

# The Oldham Rochdale Pathfinder: making the right headlines

## The challenge

The Oldham Rochdale Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder is a flagship programme to prevent areas in two former mill towns from falling into spiral of decline.

The Government-funded scheme aims to invest more than £2billion by 2020, to transform the local housing market, strengthen the economy and create strong, stable communities.

The scheme is exciting, ambitious, but also emotive. Plans include demolition, to make way for modern new homes across the area.

IPB was appointed to help the Pathfinder generate positive media coverage, bolster communications with local communities and reach key stakeholders, especially political stakeholders.

## What we did

→ **Making positive headlines:** Working with senior Pathfinder staff, we compiled a comprehensive list of story leads, and issued a steady stream of positive news releases to the local press.

To drill down further, we launched a scheme called 'Have You Got News For Us?' for staff working in local neighbourhoods, with prizes for the best story tip-offs. This was supported by a rolling programme of media awareness sessions.

→ **Media training:** Major issues were handled via face-to-face media briefings, to build relations with key correspondents. Pathfinder spokespeople were put through a rigorous media training programme.

→ **Community consultation:** We provided a range of support for local neighbourhood offices, from newsletters and display stands to strategic advice on specific local issues.

→ **Website:** We wrote copy for a dedicated Pathfinder website, which became a valued information source for local communities.

→ **Stakeholder communications:** We created a lobbying document for MPs, which made the case for sustained Government funding. This was launched at a House of Commons event. We provided briefing notes for elected members on key issues and began to up the ante with our media campaign, by targeting national broadsheets and key trade titles.

## Results

The Pathfinder Board has acknowledged that IPB's support has had a major impact on press coverage and has helped improve the flow of communication to local neighbourhoods.

## What the client said

“ IPB's work has led to a significant improvement in media coverage and has helped us to build trust with the community. ”

**John McGuire**, Chair of the Pathfinder

