

PRESS RELEASE

7 April 2008

**PLANNING APPLICATION SUBMITTED
FOR EASTGATE RENEWABLE ENERGY VILLAGE**

An outline planning application for the proposed Eastgate Renewable Energy Village in Weardale has been submitted to Wear Valley District Council. The application will now go through the Council's validation process and will then be available for the public to view in around two week's time.

The planning application will be displayed from the 14th April onwards in Crook Civic Centre, Durham Dales Centre and Wolsingham Library, and will also be available on line at www.weardale-works.co.uk.

In addition, information boards and posters showing plans contained in the application will be visible at a number of locations throughout the Dale and at the Weardale Hub in Stanhope.

Eastgate Renewable Energy Village will create around 350 sustainable jobs for local people, drawing investment from outside the area and bringing economic and social benefits for the whole of Weardale.

Weardale Task Force, the partnership behind the application, hopes for a positive outline planning decision by this autumn. Subject to a positive outcome, the Task Force will then begin to apply for detailed planning approval on the various elements of the proposals.

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.

It will create an estimated 150 jobs from business investment, a further 200 jobs in the visitor and hospitality sector and a wealth of other opportunities are anticipated in the surrounding area as a result of the new economic activity at Eastgate.

The 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, greater than 800 football pitches, and incorporates visitor attractions and fish-farming.

For a range of information on the project, go to www.weardale-works.com, call **01388 761571** or email regeneration@wearvalley.gov.uk.

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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 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 eco-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.

About Weardale Task Force:

Weardale Task Force is the body responsible for overseeing the formulation of a master plan 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.

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

(01388) 761571

economic.regeneration@wearvalley.co.uk