

21 April 2009

## FINAL ECO-VILLAGE PLANS SUBMITTED

A year on from the submission of the original planning application for the Eastgate Renewable Energy Village in Weardale, further details and an updated illustrative master plan have now been submitted to the local planning authority (now Durham County Council) following final discussions between the Weardale Task Force and a number of statutory bodies.

The discussions, aimed at fine tuning the plans to balance environmental and landscape matters, have resulted in some alterations to leisure and infrastructure features, primarily within the former quarries and on the slopes leading down to the main development site.

The concluding revisions to the master plan also take into account the results of additional wildlife and ecology studies. More 'quiet' areas of woodland have been created while planting has been altered to give even greater protection and encouragement to wildlife. The upper section of the cable car has been removed in order to reduce visual impact.

A decision on the outline planning application for the development, which will feature all five forms of land-based renewable energy available in the UK, is now expected in summer 2009.

One NorthEast's John Topliss, project manager for Eastgate Renewable Energy village, said: "As with any proposed development of this scale, and particularly one that's proposed in a very sensitive location, there are a large number of issues that have to be balanced. We want to enable development to happen whilst giving appropriate consideration and protection to ecology, landscape and other issues.

"Additional survey work was requested by some of the statutory consultees and that work has now been completed and incorporated into a final master plan. The results supplement the substantial Environmental Statement that we have previously submitted and more detailed points raised in response to the submission.

"It has been very important to consider and act upon more detailed feedback from local community and statutory consultee colleagues so we can create a sustainable development that will not only boost the local economy and offer employment opportunities, but will be ecologically and visually sympathetic to the stunning landscape at Eastgate.

“It now rests with the local planning authority to determine our application after officers have carried out a formal round of consultation on our supplementary submission.”

Designed to create jobs and revitalise the whole of Weardale’s economy, Eastgate Renewable Energy Village will encompass a mix of homes, office and workshop accommodation, a hotel and a public geothermally heated spa – only the second in the UK.

The entire site, including the actual Renewable Energy Village, Riverside Meadows, The Slopes (hillside) and The Tops (quarry areas) will cover a vast area of 330 hectares, equivalent to 500 football pitches.

Unique in this country, Eastgate will be the only Renewable Energy Village to feature all five forms of land-based renewable energy available in the UK – hydro, solar, wind, biomass and geothermal. It will generate sufficient ‘clean’ electricity to offset the energy consumption of the whole of Weardale.

The amended details of the planning application can be viewed at the Durham County Council Crook Area Office or through the online Planning Public Access system at [www.durham.gov.uk](http://www.durham.gov.uk).

## ENDS

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### **Notes to editor:**

To view the master plan and for a range of other information on the project, go to [www.weardale-works.co.uk](http://www.weardale-works.co.uk). Alternatively, call Durham County Council on 01388 761571 for a copy of the plan, to be put on the mailing list for this news sheet, or if you require this Eastgate Information Update to be summarised in another language or format, such as Braille or talking tape.

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

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

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 Renewable Energy Village 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.

The outline planning application was submitted in late March 2008, with planning permission hoped for in summer 2009.