



**ANNUAL
REPORT
2017**

Making the area cleaner & greener remains a priority for Leigh Neighbours, and our programme of environmental activities to date is testament to this ambition. Our vision for 2018 - 2021 is to build on our achievements and to embrace the ethos of the *Incredible Edible* movement in order to maximise the potential benefits for our community.

cleaner & greener



Leigh Neighbours community garden

Our **community garden** represented a milestone project for Leigh Neighbours when it was originally created from a patch of derelict land on Gordon Street, an area which had been left to waste following the demolition of St John's Church. In spite of some minor anti-social behaviour in 2017, the garden remains a valued and much-loved resource for the entire community and continues to thrive thanks to the efforts of local residents, Christine and Kenny Farnworth, who often call upon the support of *The Gardening Gang*, a group of local children who have proudly embraced the garden as their own.

Clean-up campaigns

Environmental anti-social behaviour is a problem in our area, so we've organised dozens of **community litter picks** in partnership with the community, and we support all the national campaigns of Keep Britain Tidy, such as *Clean for the Queen*. In 2017, we focussed our efforts on cleaning up Railway Road, a once proud and thriving retail district which has become depressed through neglect, lack of investment and anti-social behaviour. As part of the clean-up, we transformed the car park, landscaping its perimeters with hand crafted wooden and recycled tyre planters in readiness of establishing our very first *Incredible Edible* allotment.



Hanging basket workshops

Every Spring and Autumn, we deliver **hanging basket workshops** for local residents, schools, businesses and community groups. With all materials provided by Leigh Neighbours free of charge, our workshops are a great way of making the area more attractive whilst providing an opportunity for bringing the whole community together. From 2018, our hanging basket workshops will also feature herbs, fruit and vegetables in support of our commitment to the *Incredible Edible* movement.

Landscaping projects

As part of their personal development, we commissioned students on the **Prince's Trust Team Programme** to undertake various environmental projects to help improve the area. The teams have cleared weeds and undergrowth from the grounds of churches, schools and community centres right across the Leigh Neighbours project area. In 2018, they're returning to work on other projects including some neglected back alleys in urgent need of some TLC.



In Bloom

Meanwhile, **Leigh Neighbours In Bloom** is our annual competition designed to recognise and celebrate the skills and efforts of our most talented green-fingered residents. Following a successful pilot in 2016, In Bloom was repeated in 2017, attracting more interest. The board is now looking at ways of developing it further for the future.

Incredible Edible

In 2017, we developed an exciting programme of activities as part of Leigh Neighbours endorsement of the **Incredible Edible** movement... and now in 2018, we're looking forward to embarking on them!

Our initial pilot project for Incredible Edible is based on the car park on Railway Road, parts of which are being transformed into a vegetable plot for cultivation by the wider community.

Other projects celebrating local food production are scheduled throughout 2018, including some innovative collaborative partnership working with foodbanks and a homeless hostel.



Building community spirit



Many of our events and activities aim to build community spirit. They are designed to foster a greater sense of 'belonging', tolerance and civic pride.

We provide funding to grassroots community groups, churches and schools via our easily-accessed **Resident's Fund** which enables local people to host events and activities for the wider community.

We also provide financial support to local **foodbanks and charities** at Christmas, increasing their capacity to help the most vulnerable families in our area.

Leigh Neighbours also hosts a variety of events including monthly free family **arts and craft workshops** which are great for bringing people together in a fun, relaxed and sociable environment.

In a bid to promote **The Big Lunch** - a national initiative designed to generate community resilience and to help people build relationships with one another - we donated modest grants to numerous resident groups and local organisations to enable them to host an event. Meanwhile, our Big Lunch event at The Coffee Stop on Railway Road attracted over a hundred local people, with many guests saying they'd forged new friendships on the day.

Raising aspirations and helping people to develop new skills is important to us and we're proud that our projects reflect this. Through our various activities and initiatives, we provide opportunities for people of all ages to 'skill up', grow in confidence and become more empowered.

In 2017, for the third year running, we sponsored the popular **Summer School** at Sacred Heart RC Primary, a week long programme of fun educational activities aimed at children who benefit from a little more attention before they embark on the new academic year. The children enjoyed a day out on a steam train as part of a project exploring the area's industrial heritage.

Building on the success of two previous apprenticeship schemes, we're currently in dialogue with **Wigan Council's Archives Service** to fund a third apprenticeship, and hope to have the successful applicant in place soon. We also support the **Prince's Trust** in the delivery of their personal development programme for young people.

Leigh Neighbours also supports charities such as True Colours which works with people with special educational needs. We were proud to endorse their campaign, **Autism Friends**, a training project for local business which was designed to raise awareness of the condition, challenge negative perceptions and provide insight into how the community can support those who live with this condition.

Investing in people



Another of our priorities is to promote health and well-being, which is why so many of our initiatives urge people to invest in their mental and physical health, and encourage them to introduce more activity into their daily regime.

The Big Bike Revival is a national campaign aimed at encouraging fair-weather cyclists to climb back in the saddle, and is another healthy living campaign supported by Leigh Neighbours.

We sponsored the goody bags for the inaugural **Leigh Community 10k**, and will do so again in 2018. We're also working with Leigh Central Primary School to add value to their **Daily Mile** project, an initiative which encourages children to walk a mile a day. To encourage wider buy-in, we've fitted 'route markers' and an art installation which not only brightens the area, but also provides space for community cultivation.

Helping people feel healthier...



We know that tackling crime - and the *fear* of crime - is important to local people in our area.

Which is why we promote many of the community safety initiatives led by Wigan Council, Citizens Advice, Greater Manchester Police and Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service. These include campaigns to tackle alcohol and substance misuse, combat anti-social behaviour, raise awareness around domestic abuse and promote road safety initiatives.

For instance, our regular **Be Seen Be Safe** events - organised in partnership with schools, the police and Wigan-based CIC *Gearing Up* - are very popular with cyclists of all ages. In addition to having their bikes serviced free of charge, cyclists also have the opportunity to learn about safer cycling and claim their complimentary hi-viz jackets, lights and other safety equipment.

All our activities and campaigns are designed to build a stronger, more cohesive community, and to give people a greater sense of confidence and belonging.

... and to feel safer, too



Improving community facilities

Encouraging people to come together is one thing. Ensuring they're able to do so in safe, 'fit for purpose', well-resourced community venues is another.

Our programme for improving existing community facilities and building resilience in this area continues apace.

The unveiling of a plaque at **Kingsleigh Methodist community centre** in December 2016 marked the official re-opening of the venue following its £25,000 renovation, funded by Leigh Neighbours. And we're delighted that the centre continues to be used by hundreds of people in the community every month!

Emboldened by this initial success, we've continued exploring ways in which we can help other community facilities in the area, so they can offer a wider range of improved resources to local people for both learning and leisure. In summer 2018, Leigh Neighbours is taking over **As in Eden**, a popular community facility on Walmesley Road which we anticipate will also benefit from a programme of investment.



We're proud to sing the praises of local people who go out of their way to help build community spirit, improve the area and act as fantastic ambassadors for the town.

People like 8-year-old Liam, who donated potatoes he grew to the local foodbank...

... Michelle, a local mum and school governor, who organises and hosts our family arts and crafts workshops.

... Derek, a green-fingered expert who has spent years transforming his patch in Leigh into a tropical paradise of exotic flora.

... Tony, a regular volunteer at our hanging basket workshops.

And all the people who work with the homeless, organise the bingo, teach in our schools, lead uniform groups, host community events... and generally all those committed to investing in making the area better. The list goes on and on.

We always want to hear about our local heroes, because we want to shout about their success and celebrate their contribution to the community.

Championing our unsung heroes



Listening to local residents, and reporting back to them, is written into our DNA, and we continue to adhere to the same level of transparency and accountability that we've practiced ever since we embarked on our original public consultation exercises back in 2011.

We are committed to keeping local people informed about what we're up to. In addition to maintaining a website and social media pages, we produce a newsletter every other month which is hand delivered to every home, community organisation and business in our area.

Listening to what local people think is important to us. We conducted a survey in 2016 asking for feedback to help inform our activities, and another in 2017 to assess the public perception of anti-social behaviour specifically on Railway Road. Results of both surveys were fed back to local people.

We adopt an 'open door' policy at all our events, where again people are invited to give us feedback. Our board is made up local people including residents and stakeholders. We've recruited four new members in 2017 including two residents, the head of a local school and a manager from the local Citizen's Advice. Altogether, three of the four primary schools in our area are now represented on our board, and they act as great ambassadors for us.

We work in tandem with councillors to act as a voice for local people, engaging with agencies such as the council and the police, and other stakeholders such as our local MP. In 2017, we hosted fact-finding tours of our project area, initially with the MP Andy Burnham and Chief Executive of Wigan Council, Donna Hall; and subsequently with our new MP, Jo Platt, to ensure they were familiar with local issues of concern.

Listening to what people say



If you have any questions about Leigh Neighbours or you would like to give us some feedback, email us at info@lnpb.org.uk or write to us at Leigh Neighbours, 14 Walmesley Road, Leigh, Lancashire, WN7 1YE