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## **OLD ELDON SQUARE TO REOPEN WITH VIP DEDICATION CEREMONY**

The city's official war memorial will be rededicated in a VIP civic ceremony which will signal the official reopening of Old Eldon Square following a 12-month, million pound facelift.

Leader of Newcastle City Council, Councillor John Shipley, will be joined by the Lord Mayor and the Lady Mayoress and representatives from war veterans' and former servicemens' groups in a ceremony which will take place at 9-30am on Wednesday August 6.

Old Eldon Square is the historic 'jewel in the crown' of the city, painstakingly restored to its former glory. The renovation will provide an opportunity for people of all ages to enjoy this beautiful, green oasis in the heart of the city.

Old Eldon Square has always been a popular gathering place and meeting point for the public and these enhancements will guarantee that it continues to fulfil this role for generations to come.

New pathways have been created to improve access to the memorial, with immaculately manicured grass areas flanked by trees uplit at night to provide an attractive high quality and safe, environment during the hours of darkness.

There is improved seating and the plinth for the war memorial, at the heart of Old Eldon Square, will be uplit with the statue illuminated by spotlights. The magnificent Georgian terrace on the east side has been refreshed to provide an imposing setting for Remembrance Sunday ceremonies.

Councillor John Shipley, Leader of Newcastle City Council, said: "The restoration of the war memorial, which is so important to the history and people of Newcastle Upon Tyne, completes a breathtaking transformation of the square and turns it into a wonderful space for the public once again."

The statue of St George and Dragon was designed by Charles Leonard Hartwell and was unveiled on September 26 1923. St George is the patron saint of the Northumberland Fusiliers.

Works to Old Eldon Square have dove tailed with a series of major developments to Eldon Square shopping centre undertaken with partners Capital Shopping Centres. Phase one delivered two new restaurants for Strada and Wagamama along the western side of Old Eldon Square and seven new stores along Blakettbridge mall. Phase two introduced the new bus station, which opened in March 2007 and on February 19 this year, the new mall, St George's Way opened providing 48,000 sq ft of retail space and includes John Lewis, Boot's, Argos, Greggs, Nando's and Starbucks and on August 28, Waitrose will make a welcome arrival.

The third and final phase of the £170 million redevelopment – Eldon Square South - will deliver St Andrew's Way, a new 410,000 sq ft mall in spring 2010, showcasing a new four-storey Debenhams and 22 shops including flagship stores for Topshop, River Island and New Look.. On completion, Eldon Square will become one of the largest city centre shopping destinations in the UK at 1.3 million sq ft.

Eldon Square opened in 1976 and was one of the first examples of mixed-use city centre regeneration and continues to be one of the UK's top shopping destinations.

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