



# New skyline for Smethwick

An £11 million facelift to three high-rise blocks in Smethwick is now complete.

Tenants living at Ashcroft, Birchcroft and Elmcroft in Cape Hill have seen their homes and the skyline transformed over a two-year period.

Improvements include new roofs with energy-efficient photo-voltaic panels and eye-catching insulated cladding to reduce energy bills, plus new windows and balconies.

These have given the blocks – which comprise 270 homes – a new lease of life.

Keepmoat has worked with the council’s urban design high-rise team to carry out the improvements.

The facelift has also boosted the local economy, with more than £1 million being spent with local small and medium-sized businesses through the supply chain and 11 apprenticeships created for young people.



**Eight tired and worn-out looking community buildings in Sandwell have benefited from our Hands-on Help scheme.**

Community, voluntary and not-for-profit organisations were invited to apply, with our investment partners offering to provide free labour and materials.

Our partners have been busy decorating community rooms, repairing a leaking roof, replacing toilet facilities and fitting a new kitchen.

Hundreds of residents are now enjoying better facilities, and this often helps organisations attract new people.

One of our round one winners, Holy Name Parish Centre, Great Barr, has benefitted from new toilet facilities thanks to Lovell.

Secretary Bernadette Kennedy said: “Our centre is celebrating its 30th birthday this year but some of our fixtures and fittings were falling into disrepair. This has made a huge difference to our users and volunteers who help run the centre.”

The final round of Hands-on Help applications was being assessed as the Herald went to print.

**Round two winners were:**

- Hope Church, Oldbury
- St John’s Community Centre, Oldbury
- Great Bridge Community Forum
- The Wesley Centre for All, Wednesbury

# Housing partners in the classroom

Our four partners have been getting involved with local primary and secondary schools on a range of activities.

These include health and safety talks; visits from the Considerate Constructors’ mascot, Ivor Goodsite; work experience placements and careers exhibitions.

We are trying to encourage young people into construction because it’s a growing industry and often people don’t realise the opportunities being offered.



Sue Lunn and Louise Hart from Keepmoat gave a safety talk at All Saints Primary in West Bromwich. Pupils had fun while learning about the dangers of building sites.

**Statistics from [www.goconstruct.org](http://www.goconstruct.org) show:**

- More than 15,000 construction jobs will be created in the West Midlands over the next five years;
- There are more than 150 different professions in construction, from office work and management to trades such as electricians, plumbers and engineers; and
- 320,000 women work in construction.

# Canal clean-up for the Queen

Three stretches of Sandwell’s historic canal network were cleaned up as part of the national Clean for the Queen campaign to mark Her Majesty’s 90th birthday.

Armed with litter pickers, the teams collected more than 100 bags of rubbish and debris from along the canal banks at:

- Old Main Line Canal, Smethwick (near Brasshouse Lane)
- New Main Line Canal, Tipton and Oldbury
- Rushall Canal, Yew Tree and West Bromwich



We teamed up with the Canal and River Trust, Keep Britain Tidy, waste partner Serco, Lovell, VINCI Facilities and Wates Living Space.