

# Advance Northumberland Update 25th March 2024

**Robin Earl**  
**Group Executive Director**

# Advance Northumberland Corporate Update

## Introduced "Continuous Improvement Programme" (CIP)

- ISO 9001 / 14001 / 45001 Accreditation process underway
- Embedding Sustainability across Group, with dedicated intranet site and monthly news items
- Joined "Zellar" Sustainability reporting and management platform
- Enrolled Advance Northumberland as member of the British Safety Council
- Secured Investors In People Silver Award

## Governance Improvements

- Recruited 4 new Independent Non-Executive Directors
- Refreshed Articles of Association
- Refreshed Audit Committee and Remuneration Committee established
- New external auditor appointed
- Streamlining Records of Board Approvals
- Increased All-Department, Senior Leadership Team engagement in Business Performance & Risk management

# Advance Northumberland Projects Update

- The team have continued to support Northumberland County Council with new regeneration projects in Blyth and Ashington, as well as supporting the Climate change team with retrofit projects.
- Advance led projects in Ashington, Bedlington and at Northumberland Energy Park 1 are also continuing well.
- The team are supporting the Net zero carbon 2030 target by promoting sustainability and carbon reduction in all projects with ambitious targets being set for all new projects to minimise energy use.

## Morpeth Leisure Centre.

- Successfully opened March 2023.
- Advance Northumberland have supported Active Northumberland, Library services and Northumberland Skills through the defect period so far, dealing with any issues quickly to ensure the Centre continues to operate successfully.



# Advance Northumberland Projects Update

## Energising Blyth

The team have managed the design and build of **Energy Central Learning Hub** and works are progressing well with the external façade now underway and the building on track for September 24 opening.

At **Blyth Culture Hub** The team have managed the design process and coordinated the appointment of Kier as main contractor, enabling works started in October 24, the foundations and ground works are currently in construction.

The team have delivered a successful feasibility study for a District heating network at Blyth using waste heat from Mine water.



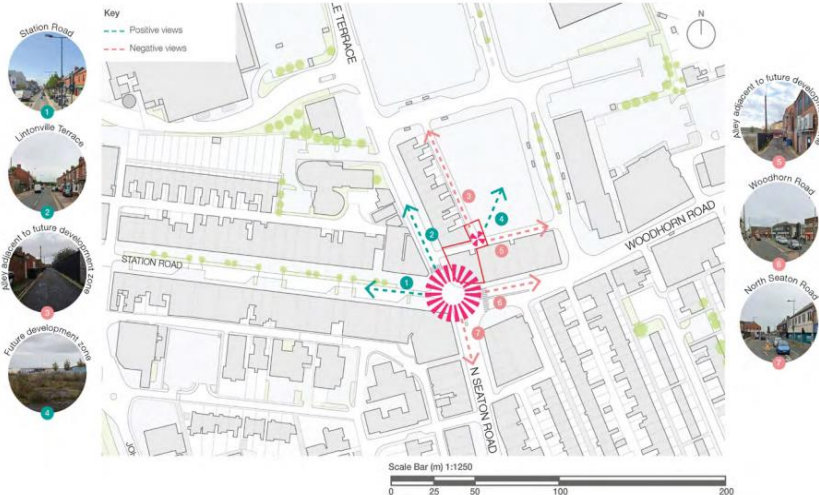
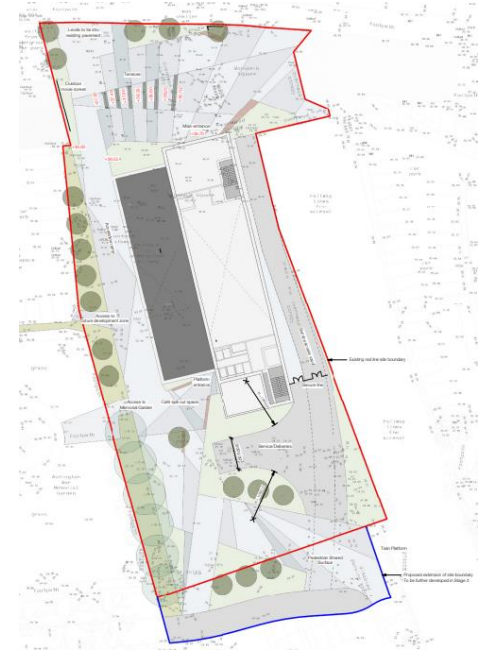


# Advance Northumberland Projects Update

## Ashington Regeneration Programme

The team are managing the design of the Ashington Regeneration programme which includes projects at Wansbeck Square and Portland Park providing a new gateway link between the Northumberland Line station at Ashington Town Centre.

Designs are at an early stage and Planning Applications will be made later this year following public consultation and engagement events in summer 2024.



# Advance Northumberland Projects Update

## Bedlington

- Following the administration of Tolent Construction, Advance Developments took over the ongoing construction works and delivered the first unit on budget with a minimal delay to programme.
- The unit is now occupied by Greggs.
- The second phase of work started in December 2023 and will complete early 2025 with a further three retail units and six apartments

## Berwick Barracks

Works to convert the historic Mob Store to a temporary Cinema are now complete.

## Berwick Leisure Centre

The Project Management team dealt with the fallout from Tolent construction entering administration including quickly appointing a new contractor and completing the final stage of the works including car park, play park and public realm works by August 23 with minimal delay.





Ascent Homes

## Ascent Homes Update

### Development Update

- Completed **98 homes** this financial year, across **5** developments from **Blyth up to Wooler**
- Started on site at Seton Hall in Berwick, acting as Principal Contractor for delivery of **58 Affordable & Shared Ownership homes on behalf of Bernicia**
- Delivered Ascent Homes' **600th home** at Kingsmead development in Wooler
- **Moved to new phases** at Wayside Point in Ellington, and Willow Farm in Choppington
- Currently working on Planning & Mobilisation stages for commencement of **6 new developments** to start on site within FY 24-25
- **Opened our first “off-gas” showhome** at Wayside Point in Ellington as part of our Net Zero Journey, incorporating ASHP, PV & Battery Storage





## People Update

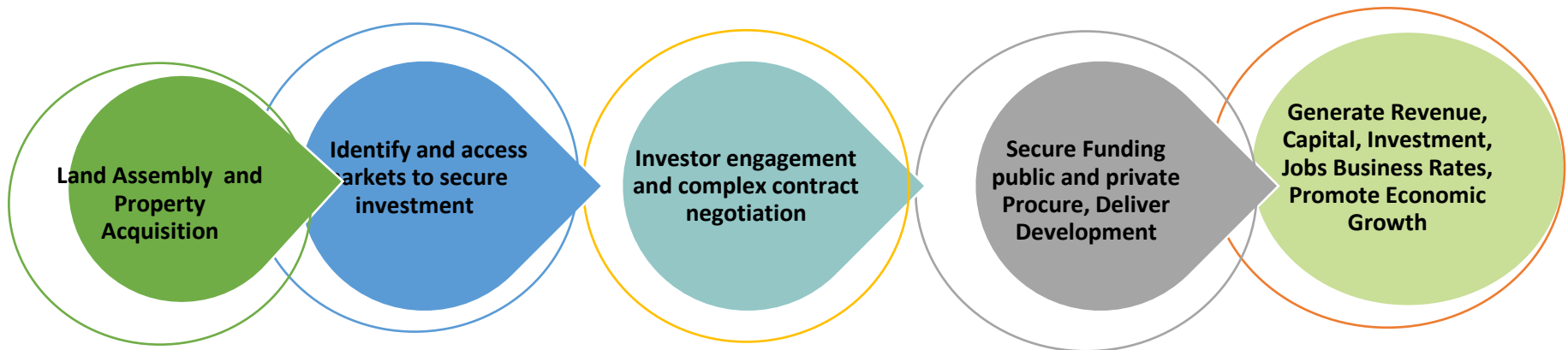
- **Invested in establishing our “in-house” Design & Technical team-** Giving greater control over design stages, and support during construction. Allowing the ability to adapt and be flexible in our different homes. Financial benefits in the long-term delivery
- **Formed, then grew our Health, Safety & Environmental team** -Offering direct support to our site delivery teams
- We appointed a H&S Manager directly employed by Ascent Homes and invested in our future by creating a Trainee Health & Safety Advisor position
- **Created a new Quality team** -Demonstrating our commitment to continuous improvement in our quality
- Created a Quality Manger role to support and inspect all works whilst on site. - Supporting our supply chain and our sub-contractors through cultural changes
- **Invested in our future growth** by creating a Trainee Quality Advisor role and a new Trainee Construction Planner role
- **Established an in-house qualified Town Planner within our Land & Planning team** - Offer greater support and advice ahead of committing significant resource to projects.





# Economic Growth and Investments

- Acquired and developed the Advance Northumberland portfolio of income producing assets that generates the revenue to drive the business
- Working with and on behalf of NCC to support businesses across the county
- A pivotal role in attracting and securing significant inward investment, creating new jobs, new locations and providing opportunities for economic growth
- Delivering commercial development in strategic employment locations and key towns throughout the County.



# Economic Growth and Investment Team continues to deliver against key Business Plan priorities for 2023/24:

## Key Town Centre and Strategic Sites including:

- Wansbeck Business Park - Ashington College Campus
- Ashington Regeneration Programme – Portland Park, Wansbeck Square and Accelerate Ashington a digital and enterprise support programme.
- Bedlington Town Centre redevelopment
- Tyne View Retail Park, Prudhoe
- Amble Retail Park



**Ashington College Campus, Ashington**



**Bedlington Town Centre**



**Tyne View Retail Park, Prudhoe**

# Economic Growth and Investment Team continues to deliver against key Business Plan priorities for 2023/24:

## Inward Investment and Strategic Employment:

### Northumberland Energy Park (NEP)

- **NEP 1** – JDR Cable Systems Ltd – 69,000 sqm subsea cable manufacturing facility
- **NEP 2** – SSE Renewables – Berwick Bank Windfarm Ltd
- **NEP 3** – Gigafactory site

### Other strategic employment sites

- **Ashwood Business Park**, Enterprise Zone
- **NEP 4** – NCC owned



Northumberland Energy Park



NEP1 – JDR Cables, Energy Central



# Economic Growth and Investment Team continues to deliver against key Business Plan priorities for 2023/24:

18 new growth projects which has delivered 538 new jobs and £144m of new investment.

Successfully completed three European Regional Development Fund Projects in June 2023:

- **Business Northumberland**
- **Rural Design Centre Innovation Project**
- **North of Tyne Rural Business Growth Service**

**Northumberland Small Business Service (NSBS)** - With NCC as accountable body, £4.8m of UK Shared Prosperity Funding, Rural England Prosperity Fund and North of Tyne Investment Fund secured.

Service launched in October 2023.

**Northumberland Small Business Service Launch Event**



**RED Engineering, Hexham – Supported in development of a new Research Technology Centre**



# Advance Northumberland Homes Update

## Tenant Satisfaction

Some examples of successful management so far this year are:

- **100%** of tenants rated their lettings experience as **very good or excellent**
- **100%** of tenants considered it to be as expected, or easy to contact ANH
- **97.5%** of tenants rated ANH's repairs provision **good, very good, or excellent**
- **96%** of tenants rated the standard of their property with ANH as **good, very good, or excellent**



## Advance Northumberland Homes Update

- **Occupancy** - Independent of Hirst (Ashington) Reintroduction Programme, occupancy is **98.5%**, which is an unprecedented level, and significantly above KPIs. **Overall occupancy** (including HRP) is 94.5%.
- **Hirst occupancy has increased by 16%** since the commencement of the Hirst Reintroduction Strategy (72% to 88%)
- We have successfully refurbished and let **104 Hirst units** in the same period- By the end of the 24/25 FY, we anticipate Hirst occupancy being **>95%**
- **Stock rationalisation** - Stock rationalisation is ongoing, and this FY we have collected c.£1.1m in capital receipts from asset disposals, with a further £1.6m forecasted for FY 24/25.
- **Stock Condition Surveys** - Stock Condition Surveys have commenced, with an anticipated conclusion of March 2025. This will give an overview of property requirements over the next 30 years, which will inform future budgets.
- **Void turnaround times** - Average void turnaround time has halved since November 2022.
- **Void Refurbishment Tender** - In the process of procuring a contractor for the refurbishment of 30 void units. Works expected to start May 2024.



# Advance Northumberland Commercial & Workspace Update

**Occupancy across the portfolio continues to be above our targets - currently at 97% across the portfolio.**

- Increased occupancy across the overall Workspace portfolio with focus on energy at Blyth. Berwick workspace have entered into deals with 2 national banks.
- Capital receipts received over the year for surplus assets of over £3m as part of rationalisation and regeneration programmes.

**Full estate management process in place to ensure that portfolio continues to be 100% statutory Compliant**

- Large scale procurement exercise undertaken to ensure building condition survey undertaken across the commercial estate to identify a comprehensive building condition reports
- Successfully facilitated securing vacant possession and the sale of Wansbeck Square and 2-4 Woodhorn Road , Ashington to NCC as part of Wider long term Regeneration plan for Ashington Town Centre
- Work ongoing with Ascent Homes to identify potential residential sites within our garage portfolio

# Advance Northumberland Commercial & Workspace Update

## Energy and Sustainability

- Benchmarking of energy use undertaken and various energy saving schemes undergoing feasibility with regard to identify "invest to save" schemes looking at various sustainable uses including: PVs, Heat pumps and other sustainable uses with view to reduce carbon across portfolio
- Charging points installed at Manor Walks, Ashington and Wansbeck Workspace in partnership with NCC and also schemes agreed and ready for implementation at various retail and strategic sites across Northumberland
- Extensive invest to save works at Manor Walks over the past 18 months on internal and external lighting has resulted in have Kwh savings of 46% against previous years consumption.



## Manor Walks

**7 million visitors per annum** - continuing to show increase year on year and back to pre-covid levels

- **High occupancy levels above national benchmark** figures for comparable retail sites
- Challenging year in retail with Wilko going into administration as well as some of leisure operators rationalising assets
- We have **continued to bring new retail tenants** into Cramlington including **Poundland** replacing Wilko, **B&M** moving into the vacant former Buzz bingo site to provide 30,000 sq ft of retail space, and securing food and beverage operators **Costello Lounge** and **Burger King**, along with signing anchor tenant Sainsburys on a new long-term lease
- Building on the success, an **Asset Strategy Brief** will be taken to Board in 2024 with regard future proposals for improving the offer and financial viability of the Centre.

