

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

- i) BE Group were appointed by High Peak Borough Council (HPBC) and New Mills Town Council (NMTC) to carry out a Market Town Healthcheck and Action Plan for New Mills.

- ii) This Healthcheck and Action Plan has five objectives:
 - To gather an accurate and complete picture of the current condition of New Mills;
 - To develop the vision for the town into a clear action plan;
 - To identify priority actions/projects for the short, medium and long term;
 - To provide an information base for use in attracting new businesses to the town, and for funding strategies to deliver the Action Plan; and
 - To inform management decisions.

Market Towns Initiative

- iii) The Market Towns Initiative (MTI) was established by the Countryside Agency to determine the health of rural towns and their hinterlands and to help revitalise the role of the market town as a rural service centre in the 21st Century. Central to the initiative is local community involvement, which informs the Healthcheck and actively contributes to the future of the town in the development of an action plan.

- iv) The objective of this Initiative is to:
"Promote local solutions and help market towns to become places where people from the town and surrounding countryside can:
 - Buy most things they need;
 - Obtain a range of basic services, such as legal advice and libraries;
 - Find housing of all types – rental and for purchase;
 - Have a choice of jobs, particularly in business related to the products of the surrounding countryside;
 - Obtain the training and education they need; and
 - Enjoy eating out, the cinema, theatre and musical events."

Context

- v) New Mills originally developed as a mill town during the industrial revolution.

Textile mills, based on waterpower, were built in the Torrs, a rocky gorge formed during the ice age by the erosive powers of the Rivers Goyt and Sett.

The town occupies a unique setting above the Torrs and although currently derelict, the Grade II* listed Torr Vale Mill remains a strong reminder of the town's industrial heritage.

Today New Mills is more of a market than a mill town, with many of the original mill buildings either in disuse or converted to alternative uses such as housing.

- vi) The town is located just inside the boundary of Derbyshire and the East Midlands, surrounded by the stunning Peak District countryside. It sits on the border with Cheshire and Greater Manchester sharing strong links with the North West Region. The town has good transport links to Manchester, Stockport and Sheffield, with two train stations, and is a popular rural base for commuters.

The Hinterland

- vii) The Healthcheck and Action Plan covers the town of New Mills and its hinterland, which includes the New Mills town wards of New Mills East and New Mills West and the hinterland wards of Hayfield and Sett. The village of Furness Vale is also included within the New Mills hinterland, although this sits just outside the New Mills ward boundaries.

Key Findings

- viii) The findings are a result of widespread consultation was carried out with High Peak Borough Council, New Mills Town Council, local stakeholders, schools, businesses and the general public. This has involved meetings, workshops, surveys, informal debate and public exhibitions.
- ix) The Healthcheck is an in-depth look at housing, economy, population, environment, leisure, transport and social aspects of life in New Mills.
- x) New Mills benefits from its location close to two large urban centres (Manchester and Stockport) and on the edge of the Peak District National Park, it is this latter tourism role that is important for New Mills to build on.

- xi) The town has many assets, unique to New Mills, which it could capitalise on to generate greater tourism activity, including: The Torrs, Swizzels Matlow, Peak Forest Canal Basin and the Sett Valley Trail.
- xii) This will help to address the clear economic and social divide between New Mills East and West. Work is being done through the Healthy Living Network to address this. There is strong demand for a Community Resource Centre in New Mills East, to house a multitude of services and uses, including:
community, health, youth and advisory.
- xiii) Raising the profile of New Mills will form a key part of its development, both in attracting new business to the area and developing the tourism industry. This will be achieved by environmental improvements, promoting existing attractions and the regeneration of the town centre, to include a more diverse retail and restaurant offer.

Vision

- vii) New Mills' Vision is:
"To develop and promote New Mills as an attractive and thriving town, offering a unique visitor experience. Providing a good quality of life with improved access to facilities and services for residents and visitors alike."

Objectives and Actions

- viii) The Vision will be achieved through 43 actions themed under 5 objectives:

Overarching projects to achieve the Vision:

- Action 1: Secure funding for a joint project manager for New Mills and Whaley Bridge (to start 2004/5)
- Action 2: Establish a project fund to support project development with contributions from HPBC and NMTC

Objective 1: To improve the vitality and viability of New Mills

- Action 3: Establish a Business Forum/Sub Group as part of the Town Partnership
- Action 4: Create attractive "gateways" to the town

- Action 5: Diversify and expand the retail and evening economy
- Action 6: Investigate the feasibility of developing a regeneration strategy for the Peak Forest Canal Basin area
- Action 7: Environmental enhancement of the town centre
- Action 8: Undertake a review of street lighting
- Action 9: Review street care
- Action 10: Investigate demand and potential locations for art and craft space
- Action 11: Endorse and support the New Mills Adult Education Centre bid

Objective 2: To improve transport provision, accessibility and infrastructure

- Action 12: Undertake an access audit of public buildings, places of worship and the theatre
- Action 13: Investigate town accessibility issues
- Action 14: Investigate the feasibility of and encourage the environmental enhancement of Meal Street
- Action 15: Reinstate a bus service to Mellor Road and modify the route and operation times of the town centre bus service (389)
- Action 16: Facilitate and support the lease / purchase of a community mini bus with wheelchair access
- Action 17: Improve town centre signage
- Action 18: Feasibility study into the potential for a Transport Interchange
- Action 19: Improve train stations
- Action 20: Undertake a study to determine the transport needs of the working population
- Action 21: Investigate the feasibility of a new road linking to Garrison Works Industrial Estate – High Hill Road

Objective 3: To improve community facilities and services

- Action 22: Develop a community resource centre in New Mills East Ward
- Action 23: Support the development of existing community facilities
- Action 24: Consult with local service providers about improvements to services and facilities
- Action 25: Increase provision and accessibility of NHS dentists
- Action 26: Investigate improvements to the Leisure Centre
- Action 27: Establish a young carers support group
- Action 28: Improvements to public toilets
- Action 29: Support the High Peak Walks for Health Programme
- Action 30: Encourage a review of health services to be undertaken
- Action 31: New Mills Town Council and the Town Partnership to work together to draw up plans for the development of Ollersett Fields
- Action 32: Support the continuation of the Healthy Living Network Community Development Worker

Objective 4: To promote New Mills as a tourist destination and make better use of its heritage and physical assets

- Action 33: Improvements to Sett Valley Trail, including opportunities for cycling
- Action 34: Support the development of Torr Vale Mill
- Action 35: Investigate the potential of developing the tourist information role of the Heritage Centre
- Action 36: Market and promote New Mills as a tourism destination
- Action 37: Commission a Management Plan for The Torrs
- Action 38: Consult with Swizzels Matlow about its promotion as a tourist attraction

Objective 5: To improve existing and create new facilities for young people

- Action 39: Improve access for young people to health services and advice
- Action 40: Install youth shelters
- Action 41: Directory of activities and venues for young people
- Action 42: Young people consultation day
- Action 43: Increase evening activities for young people

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 BE Group was appointed by High Peak Borough Council (HPBC) and New Mills Town Council (NMTC) to undertake the New Mills Market Town Initiative Healthcheck and Action Plan.
- 1.2 The study has involved a detailed investigation of the town and its surroundings, covering the local economy, environment, transport and accessibility, social and community issues.
- 1.3 To ensure the study approach was inclusive, extensive consultation with residents, businesses and local interest groups has been undertaken. This has involved: public consultation events, schools consultation, key stakeholder consultation and survey work.
- 1.4 This report will be used to influence Local Authority priorities for New Mills and assist in the regeneration of the town and the surrounding area. It will also help to regenerate and promote the town as a local service centre and build upon the town's strengths to make New Mills a better place for residents, workers and visitors alike.
- 1.5 The five key aims of the New Mills Market Town Healthcheck and Action Plan are:
 - To gather an accurate and complete picture of the current condition of New Mills;
 - To develop the vision for the town into a clear action;
 - To identify priority actions/projects for the short, medium and long term;
 - To provide an information base for use in attracting new businesses to the town, and for funding strategies to deliver the Action Plan;
 - To inform management decisions.

New Mills in Context

- 1.6 New Mills originally developed as a mill town during the industrial revolution. Textile mills based on waterpower were built in the Torrs, a rocky gorge formed by the Rivers Goyt and Sett. The town occupies a unique setting above the Torrs and although currently derelict, the Grade II* listed Torr Vale Mill remains a strong reminder of the town's industrial heritage. Today New Mills is more of a market than a mill town, with many of the original mill buildings either in disuse or converted to alternative uses such as housing.

- 1.7 The town is located just inside the boundary of Derbyshire and the East Midlands, surrounded by the stunning Peak District countryside. It sits on the border with Cheshire and Greater Manchester sharing strong links with the North West Region.
The town has good transport links to Manchester, Stockport and Sheffield, with two train stations, and is a popular rural base for commuters.
- 1.8 The location and context of New Mills and the area covered by the Healthcheck is shown in Figure 1.

