



The purpose of this newsletter is to highlight some of the key issues of relevance to Tees Valley Unlimited, which have been prominent over the previous month. It is not intended to provide a comprehensive discussion of everything happening, but provides a brief review of the most salient issues, offering comment where appropriate. It is produced by the Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit, which supports the work of Tees Valley Unlimited.

## Pre-Budget Report

The Chancellor's Pre-Budget Report, 'Facing global challenges: supporting people through difficult times' was published on November 24th and in addition to fiscal policies contained two important issues for Tees Valley, which are:

- a) Bringing forward £3 billion of capital spending from 2010-11 to 2009/10, and
- b) Devolving responsibilities to city regions.

### Bringing forward £3 billion of capital spending

This package includes:

- £100 million funding to complete key transport projects in growth areas and support regeneration projects which might not otherwise go ahead in the current market.
- RDAs can bring forward £100 million from future years to support priority projects in the region.
- £700 million to advance to DfT's existing plans to increase capacity on the motorways and other critical highways.

### Devolving responsibilities to City Regions

Chapter 4 of the Pre Budget Report develops further the concept of the MAA and the devolution of responsibilities to local authorities in the city regions. It states:

Building on the Sub National Review, and Multi Area Agreements in particular, the government will support city regions to fulfil this role by agreeing, on a

voluntary and tailored basis, a set of devolutionary proposals with local authorities in city regions, to increase further their ability to drive economic growth and contribute to sustainable development. The Government intends to announce new agreements with at least two forerunner city regions at Budget 2009.

These proposals will support stronger integration of planning, housing, transport, regeneration, employment and skills to drive sustainable growth and economic development, ensuring policy decisions are made at the right spatial level. The proposals will be underpinned by new statutory arrangements for sub-regional cooperation between local authorities, supporting strong local capacity, governance and accountability at the city region level.

RDAs will play a key role supporting sustainable growth within city regions, as part of their broader role in driving up regional economic performance, and ensuring that city region policies remain coordinated with those of other sub regional and local economies. RDAs will support city regions in developing proposals for devolutionary measures and work with city regions to increase capacity where it is needed, as they increasingly take on a strategic programme management role. RDAs will also support strong city regions through their role in formulating regional strategies.

New agreements will be developed with the local authority city region leadership, in order to suit particular needs. The Government envisages that the following components will be available:

- Increased statutory responsibilities for strategic transport issues;

- Integration of the DWP three levels of devolution model, as announced in the Welfare Reform Green Paper;
- A city region Employment and Skills board, with strong employer representation and formal powers to influence provision in line with employer demand
- A joint board between the city region and the Homes and Communities Agency to provide strategic direction of housing and regeneration spending, in line with the Agency's area-based approach to working with local and regional partners
- Integrated city region planning within the context of the Single Regional Strategy; and
- Joint investment planning with key partners. As part of this, Government would consider the merits of greater flexibility over capital funding to support the more effective programme management of projects.

## Single Programme

### CAUTIOUS BUT DELIVERABLE IS INVESTMENT PLAN AIM

The Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit is preparing a Single Programme Investment Plan on behalf of our five local authorities of Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton-on-Tees.

With full endorsement of the Tees Valley Unlimited Leadership Board and Executive, it is intended to support the Tees Valley City Region Business Case first presented to Government in October 2006. and setting out how we envisage improving the economic performance of the sub-region over the next ten years, improving the quality of life for our residents, workers and visitors.

The Business Case also included outline arrangements for the setting up of Tees Valley Unlimited and our intention to develop with Government a new Multi-Area Agreement which is the first of its kind and was agreed with Government in July.

Working with One NorthEast, the investment plan sets out the priorities for delivering the objectives of both the City Region Business Case and the Regional Economic Strategy Action Plan.

## Capital

Since the publication of Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 there has been a greater degree of certainty over funding for the next three years. Although ONE has not provided a specific allocation for each city region and sub-regional partnership, a suggested resource level of £20 million for 2008/9 for the Tees Valley has been assumed.

The JSU asked all of the project sponsors to provide a more detailed implementation schedule, aimed at ensuring the programme is a realistic and robust as possible at this time, is matched by the funding profile and truly reflects the city region's spatial priorities. Tees Valley Unlimited believes that the programme is robust and deliverable, and is based on a cautious delivery profile, drawing on recent experience.

## Revenue

There is a clear need to ensure that adequate resources are placed within the city region to bring forward high quality business cases and, ultimately, successful projects. This will be a true partnership between ONE, the JSU and the Tees Valley Authorities, who have been restructuring and recruiting ready for the challenge of delivering the planned programme as part of the Tees Valley City Region MAA.

## Restructuring the JSU

The Joint Strategy Unit has undergone a restructuring exercise, designed to suit the needs of the new programme and to support the new arrangements, in particular giving the relevant Tees Valley Unlimited boards robust information and providing specialist help to project sponsors to bring forward high quality business cases that should shorten the overall appraisal timescale.

Under the restructuring, two new teams have been created within the Strategy & Development arm of the Unit - The Project Support Team and the Economy, Planning & Environment Team. At the same time, a new Programmes Team is operating under the new Corporate Support arm of the JSU.

These new arrangements absorb the existing work of the Tees Valley Partnership Support Officers and aim to enhance and streamline the project appraisal process and provide flexibility to vire resources between projects and disciplines, through the

## Revenue continued ...

preparation of high quality business cases, which should help with overall project definition and reduce the time taken at present for project approval.

The Programme Group in particular will play a vital role in the management of the overall programme and providing critical and independent advice within Tees Valley Unlimited, as well as having the capacity to undertake independent project reviews.

## STOP PRESS...

### MINISTER KEYNOTE SPEAKER AT OUR FIRST TEES VALLEY UNLIMITED CONFERENCE

We are delighted that the Rt Hon John Healey, Minister of State with responsibility for Local Government, has accepted an invitation to be the headline speaker at Tees Valley Unlimited's inaugural conference, which will take place at Wynyard Hall on Monday, February 19th.

Other speakers will include Sir Bob Kerslake, Chief Executive of the Homes and Communities Agency, and Hugh Lang, Chair of Tees Valley Unlimited.

This free event has four key aims:

- to celebrate the early successes of Tees Valley Unlimited, in particular the Multi Area Agreement
- to inform the broader partnership and deepen their understanding of the activities of Tees Valley Unlimited;
- to demonstrate and promote the investment opportunities within Tees Valley; and
- to share with other areas Tees Valley Unlimited's experience of developing a successful MAA.

Attendees to the conference will be Tees Valley - councillors (particularly those not involved directly in TVU activities,) TVU partner staff (particularly those not involved directly in TVU activities), voluntary sector, private sector, members of local strategic partnerships; TVU members (including Sub Boards); existing investors who are currently or planning to be involved in TVU developments; potential investors; and other MAA partnerships.

## LEADER

### £3 MILLION BOOST FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

An application for European funding to support the rural communities of East Cleveland, North York Moors, and the Howardian Hills has been successful in securing £3 million. It will be used to support projects that improve the quality of life and economic prosperity of local communities between now and 2013. The LEADER grant is from Government and EU sources and has been awarded by Regional Development Agencies, Yorkshire Forward and One NorthEast.

The funding will be managed by the North York Moors, Coast and Hills LEADER Partnership whose members include the North York Moors National Park Authority, the Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit and Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council. The partnership has created a Local Action Group of local businesses, farmers, landowners, voluntary groups and individuals which will play a key role in allocating the funding.

Early in the new year, people and organisations within the project area will be able to apply for grants for initiatives that fit with the themes and priorities identified by the LEADER partnership. Following consultation with local communities and stakeholders, three main priority themes have been identified:

- Sustainable rural communities
- Conservation and enhancement of the rural heritage, recreation opportunities and environment
- Village renewal and development



## Employability

### IMPROVING THE 'JOURNEY' TO EMPLOYMENT

The Delivery Plan for the Tees Valley Employability Strategy is now in its final draft stage. This Strategy aligns with the principles of the Regional Employability Framework (REF), seeking to improve and join up the customer 'journey' to include those furthest away from the labour market, taking them through quality training into sustainable employment.

Whilst much good work is already going on at local level to address issues across the employability agenda, it is important that we work together across Tees Valley to deliver a more co-ordinated approach, which makes better use of all available resources and aligns our activities with developments at both regional and national level.

The overarching vision of the Tees Valley Employability Strategy is to:

- Improve engagement with individuals and employers
- Ensure delivery of a consistent and co-ordinated employability service for individuals and employers
- Guarantee better outcomes for workless individuals with increased numbers entering and sustaining employment
- Contribute to efforts to enhance economic growth and reduce the productivity gap

Representatives from 'Shared Intelligence' have been working with partners to gather information, views and recommendations, which have now been brought together in the Draft Delivery Plan. This document proposes key aims and priorities for action:

- Achieving greater customer reach;
- Providing a clear, co-ordinated customer offer;
- Providing a clear, co-ordinated employer offer;
- Joining up the employment and skills infrastructure;
- Improving the sharing and management of information

Once agreed and approved, priorities and their supporting activities will be taken forward through a number of joint working groups/workstreams, supported by Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit.

## Digital City

### TAKING OUR DIGITAL PROFILE ACROSS THE GLOBE

A massive £14 million pound investment is planned for DigitalCity as part of the overall strategic plan that could see over £20 million pumped into the region to create a vibrant, successful and self-sustaining super cluster in the Tees Valley based on Digital Technologies, Digital Media and the Creative Industries.

Its overarching vision is of a cluster that will not only support the regeneration of the Tees Valley, but will raise the profile of the region across the globe, connecting with and attracting innovative ideas and businesses to drive forward the regeneration of the region.

The investment plan (which is bidding for £7m of European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) resources for the next five years and has secured £7m of match funding) has been submitted to ONE NorthEast. It covers:

- **The BOHO Zone and DigitalCity Hubs -** Physical infrastructure to extend the activities and, therefore the benefits of the DigitalCity Initiative physically across the Tees Valley.
- **BOHO 4** that will deliver a 2,500m<sup>2</sup> incubation and managed workspace building in the Boho Zone: Boho Four will contribute to the further development of the Zone - central Middlesbrough's digital and creative quarter.
- **Redcar & Cleveland Creative Industries -** DigitalCity Redcar to deliver a 2,500/2,000m<sup>2</sup> incubation and managed workspace building in Redcar, intrinsically linked to the Boho Zone - central Middlesbrough's digital and creative quarter.
- **Digital City at Thornaby Town Hall.** ERDF will support the refurbishment of a currently redundant building as incubation and managed work space for SMEs working in creative and digital media, directly linked through revenue activities delivered by the DigitalCity Innovation Connector.
- **Public Space (Connecting the Connectors)** the Public Space project will provide an overarching programme of activities, offering a means whereby the Region's Innovation Connectors can reach and engage with communities and individuals across the region.

It is a major initiative which will bring together all Innovation Connectors and allow people to take advantage of the opportunities in employment, education and training which arise from the work of these key economic drivers.

- **Hope in Digital City Community Champions** a programme of community engagement activities is designed to raise the aspirations and the awareness of local communities regarding digital media and technology.

The proposal will be delivered alongside another project for the **Institute of Digital Innovation (IDI)**. This is a continuation and expansion of the existing programme of activity, that will support the key aim of the DigitalCity initiative to grow the digital and creative industries clusters, and to attract and retain new graduate talent, with the aim of developing a national and international profile for IDI that brings real added value to DigitalCity as a whole, and to regional innovation.



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## Chemicals

The Tees Valley chemicals and process industries are absolutely critical to the North East economy and to its successful development and prosperity. There are over 200 individual chemical, pharmaceutical, speciality and biotechnology companies operating in the region producing a total of £8.8 billion GDP. It is important to recognise that there are close links with the energy/low carbon industry, Teesport and the world-class engineering design industry in the Tees Valley.

The chemicals industry is the largest industry in the Tees Valley. It employs 13,400 people, about half in petrochemicals and the remainder in fine and speciality chemicals. It is largely based on three sites, Wilton, Billingham and North Tees/Seal Sands. The petrochemical cluster is the largest integrated chemical complex in the UK in terms of manufacturing capacity and the second largest in Western Europe after Rotterdam. It contributed gross domestic output of £1.6 billion and £3.5 billion to the local and national economies respectively. It supports 69,000 jobs in the UK, of which 20,000 are in the Tees Valley.



BOHO Zone Plans

## Wilton Bid

### WILTON BIDS TO LEADS THE NATION

At the end of July 2008, One North East issued a limited call for the attention of seven Innovation Connectors, including Wilton, to submit a detailed proposal ("Investment Plan") to access European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) resources for the next three years.

The Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit has provided technical support to the Wilton team to develop the proposal to create WIC (Wilton Innovation Centre) The vision is to create a unique location providing national and regional leadership of the UK process industry, recognised worldwide for its excellence and capability, with world-class status and best practice in all key areas.

The Wilton Innovation Connector aims to maximise the output and business growth of the sector in the region, while making this industry more accessible to all of the community. The aim is to grow the process industry by £5b of GDP by 2014 and this growth requires not only new investment and innovation but significant community engagement, up-skilling and recruitment of staff by up to 16,000 people over this period.

The WIC Project has the following elements:

1. **Physical Infrastructure** - New Facilities - Visitors Centre, Teaching Lab, Training Facilities, Incubator Units, Share Central Facilities, Centre Management Offices
2. **Innovation** - CPI Incubation capabilities & NEPIC company engagement
3. **Business Development** - Experts in Process Industry Market Sectors, New Business Spinouts and Incubation, Supply Chain Development
4. **Enterprise** - Development of skills & enterprise culture within the sector, creation of new enterprises
5. **Education** - STEM & Industry Programmes for Schools, Vocational and Graduate level training for individuals, Company & Process Specific Knowledge Transfer

6. **Community Development** - Visitors centre, labs, meeting rooms & outreach facilities including disadvantage communities.

The investment plan was submitted to ONE in September for appraisal, and when the bid is approved, projects will be invited to bid.

## Business Support

### NEW INITIATIVE TO BRIDGE THE 'BUSINESS GAP'

Proposals have been drawn up for a new £11 million initiative, backed by the European Regional Development Fund, to boost and restructure the Tees Valley business base.

The 'Tees Valley Integrated Business Support Activity Operation', is a set of projects that will provide new job opportunities through business establishment and growth, and safeguard existing jobs through improved efficiencies. Concentrated in the most disadvantaged areas of the sub-region, it will help the disparities in economic performance in the Tees Valley and the North East Region.

All of the selected projects will help to remove the barriers to growth for the self employed and micro businesses operating below the VAT threshold. and to support them with the aim of increasing the number of VAT registrations. The majority of the projects will work in partnership with Business Link North East to ensure there is no duplication of activity and to maximise the benefit to the individuals and small to medium sized businesses.

Some of the key benefits will be:

- Linking companies to mentoring, training and networking opportunities, these projects will assist in developing the entrepreneurship skills of new companies.
- Linking new companies to training, support and a ready supply of information which will allow them to access procurement opportunities across the EU.
- Some new businesses supported through these projects will be linked to one of the region's major Innovation Connectors, the Digital City initiative, which lies at the heart of the Tees Valley.

- By supporting the growth and survival of new companies in deprived communities, this project will allow for an increase in high quality employment opportunities in these deprived wards.

The project is aimed at helping redress the current position where the Tees Valley City Region performs poorly compared to the national average, with half the number of companies per 10,000 working age population. Business activity generally is much lower than nationally with less than half the registrations per person of working age and similar numbers of de-registrations.

ERDF support will enable improved provision of entrepreneurial support to disadvantaged individuals and existing SMEs across the Tees Valley. Many of the projects would not go ahead without the support of European funding.

## Growth Bid

### MATCHING OUR HOMES TO 21ST CENTURY ASPIRATIONS

The Government's confirmation of Growth Point status for the Tees Valley presents an opportunity for us to accelerate our development plans for the area, allowing us to play to our strengths, working in partnership to implement our vision so that the local housing offer matches 21st century aspirations and the full benefit of economic growth is experienced across the whole community.

We already have an impressive track record of delivery and Growth Point status will allow us to demonstrate partnership in action, with the flexible deployment of funding to respond to locally determined priorities and to constantly changing conditions, where necessary.

### Sub Regional Housing Strategy (SRHS)

Our SRHS is fully aligned with established regional strategies. It has momentum behind it and has been recognised as a coherent response to local challenges. It remains as relevant in current market conditions, as it was in "market failure" five years ago and the subsequent market buoyancy of 2005-07.

Forty years of net outward migration had led to a traditionally low pressure market, where more new homes have been built than households formed, leaving core urban areas as concentrations of deprivation, sitting "cheek by jowl" with very successful affluent suburbs.

The neighbourhoods with the lowest levels of vitality and viability are largely made up of small 2 -bedroom "back of footpath" terraces built for rent in the 19th century and sprawling mid 20th century Council estates. Our evidence confirms that the major concentrations of these two dwelling types no longer meet the aspirations of the local population or those of potential inward migrants, especially those attracted to the growth industries in the local economy.

Some 30 per cent of would-be house movers in a recent Tees Valley Living attitude survey aspire to live in North Yorkshire, for a perceived better quality of life. The response of our strategy is to pursue transformational change to provide a massively improved housing offer around the core areas of the city region to retain future generations of Tees Valley residents and to attract inward migrants.

This will not be achieved by the "Decent Homes" agenda alone. Although our Housing Market Renewal agenda proposes improvements to 2000 homes by 2011, the major opportunity is to apply our governance structure and partnership working capacity to pursue the place-making agenda to radically improve the core of the Tees Valley city region. We have identified significant gaps in the local housing stock in relation to modern demand.

Growth Point status also gives the opportunity to reappraise opportunities. In 2003 our analysis suggested that the deployment of scarce Housing Market Renewal resources into the Darlington area could not be justified alongside the very acute cases of housing market failure in the other four Tees Valley Boroughs. The Darlington housing market offers great opportunity to respond to the Growth agenda in offering attractive Gateway sites to attract inward migrants and enhance the image and prospects of the city region

Growth Point also gives the opportunity to comprehensively address the need to fill the gaps in the city region housing offer. This will see designations for specific housing types, particularly family homes which will be attractive to middle and upper income groups. C.

## Growth to 2016/17

The approved Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East sets a target 2,200 new homes per annum for the five Tees Valley Boroughs to 2016. To achieve the necessary 20 per cent uplift to comply with Growth Point guidance requires an annual build rate target 2,600 new homes per annum across the five Boroughs.

To achieve this target we have established a clear hierarchy of priority sites. The locations are entirely compatible with the established strategies for the North East region, the Tees Valley City Region and the emerging Core Strategies in the individual Boroughs. The priority locations are:

- Central Darlington (including Lingfield Point)
- Central Hartlepool
- Central Middlesbrough
- Greater Eston
- Central Stockton

The vast majority of sites necessary to achieve the annual build rate are already in the public domain and are very well known, many with ambitious master plans in place.



Middlehaven - Middlesbrough



Health Village - Redcar & Cleveland



North Shore - Stockton-on-Tees

## Affordable Housing

The need for further affordable housing provision is a relatively recent phenomenon in Tees Valley. The North East traditionally is the region with the lowest average house prices nationally. Tees Valley is traditionally the cheapest sub-region of the North East. As recently as 2001 the Inspector presiding over the Tees Valley Structure Plan Examination in Public dismissed the need for an affordable housing policy.

The situation has changed significantly in the intervening period, with rapidly rising prices in the local markets. As a consequence all five boroughs have recently included affordable housing policies in their Local Development Frameworks seeking between 20 and 30 per cent affordable housing provision on new housing developments.

The evidence base presented as part of the regularly updated Tees Valley Sub Regional Housing Market Assessment will facilitate regular monitoring of the need for affordable housing provision.



Darlington - Lingfield Point



Victoria Harbour - Hartlepool

## Credit Crunch Taskforce

In August 2008 we established a Tees Valley Housing Recovery to seek innovative methods of reducing the impact of the current economic climate on housing output locally. It is a partnership between the local authorities, registered social landlords and the private sector, and government agencies. It began with the recognition that the current situation is a lending crisis, not a housing or building crisis.

A wide variety of initiatives is being considered, underpinned by a thorough understanding of the factors affecting current and future growth capacity. Proposals include: a register of unsold completed market housing and the use of Homes and Communities Agency funding by RSLs to purchase unsold market housing to keep the local housing market moving; the identification of priority sites for action by RSLs, Councils and developers acting cooperatively to help maintain build rates; the development of mortgage rescue packages; a Tees Valley Homebuy agent to improve access to housing for all, and development of a fully flexible approach to tenure to support the creation of sustainable mixed tenure communities. The intention is that the tenure of a property can transfer from social-rented to part or full ownership as and when the financial circumstances of the occupant allow.

## Better Placed To Weather The Economic Storms

This is obviously a very difficult time to assess the state of the Tees Valley Economy, as the credit crunch and near collapse of the global and UK banking sectors are likely to have a major impact on the economy. There is a very high degree of uncertainty of what the impacts will be on the global, let alone the UK or local economies, if problems seen in the financial sector spread to the 'real' economy. The outlook for the emerging economies (eg India, China) may not be so bad, though there are downturns in these markets as well.

Locally, the economy was unusually buoyant during the first half of 2008, with many news stories of firms expanding, winning new contracts

and firms setting up operations in the Tees Valley. The high oil prices then being experienced gave a boost to the offshore and engineering sectors, as there has been a lot of activity in the engineering, oil and green energy sectors.

However, the slow down in the national economy and the credit crunch have begun to have an effect. The property market is very weak, and house building activity has declined rapidly, with knock on effects on companies that supply that market. The credit crunch has affected the supply of finance to local companies, which acts as a constraining factor on them. General confidence has declined, with higher proportions of firms expecting to cut jobs rather than recruit, and manufacturing output falling. However, the effects are not general - some sectors are still thriving.

### *So how well placed is the Tees Valley to survive the coming recession?*

Whilst the Tees Valley will be far from immune from the effects of a general slowdown, there are some grounds for optimism that the Tees Valley may be better placed to survive the worst effects of recession than previously. The Tees Valley does not have a high level of employment in the financial sector, so any declines that occur there are unlikely to have a major effect here. However, unemployment has risen sharply - 3% higher in October 2008 than the previous month and 22% more than a year ago. Several companies have closed, and the failure of national companies (eg Woolworths) will have an impact on the local economy.

The offshore sector will hopefully continue to be reasonably buoyant as exploitation of North Sea oil is still likely to develop, as will 'green' energy projects. If the emerging economies of countries like China and India are less affected by the recession than Western countries, this would still keep demand for basic commodities like chemicals and steel high, which would obviously benefit the Tees Valley. In addition, all these factors are likely to aid the Tees Valley's strong specialist engineering sector. However, the overall message must be that whilst there is a high degree of uncertainty about the future of the economy, the immediate prospects for the local economy are not good.

## Major Economic News Items

On-line search company, **Infoserve** hopes to create 150 jobs in the next year, to help it keep pace with the multi-billion pound growth of internet advertising. The company has seen a 25% rise in turnover to £4.65m over the last year and expects to see further growth over the next 12 months. **MGT Power** has announced a £400m investment at Teesport. Construction will begin next year on the world's largest sustainable biomass plant - the Tees Renewable Energy Plant (REP). The REP will create around 600 construction jobs and 150 on-site roles, as well as 300-400 jobs each year for the local supply chain. The plant will produce enough green electricity to power 600,000 homes.

Darlington based engineering company, **Amec**, have announced they are to recruit up to 200 jobs over the next 6 months. The firm, which employs 700 people in Wynyard and Darlington, currently have 100 vacancies for design and engineering staff. The company also expects to land two or three significant contracts in the next 6 months which would generate a further 100 jobs.

Hartlepool firm, **Respondez**, will create 100 new jobs and double its turnover after winning 3 major new contracts. The contact centre, which currently employs 100 staff, also expects to create a further 400 jobs in the next 18-24 months.

**Barclaycard** has announced it is creating 120 more jobs at its Teesdale site. The company have already taken on 200 staff this year and the new recruitment drive will bring the total number of employees to over 700.

The Government has approved plans for a new green combined heat and power station at Seal Sands. The new facility will be an advanced gas-fired station creating 1,020MW of electricity and steam. The scheme is proposed by **Thor Cogeneration**, a subsidiary of the **px group**. The station will employ 60 permanent staff and around 1000 during construction. Work should start in 2009 and the station should be operational during 2012.

Engineering company **Aker Solutions** is creating around 70 new jobs at its base at Stockton.

Logistics company **AV Dawson** is to significantly enlarge its fabrication workspace due to high demand caused by the SeaDragon oilrig contract.

## Who's Who - John Williams



DIE-HARD Liverpool fan, John Williams, moved from his native Merseyside to Darlington in 1970 to train as a teacher.

He was first elected as a councilor in 1979 and became Leader of the Council in 1991. He was the Borough's mayor in 1994/5 and Deputy Chairman of One NorthEast between 1998 and 2002.

John is also a Deputy Lieutenant of the County of Durham and one of his greatest personal achievements was being awarded an MBE last year in the Queen's New Year's Honours List for his services to local government.

During his time as Leader of the Council, John has overseen various changes none as challenging as the successful move in status as the Council became a unitary authority in 1997. This move saw the Council take responsibility for all major services and its workforce grow overnight from 900 to 5,000.

John is passionate about promoting the Tees Valley to the rest of the region and beyond and he has been central to many projects which work to develop the potential of the Borough.

These include the development of Darlington's Gateway project, the opening of prestigious business parks at Morton Palms and Faverdale East and the on-going Central Park development, which includes the new Darlington College which is to become a satellite campus of Teesside University.

John is married to Sheila, a Head Teacher, and has a son and a daughter. As well as travelling to see his beloved The Reds, he enjoys walking and spending time with his grandchildren.

If you would like more information on any of the items raised, or receive copies of this newsletter each month, please give Kerry Jonas a ring on 01642 264852, or e-mail:

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