

CONNECT NW

Collaborative Network for Enterprise and Community Technologies in the North West

Supporting:

- Your role in planning, managing and delivering facilities and services for the benefit of communities.
- Small businesses and creating local employment in regenerating the places in which we live, work and play.

European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Project
Project started: April 2006
Duration: 2 years

Introduction

Regeneration is a comprehensive and integrated action which brings about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of an area. Direct involvement of communities in the ownership and management of neighbourhood facilities; in delivering services to support the community; and the development of new model for Community-based Facilities Management, all make a vital contribution to creating sustainable communities.

The CONNECT NW project aims to deliver new employment and assist small businesses in property, housing management, cleaning and facilities management four elements of asset skills. It focuses on creating and developing opportunities for community involvement in regional regeneration activities. The project works with four housing market renewal pathfinder areas: Central Salford, East/North Manchester, East Lancashire and Oldham/Rochdale.

European funding has enabled Centre for Facilities Management (CFM) and Construct IT to contribute to the UK Government's 'sustainable communities' agenda in the North West. CFM has located its community-based FM activities in regeneration initiatives, eg. at One Central Park in North Manchester, to work at the interface with business, industry, universities and the community. Related postgraduate studies with communities in Blackburn, East Lancashire has sought to assess levels of community engagement in housing renewal and to identify regeneration skills gap.

Background - Communities in the North West of England are amongst the most socially deprived and environmentally declined parts in Europe. Best practice found and lessons learned in regeneration of these communities would bring tremendous benefits to the country and the whole of Europe.

Vision - The North West to become a world-leading exemplar of community-based enterprise for regeneration and community renewal.

Legacy - The project will create a legacy of knowledge transfers and support for communities in the North West's network of multi-purpose community anchor organisations.

Strategy - To create opportunities for small housing, property services, facilities management and cleaning enterprises in the North West connected to a network of advice and support through local pathfinder agencies. To provide local communities with opportunities of involvement in regional regeneration activities, create new employment and assist small businesses.

Knowledge

Learning

Innovation

Development

CONNECT NW

Objectives

- Raise awareness of housing, property, cleaning and facilities management skills
- Create new and secure existing local employment
- Support small businesses in local supply chain, training and advice services
- Promote innovation through innovation forum and action learning group
- Engage with communities through imbedding all activities within
- Identify skills gap and develop asset skills training provision
- Develop a team of community researchers

Focus

- Community-based action
- Support for developing sustainable communities
- Social, economic and environmental dimensions
- Research capability
- Promote social enterprise and other business models that encourage community ownership and management
- Means of engaging communities in planning, managing and owning neighbourhood facilities and effective delivering of services that support community development
- Transfer knowledge skills and experience through an accessible network of University and college resources
- Collaborate with local agencies and community groups
- Provide the processes/tools (community technologies) and provide access to information (eg. toolkit such as LUDA – Large Urban Distressed Areas)

Resources

Through CONNECT project, a team of community-based researchers have been located in local agencies with a mission to transfer technology, skills and experience from higher and further education to community groups. Researchers are working with external stakeholders in each area - Elevate (East Lancashire), Urban Vision (Salford), Oldham/Rochdale (TBC) and One Central Park (East/North Manchester). Their tasks are to promote and support social enterprise in managing the built environment, to encourage community involvement in planning and evaluation and to act as a conduit for knowledge exchange network from academic and industrial partners.

Further resources are attracted from Higher Education Fund for England (HEFCE) project – Regeneration: making a difference. Also various support from related researches in the School of Construction and Property Management (eg. FM for Education and FM in Healthcare) at Salford University.

Expected outcomes

- Jobs created and safeguarded – local employment opportunities
- SME start-ups – new community-based FM service providers
- SME assisted – training, increased sales and supply chain factors

Community-based partners

Elevate East Lancashire (<http://www.elevate-eastlancs.co.uk>)

Urban Vision (<http://www.salford.gov.uk/urbanvision>)

One Central Park (<http://www.onecentralpark.co.uk>)

Industry partners

FM Foundation member organisations:

Turner Townsend	EMCOR
BWA	IFPI
EC Harris	Drivers Jonas
4FM	Salford University Estates

Construct IT member organisations:

ITinc
Shepherd
Atkins

Knowledge-based partners

University of Salford
Bolton University
University of Central Lancashire

Liverpool John Moores University
Manchester College of Art and Technology