funded by the Regional Housing Board, on an infill site, and a further scheme of this type is planned for later this year. It is also proposed to provide Housing Corporation funded shared ownership for local persons on a site at Threlkeld Quarry.

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**Email**  
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share resources across the seven local authorities in Cumbria.

Some problems associated with rural areas still blight Allerdale Borough, such as the lack of housing for low income families in the area and

order to be able to lobby the government for restrictions on the RTB in the rural areas. A report will be presented to councillors this autumn.

One area of concern is that homelessness statistics continue to rise in Allerdale – partly as a result of rising house prices, and partly because an increased range of people are now classified as ‘homeless’ and therefore eligible for council support. The council has therefore developed innovative proposals for a new service to cope with the massive increase in demand without increasing the budget set aside for dealing with the problem. The new service will include a resettlement officer to help homeless people move from temporary accommodation to permanent housing and an end to bed and breakfast accommodation in all but the most extreme cases.

Despite the years of neglect, the plans are now in place to deal with the range of challenges facing Allerdale Borough Council and its partnership organisations in trying to deliver housing services

Despite the years of neglect, the plans are now in place to deal with the challenges facing Allerdale.

first-time buyers. Housing associations have agreed to support any moves that the council may take to apply for restrictions on the right to buy (RTB) in rural areas, where there is often very little housing for families on low incomes. Allerdale Housing Services has started the extensive work needed in

to the local community. The council has stressed that the plans will not come to fruition overnight – as they are keen to point out, ‘Rome was not built in a day.’ However the signs are good that Allerdale is working through its problems and moving towards a bright future. ■



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