It’s been a few months since we last sent out a community update on the empty homes project in Woodnook, but the team have been very busy behind the scenes and have a lot to tell you about in this edition.

So, to kick off newsletter no.03, we thought we’d start with this picture of Augusta Street, showing how the houses and public realm should look once the empty homes have been refurbished - we hope you like it!

Please note that some of the details may change as the design is developed and costed, but this gives a flavour of things to come.
We are pleased to announce that Woodnook has a new Neighbourhood Coordinator! Yvonne Hinds has considerable experience in neighbourhood management across East Lancashire and took up her role as Woodnook’s Neighbourhood Coordinator on 11th May.

We don’t have a permanent base for Yvonne in Woodnook just yet but are exploring a number of options that can provide a convenient and central location within the neighbourhood.

Yvonne will regularly attend the Woodnook Residents Association meetings on the first Wednesday of each month. The meetings are held at Trinity Church and usually start from 6.30pm, so please do come along and welcome her to the community.

Contact details for Yvonne are provided at the end of this newsletter.

The strip out and partial demolition of Phase 1 properties between Augusta Street and Booth Street has now been completed, with the main refurbishment works expected to commence in the Autumn.

The time between completion of the strip-out and commencement of refurbishment allows us to get a clearer idea of the condition of individual properties, and includes for time taken to tender the works to contractors.

As outlined in the previous newsletter, the Council have secured £3.76m from the HCA Empty Homes Cluster Fund. This funding will be ‘matched’ by Woodnook JVCo, the joint venture between PlaceFirst and Twin Valley Homes, and will deliver a range of interventions to address the problem of empty homes in Woodnook. These include:

- buying empty homes at open market value - properties will be refurbished by Woodnook JVCo and either sold or rented
- lease & repair - owners of empty homes can choose to lease the property to Twin Valley Homes via Linked Up, who will subsequently refurbish the property and manage the property for a period of 5-10 years
- owner grants - a limited fund has been allocated for owners of empty properties who need financial assistance to bring the property back into decent use. All grants will need to be ‘match funded’ by the owner and will not exceed £12,500

Letters have gone out to some owners of empty properties in Woodnook, highlighting the choices above and providing clear instruction that a formal response must be returned to the Council. If an empty property owner does not respond to the letter, the council will follow up with planned enforcement action.

The Council are actively using enforcement powers in Woodnook to tackle wider issues of empty and/or dilapidated properties. One property owner has recently been prosecuted after failing to comply with a notice served on him to clean his property up and make habitable - he has been given a 12-month conditional discharge (works to be completed within 12-months) and ordered to pay prosecution legal costs and investigation costs.

The Council are now identifying more properties for enforcement in Woodnook and will use any and all legal actions on owners/tenants of properties that continue to cause nuisance in the neighbourhood.

If you would like to report an empty or problem building, please contact Kevin Walsh at Hyndburn Council - details provided at end of newsletter.

It is proposed to use some of the empty home cluster funding to enable a comprehensive face-lifting scheme on Nuttall Street. The scheme will be grant funded and will include all residential and commercial properties.

Many properties on Nuttall Street are in a dilapidated condition and therefore, with only limited funding available for face-lifting, our aim is to target investment where it will have maximum impact by improving the key ‘gateway’ into Woodnook.
Once face-lifted, the street will look much more attractive, benefitting the existing community and helping to attract new households to the neighbourhood. We are currently finalising the details of the scheme and will issue letters to owners of relevant properties once this is complete.

Work is anticipated to start in the Autumn and conclude within six months.

Priestley Nook

Priestley Nook, at the junction of Royds Street and Nuttall Street, has been bought by the Council. The building will be demolished and the site transformed into a new square for Woodnook. The images below show a simple ‘before & after’ sketch of how the site may look.

The planned square will improve the appearance of the neighbourhood and give it a physical heart; it will provide a welcoming space for community events such as markets and fetes; it will support local shops through additional parking; and it will open up Woodnook Community Centre which is the subject of refurbishment plans.

As the design develops we will keep the community informed through these newsletters and regular attendance at the Woodnook Residents Association meetings. We hope to deliver the new public space in parallel with the Nuttall Street facelift in order to minimise disruption to the community.

Britannia Inn

The Britannia Inn has been bought by Woodnook JVCo and has recently been boarded up whilst we consider its future use. We have spoken to a number of people and organisations involved in running community pubs and believe a well managed pub will add to the appeal of the wider Woodnook area.

We will update the community on progress through these newsletters and regular attendance at the Woodnook Residents Association meetings.
media coverage

At the last WRA meeting in May, we received a lot of interest in the media coverage Woodnook has received, particularly its feature on the BBC’s One Show. We presented the coverage the area has received at June’s Woodnook Residents Association meeting and will continue to provide updates through these meetings.

All media coverage can be found on PlaceFirst’s website:
http://www.placefirst.co.uk/news/

PlaceFirst have also set up a web photo gallery which will chart progress of the project:
http://www.flickr.com/photos/placefirstltd/sets/

apprenticeship opportunities

Are you interested in a career in construction? How would you like to become an apprentice and to work on transforming Woodnook into what will undoubtedly become a fantastic place to live.

If the answer to both is yes, we are delighted to offer local people a variety of construction apprenticeships. All the apprentices will be employed, have access to superb training and be fully supported throughout their apprenticeship.

If you are interested and would like more information, then all you need to do is contact Constructing the Future Lancashire at ctfl@calico.org.uk or ring on 01282 686 420

property theft & fly tipping

Thieves are continuing to break into empty properties to steal metal and stone flags which are then sold illegally. The area is also suffering from isolated incidents of fly-tipping as shown on the photo of Augusta Street, opposite.

If you see or hear anything suspicious, please do not hesitate to call the police, noting any memorable details such as vehicle registration numbers.

contact us

general enquiries
Sarah Whittaker, Hyndburn Council: t. 01254 380 613 | e. strat@hyndburnbc.gov.uk
Yvonne Hinds, PlaceFirst: t. 07570 286 693 | e. woodnook@placefirst.co.uk

empty homes
Kevin Walsh, Hyndburn Council: t. 01254 380 667 | e. kevin.walsh@hyndburnbc.gov.uk

fly tipping
Hyndburn Council: t. 01254 388 111
Police: 101 or 01254 353749 (police station)

apprenticeships
Constructing the Future: t. 01282 686 420 | e. ctfl@calico.org.uk