



**Leigh Neighbours project is a Lottery-funded, resident-led, community development project. In 2015, we established ourselves as a registered charity to formalise our organisation.**

The Lottery stream is called *Big Local*, and the intention is to empower local people to enable them to identify how they can make the area where they live, and work, a better place. *Big Local* gives us the funds we need to make these changes and to achieve our shared objectives.



The Lottery helped us to define a specific part of Leigh to work in, and gave us £1 million to spend over 10 years. We have a fixed geographical area bounded by Kirkhall Lane to the north, Leigh Road to the east, Twist Lane to the south and Atherleigh Way to the west.

We have a Community Plan which we prepared after consulting with over 700 local people. We have a number of partners in the statutory, voluntary and charitable sectors, and have good visibility in the local community.

Our Management Board, which includes two local headteachers and seven residents, meets monthly, and drives all the strategic decision-making.

We have categorised our priorities into a number of key strands:

- **Building community spirit**
- **Education, employment & training**
- **Improving the quality of local housing**
- **Crime & Community Safety**
- **Access to community facilities**
- **Environment**
- **Opportunities for leisure**
- **Health improvements**
- **Tackling financial inequalities**
- **Traffic & transport initiatives**

All of our projects reflect the priorities that local people told us were important to them, and demonstrate partnership working in action.



## Supporting our local community Champions

Leigh Neighbours recognises the contribution that so many organisations, schools, churches, volunteers and charities make to our project area.

And to show our support, we sometimes make donations to these groups, which we hope helps them bring even more value into the lives of local people.

So far, we've provided financial support to organisations such as:



- As in Eden CIC
- True Colours CIC
- Atherton & Leigh Foodbank
- Compassion in Action
- Homeless Support Project
- Atherton & Leigh Shelter of Hope
- Christians in Leigh
- Leigh Caring Kitchen
- Prince's Trust
- Gearing Up CIC
- Ground-work

We're not prescriptive in how we support local organisations. There are many different ways in which we can help them. Our only ask is that they in turn help people in the project area and make a difference in the wider community. Examples include:

- Sponsoring the goody bags for this year's inaugural **Leigh Community 10k** in a measure designed to promote health initiatives. And, of course, the race raised funds for another great cause, **Wigan & Leigh Hospice!**



- Providing starter funds for the **Over-50s Monday Club** which now runs at full capacity every week, supports more than 75 older people and helps to tackle social isolation.

- Supporting **Sacred Heart RC Primary's Summer School**, a programme which gives children a chance to consolidate their learning in a fun and relaxed environment before they embark on a new academic year.



## Providing easy access to a Resident's Fund

Our Resident's Fund provides access to grants up to £500 for projects which address the themes identified in our Community Plan.

The fund is open to anybody within the area, and is especially suitable for people who have little or no experience of submitting bids for funding. Our application process is quick and easy! So far, we've given away £15,000 through the Resident's Fund, which represents an investment into over 50 local projects.

The breadth and scope of these projects reflects the diversity of our local community. Examples include:

- We've funded several events as part of **The Big Lunch**, a national initiative which aims to generate greater community spirit.



- We've supported **Leigh Caring Kitchen**, a facility which provides food and shelter to the homeless.

- We helped cover the cost of laying on a Star Wars-themed party hosted by **Churches in Leigh**, which offered children a less spooky alternative to Hallowe'en.



- The replacement of new Standards for the local **Air Cadets** after theirs were stolen. We also contributed towards the maintenance costs of their minibus.

- Covering the cost of materials and a visiting tutor for **Carpe Diem crafts group**.



- A new all-weather noticeboard for **As in Eden**, a well used and much loved community venue on Walmesley Road.

- **i-Roam** is an online tool which gives people with learning difficulties a chance to preview public buildings prior to visiting. Leigh Neighbours provided funding to purchase vital film equipment.



# Responding to local Challenges

There are several pressing issues which are of real concern to local residents, issues which are affecting quality of life and undermining pride in the area.



## Silcocks land on Leigh Road

We'd like to see the Council tackle landowners like Silcocks who previously left over 20 hippo bags of Japanese knotweed green waste on the land for over 12 months.

- *Is it fair that Silcocks uses the land for a few weeks a year for its mobile fairground, and then leaves it in this condition for the rest of the year? Can the Council use any of its enforcement or regulatory powers to stop this? Is there scope to work in partnership with Silcocks by landscaping the area and using the land as a Skate /BMX park?*

## Environmental crime

We'd like to see greater enforcement of powers to tackle the significant amount of flytipping and dog fouling in back alleys.

- *Can the Council organise regular Clean Up Days, offering amnesties and giving residents access to skips? Also, can they prosecute and 'name and shame' perpetrators?*

## Hilton Park

The old rugby ground is a target for anti-social behaviour and wheely bin fires. It has been a blight for local residents for the past ten years, and presents a wasted opportunity.



- *Can the Council hold the owners to account? When can we expect to see this land brought into proper use?*

## The old college on Railway Road

Another wasted opportunity in the heart of Leigh, this listed building is a haven for rats and a target for anti-social behaviour.

- *When can local residents expect to see the building brought back into use?*

## Drug and alcohol-related anti-social behaviour

This is particularly a problem along Railway Road, although other parts of the project area are also affected. Telephone boxes on Railway Road and at the junction of Kirkhall Lane/Gordon Street are used almost exclusively for the purposes of drug-dealing.

- *Can the Council remove these telephone boxes?*

Leigh Neighbours would like to see greater use of powers by the Council and the Police to tackle drug and alcohol-related anti-social behaviour. We'd also like to see more positive interventions from the drug and alcohol reduction teams to counter the problems experienced along Railway Road from users of the hostel and homeless shelter.

# Tackling issues around the Quality of Housing

Housing is a key concern for local people. Residents see the value of their own homes decrease because of the condition of 'buy to let' properties in the area, and because of the transient nature of some of the people who live in these properties.

Anti-Social Behaviour. Warrants issued for drug use and drug dealing. Petty crime. Instances of this type are common place.



So, one of our longer term aspirations is to purchase properties, refurbish them and then let them out to tenants ourselves.

This would serve to raise the physical condition of poorly maintained properties which are adversely affecting house prices in the area.

And it would enable us to offer longer let periods to tenants who feel they have more of a personal stake in the local community.

# Identifying local Opportunities

We have money to invest in the area and would like to work in partnership with the Council and other agencies to maximise the value of our investments and make the greatest impact. Many ideas are 'quick wins', such as:

- More energy efficient cladding of properties in the area.
- Traffic calming schemes which can be planted up as part of the Incredible Edible initiative.
- Greening schemes such as lamp-post mounted hanging baskets along streets with no alternative greenery.
- Using the arts to brighten up the area... such as tromp l'oeil boards on empty shop windows... majolica tile street signs... roller shutter art... and poems in paving stones...
- Wildlife initiatives such as bird boxes and beehives.
- Solar powered lights in the trees on Civic Square.
- Create mini-play areas in side streets and alleys where young children can play safely.
- Start-up grants for the cultural sector to establish artist studios, gallery spaces, rehearsal rooms...
- Promoting café culture, perhaps through pedestrianisation.

# Improving Railway Road

Railway Road was previously a popular thoroughfare with attractive architectural frontages and a busy retail base. Sadly, these days Railway Road is renowned more for its fast food outlets, litter and alcohol-related anti-social behaviour.



There are, however, businesses, residents and community groups who are based on, and immediately off, Railway Road who take great pride in their homes and businesses, and are keen to see investment made in the area.

Leigh Neighbours is proposing to work with partners and other stakeholders to develop a strategy and vision for this once proud and thriving district. We've carried out a community consultation exercise, generating more than a hundred responses, with many people expressing concern about anti-social behaviour, litter and the decline in small, independent retailers. We've also:



- Conducted an intensive clean-up at the car park, picking up twenty bags of rubbish, clearing overgrowth and treating woodwork.
- Fitted brackets to properties along the road for hanging baskets, followed by a hanging basket workshop.

- Hosted a Big Lunch get-together at the Coffee Stop, giving us an opportunity to get people's feedback.
- Hosted a 'walkabout' of the area with former MP Andy Burnham and Chief Executive of Wigan Council, Donna Hall, to discuss the issues.

We are keen to work with our new MP, Jo Platt, together with the local authority and the police, to address the issues which are of greatest concern to local people. It's already clear to us that people feel very passionately about the area. The more energy and enthusiasm we can generate, the more we're likely to achieve.



If you'd like to get involved, email [railwayroadrevival@lnpb.org.uk](mailto:railwayroadrevival@lnpb.org.uk)

# Your local priorities



## Building community spirit

Our events and activities aim to build community spirit. The community arts project, **Our Art Neighbourhood** was not simply designed to add colour to the area, but also to act as a catalyst to bring people together. We also provide funding to groups, churches and schools so they can lay on events and activities for the wider community. We funded Leigh town centre's **Christmas tree lights**, as well as several **Big Lunch** events to help people forge new friendships.



## Raising aspirations and investing in people



We've worked with the charity **Groundwork** to fund two local apprenticeships in landscaping, enabling them to learn new skills and obtain NVQ qualifications. We're currently developing an opportunity with **Wigan Council** for another apprentice in Archives and Libraries. And working with Wigan-based CIC, **Gearing Up**, we've provided a number of recycled bikes to local schools, giving pupils a chance to learn to ride - an important milestone in the lives of many young people!

## Encouraging people to be healthier...

Our regular **Be Seen Be Safe** events - organised in partnership with schools, the police and Gearing Up - are very popular with cyclists of all ages. We're also working with Leigh Central Primary School to add value to their **Daily Mile** project. And we sponsored the goody bags for the inaugural **Leigh Community 10k**, in an effort to promote health initiatives.



## ... and to feel safer

**Stop & Lock** was a 'target hardening' initiative to provide additional home security to some of our more vulnerable residents. We've also organised events to give local residents an opportunity to meet the police and other **community safety** professionals. And we support the **Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service** in their campaigns, too.



## Improving community facilities

The unveiling of a plaque at **Kingsleigh Methodist community centre** marked the official re-opening of the venue following its £25,000 renovation, funded by Leigh Neighbours. We're now looking at how we can help to improve **As in Eden** - host to many of our popular craft events. We plan to target a number of other community facilities for improvements over the next two years.



## Making the area cleaner & greener

### Jubilee community garden

With the support of the Probation Service, Prince's Trust and the Council's Restorative Justice team, we transformed an area of derelict land next to St John's CE School, and turned it into a community garden.



### Leigh Neighbours In Bloom

**Leigh Neighbours In Bloom** is our annual competition designed to recognise and celebrate the skills and efforts of our most talented green-fingered experts. Pictured: 2016 winner Derek Cunliffe of Findlay Street with judge Bill Burton.



### Hanging basket workshops

We've delivered over 30 hanging basket workshops for local residents and schools. All materials are provided free of charge, and as well as making the area more attractive, the workshops are a great way of bringing the whole community together.



### Clean-up campaigns

We've organised dozens of litter picks in partnership with the community, and we support all the national campaigns. During **Clean for the Queen**, we co-ordinated community litter picks and sponsored a school art competition.



### Landscaping projects

As part of their personal development programme, we have commissioned **Prince's Trust** students to undertake various projects to help improve the area, such as clearing the grounds of **As in Eden** and stripping back overgrowth around Sacred Heart church.



### Sustainable projects

We're currently developing a project in partnership with the charity, **Incredible Edible**, which aims to increase the amount of local food grown and eaten in local communities.

