

REVIEW



Spring 2006

Issue No. 33

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Cardboard now on South Staffordshire Council's collection list for residents

Recycle your cardboard and help save a packet

South Staffordshire's Recycling Campaign has opened a new front with a collection service for cardboard - by popular demand.

Starting from April, everyone currently enjoying the benefits of the Council's kerbside recycling service, will be able to put out cardboard along with their waste paper. All you have to do is put your flattened card with your paper into the waste paper sack. Also, bundles of flattened cardboard will be taken if left next to your recycling box. Items such as cereal and washing powder boxes, greetings cards and cardboard food packaging can all be included.

To cope with the extra volume we will deliver, during April, an additional white sack to every household.

Unfortunately, packaging known as Tetrapak, such as juice cartons, cannot be taken for recycling at the moment as the card is covered with a plastic film. These items need to be put into your regular grey rubbish bin.

Over 80% of households in South Staffordshire are now using the kerbside recycling service. Since its introduction, the amount of waste being

buried in the ground has dropped by 5,000 tonnes. This saves energy together with natural resources, and of course reduces the need for landfill sites and so cuts down greenhouse gas production helping to reduce global warming.

Cllr Mrs Joan Williams (Deputy Leader Environmental Services) said "South Staffordshire residents have really made a difference. The waste recycled amounts to a saving of energy for each of our households to power about 100 showers, 15 baths or 150 hours of television!

We are now collecting 1,300 tonnes of materials for recycling each month, a whopping 40% of our total waste. That's the body weight of over 3,000 people each

year! Thanks to your support of the new kerbside recycling scheme we are really making a difference".

The amount of paper collected for recycling will make thousands of new paper products such as new paper or cereal and washing powder boxes.

Recycled cans, once melted down, may be back in the shops in only six weeks time as new cans, fridges or as part of your new car! Just think, you could be wearing your old plastic bottles, which are recycled into cosy fleece jackets and hats, or used in making plastic furniture or even your own kerbside recycling box! You may even be driving along on your old glass bottles and jars, which are being ground down right now and used to make roads!

The addition of cardboard to the recycling collection is not the end of the story.

In-vessel composting

The next major improvement the Council is looking at is the composting of food waste along with green garden waste. Food waste has to be heat treated to stop the risk of spreading diseases such as foot and mouth and this cannot happen until special units are built.

The good news is that there are now two sites in the area which have planning permission to build 'in-vessel' composting facilities. As soon as these plants are operational, the Council will be looking to use them to compost both food and garden waste.

For further information regarding the new service contact our Recycling Helpline on 01902 696203 or e-mail env.general@sstaffs.gov.uk

The BIG Summer Event



Getting ready for a really BIG day out this Summer ... Plans for a gi-normous day of fun for youngsters in South Staffordshire are already under way. Turn to Page 3 to find out what's going on and how your kids can enjoy a great day out for free.



Cllr Mrs Joan Williams (Deputy Leader Environmental Services) with Birches First School, Codsall - South Staffordshire's 'Waste Free Lunch' Champions.

AT YOUR LEISURE

Baggeridge Nature Reserve is really something special

One of South Staffordshire's crown jewels, Baggeridge Country Park, will be getting extra special care and attention from now on.

The Council has officially declared Baggeridge a Local Nature Reserve, reflecting the importance of the park as a haven for flora and fauna.

Baggeridge has been a popular park for a long time. Every year thousands of visitors enjoy the play area, miniature railway or a family picnic in beautiful surroundings.

Over the years, the wildlife at the park has also been thriving due to careful habitat management.

There is now an increasing number of rare and important species living at the park. To reflect the importance of the site for wildlife, and the need for careful management, Baggeridge has



been declared a Local Nature Reserve.

One of the special creatures that will benefit from this new designation is the White Clawed Crayfish. This fresh-water lobster-like animal can grow up to 15cm (6in) long and lives in clear, fresh water. The crayfish was once common in Britain but is now endangered. Baggeridge is also home to a number of rare moths, such as the Six Belted Clearwing, and plants including marsh and bee orchids.

Cllr Robert Marshall, Deputy Leader Community Services said "The designation demonstrates our commitment to the conservation of our local wildlife and our dedication to help develop people's interest in the environment".

Twitchers flock to see rare Firecrest

Birdwatchers from all over the Midlands - and further afield - descended on Baggeridge Country Park earlier this year to get a rare glimpse of a Firecrest.

The Firecrest, Britain's smallest bird, even smaller than a Wren, was discovered just two days after the park was officially declared a Local Nature Reserve.

There were only two other known Firecrests in the country at the time so the twitchers travelled from far and wide to see this little jewel of a bird.

Baggeridge, a reclaimed colliery site, is now home to a wealth of wildlife and is a popular spot for bird watching. Declaring the site as a Local Nature Reserve confirms the Council's commitment to conserving our District's rich wildlife heritage.



Tourist boost to local economy

Tourism is big business these days and South Staffordshire is geared up to cash in on the boom.

Latest research shows that more than 1.3 MILLION people have visited the District, providing a big boost to the local economy.

Visitors may not have spent their annual two weeks holiday here, but 'tourism' is much more than that.



It covers a multitude of leisure-time activities, ranging from sightseeing and shopping to attending events or visiting friends and relatives.

New activities and interests of every kind are extending tourism in new ways and into new areas. Business conferences, trade fairs, study courses and language learning spread it wider still.

Tourism is now one of the biggest industries on the planet and a major contributor to the wealth of the UK, estimated by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport to be worth over £50 billion a year and employing 1.75 million people in 125,000 businesses.

South Staffordshire's contribution to this wealth has been calculated and the figures may surprise you.

The latest economic impact study, carried out by Heart of England, highlighted the following:

- 1.37 million visitors came to South Staffordshire.
- their spending totalled £34.6 million, - a £3 million injection into the local economy each month!
- 1.15 million of these were day visitors spending three hours or more here and 0.21 million stayed overnight.

As well as stimulating economic vibrancy and generating money, tourism also benefits the economy by sustaining small businesses and offering employment for local people.

Socially, it can provide relief and escapism as well as contributing to a person's health and well-being.

Environmentally, it can provide a catalyst to preserve and conserve our historic properties, as well as supporting local initiatives for village enhancement schemes and improving access to our countryside.

What we've achieved

With such a strong tourism product here in South Staffordshire, the Council has been working hard over the last year to encourage visitors and local people to experience the delights of the District.

Initiatives have included:

- A brand new 'Visit South Staffordshire' guide.
- A group tour of South Staffordshire's Glorious Gardens.
- A seasonal 'What's On in South Staffordshire' guide highlighting events and festivals taking place in the District.
- Creation of a new website promoting South Staffordshire worldwide! www.visitsouthstaffordshire.co.uk
- The generating of over £27,000 worth of press coverage promoting the area.
- Tourist Information Points have been updated with local information including places to visit.
- Supporting South Staffordshire Tourism Association to develop tourism locally and working with their members to develop their knowledge and skills.

The year ahead

This year the development and promotion of tourism in South Staffordshire continues, including:

- the launch of a 3-year strategy to develop tourism locally.
- a new visitor guide to encourage visitors into the District as well as encouraging people to stay in the local area.
- a series of 'day out tours' to explore South Staffordshire's fabulous tourism products.
- continuing to promote South Staffordshire as an area to visit through a series of marketing campaigns.
- enhanced support for South Staffordshire's Tourism Association and its members to continue developing tourism locally.

Excellence in Tourism

South Staffordshire is also proud to have a number of establishments who have been recognised for their work in the industry.

At the 2005, 'Taste of Staffordshire' awards, The Moat House at Acton Trussell won the Large Restaurant of the Year prize



The Defiant, Boulton Paul Heritage Project

as well as third place in the National Farmers' Union Awards for 'Best use of Local Produce'.

The Country Kitchen at Essington Fruit Farm was a runner up in the Heart of England Tourism Award for a visitor attraction. Weston Park won best banqueting venue.

Boxleys at Wombourne, a local meat retailer, also scooped up a host of awards throughout 2005, including 'Meat Retailer of the Year'.

Regionally, both the Moat House and Weston Park received recognition at the Heart of England 2005 awards held at Worcester Cathedral.

Nationally, Ashwood Nurseries won Gold at the RHS Chelsea Flower show for their Hydrangeas.



With South Staffordshire having a wealth of visitor appeal, the Council is determined to maximise its potential for the benefit of the community.

Anyone wanting further information about South Staffordshire, looking for some inspiration on great days out, or ideas on how to entertain visiting friends or relations, should contact Community Services on 01902 696600, e-mail tourism@sstaffs.gov.uk or visit our website www.visitsouthstaffordshire.co.uk

What's on at Baggeridge in 2006

The Baggeridge Country Park Events guide for 2006 is now available. The guide lists the wide range of activities Baggeridge has to offer from March 2006 through to January 2007.

Events include: The Summer Concert Series, Folk Festival, Halloween Family Event, Bird Watching for Beginners, Children's Summer Activities and a series of walks.

Details on all the events are either available online at www.sstaffs.gov.uk/baggeridge or by contacting Community Services on 01902 696531.



Summer SUSSED Children's Activities



Morris Dancers at the Folk Festival



Halloween Masks at the Halloween Family Event



Kids go BIG this summer

Youngsters throughout South Staffordshire will be put on red alert for a "big" day of fun and games this Summer ... and ALL FOR FREE!

The Council's Community Services are this year planning a huge one-day spectacular as part of the successful children's activity programme SUSSED.

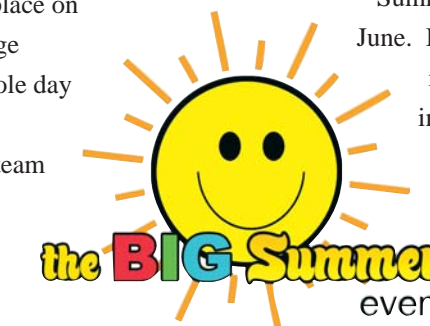
The BIG Summer Event will take place on Wednesday 23rd August at Baggeridge Country Park, offering children a whole day of fun activities which are likely to include bug hunts, tag rugby, dance, team races, art workshops, sand art and a body jam aerobic session.

This exciting event will be free of charge to all South Staffordshire

children. There will even be coach transport provided to take children to and from the event.

All Sussed activities during Easter and the Summer school holidays will lead up to the BIG ONE! So get down to your local leisure centre, enjoy what's on offer and find out more about this great family fun day.

Summer Sussed brochures will be out in early June. If you would like to be one of the first to receive a brochure containing booking information on the BIG Summer Event please visit www.sstaffs.gov.uk/sussed and complete the online request form, or contact Community Services on 01902 696531.



Tools of the Trade

Community groups in South Staffordshire will soon be able to get an answer to their most "Frequently Asked Questions" - without even asking!

The Council is putting together a "toolkit" of information sheets which will help the groups to do the basic tasks, including setting up an organisation and fundraising.

The toolkit is a response to the variety of common questions and problems encountered by the Council on a regular basis when assisting local groups.

It will cover a variety of topics including: how to set up a group,

advice on constitutions, how to run an event, advice on risk assessments and health & safety, along with child protection and fundraising.

A really useful component will be model forms, which can be amended and used as necessary. The Toolkit will be available from Easter, via the Council's website, as well as on CD upon request.

If you would like to receive a copy of the Toolkit please visit www.sstaffs.gov.uk/toolkit and complete the online request form or contact Leisure & Tourism on 01902 696531.

Computer says Yes to lower Council Tax



Councillor Roy Wright, Deputy Leader (Direct Services) explains how South Staffordshire Council's use of new technology has smoothed the collection of payments for public services in the District and is helping to keep Council Tax down.

You help us to be the best

South Staffordshire Council is extremely proud of its Council Tax collection record. Over £40 million is gathered in each year, in an efficient and effective manner.

Our high performance and low operating costs compare favourably with other local authorities in the country, thanks to the hard work and devotion of our officers and the co-operation of our customers, the Council Tax payers of South Staffordshire.

A number of new initiatives have been introduced,

some as a Direct consequence of feedback from our customers. We have been listening to you and will continue to do so, to improve our services.

For the past couple of years, the Council has been working extremely hard to improve the quality of services that it offers to residents and taxpayers. In particular, considerable effort has been made to modernise and to make the best use of new technologies. The Local Taxation Services Unit, which administers Council Tax and Business Rate accounts, is in the vanguard of this modernisation process.

Moving with the Times

The complete replacement of our suite of computer systems was a difficult challenge and, at times, resulted in some minor disruptions. I would like to thank our customers for their patience during this period, but I am happy to announce that the job is now complete and you can now begin to reap the benefits.

The ease of use of the new system for our staff means that we can deal with customer requests more quickly and present information in a customer-

friendly format. The general appearance of our documentation, such as bills and letters, is far clearer than before.

The new systems also saves us money, in terms of our operating costs, as well as improving the quality of our service. This has to be good news to our taxpayers, as it will help us with the important business of keeping your Council Tax Bills down and diverting your money to where it is needed - the provision of front-line local services.

Direct Debits take the pain out of Paying

I would like to thank the majority of our Council Taxpayers who pay their bills by Direct Debit. Two out of every three paid this way in the 2005/6 financial year. The ease and efficiency with which Direct Debit operates allows us to concentrate our efforts and keep costs down.

To the one in three of you who still use other methods, I would say: Come on over to Direct Debit, it doesn't hurt a bit! In fact, Direct Debits has distinct advantages:

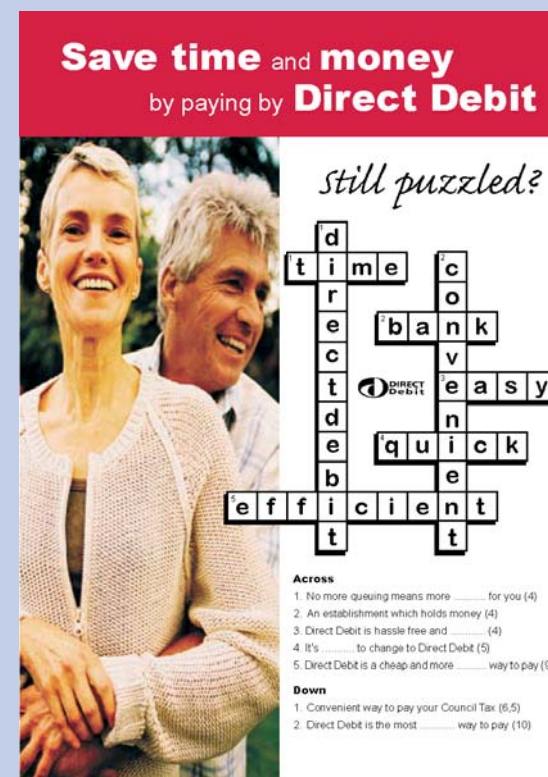
- It saves you time and money - there is no need to write cheques, visit the office or post your payment etc.
- It gives you certainty - we will tell you exactly how

much will be paid from your account and when.

- It gives you peace of mind - your instalments will be paid and so there is no risk of receiving reminders.
- It is completely safe - in the unlikely event of a mistake being made by the Council, your bank will refund your payment to you.
- You are in control - your bank will cancel the Direct Debit if you ask them to.

Together with all this, Direct Debit customers have an added bonus:

You can now choose your own payment date!



Choose Your Own Payment Date

From April 2006, anyone who pays by Direct Debit, will be able to choose an instalment date of either the 1st, 15th or 25th of the month. You can set your instalment plan to suit your own salary dates and personal budgets.

Signing up for Direct Debit has never been easier - you don't even need to fill in a form. You can set one up by:

- Telephone: 01902 696664 during office hours (Mon-Fri 8:45 am to 5:00 pm). Your instruction can be created, there and then.

Alternatively, you can return the form shown below to:

**Local Taxation Services Unit,
Council Offices,
Codsall,
South Staffordshire.
WV8 1PX**

Fax: 01902 696630

E-mail: taxation@sstaffs.gov.uk

**South Staffordshire Council
Local Taxation Services Unit**

Please fill in the form and send to: South Staffordshire District Council, Council Tax Section, Council Offices, Codsall, South Staffordshire, WV8 1PX

Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society

To the Manager	Bank/Building Society
Address	
Postcode	

Name(s) of Account Holder(s)

Bank/Building Society account number

Bank Sort Code

Council Tax Account Reference

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit

Originator's Identification Number

9	7	1	9	5	8
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For South Staffordshire District Council OFFICIAL USE ONLY
This is not part of the instruction to your Bank or Building Society.

Please indicate which of the following days of the month, the debit from your account should occur.

1st 15th 25th

You can also set up your Direct Debit by telephone. Call: 01902 696664 during office hours.

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society
Please pay South Staffordshire District Council Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this Instruction will remain with South Staffordshire District Council and if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.

Signature(s) _____

Date _____

Banks and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debit instructions from some types of account

24-Hour Service

Direct Debit is by no means the only improvement to our payment service that we have made. If Direct Debit is not for you and you are still looking for a simpler way to pay, why not try our 24 hour automated payment line.

To pay Council Tax, or any other bill at any time of day or night, simply call **01902 696678**. You will need to have the account reference number from your bill and your debit or credit card to hand.

Or you can pay online at...
www.sstaffs.gov.uk/payments

Log on to your Account

You can now view your Council Tax account online. Our Citizen Connect service allows you to register and set up a secure connection into your account. Access is by way of a password and Personal Identification Number (PIN) and you can;

- View your account
- Check that payments have been received
- Make payments
- Set up Direct Debits
- Request a copy bill
- Register for electronic billing
- Apply for discounts and reductions
- Notify us of changes to your circumstances
- Provide the Council with up to date contact details
- Provide us with much needed feedback on this and other services.

This is the first of many services that the Council intends to bring online, as we aim to stream-line our communications with customers.

Our customers have told us that they prefer to receive less formal means of communication than the letters and notices that we have traditionally issued. So in future, we will look to actively extend the use of e-mail, text messaging and telephone to contact people rather than using the more formal, time-consuming and expensive written correspondence.

So why not register now, by visiting www.sstaffs.gov.uk/citizenconnect

Feel the Benefit & cut your Bill

Each year, many people pay more Council Tax than they need to ...

Don't pay more Council Tax than you need to. If you are on low income, Council Tax Benefit may be able to help by reducing your Council Tax bill. If you get other benefits, they won't be affected by Council Tax Benefit. Find out if you're eligible by applying for a rebate today.

For further details and an application form, please contact the Benefits Services Unit at the Council Offices on **01902 696668** (if you are aged 60 or older), or **01902 696669** (if aged below 60 years).

You can also get information from your local Jobcentre Plus, Jobcentre, social security office, or from The Pensions Service, or you can visit the the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) website at www.dwp.gov.uk



Find out if you can get a rebate

Estimate your entitlement online

It is now possible to estimate your own Benefit entitlement online.

Simply visit our website at www.sstaffs.gov.uk/benefitscalculator and follow the links to "Benefits" and "Benefits Calculator".

This service is free and entirely

confidential. It is designed to give you an indication as to whether you will qualify, without needing to call us or visit the office. If the calculator indicates that you do qualify, you should submit an application without delay.

You may pay more Council Tax than you need to, if you do not apply quickly.

Council Tax Discounts available

Reductions are also available for other households, not just those on low incomes or Benefits.

If you are the only adult (aged 18 years or over) living in your household, you will be entitled to a 25% discount against your bill, irrespective of your income.

Reductions are also available to households that include people who are,

- Students
- Disabled
- Mentally ill
- Caring for a sick, disabled or elderly person.

Many of these reductions go unclaimed each year and so I would urge anyone who thinks that they may be entitled, to consider claiming. Further details of the qualifying criteria are included at page 25 of the booklet that was sent with your bill. Full details can be obtained from the Local Taxation Services Unit on **01902 696664**.

Reductions for the Disabled and Elderly

If you, or someone who lives with you, needs a room, or an extra bathroom or kitchen, or extra space in your property to meet special needs arising from a disability, you may be entitled to a reduction.

The bill may be reduced to that of a property in the band immediately below the band of your property. If your property is in Band A, you will be entitled to a reduction equivalent to one-ninth of the Band D charge.

Friends rally round Wom Brook

by *May Griffiths*, a well known local historian and Friend of the Wom Brook...

We are the Friends of the Wom Brook and our aim is to maintain and enhance the nature conservation potential of the Wom Brook, Wombourne. We work in partnership with South Staffordshire Council and other owners and tenants of the area, for the benefit, education and enjoyment of the public.

The Friends are essentially a group of nature lovers, led by Anita Ferguson who, along with the support of the District and Parish Councils, have pledged that the brook through Wombourne and its environs shall be a nature conservation area, and stay that way.

Wom Brook is not a park, in fact certain areas have been deliberately left uncut and undisturbed so that plants and creatures can live there alongside us, amicably sharing this pleasant place. It encompasses the whole of the Wombrook Walk from Rushford Bridge at the Red Lion end of Rookery Lane, all the way to the Bridgnorth Road (B4176). Every yard is worth looking after. It is a 'far-from-the-madding-crowd' place and gets more precious as roads get madder!

Am I a Friend of the Wom Brook? Of course! As long as I can remember, I've played in it, paddled in it, fallen in it, been pushed in it! I've cleaned it out, dammed it, stepping-stoned it, and there must be a regular armada of stick boats of mine on the way to the sea! The Dingle was my patch, from the Railway embankment to Planks Lane; then from Longford (Dickies Brook) to the Heath. The part at the bottom of Glendale and Red Hill used to be a meadow with cattle, and none of us were in any hurry to go there because there'd be a bull in it as well! (Come to think of it, that's one way of conserving an area - put a bull close by!)

Thanks to three legacies from the past (the Staffordshire and Worcester Canal, the Kingswinford Branch Railway and the Wom Brook Walk), the village has acquired three long

green corridors across it.

Here, people and nature have permanent open spaces for the good of both. Thanks also to certain wide awake officials and Councillors (District and Parish), plus caring parishioners, Wombourne folks can truly say "the lot is fallen unto me in a fair ground. Yea, I have a goodly heritage".

So much to enjoy and so much to learn for all ages - Wombourne has a lot going for it. As well as the three assets already mentioned, there's also the Bratch, Orton Ridge and Penn Common. It has so much natural beauty worth conserving. I've seen the Dingle one golden carpet of celandines, until the mowers reduced it somewhat, yet there's still plenty left. I've seen a sudden flash of that beautiful blue that is a busy Kingfisher. I've seen water voles cautiously sniffing the air before disappearing into the bank sides. I've watched the willows 'weeping', the catkins shaking, heard the comforting sounds of water bubbling gently over the pebbles. I've seen an angry brook, flooding, racing. I've seen ice almost covering the water and hoped all the little creatures were home and dry. In the so-called black of winter, millions of buds, all waiting for the eternal signal we call spring. Am I not the lucky one?

Mind you, change must come and some things we will lose. I remember a meadow just below the footbridge at Dickies Brook (Longford to the mapmaker) where each April there would be little purple orchids every yard of the way. Gone now under homes but, you who live there, if one pops up in your garden, be kind to it for it is 'at home' too. The brook would want you to be friends.

If you are interested in joining the Friends, please contact Anita Ferguson on 01902 892187.

Even if you are not able to join in various projects, your awareness of what is going on (to pass on to others) will be just as valuable.



Members of the Friends Group - observing the Wom Brook

Photo courtesy of: Geraint Lang

Poster campaign is a winner



Cllr Mrs Joan Williams with Joshua Secker (left) and Sam Dyehouse (right), from Westfield Primary School, with their winning posters.

Five award-winning posters designed by local children will be going up along a South Staffordshire rural walk to remind dog owners not to let their pets become pests.

The posters are the winners of a special competition organised by the Friends of Wom Brook in a bid to cut dog fouling along this beautiful stretch of the countryside.

The walk, which runs through Wombourne adjacent to the Wom Brook, is managed by the Friends, in partnership with South Staffordshire Council.

They came up with the idea of a poster competition open to schools in the village and from the many entries received, the five best designs have been chosen.

A special presentation ceremony was held for the winners, at Wombourne Civic Centre, where Councillor Mrs Joan Williams (Deputy Leader for Environmental Services) presented the prizes on behalf of the District Council. The winning designs will be displayed on sections of the Wom Brook Walk.

Councillor Mrs Williams said: "It is reassuring that the younger generation are taking a positive interest and due concern about the environment in which they live. I hope that this will encourage other members of the community to treat this valuable open space with care and keep it clean for us all to enjoy".

For further information about The Friends of Wom Brook Walk, please contact the Landscape Manager, Howard Medlicott on 01902 696406 or h.medlicott@sstaffs.gov.uk

Youngsters vote for Local Democracy

School children in South Staffordshire cast their first votes in the political arena in a specially organised "election".

Six hundred teenagers from all over the District got a taste of Local Democracy when they had to choose from 27 candidates representing three fictitious parties.

It was all part of Local Democracy Week, when South Staffordshire Council with Staffordshire Partnership organised eight events for six hundred Year 10 students during October.

Prior to the week, Phil Hardy, the Council's Head of Electoral Services, visited the schools to brief the students about what to expect.

The events were held in the Council's Civic Suite, when students set budgets and listened to presentations on Council services from members and officers. The candidates spoke during hustings and students then voted in mock elections.

The week was rounded off by Sir Patrick Cormack MP who addressed students from Edgecliff High School,

Kinver and Ounsdale High School, Wombourne, on the importance of democracy.

Feedback on the events from students and teachers has been extremely positive and a repeat of this inaugural event is already planned for next October.

Councillor Brian Edwards, Leader of South Staffordshire Council, said,

"Local Government is the cutting edge of democracy. Local people elect local representatives to ensure that their communities develop in a way that they want. It is imperative that all generations in our community recognise that Local Government is important and has a role to play, not only in delivering services but also through elected Councillors representing and articulating the views of the communities in which they live".

For further information contact David Coghill on 01902 696704 or e-mail d.coghill@sstaffs.gov.uk.



Students voting in a specially created polling station during Local Democracy Week



SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE COUNCIL INDUSTRIAL UNITS TO LET

Four Ashes Enterprise Centre
1345 sq ft

**Landywood Enterprise Park,
Great Wyrley**
831 - 4,500 sq ft (various sizes)

Hilton Main, Featherstone
921 & 973 sq ft

**South Staffs Business Park,
Cheslyn Hay**
947 & 1076 sq ft

Contact:

Glen Parker, Commercial Development Section,
Council Offices, Codsall, South Staffordshire WV8 1PX

Tel: 01902 696117 Fax: 01902 696705



Crimecutters update

Thieves nick car navigation systems

Car thieves are homing in on satellite navigation systems, motorists in South Staffordshire have been warned.

These expensive devices that help you find your way around are becoming increasingly popular among the motoring public, but they are also becoming a prime target for thieves.

South Staffordshire's Community Safety unit has drawn up a checklist to prevent you losing your navigation system - or any other expensive in-car equipment:

- If it's portable, take it with you, together with its support cradle and suction pads. Wipe away any suction pad marks left on the windscreen or dashboard, as thieves will be looking out for these tell-tale signs.
- DON'T leave the equipment in the glove compartment - it's the first place the thieves will look!
- Mark your satellite navigation equipment system with your postcode, house number or your vehicle registration mark, using special security markers.
- Make a note of the make, model, and serial number of the equipment and keep a note of it somewhere safe, but not in the car. Consider recording this information on one of the commercially available asset registers.
- DON'T leave anything on view in your car. Thieves are opportunists and it only takes them moments to break in.
- Lock all doors and windows, including the sunroof, when leaving your car.
- NEVER leave the keys in the ignition when the car is unattended, especially when paying for petrol.
- Use car parks that are part of the police-approved Safer Parking Scheme. Approved car parks display the official 'Park Mark' sign.

For details, visit: www.saferparking.com

This information is provided by the Home Office - further information is available from www.crimereduction.gov.uk.

**KEEP IT SAFE, KEEP IT HIDDEN, KEEP IT LOCKED
LET'S KEEP CRIME DOWN**

Send your local bobby a note

Bobbies on the beat in South Staffordshire will be checking their Neighbourhood Boxes for snippets of information from local residents that could prove vital in an inquiry.

The boxes have been launched in the Bilbrook and Codsall area to encourage people to pass on any information which is out of the ordinary or strange.

On their own, these snippets of information may not amount to much but, as a piece of a bigger jigsaw, they could help solve a crime or nip a problem in the bud.

Residents are assured that all information will be looked at carefully and even if it doesn't warrant any action, your local bobby will at least be in the know if anything occurs in the future.

The Neighbourhood Box scheme is a Neighbourhood Watch initiative in Bilbrook and Codsall.

One box is in the Co-op store in Codsall - to the right of the counter that faces you as you enter the store.

Other boxes are to be placed very soon in the library at the Council's offices at Codsall, and in Tesco's Store, Bilbrook Road, Bilbrook. The boxes will be emptied on a regular basis by the local Community Beat Officers, PCs Dave Allen and Dave Underhill.

Residents are reminded that these boxes are for information gathering purposes only and all other police matters should be reported through the usual channels.



Pictured (from left to right) are Ray Jones, Pat Lilly, Cllr Ken Mackie, PC Dave Allen, PCSO Dave Leyton and PC Dave Underhill

Traders put on the Alert

Small businesses in South Staffordshire are testing out an alert system aimed at protecting traders and reassuring workers and customers.

Some premises have had an Alert Box installed as part of a pilot project initiated by the District's Community Safety Partnership.

The Alert Box is an electronic device which enables individuals to communicate with their neighbours who have a similar device in their house or business premises.

Information is pre-programmed, so that literally 'at the flick of a button', help can be summoned or a warning message sent out.

The Alert Box is one of the ways the Partnership hopes to build up a rapport with small businesses in the District, helping to reassure them by having a deterrent device close at hand.

It will also encourage neighbouring traders to build up a relationship between themselves, hopefully leading to a full-scale Business Watch scheme.

PC Andy Heaton, Crime Reduction Officer for Staffordshire Police said: "I have personally seen the great effect that this product has had on reducing the fear of crime in other parts of the country and see this as an important tool in the fight against crime and anti-social behaviour in the South Staffordshire area."

Cllr Brian Edwards said: "The response from the business community has been very positive and although we are still in the pilot stage of rolling out the Alert Box, we would like to see it eventually being placed wider within the South Staffordshire District."



SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

is pleased to announce the launch of its new

Online Payments Service

Credit/Debit card payments can now be accepted online for the following:

- Council Tax and Business Rates
- Council Invoices
- Council Mortgages (Housing Advances)
- Hinksford Mobile Home Park Rents

So visit this new service today at:

www.sstaffs.gov.uk/payments

THANKS CHRIS!

The word search is a firm favourite with readers of the South Staffordshire Review.

The Council would like to take this opportunity to say a 'big' thank you to Chris Mantle, Senior Environmental Health Officer, who has compiled all the previous word searches. He will be a hard act to follow!

WORD SEARCH COMPETITION

Can you find the following words in the grid? They may be horizontal, vertical, or diagonal and could be backwards or forwards.

- EASTER • EGG • HUNT
- CHOCOLATE • SWEETS
- GOOD • FRIDAY
- SPRING • FLOWERS
- DAFFODILS • TULIPS
- DECORATE • BONNET
- BUNNY • LAMBS
- CHICKS • NEST • BASKET
- CROSS • TOMB • STONE
- PALM • SUNDAY

A	E	S	C	N	Y	A	D	N	U	S	X	I	S
B	B	E	N	O	T	S	O	T	S	E	N	L	D
U	O	H	U	N	T	X	P	A	L	M	N	N	S
N	N	T	W	Y	S	R	S	B	M	A	L	G	L
N	N	P	C	A	S	E	M	E	G	B	B	N	I
Y	E	B	F	D	R	T	B	O	C	O	M	I	D
O	T	E	E	I	E	S	C	A	E	T	O	R	O
O	S	T	T	R	W	A	E	T	S	G	T	P	F
S	S	A	A	F	O	E	G	C	O	K	I	S	F
O	O	R	L	R	L	E	G	O	Y	M	E	T	A
O	R	O	C	L	F	U	D	S	F	F	L	T	D
R	C	C	O	N	S	K	C	I	H	C	K	D	S
L	T	E	H	E	D	S	W	E	E	T	S	R	U
P	N	D	C	U	S	P	I	L	U	T	O	T	C

There is one word in the list that is **NOT** included in the grid.

Write it on the back of a postcard (or sealed envelope) TOGETHER WITH YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS and send to:

Helen Dye
Word Search Competition,
South Staffordshire Council,
Council Offices, Codsall,
South Staffordshire. WV8 1PX

The first correct entry picked after the closing date of

31st May, 2006,
will win a
£25 Prize

WORDSEARCH WINNER:

Congratulations to
Mrs J Jones
from Calf Heath
who won £25 in the
Word Search
Competition
in the Autumn 2005
Edition of the
South Staffordshire
Review.



SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE REVIEW



Travel tokens: the choice is yours

Elderly and disabled residents of South Staffordshire will continue to get freedom of choice for their free or reduced-rate travel benefits.

The Council has voted to continue its travel token scheme for the over-60s and anyone who meets the disability criteria, as an alternative to a free bus-only pass.

It means people can choose to use the buses or local taxi firms, according to their needs - and there is even a railcard option as an alternative.

Cllr Roy Wright (Deputy Leader Direct Services) said, "The Council has decided to continue to offer a choice to its residents so that they can decide themselves what suits them best given their personal circumstances and where they live".

The tokens are accepted by all taxi operators in the District, a recognition of the important role local taxis provide in meeting demand where bus routes are limited.

The token scheme takes into account impending new legislation, which means that a full-fare free bus pass will be offered to people aged 60 or over and people from various disability groups from 1st April

2006, replacing the existing half-fare pass.

The new full-fare bus pass will be based on the existing Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent County Scheme allowing free travel within the County.

Journeys into or returning from the West Midlands or adjoining Counties of Shropshire and Worcestershire will only be free if the journey starts or ends in Staffordshire.

For example, if you travel on a bus from Codsall to Wolverhampton, that would be free. However, if you were to get a connecting bus to Dudley that would be at normal fare rates, with no concession.

From April, South Staffordshire Council will be offering, as an alternative to a bus pass, £41 of tokens for a full year (£82 for blind applicants) to those entitled.

All current users will receive a letter in March about this year's collection arrangements, which will be based in various village halls throughout the District. The tokens will stay green in colour for another year from April, so any unused green tokens from this



year can be used over the next 12 months.

In addition, the Council will continue to offer a railcard as an alternative to a bus pass or tokens. Over-60s can still use £20 worth of their tokens to purchase a Seniors' Rail Card. For anyone who took out a railcard in lieu of the £20 worth of tokens currently offered, they will be able to do this once again on expiration of the card, providing £20 worth of tokens can be provided in exchange.

Further information can be obtained from logging on to www.sstaffs.gov.uk or by e-mailing concessionarytravel@sstaffs.gov.uk or alternatively, call 01902 696000.

Who cares about the carers? We do!

A survey of voluntary carers in South Staffordshire is being undertaken in an effort to improve support for them.

Hundreds of people in the District look after a relative or friend who may be disabled, ill or elderly - the definition of a voluntary carer.

They also include 'young carers' - someone under 18 performing a similar role.

The survey, which will start in Kinver, is being undertaken by the Local Strategic Partnership's Carers Count Project and will be carried out in April.

Questionnaires will be sent out to households and copies will be available in local community facilities such as libraries and health centres.

The Project aims to identify:

- the number of voluntary carers within the District;
- the needs of local carers;
- the services already provided for carers;
- anything the South Staffordshire Local Strategic Partnership (SSLSP) could do to help meet the needs of carers.

The SSLSP comprises organisations in the public, private and voluntary / community sectors who work together to try to make this District a better place.

The Carers Count Project is being led by South Staffordshire Community and Voluntary Action with other members of the project group from CASS (Carers Association Southern Staffordshire); South Staffordshire Council; South Staffordshire Housing Association; Health and Social Care Liaison Team; Staffordshire County Council & South Western Staffordshire Primary Care Trust.

In April 2006, copies of the questionnaire for carers will be delivered to households in Kinver and will also be available in various locations including Kinver Clinic, Library, Parish Council Offices, Kinver Volunteer Bureau and various shops. It will also be possible to complete the questionnaire online by visiting the website of South Staffordshire Council at: www.sstaffs.gov.uk

Please note that although the Carers Count Project is starting with a pilot survey of carers in Kinver, the project group welcomes responses during the pilot survey from carers in any village in South Staffordshire.

The questionnaire is anonymous unless any carers would like help and advice from a CASS outreach worker. The results of this survey will be publicised at an event in Kinver during Carers' Week in June 2006.

To contact CASS for free confidential advice, telephone 01785 606675 or e-mail enquiries@carersinformation.org.uk
Website: www.carersinformation.org.uk



SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE COUNCIL PEST CONTROL CHARGES

April 2006 – March 2007

	HOUSEHOLDS	BUSINESSES
RATS, MICE and other public health pests*	Free of Charge	£60 Initial call out (1 hour) + £48 per hour thereafter (including re-visits) + cost of materials used + VAT
WASPS and other nuisance pests**	£42 (including VAT)	As above
SQUIRRELS inside occupied properties only	£84 (including VAT)	As above
RODENT CONTRACTS		Free surveys and quotations will be provided

* Public health pests comprise rats, mice, fleas, bed bugs, cockroaches and flies (where the latter are present in significant numbers inside occupied property)

** Nuisance pests comprise wasps, ants and other insects

The Council waives its charges for the disinfestations of squirrels inside occupied domestic properties and wasps, where householders can show they are in receipt of means tested benefit.

It also waives its charge for disinfestations of public health pests

in places of religious worship, registered charities and village halls eligible for non-domestic rate relief.

The Council does not provide disinfestation services in respect of birds, rabbits, foxes, moles, squirrels (other than inside occupied properties), woodworm, lice (or other personal infestations), bats or any other protected species.

Further information can be obtained and services requested via our website www.sstaffs.gov.uk or by telephoning 01902 696204.

For Further Information:

If you would like a copy of this document in another language or format (eg Braille, audio cassette), please contact:

**South Staffordshire Council,
Council Offices,
Codsall,
South Staffordshire.
WV8 1PX
Tel: (01902) 696000**

اگر آپ اس دستاویز کی نقل اپنی زبان میں چاہتے ہیں تو براہ کرم رابطہ کریں

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਦੀ ਇੱਕ ਨਕਲ ਅਪਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ

अगर आप इस दस्तावेज की प्रति अपनी भाषा में चाहते हैं तो कृपया सम्पर्क करें

જੇ તમને આ દસ્તાવેજની નકલ તમારી ભાષામાં ખેંચીને હોય તો કૃપા કરીને સંપર્ક કરો

যদি আপনি এই দলিলের আপনার ভাষায় প্রতিলিপি চান অনুগ্রহ করে যোগাযোগ করুন

假如閣下希望索取中文版的本文件，請聯絡



SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

CONTACTS:

Tel: (01902) 696000
Fax: (01902) 696800
Website: www.sstaffs.gov.uk

OPENING TIMES

for personal visits to the Council's
Customer Contact Centre are:

8.45am to 5.00pm - Monday, Wednesday,
Thursday & Friday

8.45am to 8.00pm - Tuesday

9.30am to 1.00pm - Saturday