

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS NEWS

Anti-demolition campaigners in Liverpool are trying to raise funds to make their case at a public inquiry, reports
Ciara Leeming

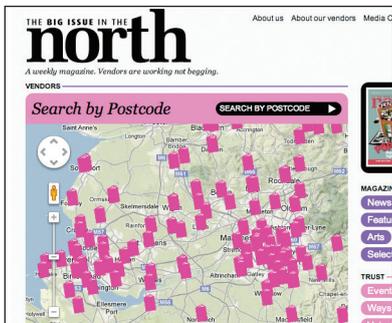
A campaign group has turned to crowdfunding to help it take part in a public inquiry into the planned demolition of Liverpool's Welsh Streets.

The long-awaited inquiry into Liverpool City Council's plans for the Toxteth neighbourhood begins on 17 June – a decade after the process began.

Save Britain's Heritage – a small independent charity and the principal remaining objector to the scheme – needs £40,000 to fight demolition and is using the crowdfunding website Dig Ventures to raise the money from sympathisers.

Director Clem Cecil said: "This is the first crowdfunding campaign of its kind in the UK, and we are really looking forward to involving everyone who supports us in the fight to save this neighbourhood."

Since the Welsh Streets regeneration scheme was unveiled in 2003 – under the banner of Labour's controversial Housing Market Renewal Initiative or Pathfinder – around 1,200 people have been displaced and hundreds of homes boarded up, at a cost of £20 million. For years the plans divided locals, with some in favour of clearance and others bitterly opposed to it.



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Going public



The future of Welsh Streets has been uncertain for 10 years. Photo: Ciara Leeming

The fact that one of the condemned properties was the birthplace of Beatles drummer Ringo Starr secured national media interest, attracting the attention of government ministers. Last year communities secretary Eric Pickles called in the plans, triggering the public inquiry.

His intervention was based on concerns that the scheme – to be delivered by housing association Plus Dane – flouts planning policy that favours sustainable growth and the renovation of empty homes.

The decision came shortly after the warring factions of residents had agreed a truce. The original clearance plans had been scaled back slightly, with 37 homes reprieved and promised renovation. Even residents who had previously resisted did not oppose this plan.

In total up to 440 properties could now be flattened – 280 in the first phase and the remainder at a later date if funds can be secured. They would be replaced by 150 low-density semis if the entire project is completed.

Many of the condemned homes in the second phase – which has only been granted outline permission at this stage – are still inhabited.

Save Britain's Heritage – which owns property on Madryn Street that used to belong to Starr's aunt – wants the unfunded second phase

of 160 demolitions and 70 new builds dropped altogether. Although its experts are giving £200,000 of support in kind by working for free or at greatly reduced rates, the group says it still needs another £40,000 to cover legal fees, the cost of surveys on a number of homes on the site and other expenses – hence the crowdfunding campaign.

The inquiry is being held at the Cunard Building on Liverpool's Pier Head from Tuesday and is likely to last up to two weeks.

Any interested person can contribute, in person or in writing.

Save Britain's Heritage campaigner Jonathan Brown, a Liverpool resident and former planner, urged people to get involved. "I'd particularly like all those who have experienced the horrors of Pathfinder and compulsory purchase order either first hand or as observers to make their views heard – otherwise, communities with homes under threat will be represented only by a narrower range of voices," he said.

"It's likely to be their last chance for a fair hearing, and will help set the direction of local and national housing, heritage and regeneration policy one way or the other."

VENDOR CODE OF CONDUCT

All vendors selling **The Big Issue in the North** must abide by the Code of Conduct, the set of rules governing how they work. Outreach teams from The Big Issue in the North patrol the streets daily to check vendors' behaviour and to encourage and support them while working. Here are some of the key rules:

- Vendors can only sell on designated pitches organised by **The Big Issue in the North**.
 - Vendors cannot sell between 8.00pm and 7.00am (6.00pm in Liverpool city centre). Police officers have the authority to confiscate magazines and badges if they witness vendors selling during these hours.
 - Vendors must always wear their own badge when buying or selling the magazine and only sell magazines with their number on.
 - Vendors can only buy magazines for themselves.
 - Vendors must not use physical or verbal aggression towards the public or other vendors.
 - Vendors are not allowed to sell if staff feel they are unfit to do so.
 - Vendors must stand when selling; sitting down is an obstruction to the public highway and is illegal.
 - Vendors must not beg for money using the magazine. Asking for spare change or other items is considered to be begging.
 - Vendors can only charge £2.00 for each magazine and must always give the customer the magazine once paid for. Failing to do so is fraudulent and may result in police involvement.
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- The Big Issue in the North Trust raises funds to provide services for homeless vendors of this magazine.