

NEW PUBLICATIONS

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ENVIRONMENT PUBLICATIONS

Pushing Forward the Review of Subsidies to Economic Development and Innovation. Published by the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (DBERR).

National Play Strategy. Published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF).

Priority Ethnic Pupils in the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England: Extension Report on Performance in Examinations at Age 16. Published by the DCSF.

Proposed Changes to Draft Regional Planning Strategy. Published by the Government Office for the North-West.

Poverty Advisory Group: Sixth Annual Report. Published by the DBERR.

PLANNING PUBLICATIONS

Community Energy: Urban Planning and Carbon Future. Published by the Urban and Country Planning Association.

Measuring the Hidden Economy. Published by the National Audit Office.

Measuring Competitiveness. Published by Grant Thornton. Available via www.gnt.com 659 8565.

Remediation Yearbook 2008 Survey. Published by the Environmental Industries Commission. Available via www.eic.org.uk 020 7935 1675.

Regenerating Housing and Climate Change. Published by the Communities and Government Select Committee.

London Needs a 50 Per Cent Affordable Housing Policy – A Housing Strategy for a 21st Century London. Published by Ken Livingstone's Mayoral Office.

No Little Plans: The Regeneration of Liverpool City Centre 1999 – 2008. Published by Liverpool Vision.

LEAD

Extra Time: The Impact of Study Support on Improving Attendance and Behaviour. Published by Contin'You.

The case studies in this guide back its premise on support for excluded children with problem behaviour and their self-esteem and will participate in class. As well as research, the guide draws on the experience, evidence and insights gathered by learning charity's regional teams.

For more information visit www.continyou.org.uk

INNOVATIONS

Cut-price homes to tackle housing blight



Owen: we bring the homes up to a good standard to attract people who wouldn't previously have considered buying in the area

A scheme on Merseyside is helping people to get on to the property ladder, while also contributing to the regeneration of streets blighted by boarded-up properties and short-term tenants. Own Place, which is run by housing association Riverside Housing, sells properties to people at a 25 per cent discount, on the condition that buyers agree to live in the property themselves and stay for at least five years. Hugh Owen, divisional director at Riverside Housing, answers our panel's questions.

Q How does the initiative relate to the housing market renewal pathfinder in Merseyside?

A The initiative was prompted by the fact that the Housing Market Renewal programme had become stretched as a result of the increased cost of land assembly. The New Heartlands pathfinder in Liverpool found that it was having to concentrate on areas where the market problems were worst. We found ourselves in a position where we had a lot of stock in areas with real problems, but with no public sector-backed plan for market intervention. We were struggling to let a lot of the stock. So, we invested in the houses to bring them up to a standard that was good enough to sell to working people who would not normally

have considered buying in the area, and provided the cut in price as an extra incentive.

Q What sort of standard are you talking about?

A We dealt with all the structural issues and fitted them with things like double glazing and central heating. We brought them up to a standard where the buyer could occupy a property and where the remaining work would be relatively easy to do. We reasoned that the buyer could probably do things like bathroom fitting at a lower cost than we could, and that they would want to decorate to their own taste.

Q If you're selling at 25 per cent below market value, doesn't that mean that your stock is decreasing, and that you're not making enough to buy new properties?

A We did a business plan and the economic model is sound – after

all we had to convince our board to allow us to do the project. Firstly, we save money from not fully decorating and furnishing the properties, which we would have to do if they were to be let. Also, we took into account the long-term costs of maintaining and managing the properties. But we ultimately benefit from regenerating the areas in which we have lots of stock. If more owner-occupiers move in and more houses are better maintained, the value of our other properties will rise.

Q What are the criteria for eligibility to buy one of the homes?

A We didn't want to be too restrictive because we didn't want to create too much paperwork, which might put people off. Obviously we check whether people have a real need to access the scheme, and the most important rule is that we don't sell to property investors. Buyers have to be people who are going to live in the property. We don't demand that buyers are local people, but because we concentrated our advertising on Merseyside most buyers so far have been locals.

Adam Branson

Contact us If you know of an innovative scheme that merits closer scrutiny, email Adam Branson at adam.branson@haymarket.com



THE PANEL

Questions were compiled with help from **Henry Oliver**, policy adviser at campaigning charity the Empty Homes Agency, and **Andrew Delaney**, head of regeneration at consultancy Lambert Smith Hampton.

