

# Developer is selected for Spanish City



**HIGH HOPES** Mayor Linda Arkley

A DEVELOPER has been chosen to breathe new life into the Spanish City site. North Tyneside Council's cabinet met yesterday to discuss plans to rejuvenate the Whitley Bay area. Two developers had been shortlisted for the project and the cabinet selected a preferred bidder. However, the successful group will not be identified until legal procedures have been completed. It is expected that an announcement on who has been successful will be made at the end of this month.

Mayor Linda Arkley said: "North Tyneside Council has agreed a preferred developer for the Spanish City development site. "Due to the ongoing legal process we are unable to identify the successful bidder at this stage. "However we will ensure that the public are not only informed, but also have an opportunity to be engaged in the near future with the plans for the iconic site on our seafront. "It is 10 years since the council acquired the former Spanish City amusement park and other relevant properties. "This is great news for residents who will

be pleased that we can now move forward to deliver an iconic development for Whitley Bay. "I would like to thank all those who have taken part in this process." Bidders were asked to be innovative in their proposals for the three-hectare seafront site. It also includes the Dome, surrounding land and Brook Street Gardens. The brief was open to a mixed development that could include a hotel, leisure and cultural uses, as well residential and retail options.

## New website gets the vote

A FACEBOOK-style website allowing voters to interact with politicians has won the backing of North East MPs.

Users can see instantly who their MP is and bring matters to their attention.

The site lets the public challenge MPs to respond to particular issues in their community.

Digital Democracy was created by Jonathan Elmer, an ecologist from Durham.

He said: "Even with Facebook and Twitter, there is no effective social network designed as part of our political system. That's why Digital Democracy is so important.

"It lets you put your ideas directly to the people who make the decisions and challenges them to respond to the issues you decide are the most important."

Five MPs from the region including Chi Onwurah, member for Newcastle Central, are backing the site.

Ms Onwurah said: "The great power of the internet lies in its ability to cut out the middleman.

"Digital democracy will enable me to hear directly from thousands of people what their concerns are.

"I want people to be able to contact me easily and I am sure Digital Democracy will be an increasingly important part of how I keep in touch with constituents."

The website address is [www.digitaldemocracy.org.uk](http://www.digitaldemocracy.org.uk)

## Campaigners urge chiefs to think again over closure

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A LIFELINE care centre in the heart of Newcastle's East End has closed its doors, despite angry protests.

Chirton House Resource Centre, in Byker, Newcastle, has been axed by the council to save cash.

Furious locals mounted a campaign against the closure – which they claim will leave elderly people out on a limb. But they were unable to stop the move.

Council leaders decided to close Chirton House to streamline care services. They said the older people's day and respite centre, in Headlam Street, was underused.

The changes, with day care moved to nearby Byker Lodge and respite care to centres elsewhere in the city, aim to modernise care to meet changing demands.

But those who use the service, their families and carers call the centre a lifeline for the East End.

The Friends of Chirton House, who mounted a protest in Headlam Street last month, claim older people will be left isolated and miles from their families.

Paul Baker, one of the Friends, said: "Elderly, frail and vulnerable adults will not be able to access services such as a distance from their homes without assistance. We want the council to think again and consider if any alternative arrangements are feasible.

"There has not been adequate consultation with the service-users, their families, carers or the community."

At the weekend, the Friends took their concerns to Newcastle East and Wallsend MP, Nick Brown. Mr Brown said he was greatly concerned.

"I am writing to the council about this issue," he said. "I accept this is a difficult time for the local authority but carers put

# Battle goes on over axed centre

such a lot into caring for these people and get so little for it.

"It is so important to have respite provision in the East End of Newcastle."

Cathy Bull, director of adult social care at the council, said: "The number of people using our older people's resource centres has been declining for some time and we took the decision to close Chirton House after a full review.

"However, this does not change our commitment to protect the most vulnerable people in the city. We will be investing in other centres to continue to provide excellent levels of care, and more rehabilitative services.

"Feedback from Chirton day-care users who were transferred to Byker Lodge has been very positive and all the older people who need respite care have been offered places at other centres.

"We know this decision has been hard for the older people involved, their carers and council staff, and we are doing all we can to support them through this change – which we believe is necessary so we can create a modern, value-for-money service that will meet the needs of Newcastle's older people in the future."

The Friends say they hope to persuade the new council returned by May's elections to reinstate services at Chirton.



**FIGHT** Left, Cath Mullinder and Annie Rutter discuss the closure and, right, Stuart Bracking with residents demonstrating at Chirton House

## Easter egg hunt

FAMILIES can join in an Easter egg hunt this weekend.

The Woodland Trust is hosting the hunt and tree trail at Low Burnhall, in Durham, on Sunday.

Visitors will hunt for eggs in the woods and learn about nature before designing their own Easter treat.

Paul Bunton, the Trust's project manager for participation, said: "It's a great opportunity to come and explore this wonderful new woodland on the edge of Durham, see the progress we have made so far with the planting and other habitats we are creating."

The free event takes place from 11am until 4pm.

Call Lorraine Weeks on 07890 194724 to book your place.