



PRESS RELEASE, 16 June 2006

## **Weardale Business Plans to Set up Shop at Eastgate Renewable Energy Village Footwear Business makes Strides to Support the Regeneration Project**

A Wolsingham business is backing plans for a Renewable Energy Village in Eastgate, Weardale. Specialist off-road running shoe company, inov-8 ([www.inov-8.com](http://www.inov-8.com)), has put forward ambitious expansion plans for an eco-friendly office complex, which could create up to 20 new jobs for people of the Dale.

Inov-8, which was founded in Wolsingham in 2003 and already employs eight local people, hopes to take advantage of opportunities for Weardale businesses that will be created as a result of the regeneration project.

Eastgate Renewable Energy Village is on the site of a former cement works and will provide an eco-friendly, working, living and learning environment and visitor attraction for the benefit of the Weardale community. It is expected that in excess of 350 jobs will be generated across the entire site.

Inov-8's Eastgate office, which would include an outdoor and sports shop, design facilities, storage, and recreational amenities for visitors and staff, would compliment the site's 'eco' nature, drawing on its sustainable energy sources. Eastgate Renewable Energy Village will uniquely utilise all five available forms of renewable energy: biomass; geothermal hot water; wind; hydro and solar.

The planning application for the development, for which outline plans received overwhelming support on completion of a public consultation last October, is due to be submitted in May 2007 once essential environmental, geological, and social studies are complete.

Inov-8's proposals, for what will be its third premises, include a café and restaurant facilities, gym and climbing wall. The company also plans to champion a mountain-bike and running track and organise race and training days for local people and visitors to the unique eco-community.

Wayne Edy, managing director of inov-8, is also hoping to attract even more visitors to the site by using his Eastgate outlet as a major stopping point of a planned Coast-to-Coast cycle route via Weardale.



Wayne says: "We're a growing business and can already boast that, in the last three years, two winning athletes of the famous annual World Mountain Running Trophy have crossed the finish line wearing inov-8 running shoes.

"When I heard about the Renewable Energy Village it sounded like the ideal place to expand the inov-8 business - the eco-friendly site fits perfectly with our ethos of being in tune with our environment. The potential for 'green' office space plus recreation and refreshment facilities will allow us to develop a comfortable and creative environment for the team, helping attract and keep local talent in the Dale.

"Exciting things are happening at Eastgate and I look forward to developing plans there for the business. It's an, as yet, untapped area with a wealth of opportunities to offer new and existing local businesses. We at inov-8 whole-heartedly support the regeneration project."

John Hamilton, Chairman of Weardale Task Force says: "Eastgate Renewable Energy Village will create sustainable jobs for local people, helping regenerate the local economy, and businesses like inov-8 already pledging support is a big step towards achieving this.

"It's still early days, as projects such as this can take up to ten years from concept to completion, with numerous studies ongoing ahead of next year's planning application. These include looking at how training opportunities will be provided to enable more local people to benefit from jobs created at the site.

"We're looking forward to planning ahead with inov-8 and other businesses expressing their interest in setting up shop within the new eco-community."

**ENDS**

**Issued by Robson Brown PR on behalf of Weardale Task Force**

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**Weardale Task Force**

Local residents are requested to contact the Task Force with any queries or concerns on:

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### **About Eastgate Renewable Energy Village**

Eastgate Renewable Energy Village is a regeneration project on the site of the former Lafarge Blue Circle cement works. It will maximise the potential of the site to provide an eco-friendly living, working and learning environment and visitor attraction for the benefit of people of Weardale.

It will demonstrate best practice in sustainability by utilising all five forms of land-based renewable energy available in the UK, which are wind, solar, hydro, biomass and geothermal - a unique concept in this country.

The project will enhance the lives and prosperity of the existing population of the Dale by creating sustainable jobs, homes and recreational facilities for local people within a development that is at the forefront of eco-friendly living. It will also provide opportunities for links with other businesses and leisure facilities in the Dale.

The new eco-community will provide one of only two public hot springs in the UK utilising geothermal hot water, and a centre for education for residents and visitors to learn about renewable energy, sustainable living, life in the Dale and the surrounding North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

It is estimated at this stage that a planning application will be submitted in May 2007\*, with planning permission hoped for by 2008.

Regeneration projects on this scale can take more than a decade to complete due to their complexity. As an example, Bluewater shopping and leisure development in Kent, also on the site of a former Lafarge works, took over 11 years from concept to completion.

\*Previous reported timings of a planning application submission have been superseded due to ongoing viability studies, essential to meeting planning requirements. An environmental study into the affect on local birds will continue until the end of winter 2006/07 so that seasonal observations can be made.

### **About Weardale Task Force**

Weardale Task Force is the body responsible for overseeing the formulation of a 'masterplan' for the proposed Renewable Energy Village and is made up of members from One NorthEast, Wear Valley District Council, Durham County Council and Lafarge Cement UK.