

## MINISTER SPEAKS AT TEES VALLEY REGENERATION CONFERENCE

The Tees Valley's role at the forefront of the Government's local regeneration programme will be highlighted next Monday (**February 16th**) at the major conference where the keynote speaker will be the Local Government Minister John Healey.

The inaugural annual Tees Valley Unlimited Conference will bring together key figures from the public and private sectors, along with regional and national organisations, to discuss the progress already made in developing initiatives to drive forward the area's economy—and the bid to become a pilot for the new 'City Region' programme.

Tees Valley Unlimited is the partnership of public, private and voluntary interests which co-ordinates activities to improve the economic performance of the sub-region and its Chairman Hugh Lang says that the conference, being held in the impressive surroundings of Wynyard Hall, is an opportunity to showcase the area's achievements—and its challenges.

He explains "Government has recognised that we have been working for the past decade on developing an effective partnership approach to the task of transforming our area and its economy. It began with the Tees Valley Vision, setting out our ambitions, followed by the establishment of the Tees Valley Partnership—and now the lead role has been taken on by Tees Valley Unlimited.

"Of course our first conference comes at a particularly critical time for the economy—at global, national and indeed local levels—and we will be examining how we can continue to maintain progress in such difficult times. At the same time we need to keep our eye on our long term objectives to make the Tees Valley a place where people want to live, work—and invest.

"Our track record as a pioneer of the partnership approach was recognised in July last year when we became one of the first areas of the country to sign what's known as a 'Multi Area Agreement' with the Government, giving greater local freedom—and flexibility—over the way in which millions of pounds of public money can be used to move ahead with major regeneration schemes, housing improvements and the development of a Twenty First Century transport system.

"In November the Government made clear they wanted to move even further in giving local areas greater influence and control through the piloting of new 'City Regions' which would create a real opportunity for powers—and funding—to be devolved from Whitehall. We believe that our track record in the Tees Valley makes us a strong candidate to become one of those pilot areas."

Monday's conference will be opened by the Minister after which Ada Burns, Chief Executive of Darlington Borough Council, will explain the role and achievements of Tees Valley Unlimited, with Eamonn Boylan, Corporate Director with the Homes and Communities Agency, speaking on the task of 'delivering regeneration in the midst of a credit crunch.' The day will also involve panel debates and workshops—and delegates will have the chance to go on a range of tours to see at first hand developments across the Tees Valley.

**NOTE FOR EDITORS:** Please find attached the programme for Monday's conference. The media are welcome to attend all or part of the morning session. For further information please contact Peter Dodson, telephone 01642 353111/mobile 07753 910536