

ECONOMIC CLIMATE UPDATE REPORT

This report summarises the positive and negative economic changes that have taken place in the Borough during February 2012.

EMPLOYMENT AND BUSINESS

ENGINEERING / MANUFACTURING / CHEMICAL

Positive

- **UPDATE:** The new £8.5m premises for Stockton based company, **Nifco**, Durham Lane, was opened on 16th February by the Duke of York. The 130,000 sqft premises is the largest investment in manufacturing in Stockton for twenty years.
- **AMEC**, with large offices in Wynyard Business Park, and Darlington, has secured a key contract with **Sabco** for major maintenance work on Sabco's Tees Valley process plants. This will create and safeguard up to 500 contracting jobs over the next two years.
- **Tees Alliance Group** has won another contract in the oil and gas sector; this time the Haverton Hill based company has agreed with marine construction firm Saipem to fabricate foundation piles for Total's North Sea oil and gas field.
- A £450m project is progressing by **Teesside Gas and Liquids Processing (TGLP)**, a subsidiary of **Teesside Gas Processing Plant**, which will bring gas from the Breagh gas field in the North Sea to the Tees Valley. The Stockton-based, **PX group**, in its role as operator of the Teesside Gas Processing Plant, is providing project management and development services.
- **UPDATE:** The four massive stoves required to re-start the blast furnace were lit at the **SSI Steel Plant in Redcar**, and it will take a number of weeks before they have been brought up to the required temperature. With 90% of the work now complete, the blast furnace restart date and commencement of operations will be announced within the next few weeks.
- **UPDATE:** Stillington based company **Darchem Engineering's** plans for an £8m factory could speed up as they have won a multi-million-pound contract - its first in the nuclear sector for two decades - creating 20 new jobs, in addition to the already reported 100 new jobs as part of the factory expansion. This would take total staff numbers to 650.
- A North East health and safety consultancy, Steel River Consultants (RSC), have secured two high profile contract wins, expanding the firm's geographical reach. One of the projects will see RSC working on behalf of **Siemens VAI**, Teesdale, on the Redcar blast furnace coal injection project.

Negative

- **UPDATE:** Fuel shipments have restarted at **Petroplus** after Price Waterhouse Cooper (PwC) negotiated a number of agreements recently, and efforts are being made to financially restructure the company. The refinery in Essex reported that it has attracted interest from numerous potential buyers.
- **Lloyds Bank** has announced that it would be making 1000 job reductions across the UK. The move is part of the Bank's ongoing cost cutting measures to make savings of £1.5 billion by 2014. The losses will come from Group Operations, Group Executive Functions, Risk, Wholesale and Insurance divisions. As well as selling parts of its branch network Lloyds will also dispose of its online bank, Intelligent Finance. The main bulk of the jobs will be lost in Romford (212) and Leeds (186), and sites in Newcastle and Scunthorpe are also set to close. It is yet unknown whether this will affect the Stockton branch.
- National Building Services firm, **MJN Colston, based at Allensway, Thornaby** (owned by Staveley Engineering Services operates nationally in six regions) has gone into administration. Of the 420 staff employed, 160 have already been made redundant across 8 UK sites with the remaining redundancies expected imminently. The company will continue trading as it looks for buyers.

SERVICE SECTOR / RETAIL

Positive

- **UPDATE:** Peel Airports Limited has concluded the sale of its majority shareholding in Durham Tees Valley Airport to Peel Investments (DTVA) Limited, which secures the future operations and business in the airport.
- Utility firm **Npower** are recruiting 200 new customer service advisers and team managers across 3 contact centres in Houghton le Spring, Peterlee and **Thornaby**, which will be in place by the end of March 2012.
- **UPDATE:** **Asda Distribution Warehouse**, Wynyard. Work started in November 2011 and will complete in September 2012, when Clipper Logistics Group will take occupation of the building on a new 16 year lease.
- **Crathorne Hall Hotel** was handed the 'Most Consistent Performer' award by the 'Hand Picked Hotels' Group of 17 high-end venues for the second year running after seeing an 8% sales increase in 2011, and for being one of the best Peugeot dealerships in the UK. This recent award makes Simon Bailes Peugeot the company's most accredited dealership in the country.
- **Fulton Foods** has opened at Castlegate Centre creating 15 new jobs (p/t and ft).
- **UPDATE:** **The Shambles**, Stockton High Street. A new enterprise has been created, **Stevenson's Florists**, and **Sweeteeze** has expanded into a double unit; extending its confectionary product range.

Negative

- Electricals chain, **Comet**, will be sold to retail turnaround firm OpCapita in a deal which will see its former owner Kesa Electricals pump £50m into the business and take on its pension scheme. Kesa had already announced plans to shut one of Comet's three warehouses, axe 12 of its 14 regional service centres and close nine under-performing stores as part of a cost-cutting drive. It is not known whether this will affect the store at Teesside Park.
- **Gift Fusion**, Wellington Square Shopping Centre has closed, with the loss of 1 f/t and 2 p/t jobs.
- **UPDATE:** **Bon Marche**, Castlegate Shopping Centre will close. **Peacocks**, in Thornaby Town Centre will close, but the Castlegate Shopping Centre store will remain open. The deal with Edinburgh Woollen Mill will save 388 shops and more than 6,000 jobs nationally, but more than 3,000 jobs and 224 stores have gone with immediate effect.

ECONOMIC INDICATORS

Number of claimants	January 2011	December 2011	January 2012	% WA pop	Change in month	%	Change in year	%
Stockton-on-Tees	6,543	6,786	7,227	5.8	441	6.5	684	10.5
Tees Valley	26,708	27,312	28,960	6.8	1,648	6.0	2,252	8.4
North East	1,445,379	1,509,736	1,586,864	4.0	77,128	5.1	141,485	9.8
Great Britain	83,936	89,374	94,529	5.6	5,155	5.8	10,593	12.6

- In the last month the number of claimants has increased in Stockton (6.5%) above that of Great Britain (5.8%). At the same time the North East saw an increase (5.1%). This is due to the reduction in seasonal vacancies, and the number of 18-24 year olds that had completed Flexible New Deal up to the end of January 2012 and have now transferred back on to the claimant count numbers.

New Claimants	January 2011	December 2011	January 2012	Change in month	%	Change in year	%
Stockton-on-Tees	1,620	1,235	1,375	140	11.3	-245	-15.1
Tees Valley	6,200	4,355	5,185	830	19.1	-1,015	-16.4
North East	357,030	265,100	333,390	68,290	25.8	-23,640	-6.6
Great Britain	20,765	14,145	17,910	3,765	26.6	-2,855	-13.7

- The increase in the number of new claimants in Stockton over the last month reflects the local, sub regional and national trend, however, Stockton's increase is at a much lower rate.

Numbers on JSA (18-24 years)	January 2011	December 2011	January 2012	Change in month	%	Change in year	%
Stockton (18-24 years)	1,965	2,235	2,340	105	4.7	375	19.1
Total JSA Claimants	6,543	6,786	7,227	441	6.5	684	10.5
% (18-24)	30	33	32	-1	-1.7	2	2.0

- There has been a marginal increase in the number of JSA claimants aged 18-24 in Stockton during the last month.

Vacancies Notified	January 2011	December 2011	January 2012	Change in month	%	Change in year	%
Stockton-on-Tees	660	1,044	923	-121	-11.6	263	39.8
Tees Valley	2,577	3,053	2,760	-293	-9.6	183	7.1
North East	10,616	12,531	11,737	-794	-6.3	1,121	10.6
Great Britain	233,983	316,437	291,459	-24,978	-7.9	57,476	24.6

- There were 660 vacancies notified in Stockton in January 2012, 384 less than in December 2011, including 359 in Banking, Finance and Insurance, 56 in Distribution Hotels and Restaurants, 111 in Public Administration, Education & Health, 42 in Other Services, 10 in Manufacturing, 39 in Construction, 26 in Energy and Water.

Unfilled Vacancies	Jun-11	Jul-11	Aug-11	Sep-11	Oct-11	Nov-11	Dec-11	Jan-12
No's on JSA	6,469	6,467	6,634	6,687	6,621	6,588	6,786	7,227
Vacancies unfilled	901	838	923	935	630	741	713	682
Jobseekers per vacancy	7.2	7.7	7.2	7.2	10.5	8.9	9.5	10.6

- The number of unfilled vacancies in Stockton decreased in January; leading to an overall increase in the number of Jobseekers per vacancy compared to the previous month.

SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES

- The **Federation of Small Businesses** has launched the 'Real Life Entrepreneurs' campaign to encourage more individuals to start their own companies to boost economic growth. The campaign calls on the Government to help entrepreneurs in the North East by increasing routes to finance, simplifying the tax system, tackling late payments and incentivising job creation.
- **Stockton Business Centre's** occupancy levels remain positive at approx. 81% (Feb 2012), with 4 new businesses taking up units during the month, and one existing business growing to take on 2 additional units.
- **Teesside University** has set up a new initiative for businesses in the North East for those who can offer a graduate a minimum of a one-year contract, on a minimum salary of £14k. Teesside University may be able to offer a subsidy of £135 per week for the first 12 weeks the graduate is employed (subject to approval from their funding body). They provide the graduates to businesses and offer a full matching service for each company.
- The third round of **Regional Growth Funding** was opened on 23rd February, as the Government makes a further £1 billion available to businesses across the UK.
- Changes to **European Union (EU) legislation** could simplify the way that small businesses bid for public sector contracts. The EU is calling for the current public procurement system, to include subdividing contracts into smaller lots to allow smaller businesses to effectively bid for work, limiting eligibility requirements and reducing bureaucracy. EU members would need to provide legal and economic advice to prepare businesses for the procurement process. It is hoped that the changes will become law by June 2013.
- **UPDATE:** A £5,000 subsidy is currently available for businesses towards the purchase of electric cars, and more recently 20% funding has been introduced for the purchase of electric vans, up to a maximum £8,000. Seven manufacturers of all-electric light commercial vehicles have already been approved by the Department of Transport. In addition '**Charge your Car**' is offering grant support

of up to 100% towards the installation of electric vehicle charging posts for businesses installing them on their premises.

- A Government grant could help **Wilton's Centre for Process Innovation** lead the way in bringing an energy-from-waste process to market. The Innovation Centre has secured £880,000 from the Technology Strategy Board to develop small-scale anaerobic digestion (AD) processes - that turns farm and food waste into energy. According to experts, AD has huge potential to generate jobs in the Tees Valley, to slash emissions and boost the UK energy sector.
- The Technology Strategy Board has announced that a UK-wide consortium bid from Carbon Trust, National Renewable Energy Centre (Narec) and Ocean Energy Innovation has been selected to help set up the **Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult**. The centre will receive up to £10m per annum over five years (£50 million) from the Technology Strategy Board. The centre will bring together knowledge, expertise and state of the art facilities to help UK businesses innovate and find new ways to capture and use the power from offshore renewable energy sources. UK businesses engaging with the Centre will be able to reduce the risk associated with creating profitable products and services.
- The North East will host a summit for a meeting of key partners to discuss the £60m RGF award made in April 2011 (£30m allocation from the RGF matched with £30m from two banks), to a team of banks and community finance lenders and will be used by **Community Development Finance Institutions (CDFIs)** to provide loans to support businesses in disadvantaged communities nationwide. CDFIs from across the country will convene at the event organised by business services firm, Entrust, and hosted by law firm, Dickinson Dees. The new fund, expected to launch on 1st April 2012, is the biggest ever investment available to CDFIs.
- Under the **Enterprise Finance Guarantee (EFG) scheme**, a new accreditation round which will open on 1 March 2012, and is inviting lenders to apply for accreditation to offer EFG loans. The EFG gives vital funding to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that lack the collateral or credit history to secure a normal bank loan. As announced in November, EFG is now available to businesses with up to £41m annual turnover and seeking up to £1m worth of loans, subject to eligibility. Further information and advice is available to businesses online via www.businesslink.gov.uk
- **Palio Capital Partners**, based in London, have responded to demand for non-bank finance by unveiling plans to provide senior debt and mezzanine loans to SMEs. Palio now plans to build a hybrid loan portfolio of approximately £250 million, initially lending exclusively to SMEs with experienced management, capable of attracting private equity management. The firm is aiming its services at businesses with an enterprise value of between £10 - £100 million, and the model has already been enthusiastically received by European investors and The European Investment Fund (EIF). The EIF has already pledged a cornerstone investment to Palio's Superflex Fund I LP.
- Government has announced a **'Finance Fitness' campaign** to combat late payments to suppliers, which recognises the importance of prompt payment for SMEs. 'Finance Fitness' will encourage SMEs to tighten up their payments, by signing up to the Government's Prompt Payment Code, run by the Institute for Credit Management, representing an estimated 60% of supply chain value in the UK. Online invoicing specialists have conducted research that reveals 13% of invoices issued by growing UK businesses remain unpaid every year, creating a £1.4 trillion hole in the economy.

SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE

- In December 2011 Government published its **'Building Engagement: Building Futures'** strategy to maximise the participation of 16-24 year olds in Education, Training and Work, alongside creating the conditions for balanced and sustainable growth in the wider economy. The strategy also announces a new phase of Raising the Participation Age (RPA) locally-led delivery projects through the Department for Education. This phase will start in April 2012 and run until March 2013. These projects are designed to enable local areas to develop and test their approaches to increasing participation and delivering RPA, and to share learning with other areas in the build up to full participation.

- The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) has introduced an '**Employer Ownership pilot**' that offers all employers in England direct access to up to £250m of public investment over the next two years to design and deliver their own training solutions. The pilot is jointly overseen by UKCES, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Department for Education.
- **Housing associations** in the North East have pledged to increase the number of apprentices they employ to be between 1% and 5% of their workforce. This has already resulted in more than 100 new apprenticeships being created. Locally, the **Vela Group** has pledged to help more young people into the workplace and to recruit more trainees to their apprenticeship scheme.
- The Financial Skills Partnership (FSP) is promoting two apprenticeship schemes: the **Professional Services Higher Apprenticeships Programme** will offer 1,500 apprenticeships across tax, audit and consulting, and is led by Price Waterhouse Coopers. A Government-backed consortium of professional bodies representing chartered accountants, management consultants and taxation technicians with training providers BPP, devised the scheme. The FSP has also been awarded funding to develop **employer-led higher apprenticeship frameworks** in banking and insurance, with an initial project creating 270 new vocational opportunities on par with the first year of a degree. Young people can find out about the opportunities available through FSP's online careers portal 'Directions', which offers independent careers information on the financial sector including job profiles of most of the sector's major roles, and links to employers currently offering work placements, internships and apprenticeships, as well as graduate traineeships."
- **UPDATE:** As a direct result of the **Northshore Homezone Phase 1** development, there will be local orders to the value of £2.2 million / 42% of total sub-contract/supplier orders. This is in addition to the Section 106 Agreement in place with Muse Developments, which ensures that there are targeted recruitment and training opportunities made available for local people.
- **UPDATE:** A further part of the **Youth Contract** has been launched today which aims to support 16-17 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). The programme will be focused on results and aims to support at least 55,000 NEETs who are at highest risk of disengagement. Payments will be given in three stages with the final payment given when engagement has been sustained for six months. Up to £2,200 is available for each young person to provide tailored support including basic skills training and interview skills.

OTHER ECONOMIC NEWS

- The Tees Valley Unlimited Leadership Board has begun to work with a number of prospective investors and politicians in London, in a bid to promote the area's economic potential, including Enterprise Zones. The **Local Enterprise Partnership**, which was one of the first to be recognised by Government, has held a number of meetings to inform interested parties about the opportunities and challenges involving the acceleration of growth in the Tees Valley.
- Ryder Architecture based in Newcastle has been appointed by Carillion Construction limited to work on the £24.3 million **Stockton Batched Academies project**. They were selected from 12 original bidders to work on the project, which comprises of three academies - North Shore Health Academy and Thornaby Academy in Stockton Borough as well as Freebrough Academy in Redcar & Cleveland. It is anticipated that work will start on site at the end of March 2012.
- At the **Tees Valley Best New Business Awards 2011** ceremony held on 19th February four Stockton businesses were amongst the winners: BCT Aspire (Community), Innovat8 Disposal Ltd (Environment category); Turbo Connect (Manufacturing category); School House Recruitment Ltd (Service category); and Homefuels Direct Ltd (Young Entrepreneur). Three of the businesses started out at Stockton Business Centre and two of those are still tenants.
- The businesses from Stockton shortlisted from the **Tees Valley for the North East Business Awards** are: Darchem Engineering, Five Lamps, Nifco UK (Company of the Year), Marshalls (Heart of the Community Award), Tadea (Innovation Award), Nifco UK, Turbo Connect (Low Carbon Award), Marshalls (Manufacturing Award), P.R.A. Business Solutions (Newcomer of the Year), Cornerstone Business Solutions, Odyssey Systems (Services Award).
- **Corporate administrations** increased by a third in the North East during 2011, a figure significantly higher than the overall national picture, which had increased by 13.5% (644) nationally, an increase on the 568 during the same period in 2010.

- **Sector Skills Council, Semta**, has highlighted that a quarter of sector employers in the North (comprising the North West, North East and Yorkshire and Humberside) offer apprenticeships, compared to a national average of less than a fifth. This latest research shows the North is home to half of engineering apprentices in England that are over 25, demonstrating businesses are also investing in their current workforce, as well as recruiting new apprentices.
- Tees Valley Unlimited is encouraging companies and organisations to have their say on key issues affecting their business. The Local Enterprise Partnership is working with independent research organisation, TBR, and partnership stakeholder, DigitalCity, to develop detailed **Tees Valley Sector Action Plans** for the Advanced Manufacturing, Logistics, Health, and Digital sectors that will help support the continued growth of Tees Valley.
- A national report published by KPMG and The Recruitment and Employment Confederation (February 2012) shows a rise in **permanent appointments** during January, while **temporary contracts** staff appointments fell slightly for the second month running. Recruitment consultants reported a slower increase in vacancies over January, and data suggested that engineering and construction workers were the most sought-after, while there was decline in demand for hotel and catering staff. Six out of eight sectors surveyed show growth in demand, including engineering, IT and office professionals.
- **Inflation levels** in January fell to 3.6%, down from 4.2% in December 2011. Downward pressures came predominantly from fuels and lubricants, tobacco, the purchase of new vehicles and alcoholic beverages. Annual inflation has now fallen by 1.2% since November, the largest fall over a period of 2 consecutive months since October and December 2008. This fall will hopefully reduce the pressures businesses are facing in the current economic climate and encourage consumer spending to rise.
- The UK's **pub and restaurant groups** saw collective like-for-like sales fall in January, compared with the same month last year. The Coffey Peach Business Tracker collected performance data from 23 major pub and restaurant groups, revealing a fall of 2.1%. In contrast, collective like-for-like sales were up 9.9% in December on the same period last year. Nevertheless, the operational performance of most pub groups has been relatively solid, with two-year growth last negative in May 2011. The latest UBS UK **household cash flow** published in November 2011 indicates that cash flow pre-savings should rise 1.6% in the current year, a significant improvement on 2011.
- The most recent **Regional Workforce Survey** report from the NECC highlighted that 52% of firms in the North East want to take on more employees before 2015, and that local further and higher education provision should provide the skills that businesses need, and that businesses need to play their part in developing and up-skilling their workforce to protect their competitive edge.
- The Local Data Company reported that the greatest threat to the high street was identified as the growing online retailing sector, as the percentage of sales taken by Out of Town retailing has fallen over recent years. Even before the recession, based on the existing trends of spending captured on the **high street**, in 2000 it was 49.4%, which has now reduced to 42.5%, and this is predicted to fall to 39.8% by 2014. **Shop vacancies** have stabilised nationally, but wide disparity in rates continue to affect an increasing number of centres. Nationally, **independent retailers** are identified as underpinning the majority of town centres, accounting for 66% of occupancies. Based on **Stockton's retail core** area it has approximately 19% of traders that are independent as at October 2011. This is below the national average, but reflects the two main shopping centres that house primarily chain stores, and the high business rates in this area that smaller independents simply cannot sustain. However with the ever increasing online retail sales market, Stockton Council plans to encourage more independent traders to the Town Centre as they offer products that are not easily available online and offer a different, bespoke shopping experience.
- **Manufacturers' organisation, EEF**, has published its North East Executive Survey 2012, which shows that some companies expect to see growth in sales to both UK and overseas customers. EEF's central forecast is for growth of 0.9% in manufacturing during 2012.

HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT

BENEFITS SERVICE

Evidence

Benefits Service Workload (monthly)

January 2011	9,816	The workload for the service has increased significantly due to the implementation of a new system from 23rd January 2012 whereby the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) directly notifies the Service of any changes to an individual's circumstances that may affect their housing benefit, rather than the client being responsible for reporting this.
December 2011	8,293	
January 2012	12,452	

HOUSING REGISTER / HOMELESSNESS

The trend in the number of applications on the Council's Housing Register peaked in January 2011, but remains static with a high number of applications on the register. This is anticipated to continue due to a combination of factors including; the current economic climate, increasing issues of affordability, welfare reform implications, a reduction in available housing stock and increased demand for the private rented sector.

The number of monthly approaches to the Housing Options service decreased in November and December of 2011 (likely due to seasonal variations, i.e. less people approach the service near to Christmas and the change in the location of the service). It is notable that approaches in January have increased. January is traditionally the busiest month for the service. The same is true for customers seeking assistance with mortgage/rent arrears. The number of households accepted as homeless by the Housing Options service has increased in 2011/12. In 2010/11 it was 45 and this already stands at 56 up to January this year.

Evidence

Number of approaches to the Housing Options service

January 2011	274
December 2011	110
January 2012	291

Number of households accepted as homeless by the Housing Options Service

January 2011	2
December 2011	2
January 2012	2

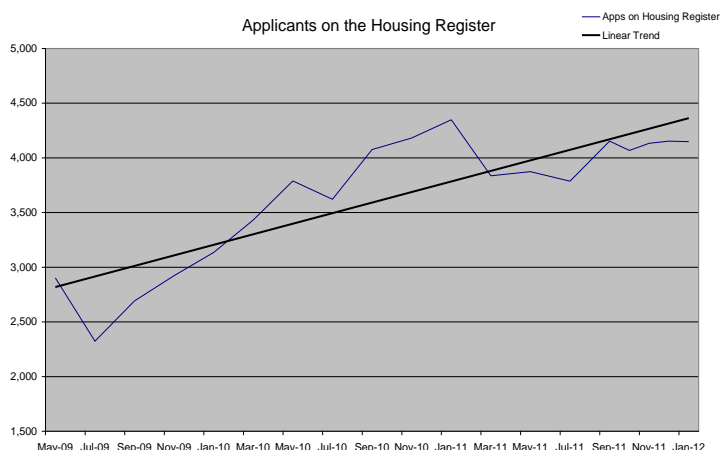
Number of housing options customers seeking assistance with mortgage/rent arrears

January 2011	43
December 2011	38
January 2012	72

Applications on the Council's Housing Register (including transfers)

January 2011	4,348
December 2011	4,152
January 2012	4,148

A positive and proactive approach is taken to homelessness; this includes services and initiatives developed to address other factors that have a detrimental effect on maintaining independence and sustaining accommodation. This can also include accrediting private landlords and tackling poor housing conditions in the private rented sector which can, in some situations, prevent homelessness.



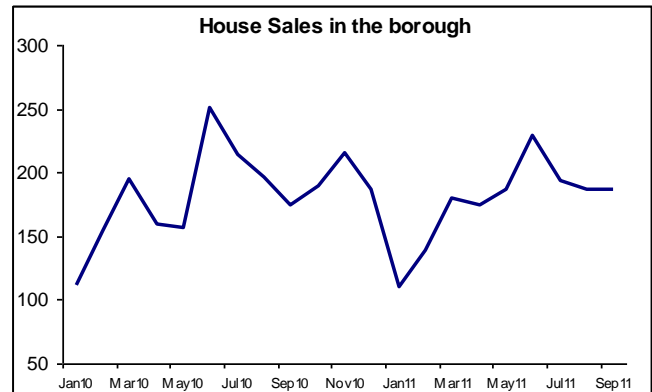
HOUSE PRICES AND SALES

Average house prices continue to be lower than the national average. The number of house sales in the borough remains around on average 180 per month. Economic conditions have affected the potential for securing a mortgage and impacted on households entering into owner occupation.

Evidence

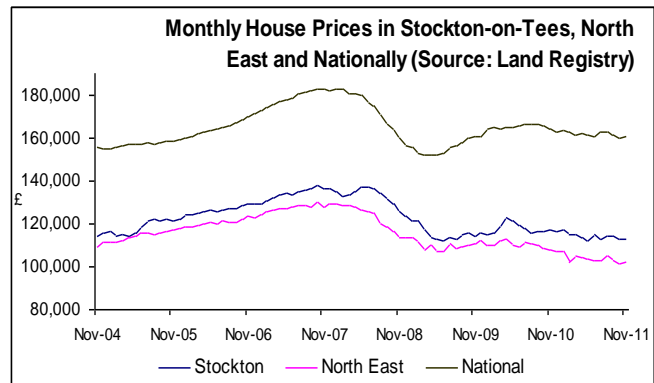
Number of House Sales in the borough (source: land registry)

September 2010	174
August 2011	187
September 11	167



Average monthly House Prices in the borough (source: land registry)

November 2010	£117,092
October 2011	£113,178
November 2011	£112,998



FUNDING SECURED

Stockton Council has secured £76,331 through the Government's Preventing Repossessions Fund, announced in February 2012. The funding will be used to help up to 150 struggling homeowners at risk of re-possession and could include small interest free loans, facilitating access to the mortgage rescue scheme or brokering a three way agreement between the lender, the borrower and the Local Authority.

FUTURE PLANNING

Stockton Council is currently updating its information on housing need and aspiration in the Borough through the update of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment. The results will show the required demand for housing in the borough, and estimate the number of affordable homes required in future years. It will also assessment the need for specialist/supported housing for specific groups, including older people, and will be used as evidence to inform housing and planning policies.

STOCKTON BOROUGH COUNCIL RESPONSES

- Stockton Council has pledged to take on more apprentices and is encouraging local businesses to do the same. By using the Communities Fund surplus monies a 'Youth Employment Initiative' will commence from April 2012 for those aged 16-24, which will complement the Young Person's Employment Strategy. There will be 100 apprentices employed by third sector organisations, but a number will be placed within the Council. The targeted groups for this initiative are Looked After Children, young people with learning disabilities, and some of those young people with a prolific offending history.

- In 2011 more than 20 local businesses worked with around 70 young people to develop entrepreneurial skills. As part of Stockton Council's Christmas Market Challenge the businesses helped the young people develop innovative, yet marketable items to sell. An awards ceremony was held at Stockton Riverside College, and St. Michael's School, Billingham, won the award as the most enterprising school during Stockton's Christmas Markets.
- Following on from the publication of the 'Portas Review' in 2011, Stockton Council will be submitting an application to DCLG to become a 'Portas Pilot'; with 12 Town Teams nationally sharing funding of £1 million. The deadline for applications is 30th March, when Stockton will need to demonstrate a 'Town Team' approach of strong leadership, commitment, potential for improvement, innovation and expenditure.
- Stockton Council is pro-actively working with the Sector Skills Council for Engineering and Manufacturing (SEMTA) and making the necessary connections to the developing sub regional sector action plans. SEMTA was awarded funding from the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, and work is progressing on strategies for SBC and SEMTA to collaborate in developing interventions to address the projected skills gap over the next 6 years, and opportunities to access the funding.
- A new £3.9 million project to end fuel poverty in Stockton has been launched, in a bid to deliver energy efficiency measures to more than 400 homes in the Parkfield area. GoWarm Parkfield is being run by fuel poverty specialists GoWarm in partnership with Stockton Borough Council, and will help deliver energy efficiency measures and benefits advice to three areas of Stockton's Parkfield ward. The project should now cut the borough's carbon emissions by around 110,000 tonnes, which helps households in areas of low income to improve energy efficiency standards and reduce fuel bills.
- As part of Stockton Council's 'Over the Threshold' project two events were held on 21st/22nd February to help businesses improve their e-marketing (9 businesses attended) and social media skills, and sales skills (13 businesses attended). A further free workshop is being held on 21st March to help businesses develop their sales skills and improve their sales process. The workshop will be held 1pm-4pm at Durham Tees Valley Business Centre. To find out more or to book a place call Mark David on 07827352861 or email mark.david@business-enterprise.net