

# REVIEW

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Summer 2009

Issue No. 43

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*Council gives financial support to beauty spot project*

# Common is all set to be a bloomin' marvel

**One of South Staffordshire's most treasured beauty spots is set to blossom with the help of a cash boost from the Council.**

Highgate Common near Kinver, a glorious stretch of heathland with a wealth of flora and fauna, is now in the ownership of Staffordshire Wildlife Trust.

South Staffordshire Council is backing the Trust in its mission to ensure that the Common remains one of the jewels in the District's natural crown.

The Trust, a totally charitable organisation, will be getting £25,000 from the Council through the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) to kickstart a new project which

is set to benefit visitors to the Common for many years to come.

The project, a new community meeting room at the Common itself, is due to open to the public in the autumn. Visitors will be able to learn more about the Common in a series of educational walks and talks.

In addition, the Council's own Rangers from Baggeridge Country Park will hopefully be able to take advantage of the new facility to arrange a series of extra educational visits.

Cllr Brian Edwards, Leader of South Staffordshire Council said: "We're absolutely delighted to be supporting the work at Highgate Common and we're looking forward to working closely with the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust for many years to come as they look to preserve and enhance one of our most popular and distinctive areas.

"Supporting the work at Highgate Common means future generations will be able to learn about and enjoy the natural habitat that helps make South Staffordshire so special."

**- You can find out more about Highgate Common and why it means so much to local people on page 8.**

## Fun at the BIG Summer Event



**2009 is set to be a BIG summer of fun!**

*- see pages ii-iii of the supplement for further information.*

## Connect to your Council

### New Council website is here ...

[www.sstaffs.gov.uk](http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk)



## Council elects a New Chairman



2009-2010

Councillor Mrs Christine Raven

The Chairman of South Staffordshire Council for the coming year will be Cllr Mrs Christine Raven.

She was elected by fellow members at the Council's Annual Meeting on 5 May, 2009.

Cllr Mrs Raven has lived in Staffordshire for over 40 years and in Penkridge for 20 years.

After serving on Penkridge Parish Council for four years, she was elected to the District Council in 2003.

Her committee positions include Regulatory, where she was Vice-Chairman for two years, Overview and Scrutiny, and The Community and Environmental Services Scrutiny Panel. She is still Secretary to several committees in Penkridge.

Cllr Mrs Raven is retired from the University of Wolverhampton and is now primary carer for her elderly mother.

Married with two daughters and two step-daughters, she will be supported in her role as Chairman of the Council by her husband, John.

Cllr Mrs Raven has nominated the Penkridge Branch of the Parkinson's Disease Society and Katherine House Hospice as her charities for her year in office.

She said: "I am very proud to be appointed to the Chairmanship of South Staffordshire Council. It is a very great honour, and together with my husband, John, we are delighted to be able to represent South Staffordshire over the forthcoming year."

## New Council chief steers course for success

The new Chief Executive of South Staffordshire Council has pledged to maintain the authority's tradition of top quality service at a value-for-money price.

Steve Winterflood took the helm of the Council's administration in June, stepping up into the top job after 5 years as Deputy to outgoing Chief Executive Mr Rolf Levesley.

Mr Winterflood's first task was to reassure residents that the authority is in safe hands and they can expect the policy of improving service performance year-on-year to continue.

Paying tribute to the retiring Chief Executive, Mr Winterflood said: "Rolf Levesley has been an outstanding Chief Executive and will be a hard act to follow.

"This is an excellent Council, which has made huge improvements over the past few years.

"My job now will be to continue these improvements and ensure that our residents continue to receive top class, value for money services, whilst helping to keep Council Tax low."

Mr Winterflood said that he was thrilled and honoured to be offered the post, especially as South Staffordshire is one of the country's most improving Councils.

He added that he was extremely grateful for the support of Councillors and members of staff.

Mr Levesley announced earlier this

year that he was leaving after 28 years with the Council, the last five as Chief Executive.

With South Staffordshire Council so well respected in local government circles, it is not surprising that there was a rush of applicants for his job.

A total of 28 of the country's most able local authority administrators put their names forward.

The applications were considered in March by a specially-convened interview panel of 10 South Staffordshire councillors.

After drawing up a short list followed by extensive interviewing, the panel voted unanimously for Mr Winterflood.

Cllr Brian Edwards, Leader of South Staffordshire Council welcomed the appointment: "We are delighted that Steve has become our new Chief Executive. He has an excellent record and is highly respected both inside and outside the Council.

"We are confident that he is going to help take this Council forward as we strive to offer even better services to our local residents."

Cllr Edwards also paid tribute to Mr Levesley's work for the people of South Staffordshire: "Rolf has been a committed Chief Executive whose hard work and dedication to the District has been exemplary.

"I would like to publicly thank him, on behalf of all of the Members, for all he has done for the Council and for the people of South Staffordshire."



Steve Winterflood, who has taken over as Chief Executive.



Rolf Levesley, retiring Chief Executive of South Staffordshire Council.

## Services come under the microscope

If you've got something to say about the services South Staffordshire Council provides to its customers, now's the time to get it off your chest.

A review of the way the authority handles its work is currently taking place.

It's a check to see that the Council is providing quality services - at the right price.

The review is being assisted by the West Midlands Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership.

They will look at all the Council's processes and the stages within them. But the acid test is how customers rate them.

If you have used South Staffordshire Council's services and have some constructive comments on how they could

be improved, please get in touch.

If you are a regular user of a service, you might like to spend an afternoon of your time being actively involved in the review.

To give your views, or to join the review panel, contact

**Fiona Cozens,**  
Senior Policy and Performance Officer,  
South Staffordshire Council, Council Offices,  
Wolverhampton Road,  
Codsall,  
South Staffordshire.  
WV8 1PX

or telephone: 01902 696114

or e-mail: [f.cozens@sstaffs.gov.uk](mailto:f.cozens@sstaffs.gov.uk).

## Chairman's charity boosts Macmillan

More than £11,000 was raised for Macmillan Cancer Support during South Staffordshire Council Chairman Cllr Alan Hinton's 12 months in office.

Cllr Hinton nominated Macmillan to benefit from various fund raising events held on behalf of the Chairman. These included a charity concert and the Civic Dinner, both of which were well supported.

As his tenure of office drew to a close, Cllr Hinton presented a cheque for £11,242 to Macmillan Cancer Support representative Cheryl Bradburn at the Annual Council Meeting on 5th May.

Cllr Hinton told the meeting: "I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who contributed and supported my charity, during my year as Chairman of South Staffordshire Council and I take great pleasure in presenting this cheque to Macmillan Cancer Support."



Cllr Alan Hinton presents a cheque to Cheryl Bradburn, a representative from Macmillan Cancer Support.

## Fly-tipper caged by the courts

A rogue rubbish dumper has been jailed and more than a dozen others fined over £15,000 between them in South Staffordshire Council's crackdown on fly tipping.

Thirteen individuals were hauled in front of Magistrates over the last 12 months for flouting laws aimed at keeping the District clean and free of illicitly dumped rubbish.

One man who had evaded the Police for over two years was finally arrested and sentenced to six weeks in prison after he had dumped rubbish in a country lane in Kinver.

The Council's Environmental Enforcement

Team has also been involved in a number of joint operations with Staffordshire Police and other agencies including VOSA (the Vehicle Operations Standards Agency).

These operations are designed to improve road safety by spotting defective vehicles, drivers without licences or insurance, dangerous loads and any other environmental hazards on our roads.

Last year, as part of the on going 'stop and search' operations, almost 900 vehicles were stopped, 31 of which were immediately seized and ordered off the road. A further 16 vehicles were ordered to have major

repairs and report back to VOSA before being allowed back on the road.

There were 16 arrests and the Council also removed and destroyed 23 abandoned cars from across the District.

Councillor Mrs Joan Williams, (Deputy Leader) Environmental Services, commented: "South Staffordshire is a beautiful District and we are determined to bring to justice those who try to ruin it by dumping rubbish.

"With one prison sentence already handed out, I hope this will show that if you're caught, you won't just get a slap on the wrist and walk away, you could end up in prison."

# Walk leaders please step forward

Enthusiastic walkers are wanted to help others take up this healthy and rewarding pastime.

By becoming a volunteer leader, you can remove the barriers which prevent many people pulling on their walking boots or shoes.

These short, friendly and local group health walks provide people with the opportunity to come together, to become fitter, healthier and happier, make new friends and discover their local environment.

There are many reasons why people who would love to get out in the fresh air don't do it. The main ones are:

- Fear of walking in parks or countryside areas;
- Lack of knowledge about where to go;
- No-one to walk with;
- Feeling unable to walk very far, perhaps due to a medical condition; and
- Lack of confidence.

Short health walks can overcome all these obstacles. As a leader you can really make a difference to your own and your walkers' lives.



## Here's what's involved in becoming a leader:

You would work closely with South Staffordshire Council's Health and Wellbeing team and your fellow Volunteer Walk Leaders to:

- Lead or back mark weekly short, safe and friendly health walks for the general public.
- Help promote the 'Walking the Way to Health' scheme to local communities.
- Support your fellow Volunteers and any new walk leaders.

As a result of attending the training you will receive a nationally recognised qualification.

If you would like more information simply contact the Health and Wellbeing Team on **01902 696682** or e-mail: [env.commercial@sstaffs.gov.uk](mailto:env.commercial@sstaffs.gov.uk).

# Boots, blisters and aching bones all in a good cause

Six intrepid walkers representing South Staffordshire Council have raised more than £4,000 for Midlands Air Ambulance by completing the 95 mile length of the Staffordshire Way over the Whitsun Bank Holiday.

The walk, organised by the 22nd Signal Regiment based in Stafford, was completed in just three days.

The team chose to raise money for Midlands Air Ambulance after a colleague suffered an horrific horse riding accident last year. Rachael Dawson was air lifted to a specialist hospital by the air ambulance after the horse she was riding reared and fell on top of her. She had suffered multiple bone fractures.

Initially a normal ambulance was despatched but was unable to find her due to the remote location of the fall near Telford. The air ambulance was able to land near her and the transfer to Selly Oak Hospital, in Birmingham, took less than 12 minutes. This life saving service receives NO Government or National Lottery funding. The £5.6 million required each year to run the three helicopters in the fleet is entirely raised through the generosity of the public.

The team, Rachel Eeles, Daniel Roberts, Paul Thompson, Graham Colling, Bryn Walters and Ross Kennerell-Walters had been in training since the beginning of the year, in preparation for the gruelling walk. During the walk they were ably supported by Bob Taylor and the Council's New Chief Executive, Steve Winterflood.

The team captain, Graham Colling, an Environmental Health Officer at the Council said "The distance involved - we walked 37 miles on the final day - combined with the hot weather, made this an exhausting challenge. We were spurred on by Rachael's experience and by the support from our family, friends and colleagues that met us along the route."

To find out the current total raised by the team, or make a donation, the team has set up a website at [www.justgiving.com/staffsawayinmay](http://www.justgiving.com/staffsawayinmay)



The team from South Staffordshire Council, with Rachael Dawson, meet the crew of the Air Ambulance.

## South Staffordshire Health Watch Walks

**Huntington Walk & Talk**   
**Mondays 1:30pm approx. 30-40 mins**  
**Distance:** 1-2 miles  
**Intensity:** Easy, an ideal introduction to health walks  
**Surfaces:** Hard and Soft  
**Meet at:** Huntington Community Centre

**Featherstone Walk & Talk**   
**Tuesdays 10:30am approx. 30 mins**  
**Distance:** 1-2 miles  
**Intensity:** Easy, an ideal introduction to health walks  
**Surfaces:** Hard and soft  
**Meet at:** Featherstone Community Centre, Baneberry Drive

**Perton Walk & Talk**   
**Tuesdays 10.30am approx. 30 mins**  
**Distance:** 1-2 miles  
**Intensity:** Easy, an ideal introduction to health walks  
**Surfaces:** Hard  
**Meet at:** Perton Library, Severn Drive

**Penkrige Walk & Talk**   
**Tuesdays 10:00am approx. 30-40 mins**  
**Distance:** 1-2 miles  
**Intensity:** Easy, an ideal introduction to health walks  
**Surfaces:** Hard and soft  
**Meet at:** Haling Dene Centre, Cannock Road, Penkrige

**Wyrley Walk & Talk**   
**Wednesdays 10:00am approx. 20-50 mins**  
**Distance:** 1-2 miles  
**Intensity:** Choice of 2 Walks:  
*Moderate*; slight gradients  
*Easy*, an ideal introduction to health walks.  
**Surfaces:** Hard and Soft  
**Meet at:** Wesley Chapel, A34 Walsall Road

**Baggeridge Wednesday Wanderers**   
**Wednesdays 10:30am approx. 1-1½ hours**  
**Distance:** 3 miles  
**Intensity:** More difficult - strenuous; stiles and some steep gradients, suitable for regular walkers used to longer distances. Choice of 2 walks to go on.  
**Surfaces:** Hard and Soft  
**Meet at:** Rangers office, Baggeridge Country Park, Gospel End.

**Kinver Walk & Talk**   
**Wednesdays 10:30am approx. 30-40 mins**  
**Distance:** 1-2 miles  
**Intensity:** Easy, an ideal introduction to health walks  
**Surfaces:** Hard and Soft  
**Meet at:** Edward Marsh Community Centre, Hyde Meadows, off High Street, Kinver.

**Wombourne Walkers**   
**Thursdays 12 Noon approx. 30 mins.**  
**Distance:** 1-2 miles  
**Intensity:** Easy, an ideal introduction to health walks  
**Surfaces:** Hard and Soft  
**Meet at:** Wombourne Civic Centre, by Council notice board

**Featherstone Family Walk**   
**Thursdays 11:30am approx. 30 mins**  
**Distance:** 1 mile  
**Intensity:** Easy, an ideal introduction to health walks with a few slight gradients  
**Surfaces:** Hard  
**Meet at:** Featherstone Children's Centre, The Avenue

**Essington Healthy Walks**   
**Fridays 11.00am approx. 30-45 mins**  
**Distance:** 1-1½ miles  
**Intensity:** Moderate; slight gradients  
**Surfaces:** Hard and Soft  
**Meet at:** Minerva Pub, Wolverhampton Road, Essington.

### KEY TO RATINGS:

- Easy
- Moderate
- More Difficult
- Refreshments Available
- Suitable for Wheelchairs and Pushchairs

## Growing old gracefully

South Staffordshire's older generations are wanted - to help prepare for and cope with an ageing population.

They are to be asked about their own experiences, which will form the basis for South Staffordshire Local Strategic Partnership's Ageing Well Strategy.

The responses will help the drafters of the strategy to understand better the issues around ageing across the District of South Staffordshire. One of the questions to be resolved is what types of support people would like as they grow older.

The LSP, which is made up of public sector groups such as the Council, Police and Health Service, wants to send representatives to meet groups of older people, to find out the issues affecting them. After the consultation, a number of feedback events will be held across the District, to involve people in the development of solutions.

"We have an ageing population in South Staffordshire and we need to plan for how we meet the challenges ahead. We want to hear about your experiences so we can start new projects or build-on what's already happening and make them more responsive," said Cllr Brian Edwards, Leader of South Staffordshire Council and Older People's Champion.

If you would like to take part in this process please contact Fiona Cozens, Policy and Partnerships Team, South Staffordshire Council, on **01902 696114** or e-mail [f.cozens@sstaffs.gov.uk](mailto:f.cozens@sstaffs.gov.uk).

# A handy person to have around the home

Elderly and disabled people in South Staffordshire can now call on their own Handyman, or Handywoman, to carry out minor repairs or improvements around the home.



## Priorities

Priority will be given to work that reduces risk of injury or risk to health and improves security around the home.

## Home Fire Risk Check

Working in partnership with the Fire Service they will carry out home fire risk checks. This includes fitting smoke detectors and, if necessary, replacing chip pans with deep fat fryers and replacing old electric blankets. They will also supply low energy light bulbs. This service and any equipment supplied is free.

## What can't the Handyman service do?

It is not possible to do repairs to gas or electrical appliances; wiring; complex or large plumbing jobs; any tasks that are above step ladder height; work that is too large for the service or that the Handyman assesses as a risk to themselves or others.

## Home Improvement Agencies

In addition to the Countywide Handyman Service, there are various agencies which help people repair, improve and adapt their homes to enable them to live there with greater independence, safety, security, and warmth. They have skilled caseworkers, technical staff and handymen who will help you through the whole process from small work to large disabled adaptations and many other types of work. They also offer advice and can

refer you to more appropriate organisations, if necessary.

To contact the Handyman service or to get details of other Home Improvement Agencies:

Call: **0800 587 1460** (Free)

E-mail: [hiainfo@aol.com](mailto:hiainfo@aol.com)

or write to:

**Home Improvement Agency**  
3rd Floor  
Civic Centre  
Riverside  
Stafford  
ST16 3AQ

The Handyman Service is supported and funded by the following organisations:

- Staffordshire Supporting People
- Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service



The Countywide Handyman service is provided by the Alliance of Home Improvement Agencies in Staffordshire.



## What does it cost?

The service is NOT free, but the cost of any particular job will be stated before any work is carried out. There is no charge for just visiting to assess the work and there is no obligation to have any work carried out.

Any materials used will, in most cases, have to be paid for by the householder, but they will be obtained by the Handyman doing the job and brought to the property.

## What kind of work can the service carry out?

This is just a small selection of jobs that the Handyman can carry out:

- Changing tap washers and unblocking sinks
- Fitting door chains, bolts and locks
- Fitting curtain rails and curtains
- Fitting shelves, mirrors, pictures
- Laying and repairing small areas of flooring
- Moving and assembling small pieces of furniture
- Easing doors and windows
- Simple furniture repairs
- Moving furniture for easier access
- Changing light bulbs
- Replacing small panes of glass
- Fitting cat flaps
- Replacing WC seats
- Replacing ball valves
- Small joinery work
- Fitting draught excluders
- Fitting grab rails
- Fitting key safes
- Fitting lever taps

# Pointing the way to energy saving

Two South Staffordshire villages are set to become the first low-carbon communities in the District.

Essington and Wombourne are in the vanguard of a new community-based energy saving project.

This innovative experiment is being launched by a partnership between South Staffordshire Council and the Marches Energy Agency charity.

The cash to fund it is coming from the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) via the County Council's 'Learning to Deliver' programme.

Local community group, The Friends of Essington, has recently embarked upon the new project, which is aiming to reduce energy use in each of their homes by 20% - and hopefully saving them between £50 and £200 a year.

The Friends' secretary, Wayne Whitehouse said: "This is a very interesting opportunity for us as a community and we are looking forward to understanding how we respond meaningfully to the climate change."

Simon Ross from the energy charity added: "By working with local people in their homes, local businesses and in local community buildings, we will hopefully be able show them how they are currently using energy and give them the tools to help reduce it."

"We're hoping that those taking part in the projects will take a 'pass it on' view to the work we're doing by passing on all the tips and information on how to save energy to their families, friends and neighbours. It's going to be exciting to see if and how attitudes to climate change and energy saving change."

## Workshops

The project, which runs until March 2010, is now well under way. A series of two-hour workshops for groups of local householders in both villages is being held to demonstrate a whole host of energy efficiency measures, as well as information on grants and how householders can target their money to make the biggest savings.

Householders can then set up their own 'account' to measure their energy use and compare it with friends and neighbours.

The project will also be offering a similar service to local business and community buildings, and from April will be working with a number of school children to show them how to reduce their schools' energy demand.

More information on the project is available from Rachel Eeles at South Staffordshire Council on **01902 696508** or by e-mail at [r.eeles@sstaffs.gov.uk](mailto:r.eeles@sstaffs.gov.uk).

## Ruralink update (& an apology)

The last edition of Review (Issue 42 page 11) included information for the Ruralink taxi-bus service which was out of date.

The Ruralink service, operated by Codsall Cars and Wombourne Private Hire, now covers the villages of Bobbington, Wombourne, Trysull, Seisdon, Lower Penn, Gospel End, Perton, Enville and Kinver.

The 584 and 585 services operate throughout the week (excluding Sundays) - full details of which are in the Ruralink timetable which can be found in the Codsall and Wombourne transport timetables

which are available from local libraries. Alternatively, copies can also be obtained from Staffordshire County Council by calling either **01785 276739** or **01785 276748**.

If any of our readers were inconvenienced by relying on the details published in the last edition, please accept our sincere apologies.



## THANK YOU FOR ENTERING

The correct answer to the word search in Issue 42 of Review was **COWSLIP**. A big thank you to everyone who entered and well done to those who got the answer correct!

# Word Search Competition

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

- EXERCISE • FITNESS
- HEALTH • WELL BEING
- GYM • TONING-BEDS
- YOGA • PILATES • SPINNING
- WALKING • STEP • GOLF
- CRICKET • RUGBY
- TENNIS • BADMINTON
- BASKET BALL • GO KARTING
- ROLLER SKATING
- SWIMMING • ATHLETICS
- ENERGISE

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

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

**9th September, 2009,**  
will win a  
**£25 Prize**

## WORDSEARCH WINNER:

Congratulations to **Mrs M. Gocan** from Coven who won £25 in the Word Search Competition in the Spring 2009 Edition of the South Staffordshire Review.

# Tourism 'In Focus'

A Guide to the Good Times in South Staffordshire

Stuck for ideas on days out, places to go and things to do this summer? Look no further than your own doorstep.



South Staffordshire has a huge and varied selection of tourist attractions, from beautiful countryside and historic houses to action adventure and quality crafts.

Now you can find them all listed in the 2009 'Great Days Out' guide.

Produced by South Staffordshire Council, the guide is full of ideas, including attractions, events and festivals, and moreover, it's FREE!

Request your **FREE** copy today either on-line at [www.sstaffs.gov.uk/brochure](http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/brochure) or telephone South Staffordshire Council on **01902 696233**.



Baggeridge Aerial Ropes Adventure.

**enjoy**  
more of Staffordshire for less

Get your free **enjoy Staffordshire card** - it's the great new way to take advantage of fantastic discounts, offers and promotions from some of Staffordshire's top attractions.

Whether you love adventure, nature or culture, the **enjoy card** opens up a world of possibilities.

As a card holder you'll be entitled to amazing benefits throughout the year at:

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- Theme parks
- Pubs and restaurants
- Stately homes
- Accommodation
- And so much more

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Terms and conditions apply. One application per household. Over 18 only.

To apply by phone: **0844 888 1747**  
or log on [www.enjoystaffordshire.com](http://www.enjoystaffordshire.com)

## A Royal tourist trail

Visitors to South Staffordshire are being encouraged to follow in the Footsteps of a King and relive one of the most exciting periods in our history.

The daring escape of the future King Charles II after the battle of Worcester has become the stuff of legends.

And without the help of his supporters in South Staffordshire, Charles would probably never have ascended to his throne!



Moseley Old Hall

Now tour organisers, coach operators and individuals interested in history and heritage are being invited to visit the places where it all happened:

**Boscobel House** - where Charles hid in

the famous oak tree to avoid his pursuers.

**Moseley Old Hall** - where he was secreted away until his onward escape route to France was organised.

The tourist package brings to life one of England's most turbulent times, tracking the romantic, exciting and daring story of young Charles following his defeat at the Battle of Worcester in 1651.

The package takes you to two beautifully maintained homes of historic significance, Boscobel House and Moseley Old Hall.

Managed by English Heritage, Boscobel House, near the villages of Bishops Wood and Wheaton Aston, has the romantic character of a Victorian historical novel. Visitors can tour the house and see firsthand the legendary 'priest hole' in the attic where Charles is said to have spent the night, as well as enjoy the beautifully-maintained gardens and the famous 'Royal Oak Tree'.

From sanctuary at Boscobel House, the young King fled to nearby Moseley Old Hall. Managed by The National Trust, visitors can follow the footsteps of the young King as he entered the house way back in 1651. Visitors can also see the bed where he slept and the priest hole in which he hid. The mistresses of the house will also be on hand to



Boscobel House

provide an informative talk on 17th Century 'medicinal' cures or 17th Century food.

Anyone wanting more information on this, or any other local tourism package, can e-mail South Staffordshire Council's Tourism Team at [tourism@sstaffs.gov.uk](mailto:tourism@sstaffs.gov.uk), visit [www.sstaffs.gov.uk/tourism](http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/tourism) or telephone **01902 696539**.

### Let's Keep in Touch...

Would you like to receive quarterly e-newsletters about things to do, places to go, events and latest news from across South Staffordshire?

If so, we invite you to join our mailing list. You can join by completing the on-line application form.

Visit [www.sstaffs.gov.uk/mailling](http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/mailling)

## What's On this summer in South Staffordshire?

Below is just a taste of some of the events and festivals taking place within South Staffordshire during July, August, September & October this year.

Find out more by visiting the 'What's On' icon on the Council's website:

[www.sstaffs.gov.uk](http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk)

### JULY

- 4th & 18th** Concert in the park @ *Baggeridge Country Park*
- 5th** Amazing Nature: Birds of Prey @ *Moseley Old Hall*
- 11th** Local Food Celebration @ *Wightwick Manor*
- 10th-12th** CamperJam @ *Weston Park*
- 18th** Weston's Women Lecture & Lunch @ *Weston Park*
- 18th** Falconry Display @ *Rodbaston Visitor Centre and Animal Zone*
- 18th, 19th** Blackwork Embroidery @ *Moseley Old Hall*
- 19th** Chillington Food and Country Fair
- 22nd** Kitchen Garden Tour @ *Wightwick Manor*
- 22nd-24th** Children's Summer Activity Workshop @ *Weston Park*
- 25th** John Massey's Private Garden @ *Ashwood Nurseries*
- 26th** The Merchant of Venice @ *Hilton Hall*

### AUGUST

- 1st** Surdhwani South Asian Outdoor Dance Performance @ *Wightwick Manor*
- 1st, 2nd** Brilliant Books @ *Moseley Old Hall*
- 2nd** Life & Paintings of Thomas Prytherch Lecture & Lunch @ *Weston Park*
- 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd, 29th & 30th** Concerts in the park @ *Baggeridge Country Park*
- 4th, 11th, 18th, 25th** Active Afternoons @ *Moseley Old Hall*
- 11th** Literary Supper - Charles Dickens @ *Wightwick Manor*
- 15th, 16th** 17th Century Weekend @ *Moseley Old Hall*
- 16th** Boulton Paul, Aviation History Open Day @ *GE Aviation*
- 22nd - 23rd** V-Festival @ *Weston Park*
- 23rd** Talk 'n' Taste @ *Moseley Old Hall*
- 26th** Amazing Nature: Birds of Prey @ *Moseley Old Hall*
- 29th, 30th, 31st** Wild about Wildlife @ *Wightwick Manor*
- 30th** Jazz Sunday Roast Lunch @ *Weston Park*

### SEPTEMBER

- 2nd** Interior Design Lecture & Lunch @ *Weston Park*
- 13th** The Village Lcemakers 2 @ *Moseley Old Hall*
- 18th** Wine Tasting Evening @ *Wightwick Manor*
- 19th-20th** Midland Game Fair @ *Weston Park*
- 26th** John Massey's Private Garden @ *Ashwood Nurseries*
- 27th** Fungi Walks & Meal @ *Weston Park*
- 29th** Autumnal Trees Garden Tour @ *Wightwick Manor*

### OCTOBER

- 4th** Talk 'n' Taste: The Fruit Harvest @ *Moseley Old Hall*
- 6th** Servants' Tour @ *Wightwick Manor*
- 9th-11th** International Autumn Horse Trials @ *Weston Park*
- 11th** Boulton Paul, Aviation History Open Day @ *GE Aviation*
- 17th** Christmas Card Making Workshop @ *Weston Park*
- 18th** Autumn Colours Walk @ *Weston Park*
- 20th** Literary Supper - Sherlock Holmes @ *Wightwick Manor*
- 24th, 26th, 27th, 28th** Pumpkin Week @ *Moseley Old Hall*
- 28th-1st** Hallowe'en Garden Trail @ *Wightwick Manor*
- 31st** Hallowe'en @ *Weston Park*
- 31st** Creepy Crawly weekend @ *Rodbaston Visitor Centre and Animal Zone*
- 31st** Hallowe'en @ *Baggeridge Country Park*

### Organising / hosting an event in South Staffordshire?

- Why not take advantage of **FREE** promotion and list your event in the 'What's On' Calendar!
- On average, the Council website attracts some 27,000 hits a month!
- Simply click on the 'What's On' icon on the Council's home page [www.sstaffs.gov.uk](http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk) and click on the link to add your event.



# Community Safety



South Staffordshire Primary Care Trust **NHS**



"Working to make South Staffordshire Safer"

## Double decker drives home safety message



Residents across South Staffordshire have been picking up handy hints and tips ranging from how to keep your home safe to how to quit smoking inside a double-decker bus!

South Staffordshire Community Safety team chartered the big, red London double decker to make nine stops across the District during March and April, offering tips and advice to local shoppers.

There were stops at Penkridge Market, the Co-op at Codsall, Sainsbury's at Perton, as well as spots in Kinver, Brewwood and Great Wyrley and everywhere the bus proved a real hit with visitors.

Community Police Officers (PCSOs) from Staffordshire Police teamed up with Staffordshire County Council's Trading Standards team to give out more than 2,000 home security/property marking packs as well as advice on rogue traders and bogus officials. Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service also offered advice on home fire risk checks.

In addition, South Staffordshire Primary Care Trust (PCT) gave out 'Healthy Living' information and made blood pressure checks at Brewwood. The main areas of support covered healthy eating, improving physical activity, helping people to stop smoking and reducing alcohol intake.

Also, the team joined in with the National Burglary Day of Action. The aim of the day was to raise awareness of police enforcement work, offer reassurance to burglary victims, provide crime prevention advice and inform the public about the work of their local Neighbourhood Policing team.



Raising awareness through the bus campaign.

To tie in with this, a new burglary pack has been published to help the public take simple preventative steps to protect their home. The pack can be viewed on-line at [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/secureyourhome](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/secureyourhome) or obtained through 0800 456 1213.

## Hello, hello to Andy and Mark

Both of South Staffordshire's Neighbourhood Policing Units now have new men in charge.

The police teams at Watling and Wombourne welcomed their new Inspectors in the spring.

At Wombourne, Inspector Andy Chapman has taken over from Inspector Pat Shannaghan.

Andy joined the force in 1993 and initially worked in Tunstall and Burslem before moving to Cannock. He then became the neighbourhood officer for Penkridge in 1998 and later taking up a post in CID and then in August 2002 he became a Sergeant at Wombourne.



Inspector Andy Chapman



Inspector Mark Jones

Speaking about the new challenge, he said: "I am delighted to be returning to Wombourne and look forward to working with the community and our partners."

Meanwhile, at Watling NPU, which covers the

north of the District, Inspector Mark Jones has begun work as the new Neighbourhood Policing Commander.

Mark joined the West Midlands police in 1980 and joined Staffordshire Police in 2003.

## Domestic Violence Co-ordinator

Tackling the issues of domestic abuse and violence has been a top priority of South Staffordshire's Community Safety Partnership for some time.

Once it was swept under the carpet, but now it's out in the open and society has said it is a crime and will not be tolerated.

Latest figures show that one in four women and one in seven men have been victims of domestic abuse.

South Staffordshire CSP has appointed a Domestic Violence Co-ordinator to oversee its strategy to reduce the risks to potential victims, support women and men who have been abused and to bring perpetrators to book.

The co-ordinator is Charlotte Almond and she is an integral part of the multi-agency Domestic Abuse Partnership.

Charlotte explains exactly what we mean by 'domestic abuse':

"In basic terms, it is physical, psychological, sexual or financial violence that takes place within an intimate or family-type relationship

and forms a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour.

"It can affect anyone, irrespective of ethnicity, class, gender, religion, cultural background, disability, marital status, age or sexual orientation.

"Domestic abuse is destructive, insidious and perpetuates a cycle of destruction. As a society domestic abuse is rooted in our social and cultural structures. It is a volume crime, which research suggests affects one in four women and one in seven men during their lifetimes, with women suffering much higher rates of repeat victimisation and

serious injury.

"Domestic abuse is an issue that cuts across all sections of society and has a devastating effect on its victims, their families and the wider community.

"It is vital that as well as raising awareness of domestic abuse we let victims know that support is available while delivering a strong message to perpetrators that South Staffordshire does not tolerate domestic abuse," she added.

If you are a victim of domestic abuse or know someone who is you can contact:

Staffordshire Police on 0300 123 44 55

Staffordshire Women's Aid on 0870 2700 123

Staffordshire Victim Support on 0845 5212 300.

**REMEMBER:**  
in an emergency ALWAYS dial 999!

To contact Charlotte Almond, Domestic Violence Co-ordinator:

Tel: 01785 619362

E-mail: [calmond@staffordbc.gov.uk](mailto:calmond@staffordbc.gov.uk)



Charlotte Almond, Domestic Violence Co-ordinator

**Staffordshire POLICE**  
Putting people at the heart of everything we do

**A quality service - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week**

Dedicated to your local area, we're working with partners to make communities even safer.

Your local policing service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Your issues and concerns are very important to us and we need you to tell us how we can help you have a better quality of life.

Join us at one of a range of community meetings at venues across South Staffordshire to talk with us and find out more about policing in your area. Full details are regularly published on our website and through local media.

To contact your dedicated neighbourhood officer, call them direct on 0300 123 2345 - just simply follow the instructions and enter their individual collar number to speak to them personally.

You can also reach local officers by email at [watlingnpt@staffordshire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:watlingnpt@staffordshire.pnn.police.uk) or [wombournenpt@staffordshire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:wombournenpt@staffordshire.pnn.police.uk)

If you're interested in joining Neighbourhood Watch or need some crime prevention advice, telephone 0300 123 4455 and speak with either your local Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator, Crime Prevention officer or Police Community Support officer (PCSO).

**Staffordshire non-emergencies 0300 123 4455**  
In an emergency dial 999

**Staffordshire CRIMESTOPPERS 0800 555 111**  
Let's work together to make our communities safer

[www.staffordshire.pnn.police.uk](http://www.staffordshire.pnn.police.uk)

**Staffordshire is safe and we want people to feel safe**

## Security Spring Clean stops a shed-load of trouble

Thieves and burglars just love garden sheds. They often contain valuable power tools, such as mowers and strimmers. A lot of sheds don't even have a lock.

When out and about in the garden, what about carrying out your own Security Spring Clean?

For a start, get ALL power tools, barbecues, garden machinery and other equipment visibly and permanently marked with your postcode and house number or the first two letters of a house name.

CHECK your sheds and gates for wear and tear after the chilly winter we've had:

- Padlock hasps and screws may have weakened and rusted.
- Padlocks themselves may be seized and corroded. Consider replacing them with a close-shackled padlock approved by Sold Secure [www.soldsecure.com](http://www.soldsecure.com)

- For added security, consider adding a shed bar.
- If the shed has seen better days, consider replacing it with a metal one, which may be a more secure solution.
- Consider installing a ground anchor within the shed to which you can secure its contents using chain or steel cable and a good quality padlock.

Remember, burglars often use tools found in a garden shed to force entry to a house!

A five-minute inventory of your garden possessions will make you realise how much it would cost to replace these items!

Check your home contents insurance policy to ensure you have adequate cover for garden equipment. Some policies exclude gardens all together.

If you don't have home contents insurance at the moment, you should seriously think about getting some.

## Streetwise drivers use our safe car parks

Parking problems in South Staffordshire's villages are being tackled on two fronts - by making car parks safer and cracking down on parking pests in the 'Clear Streets' campaign.

Motorists using Council-owned car parks will be reassured to know that 12 of them have been awarded national quality status for meeting recognised safety standards.

In step with that, the Council has now taken over the enforcement of parking regulations across the District.

A Civil Enforcement Officer has been patrolling problem 'hot-spots' up and down the District, issuing fixed penalty charge notices to drivers caught parking on yellow lines or overstaying the time limits. This is aimed at stopping those parking pests who clog up our village streets, as well as putting lives at risk.

Local residents and businesses are also set to benefit from the measures.

The Park Mark Safer Parking scheme is operated nationally by the British Parking Association in partnership with the Association of Chief Police Officers. To receive the award, each site has to meet a number of

**Clear Streets**  
Protecting Your Community



Cllr Mrs Joan Williams proudly shows our award certificates with officers from Wombourne Police together with one of the Civil Enforcement Team.

conditions designed to reduce the opportunity for car crime and vandalism. The car parks that have been awarded the official 'Park Mark' status include those in Bilbrook, Brewwood, Codsall, Cheslyn Hay, Great Wyrley, Kinver, Penkridge and Wombourne.

Councillor Mrs Joan Williams, (Deputy Leader) Environmental Services at South Staffordshire Council said: "The Clear Streets campaign is now well under way. We issued warning notices to drivers who were caught parking on yellow lines for a couple of weeks before the launch date, but anyone caught now could be hit with a bill of up to £70.

The Park Mark award for our car parks is also great news for drivers and local businesses, and reflects the hard work and investment that the Council has put in to make sure people can park their vehicles in confidence."

**Information**  
Residents or businesses who want to know more about civil parking enforcement across the District can contact the Council on 01902 696000 and ask for Clear Streets or by e-mail at [clearstreets@sstaffs.gov.uk](mailto:clearstreets@sstaffs.gov.uk) or why not check out our website for more details at [www.sstaffs.gov.uk](http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk)

[www.sstaffs.gov.uk/parking](http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/parking)

## Alcohol tests to curb teen drinkers

Police in South Staffordshire are now armed with a new weapon to tackle under-age drinking - alcohol testing strips.

These new strips will allow officers to tell if young people's 'soft drinks' are alcohol in disguise.

It's a simple procedure, the strips are dipped into a liquid being tested and they change colour if alcohol is present.

Police officers on patrol and Police Community Support Officers are now using the testing strips when dealing with groups of young people on the streets, checking if their bottles or cans

of soft drink actually contain alcohol. It's part of an on-going crack down on under-age drinking across the District.

Inspector Andy Chapman of Wombourne Police said: "When Officers are out on patrol, they often suspect that young people gathered in groups are drinking but they have no way of checking soft drinks. These strips give us a quick and easy way of finding out whether they are really drinking alcohol and disposing of it if they are.

"Under-age drinking is linked to

anti-social behaviour and Staffordshire Police is committed to working together with our partners, including Trading Standards to tackling this issue every way we can."

Police are warning young people that the strips will now be used by patrols who are targeting under-age drinking across South Staffordshire.

Remember, it is an offence to sell alcohol to anyone under 18 and for under-18s to buy or attempt to buy alcohol. It is also an offence for an adult to buy alcohol on behalf of anyone under 18.

# Common is a very special place

One of South Staffordshire's most interesting wildlife habitats is set to blossom under new management.

Responsibility for Highgate Common, located between Kinver and Wombourne, has switched from the County Council to Staffordshire Wildlife Trust.

The Common, owned and managed by the County Council since the 1960s, is now designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

It is a wonderfully picturesque area in the south of the county, a gently rolling landscape made up of a mosaic of nationally-rare heathland, bare sandy stretches and tranquil woodland.

Well-used by local people, the Common supports a diverse spectrum of wildlife, including many rare species.

The Trust took over ownership at the end of March, 2009. Its acquisition is an exciting development for the 40 year-old charity and the heathland site will become a flagship reserve for the Trust in the south of the county.

Trust director Guy Corbett-Marshall explained: "Since the 1960s, the area has been owned and managed by Staffordshire County Council, but the council decided to transfer ownership over to the Trust for a number of reasons. Firstly, the location of the Common has always posed a management and maintenance problem for the council because its ranger service is based 15 miles away in Cannock.

"In addition to that, in 2006 the reserve was designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and this meant it would benefit from more investment. As a charity, the Wildlife Trust is in a better position to apply for more grant aid and other funding which can be used to improve the area for wildlife and visitors."

Following the results of a visitor satisfaction survey, the Trust is planning to build a new community meeting room, incorporating a toilet block, having won a substantial Landfill Communities Fund grant from Cory Environmental Trust in Britain, which in turn was unlocked thanks to a significant donation from South Staffordshire Council. Building work has started and is due to end this autumn.

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust also plans to introduce new signs and to investigate how

the car parks can be improved. To make this happen, the charity has employed a warden, Paul Davis, who will be based on the Common and take care of its day-to-day running, as well as developing a programme of guided walks and community and education events. The Trust has no plans to change the current access arrangements for the public enjoyment of the Common.



A Cuckoo Bee.

## What makes Highgate Common so special?

A SSSI is an area which has been singled out for protection usually because it contains plants, animals or a particular habitat that is a conservation priority. Highgate Common was designated as a SSSI primarily because of its wide range of insect species. The reserve holds 130 species of bees, wasps and ants, and 36 of these are nationally or regionally scarce. This is the greatest diversity of bees and wasps anywhere in the West Midlands.

One of the Common's most attractive residents is the tawny mining bee, a large, fluffy, ginger red bee. Unlike the honey bee, it is a solitary bee, which means that rather than living socially in hives, it makes its own nest by tunnelling into the ground. This is one of the reasons it likes Highgate, because of the sandy areas which are easy for it to tunnel into.



A Tawny Mining Bee - one of the many bee species you may see during a visit.

Another interesting insect species that inhabits the reserve is the commonly named cuckoo bee, so-called because it lays its eggs in the nests of other bees. Also called the nomad bee because it has no home of its own, it acts just like its feathered counterpart and once its larvae hatches out it then proceeds to eat the eggs of the host bee.

Many of the insect species that inhabit Highgate Common are more frequently seen in the warmer south of England. The reason they have populated the reserve is because it is situated in a sheltered dip in the landscape, giving rise to a warm local microclimate.

As well as insects, eagle-eyed walkers may also spot a range of reptiles basking in the sunshine during their visit. Slow worms, grass snakes and common lizards have all been recorded on Highgate Common.

In summer, visitors to Highgate Common will also be treated to the breathtaking sight of carpets of purple heather spreading across the heathland. Other floral features include the delicate blue harebells and the cheerful yellow flowers of mouse-ear

hawkweed.

Brown signs direct visitors from the A449 south of Wombourne. Highgate Common is open permanently and has several car parks. The toilets and Triangle car park will be closed this summer to allow the new building to be constructed.

If you would like to find out more about Highgate Common, contact warden Paul Davis on **07866 973311** or e-mail: [p.davis@staffs-wildlife.org.uk](mailto:p.davis@staffs-wildlife.org.uk).

For more information on Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and how you can become a member, call **01889 880100** or e-mail: [info@staffs-wildlife.co.uk](mailto:info@staffs-wildlife.co.uk)



Swathes of heather carpet Highgate Common during the summer months.



Paul Davis, the new Highgate Common warden.



A panoramic view of Highgate Common showing sandy areas favoured by mining bees.

# PAYMENTS & BENEFITS

## Council customers reap the benefit of improved service

South Staffordshire Council's Payments & Benefits team is facing an ever-increasing workload - but is still managing to set new standards of service.

Whether it's dealing with benefit claims or working to improve the collection of Council Tax, South Staffordshire is striving to be the best.

### Service improvements

Over the past 12 months, the time taken to process new claims and to deal with changes reported by benefit claimants have both been cut and are well within the targets set by Council chiefs.

In addition, the team set up to deal with suspected fraudulent claims also had a good year: in 2008/09, they successfully identified 38 cheats, well in excess of their target of 36.

The improvements are set against a background of more claim work. During the year, there was an increase both in the number of new claims received (3,147 compared to 2,344 in 2007/08) and in the number of changes reported (11,988 compared to 10,867 in 2007/08).

But the time taken to process new claims for Housing and Council Tax Benefit for the year averaged 18.31 days. This is well ahead of the target for 2008/09 of 30 days. We have reduced the target for 2009/10 to 20 days.

And the processing of reported changes to benefit claims averaged 6.97 days over the whole year, well ahead of the target of ten days.

The combination of these two areas of work

reflects an annual performance of 8.26 days against the new National Indicator 181: Right Time Benefit. This is well ahead of a target of 16 days and extremely pleasing considering the increase in caseload during the year, from 6708 to 7293, an increase of 8.7%.

The time taken to process appeals during 2008/09 was 5.1 weeks, once again ahead of the target of six weeks.

The Council has a policy of encouraging residents and businesses to pay their dues by Direct Debit. It saves time and money. During 2008-09, 72.62% of Council Tax payers were using Direct Debit against a target of 65%, whilst 55% of Businesses chose to pay their Business Rates by Direct Debit.

The department, however, does not intend to rest on its laurels. While standards are being improved, target levels for this year are also being raised.

### The Council's Targets for 2009/2010 are:

- To assess all new claims within 20 days from receipt of claim form;

- To assess 95% of all new claims within 14 days of all information received;
- To action all changes within 10 days of notification;
- To deal with appeals within 6 weeks of receipt;
- To secure 42 cases for which a sanction is obtained.
- To collect 98.4% of Council Tax within the year it becomes due;
- To collect 96% of Business Rates within the year it becomes due;
- To increase the % of payers paying by Direct Debit

### Collection of Council Tax and Business Rates

There are always some areas where standards need to be raised and while the Council has had a good record of collecting Council Tax, it fell back slightly during 2008/09 to 98.2% against an average of 98.3% for the last few years. This was despite efforts to support customers in meeting their Council Tax obligations and actively pursuing those who do not pay promptly.

South Staffordshire businesses have not been immune from the economic recession and following a good performance by the Council in 2007/08 collecting Business Rates - 98.6% - it dropped to 97.1% in 2008/09.

Arrangements will continue to be made with ratepayers to pay their bills, but accounts that are not paid promptly will be actively pursued.

### Service Aims

Besides the stark performance statistics, the Council's Benefits and Payments section relies on a set of general aims to guide their operation. These are:

- Aim 1:** To provide a high quality, customer focused service that pays the right benefits, discounts and reliefs to the right people at the right time.
- Aim 2:** To collect Council Tax, Business Rates and Housing Benefits Overpayments effectively, maximising income to the Council and minimising the customers' level of debt as appropriate.
- Aim 3:** To provide value for money for customers and taxpayers by focusing our services around customers needs.
- Aim 4:** To ensure that the service we deliver meets the needs of customers and stakeholders by undertaking regular liaison and consultation.
- Aim 5:** To reduce fraud and error in the system by increasing the number of customers who understand what is expected from them, and what they can expect from us.
- Aim 6:** To have well-trained and knowledgeable staff, able to provide an efficient and professional service to the Council and its customers.

## Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit

### Have your circumstances changed?

You must tell the Housing Benefit / Council Tax Benefit office of your local authority if there has been a change in your circumstances that may make a difference to your existing Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit entitlement.

Some examples of changes that need reporting:

**Changes in Benefit** – you and/or your partner stop receiving Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance, or any other benefit.

**Changes in Income** – if there is a change in you or your partner's wages, Tax Credits, maintenance, pension, or any other income.

**People who live with you** – anyone comes to live with you or moves out, someone who lives with you starts or stops work, a child is born, a child leaves school, or any other change that may affect your entitlement.

**Bank accounts, savings and investments** – you must say if there are any changes in your bank accounts, savings or other investments. However you do not need to tell us about the day-to-day changes to your current account or value of shares on the stock market.

**Private rents** – if your landlord puts your rent up or down, the services included in your rent change, or the part of the property you live in changes.

Other changes include moving, living away from home, becoming a student or finishing a course, going into hospital or prison, or you have a partner of the same sex, whether or not your partnership has been registered in a civil ceremony.

The above does not cover all of the changes we need to know about. If you are not sure whether we need to know about a change let us know anyway. Don't leave it until the next time we ask.

For further information or advice on benefits telephone **01902 696668** or e-mail [benefits@sstaffs.gov.uk](mailto:benefits@sstaffs.gov.uk)



South Staffordshire Council



South Staffordshire Council

## New drop in surgery at Wombourne Leisure Centre

- General advice on Housing matters, Council Tax and Business Rates queries.

- Advice and information on Housing/Council Tax Benefits and other related benefits.

Every Thursday morning between 10am and 12pm  
- no appointment necessary.

[www.sstaffs.gov.uk](http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk)

01902 696000

## ON-LINE BENEFIT CALCULATOR & APPLICATION FORM

It is now possible to estimate your own Benefit entitlement on-line and then complete an on-line application form.

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 can then carry on and complete the application on-line.

Visit our website at [www.sstaffs.gov.uk/benefits](http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/benefits)



# Flood advice everyone should follow

**Flood alerts are a fact of life nowadays - so it is always best to be prepared.**

**Weeks of heavy rain last summer brought flooding in Staffordshire and other parts of the country.**

The water rises so fast, sewers and natural watercourses struggle to cope with the deluge.

Floodwater in or around your home is a traumatic experience, but there are things you can do to minimise the impact.

The most important thing is to reduce the risks to health and danger to life when the water recedes.

Because it is difficult to be sure floodwater is not contaminated (by sewage, for example), it is better to assume that it is and follow some simple, common sense hygiene and safety procedures.

## General Advice

- Whenever possible avoid direct contact with floodwater.
- Keep children and pets out of the flood area.
- If it is necessary to come into contact with floodwater, cover open cuts and wounds with waterproof plasters. Suitable waterproof gloves and footwear should be worn.
- Always wash hands with clean hot water and soap after contact with floodwater, having taken part in clean-up activities or before handling food.

## Floodwater in your Home

All the points made in 'General Advice' (above) should be followed

and in addition, when the floodwater recedes:

- Any food and drink suspected of being in contact with floodwater should be thrown away. (Undamaged tinned foods can be cleaned with a dilute food safe disinfectant before use.)
- Remove excess liquid and silt from the property, including the space under ground floor floorboards (pumping / sweeping as appropriate).
- If electricity circuits or equipment have been immersed they will need to be inspected by a qualified electrician to ensure the system and/or equipment is safe to use.
- Wash down hard surfaces with hot soapy water and when clean and dry, wipe again with a domestic disinfectant following the manufacturer's directions and then leave to dry.
- Food storage and preparation areas should be cleaned with hot soapy water and when dry washed down with a food safe disinfectant (e.g. Dettol, Milton) and left to dry.
- All soft fabrics, toys/clothes/bedding which have been in contact with floodwater should be laundered in a hot wash (60°C). Other contaminated soft furnishings that cannot be laundered in the washing machine should be professionally

cleaned and if this is not possible, they should be disposed of.

- Ensure the property is well ventilated to assist the drying process, have windows open as much as possible, consider using a dehumidifier where possible and try to keep some background heat on at all times, but do not turn the heating up excessively.
- Ensure that any air bricks are clear of debris and silt.
- All kitchen utensils and crockery should be thoroughly washed in hot soapy water before being used for food preparation and service.
- If water supply taps have been splashed with floodwater, ensure the taps are cleaned and disinfected with a food safe disinfectant before they are used.
- Over the following weeks as the property thoroughly dries, vacuum on a frequent basis.

## Remember

- **DO NOT turn your heating up** as higher temperatures during the first 48 hours may prolong the life of the bacteria.
- **DO open windows** to provide good natural ventilation and moderate heating to assist drying.

## Flooding in Your Garden

All the points made in 'General Advice' should be observed in addition to:

### Hard Surfaces:

- Hard surfaces (paths/drives) can



be swept clear of floodwater and silt and then disinfected (follow the manufacturer's directions). It is advised these areas are not used for 3 hours after disinfecting.

### Lawns / Borders:

- Do not rake or dig in the affected areas, this may spread any possible contamination.
- Laboratory tests show that allowing nature to take its course is the best action. Most contaminants are on or near the surface where they receive the highest exposure to the sun's ultra violet radiation which is a very effective bactericide.

- Do not eat garden produce affected with floodwater for a period of 3 weeks and only after thorough washing.

## Remember:

**Contact your contents / home insurers as soon as possible to be advised by them as to what actions they require concerning any damage to your property or belongings.**

If you're worried about the risk of flooding in your area, you can find out more information about what to do by visiting the Environment Agency's website at [www.environment-agency.gov.uk/floodwarning](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/floodwarning). You can also call the Floodline at the Environment Agency, on **0845 988 1188**, for up-to-date flood warnings.

# Kinver hotel hopes to make history

**An historic South Staffordshire mansion, now converted into a luxury hotel, is set to battle it out for top prize in a national building award.**

The Dunsley Hall Hotel in Kinver, which dates back to 1304, beat off competition from other worthy converted buildings across Staffordshire to be the county's entry for a Local Authority Building Control (LABC) quality award.

It will be competing in the 'Best Conversion' section, against other projects up and down the country, at the National Awards ceremony in London later this year.

Its current owners, Terrie and Wilf Beardsmore, bought the Hall in June 2006.

Since then, they have worked closely with officers at South Staffordshire Council to help restore the building to its former glory. It now operates as a ten-bedroom hotel and popular wedding venue.



Cllr Roy Wright (Deputy Leader), Direct Services at South Staffordshire Council said: "This is wonderful news for everyone involved with the Dunsley Hall project. Dunsley Hall is a delightful building and its renovation is an amazing achievement."

Geoff Williams, Building Control Officer at South Staffordshire Council added: "We've been working closely with the owners at Dunsley Hall for sometime to help make sure the conversion plans were in keeping with the history of the building."

"The project has already beaten off stiff competition from across the whole of Staffordshire, but to be recognised as the best conversion project in the country would be an outstanding achievement for everyone involved."

Anyone wishing to find out more about Dunsley Hall can



visit their website at [www.dunsleyhallhotel.co.uk](http://www.dunsleyhallhotel.co.uk).

Dunsley Hall's achievement is the most recent of a series of awards for buildings in Kinver: 19/20 High Street (in the village centre), as well as the Whittington Inn have both previously won national English Heritage awards for the best restoration of a timber framed building in 1997 and 1999 respectively.



# Five star food in South Staffordshire

More than 30 food businesses in South Staffordshire have been served with an impressive 5-Star inspection rating by the Council's 'Rate My Place' team.

In the past 12 months, the Council's Environmental Health Team visited hundreds of local food businesses to assess their cleanliness and commitment to high hygiene standards.

The Council is now rewarding 32 businesses who managed to get the highest rating with a special certificate to acknowledge their achievements.

Food Businesses, including restaurants, pubs, take-aways, shops, residential homes, schools and manufacturers receive a food

hygiene inspection by Food Safety Officers from South Staffordshire Council on a regular basis.

Thanks to the Staffordshire-wide 'Rate My Place' scheme all the food safety inspections and ratings are placed on-line so you can find the cleanest and best managed places to eat! A business can achieve a rating of between zero stars and five gold stars (the top rating).

Why not join the other 18,000 visitors at [www.ratemyplace.org.uk](http://www.ratemyplace.org.uk) and find out where you're likely to get a tasty dish, hygienically prepared!

You can now even search the 'Rate My Place' website from your mobile phone at [www.ratemyplace.mobi](http://www.ratemyplace.mobi)



Some of the high achievers awarded with a congratulatory certificate by Cllr Robert Marshall, Portfolio Holder for Community Services, at a special presentation. They included: Oak Farm Hotel in Hatherton; Spring Slade Lodge Tea Rooms in Broadhurst Green; The Butchery at Essington Fruit Farm; The Village Bakery in Brewood and Wombourne Fish Bar in Wombourne.

## Support your Local Businesses

Civic leaders in South Staffordshire are urging residents to back their local shops and businesses and help them get through the Credit Crunch

The Council is raising the profile of the 'Think Local' campaign, encouraging people to try and buy what they need from outlets in the county.

Whether it's a tin of beans or a new TV set, a pound of plums or a plumber, you can get it in Staffordshire - and save time and money!

The campaign is being backed by local Councils across the county and the Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

It is not just consumers who are being urged to Think Local: businesses themselves are being asked to trade between them as much as possible.

In the difficult financial climate, it's important that people stick together.

Doing business locally makes good business sense, but buying goods and services locally can also make a real difference, to your lifestyle as well as your wallet.

Think of all the time saved in travelling or hunting around hoping to save a few pounds. Buying local usually means you get the goods quicker - and the after sales service is not a call centre in Timbuktu!

Buying local can also have an enormous environmental benefit in terms of reducing your 'carbon footprint'.

Most importantly, the money you spend in the area, stays in the area, which means Staffordshire can sustain jobs and local communities.



Why not log on to the 'Think Local' website at [www.think-local.biz](http://www.think-local.biz) to find out which businesses, shops and services are local to you.

Businesses can also take advantage of the 'Think Local' on-line campaign - you can advertise your business **FREE** to thousands of others in the area. New customers and suppliers could be right on your doorstep. Potential business partners might be waiting. There is also an invaluable source of local business news, advice and support - everything from events to funding.

Councillor David Billson, (Deputy Leader) Strategic Services, believes 'Think Local' will be key in helping the local economy prepare for the economic upturn:

"Keeping it local is better in so many ways. Better for attracting new business and investment, and is more sustainable for the local environment with customers and workforces close by. With money and jobs maintained locally, we can ensure that Staffordshire can prepare for the economic upturn."

Visit [www.think-local.biz](http://www.think-local.biz) to see what is local to you. Remember, whether you're buying or selling ... think local first.

## Oyez! Green Homes for Penkridge!

Building work on an innovative eco-housing project in Penkridge has just got under way - and the whole village knows about it.

Town crier Bevan Craddock announced the start of work on a pair of houses in Clay Street, in the traditional fashion.

The project aims to compare the green credentials of a brand new house against that of the neighbouring refurbished house.

Both homes will include:

- a Swedish heating system which uses natural resources;
- solar powered hot water;
- triple glazing; and
- low energy lighting.

It's an experiment by Central Borders Housing Group (CBHG) on behalf of South Staffordshire Housing Association and part-funded by South Staffordshire Council.

Sue Rowley, Managing Director of South Staffordshire Housing Association explained: "The aim of the project is to see whether you can really make a refurbished house as green and efficient as a new build. We will be measuring energy ratings, performance and fuel bills to see whether in the future we can provide our customers with eco-homes that are super-efficient to run."

Ursula Bennion, Group Development Director for CBHG added: "Our eco-homes have been designed to very high standards and to fit in with existing Penkridge buildings. What we learn will help us consider how we can cut emissions and fuel poverty in the future."

Town crier Bevan could be heard streets away telling villagers: "It is a big step in the right direction which should lead towards lower running costs in our homes and a more sustainable form of living. Over 30 years ago, my father was researching Heat Pumps for home heating when they were in their pioneering stage. I am very pleased that the Housing Association is now leading the way in Penkridge with this new technology."

The new eco-project has also been welcomed by Council chiefs. Cllr David Billson, (Deputy Leader) Strategic Services at the Council said: "This is a brand new project which could really pave the way for greener and more sustainable development across the District in the future".

"Projects like this are helping to provide much needed affordable homes for local people, whilst the new eco-measures could really help bring down fuel bills. We'll be very excited to see the results of this innovative experiment."

The building work, which will meet Sustainable Homes Code Level 4, is being carried out by Kaneal Construction of Stafford, while CBHG's Staffordshire Property Care team will carry out the refurbishment of the existing house.



Penkridge Town Crier, Bevan Craddock, seen here with (left to right) Mrs Anne Geoghegan (Parish Chairperson), Grant Mitchell (Housing, Strategy and Regeneration Manager from South Staffordshire Council), Cllr David Billson (Portfolio Holder - Strategic Services at South Staffordshire Council) and Ursula Bennion (Group Development Director, CBHG).



South Staffordshire Council

## INDUSTRIAL UNITS TO LET

South Staffordshire Business Park, Cheslyn Hay  
947 sq ft & 2,422 sq ft

Landywood Enterprise Park, Great Wyrley  
831 - 4,500 sq ft

Heathmill Enterprise Centre, Wombourne  
1,460 - 2,350 sq ft

Littleton Business Park, Huntington  
1,345 sq ft

Four Ashes Enterprise Centre  
807 sq ft

Contact:

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

Tel: 01902 696117 Fax: 01902 696705

E-mail: [g.parker@sstaffs.gov.uk](mailto:g.parker@sstaffs.gov.uk)

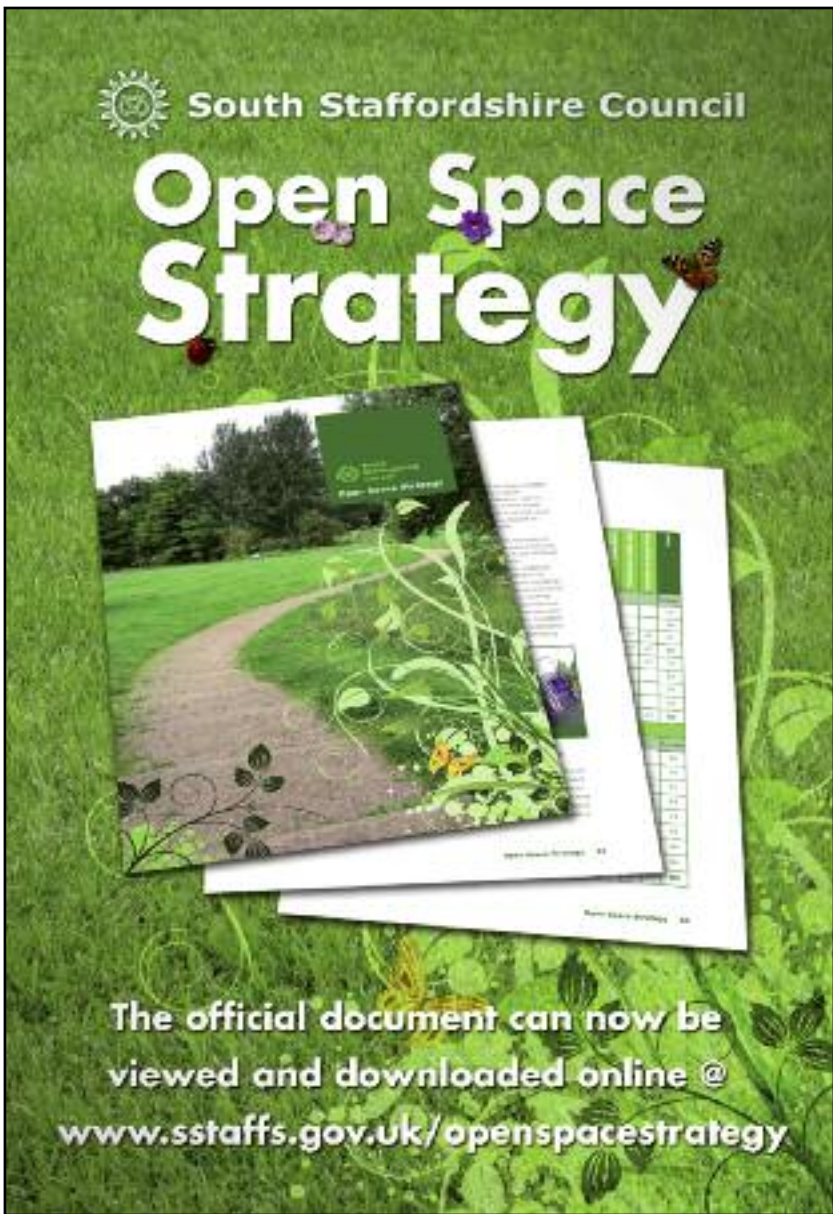


2006-2007  
Transforming the Delivery of  
Services Through Partnerships

# SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE REVIEW



## Open space - the final frontier



**Open spaces are what make South Staffordshire so special and the Council is determined to make the most of them.**

We have a huge range of them across the District - parks, gardens, commons, heathland, reclaimed industrial sites and railways.

They are enjoyed every day by thousands of residents and visitors: whether it be a woodland walk, playing sport, growing fruit and veg at local allotments, visiting churchyards or just taking in the historic landscape.

Our open spaces offer a haven of tranquillity and play a huge role in attracting the tourism industry to the District with each Parish offering its own unique charm and distinctive character.

Our parks and open areas also play a key role in helping to keep people fit and healthy, and for many offer the ideal opportunity to enjoy a brisk walk around our distinctive and picturesque environment.

Now the Council has set out plans through its Open Space Strategy to ensure that it continues to preserve and enhance our open spaces for future generations.

To find out exactly how the Council will be helping to make the most out of our open spaces for the next ten years visit our website at [www.sstaffs.gov.uk/openspaces](http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/openspaces).

*A paper copy of the document can be viewed in Solutions at the Council Offices, Codsall.*



**South Staffordshire Council**

### CONTACTS:

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

### OPENING TIMES

For personal visits to the Council's Customer Contact Centre the opening times are:

<b>Monday</b>	8.45am to 5.00pm
<b>Tuesday</b>	8.45am to 8.00pm
<b>Wednesday</b>	8.45am to 5.00pm
<b>Thursday</b>	8.45am to 5.00pm
<b>Friday</b>	8.45am to 5.00pm
<b>Saturday</b>	9.30am to 1.00pm

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

اگر آپ اس دستاویز کی نقلی کاپی چاہتے ہیں تو براہ کرم رابطہ کریں  
 یہ ڈاکیومنٹ بریل، آڈیو کاسیٹ اور دیگر شکلوں میں بھی دستیاب ہے  
 اگر آپ کو اس دستاویز کی کاپی دوسری زبان یا شکلوں میں چاہیے تو براہ کرم  
 رابطہ کریں یا دستاویز کی کاپی بریل، آڈیو کاسیٹ اور دیگر شکلوں میں  
 دستیاب ہے۔  
 For further information please contact the Council Offices, Codsall.

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

**South Staffordshire Council,  
 Council Offices,  
 Codsall,  
 South Staffordshire.  
 WV8 1PX**

**Tel: (01902) 696000**

**E-mail: [thereview@sstaffs.gov.uk](mailto:thereview@sstaffs.gov.uk)**

## FLAT OUT FOR RECYCLING

**Tenants of more than 1,500 flats and apartments across South Staffordshire have been given the green light to join fully the recycling revolution.**

Up to now, residents of properties with communal bins could only recycle paper and cardboard.

But now, with the introduction of a new blue bin, they can add glass, cans and plastic bottles.

All recyclable materials can now be put together in large blue wheelie bins, which are then separated using state of the art machinery at a sorting plant in Aldridge.

Cllr Mrs Joan Williams, who is spearheading the Council's recycling programme, recently visited residents in Arbourtree Court, run by Midland Heart Housing Association, in Wombourne, to give them the good news.

She told them: "If you live in a flat or an apartment, recycling has just become easier, because you can now recycle more things at home.

"Just empty all of your recyclable materials in the big blue bins where we will collect them for sorting."

In 2007/08, South Staffordshire Council was in the top 10% of local councils, after figures showed that over 47% of waste in South Staffordshire was now being recycled.

Cllr Williams added: "As a District we are now recycling more of our waste than ever before.

"Every home in the District can now recycle at least four different materials and we will continue to make it as easy as possible for residents to recycle and reduce the amount of waste we send to landfill."



Cllr Mrs Joan Williams, (Deputy Leader) Environmental Services, at South Staffordshire Council meets with May Mitchell from Arbourtree Court in Wombourne, just one the communal properties which will now benefit from being able to recycle more waste.

# LEISURE

## Kids have got it **SUSSED**

**What do South Staffordshire youngsters look forward to each summer?**

**SUSSED of course!**

SUSSED is the Council's mammoth activities programme designed to keep the District's five to 12 year olds active, amused, entertained and out of mischief.

All the Council's leisure centres, at Codsall, Cheslyn Hay, Penkridge and Wombourne will have SUSSED sessions running every day throughout the school holidays. Baggeridge Country Park will also be catering for kids interested in wildlife.

The range of activities is mouth-watering: roller skating, go karting, art workshops with professional artists, swimming lessons and athletics coaching are just a sample of what's on offer.

Some have to be paid for, of course, but there are still more than 50 - yes 50! - activities which are completely free of charge! These include Cricket, Rugby, Tennis, Golf and Cheerleading Coaching as well as Itsy Bitsy Bakers Cooking workshops and Samba Drumming.

Demand for SUSSED is always sky-high and it's first-come, first served, so hurry and book your child's activity as soon as possible.

Along with the leisure centres, Sussed will also be going out and about again this summer, touring the District and bringing the fun to your doorstep.

So look out for the Sussed programme in Brewood, Coven, Bishops Wood, Codsall, Bilbrook, Kinver, Essington, Featherstone, Cheslyn Hay, Great Wyrley, Perton, Pattingham, Blymhill, Wheaton Aston, Wombourne, Swindon and Huntington.

All Out and About activities are completely free of charge, but children taking part must reside in the village in which the activity takes place, due to individual Parish Council's funding the activities.

Baggeridge Country Park has a selection of children's activities on offer to enable children to discover the natural world including pond dipping, bug hunts, bat walks and art sessions.

And to top it all, don't forget that every child swims for FREE this summer during all public sessions, so make the most of your local pool this summer.

To find out exactly what SUSSED has to offer please contact Leisure & Community Development on **01902 696531** and request a copy of the 52 page Bumper Summer SUSSED programme or visit [www.sstaffs.gov.uk/sussed](http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/sussed).



## GET YOUR SKATES ON!



Children's Roller Skating Club launched at Cheslyn Hay Leisure Centre.

**Roller skating sessions are up and running at Cheslyn Hay Leisure Centre.**

They started in March and are now being held every Sunday, in conjunction with Alumwell Roller Skating Club, whose qualified coaches are there to assist.

This latest activity provided by South Staffordshire Leisure and Community Development is the result of partnership work between the Club, the Council, South Staffordshire School Sport Partnership and Cheslyn Hay Community & Learning Partnership.

Skaters are welcome to bring their own skates, but skates are also available for hire, thanks to funding provided by Cheslyn Hay Community & Learning Partnership.

Skaters can choose from either of two sessions: 11am until noon or noon until 1pm. The cost is £2.50 per hour, including free skate hire.

For more information please contact Cheslyn Hay Leisure Centre on **01922 417790** or Leisure & Community Development on **01902 696531**.

SUSSED

## It's music to your ears!

The sound of music will be ringing around Baggeridge Country Park again this summer.

A total of eight concerts covering the widest range of musical tastes have been lined up and they are all completely FREE of charge (normal car parking charges apply).

There's folk, jazz, rock, big band and Latin - just take your pick.

What better way to sit back, relax in the Park's beautiful surroundings and enjoy some great gigs.

Bring the family, bring a picnic, but also don't forget to bring something to sit on!

All the concerts will be held in the bandstand, but no seating will be provided.

Here's the line up:

**Saturday 4th July**  
4pm - 5pm **James and the Giant**  
A 4-piece Folk/Rock band

5.30pm - 7pm **Matt Tyler**  
A 23 year old singer/songwriter from Birmingham.

**Saturday 18th July**  
4pm - 6pm **Bill Bailey Band**  
Playing traditional Jazz music they will definitely get your feet tapping.

**Sunday 2nd August**  
4pm - 6pm **N C Big Band**  
The ever-popular Big Band returns to Baggeridge for their sixth year.

**Sunday 9th August**  
4pm - 6pm **The Cubans**  
A highly popular 'up and coming' local Wolverhampton band performing alternative indie/rock music.

**Sunday 16th August**  
4pm - 6pm **Rack & Ruin**  
Rack and Ruin play a combination of lively jigs and reels, original songs and soulful ballads - a true mix of folk and rock. Or as they describe it 'Folk with Attitude!'

**Sunday 23rd August**  
4pm - 6pm **The Divine Brothers**  
A covers band. Great tunes to spend chilling out at the Park too.

**Saturday 29th August**  
4pm - 6pm **Remnants**  
Back for a second year at Baggeridge, Remnants are a four-piece electro acoustic band from the Midlands.

**Sunday 30th August**  
4pm - 6pm **Giggetty**  
Back after a year away from Baggeridge the hugely popular Black Country Folk Band will be drawing the concerts to an end.

# Bags and bags of fun at the **BIG** event!

It's back and it's bigger than ever!

**South Staffordshire's BIG SUMMER EVENT promises a day filled with fun and activities for hundreds of local youngsters.**

The date has been fixed for Thursday 27th August and the venue, as usual, Baggeridge Country Park.

But this time - the fourth year it has been held - there will be loads more to do in what is bound to be another 'full house' at the country park.

This year the event is bursting with cool activities everything from cricket to recycled crafts, football to Dudley Zoo, we also have our new exciting activity ... Woodland Survival!

The Council is preparing the way for smiles, creative play, energy, new friendships and most of all fun, with FREE transport for local youngsters from across the District.

Parents need have no worries about sending their kids

along: ALL staff working at the event are CRB cleared and have experience of working with children.

The BIG Summer Event is funded by Staffordshire Children's Fund and is therefore offered to children living in South Staffordshire in the first instance. If by 24th July there are spaces remaining these will be opened out to children living outside of the District.

For parents it is important to note that due to the event's ever increasing popularity, demand for spaces for transport and at the event itself are high and will be allocated on a first come first served basis.

Bookings will be taken for the event up to 7th August or until maximum capacity is reached. Please note, all places must be pre-booked, bookings will not be administered on the day of the event.

For more information on how to book please call **01902 696245** or visit [www.sstaffs.gov.uk/bse](http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/bse).



## SWIM FOR FREE AT OUR LEISURE CENTRES

There's now FREE swimming for young and old at South Staffordshire's Leisure Centres!

If you are under 16 or over 60, you can take a dip in any of the Council owned pools completely free of charge.

The scheme, funded by the Government, started on 1st April this year and will run until 31st March 2011.

To take advantage, you'll need a Free Swimming User Card - ask at the reception desks in the Leisure Centres for a registration form.

The card will be issued right away, and you must present it at reception before all swims.

The leisure centres would like to highlight to customers that due to the launch of the free swimming, it is expected that the swimming pools will be busier than normal.

For more information please contact Leisure & Community Development on **01902 696525** or ask at your local Leisure Centre.

## Older generation is alive and kicking

The new Active Generation programme aimed at older people was launched by South Staffordshire Leisure Centres at the beginning of the year.

Early indications are that the scheme is going to be very popular. Among the activities lined up are:

- 50+ circuit training and kung-fu classes at Codsall Leisure Centre.
- Wombourne Leisure Centre has a gentle aerobics class on Friday mornings.

The Active Generation programme will continue to be developed and the Council is also focussing on other schemes specifically aimed at the older age group, including 'Flicks in the Sticks' and The Spring and Autumn Concerts.

## The YELLOW PAGES of sports clubs

South Staffordshire's Sports Club Directory has just been updated and is now posted on the Internet.

The directory provides contact details for just about every sports club or organisation within the District.

From Archery to Yachting, if you are looking to take up a sporting activity, but don't know where to start, look here.

The directory is 'live' on South Staffordshire Council's website at [www.sstaffs.gov.uk](http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk), with search facilities - by specific sports, by sports clubs in your locality and by clubs with accreditation for children.

This means the club will have qualified coaches, the club is child friendly and is a safe environment for children and young people with the club having a clear role around the development of youngsters.

South Staffordshire Council and its partners will direct children and young people to accredited clubs because they have a junior section and are meeting the minimum standards for their sport.

For more information on becoming an accredited sports club, contact your National Governing body of sport or South Staffordshire Council's Leisure and Community Development department.

If you believe any of your club's details on the website are incorrect, or your club is not listed and you would like it to be, get in touch with the Community Development team on **01902 696533** or e-mail [leisure@sstaffs.gov.uk](mailto:leisure@sstaffs.gov.uk).

## Ribbon is cut on new-look Leisure Centre

Penkrige Leisure Centre has now fully reopened after an extensive refurbishment.

The work started last year on the swimming pool and toning suite and continued this year with an extension to the Fitness Suite.

The swimming pool underwent redecoration work to the poolside and changing rooms, while the toning suite was redecorated and is now equipped with the latest Easy Tone chairs from Shapemaster UK.

The Fitness Suite now contains

28 state of the art Pulse Fitness machines and a Vibraxis vibro-oscillating machine.

The final phase of the refurbishment was in the reception area, which has been altered to offer a platform lift for increased access to the first floor fitness suite. The dry-side changing rooms have also been completely transformed with new décor.

The new-look Leisure Centre was officially re-opened on 6th May by the newly elected Chairman of South Staffordshire Council, Cllr Mrs Christine Raven.



The Chairman of South Staffordshire Council, Cllr Mrs Christine Raven, officially opens Penkrige Leisure Centre's refurbished facilities.

## Family fun on your doorstep

There's a great day out for all the family at Baggeridge Country Park - for FREE, or next to nothing!

Right on your doorstep in South Staffordshire, this 150-acre nature reserve has held the prestigious Green Flag award for the last ten years.

Home to an abundance of wildlife including some of our rarest and more endangered wildlife, Baggeridge is a great place to explore.

There is a network of paths around the park and a new Family Mountain Bike Trail for the more adventurous. The play area is ideal for keeping children active and occupied during the holidays.

Throughout the summer the rangers run a series of activities to encourage children to discover more about the wildlife of the park. These cost just £1.10 per child but need to be booked in advance as places are limited.

For a bigger thrill and challenge there is the new Baggeridge Heights Aerial Ropes Adventure run by Closer to the Edge Ltd, (Admission

fee applies). For full details on the high ropes course and availability visit their website at: [www.closetotheedge.co.uk](http://www.closetotheedge.co.uk).



Get there on foot, by bike or on public transport, it doesn't cost a penny to get in. If you are driving, the car park is only £1.20 a day. For regular visitors an annual pass is available reducing the cost even more. The park is open from 9am and gates close at 8pm during the summer.

## SWIMMING POOL CLOSURE

Work is about to start on Codsall Leisure Centre's swimming pool, which will be closed from June to September.

It involves refurbishment of the pool tank and pool deck, plus the installation of a new roof with lighting, new pool windows and a small spectator area. Although the pool will be closed during this period, ALL other Leisure Centre facilities will be running as normal.

Users of the Codsall swimming pool are invited to try one of the Council's other Leisure Centre pools during the closure, either Cheslyn Hay, Penkrige or Wombourne.

## Child's play in South Staffordshire

Children in South Staffordshire are being encouraged to 'come out and play' in a new scheme just launched.

The Council has recruited a team of Playrangers, newly-created posts, who will be out and about in villages and neighbourhoods across the District in the coming months.

Their job is to organise 'Open Access' play activities, encouraging children and young people and their families to use their local play areas to have fun and learn through play.

'Open Access' means that any child can join in the activities, regardless of age or ability.

Since no consent forms are needed, any child already at a play area can simply join in if they are interested and leave when they want to do something else.

Each child joining in is responsible for their own actions, the Playranger simply encourages them to think about what they are doing, gives some ideas on other playful activities and the impact it can have for themselves and others around them.

When will the Playrangers be in my village?

The play rangers will be working early evenings and weekends. They will work in teams of two and each team will be allocated to particular localities for a four month period.

There is no timetable for the Playrangers, as they will be running activities with children and young people already at the play areas. The play rangers will move from one site to the next during their working hours. If a play area is empty they will simply move on to the next site in their area. They will be covering a large area, so they won't be around every day, but they will be back regularly - keep an eye out for them!

What will the Playrangers be doing?

The Playrangers will be there to help the children play. Sometimes they will organise a particular activity that the children can join in, such as bug-hunts in autumn, parachute games in spring, or a good old-fashioned tug-o-war!

Sometimes the Playranger may join in activities children are already doing and encouraging them to consider the associated risks and impact of their activity. It all depends on the children who are at the play area and what they want to do.

They will have a number of activity choices and a variety of equipment available.



How do I know it will be safe for my child to join in with the Playranger?

All of the Playrangers are cleared through the Criminal Records Bureau and have been through an extensive training programme, as well as having previous experience and backgrounds of working with children and young people.

The Playrangers will be a 'responsible adult' who will be at the play areas to advise children and young people, be a role model and alert relevant organisations of any problems at a particular play area.

As consent forms are not needed, a child's medical information will be unknown, so the Playrangers will not be allowed to administer first aid other than life-saving actions which any responsible member of the public would do.

My child is still quite young - can I join in with the activities alongside my child?

Yes of course the more the merrier! Parents will be encouraged to join in. They could repeat the activities with the children when the play ranger isn't there!

If you have any questions about the Playrangers, please do not hesitate to contact Community Development on 01902 696534.



Varinder Anton Anna

The new Playrangers who will be out and about in the District.



# Fair play for South Staffordshire

**Play facilities for youngsters in South Staffordshire are set to be boosted by an injection of cash from the Government.**

Staffordshire County Council recently secured 'Playbuilder Status', which will mean money to improve play facilities around the county.

In South Staffordshire, Kinver has already benefitted through the recently opened BMX Bike track on a recreation ground in the village, and Cheslyn Hay is set to benefit this year with an adventure play area being developed.

The bike track in Kinver has been developed with young people, who were involved with the committee meetings from the outset and is now very popular. It has been built using natural materials, and it also blends in with the surrounding countryside.



The scheme has been very popular, with many more requests than money available, ensuring the schemes which get funded are really good quality.

The amount of money available for any particularly scheme varies, but the maximum amount awarded last year was £50,000.

People hoping to get funding for play projects are advised to discuss their ideas with the South Staffordshire Play Partnership.

Key contacts within South Staffordshire Play Partnership are:

**Katie Beards**,  
Community Development Manager  
01902 696528

**Rachel Taylor**,  
Community Development Officer  
01902 696534

**Karen Sullivan**, Lead Officer for Play at Staffordshire County Council  
01785 278659

For further information on Playbuilder, you can also visit Staffordshire County Council's website:  
[www.staffordshire.gov.uk/play](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/play)



The opening of the Kinver BMX Bike track.

The county's Playbuilder vision is to move away from traditional play areas, with brightly coloured, metal equipment, and instead encourage the use of natural materials. This drives children and young people to use their imagination and stretch their abilities through play.

Rather than taking the responsibility of managing different projects themselves, those in charge of Playbuilder have elected to work with local community groups and the various Play Partnerships, to ensure money is distributed fairly to areas that really need it, guided by local people.

# Good times roll for Codsall teens

Teenagers in the Codsall area can no longer complain there's 'nothing to do' in their spare time this summer.

Codsall Community and Learning Partnership has set up a four-week summer programme of activities for 13-19 year olds.

The group has organised a wide ranging programme to ensure older children in the area have an enjoyable and interesting summer break.

They include trips to Water World and Alton Towers, drop in sessions at local youth centres, DJ Skills, Graffiti, Street Dance, climbing wall and archery sessions.

Two amazing culture days are also planned, where young people can take part in Bhangra Dancing, Henna Art, Asian Cuisine, Drumming Workshops, Rangoli, garland making, Kathak, DJ hip hop, African beauty, Djembi drumming, and Caribbean cuisine!

The Partnership is made up of a variety of organisations including South Staffordshire Council, parish councils, head teachers of local schools and Staffordshire Youth Service.



Codsall Community High School has also organised a week of activities which include a Gifted and Talented Art School, and a 3 day Aeronautics and Robotics course!

All children aged 13-19 attending schools in South Staffordshire will receive a copy of the flyer detailing all the activities on offer. If you haven't received a flyer and would like one please contact Leisure & Community Development on **01902 696531**.



# Community spirit is alive and kicking

**The Council is giving wholehearted support to schemes aimed at putting vitality back into South Staffordshire's villages and communities.**



Cllr Alan Hinton, former Chairman of South Staffordshire Council, at the Essington Spring Concert.

Two Community Development Officers are ready to respond to ideas from villagers and community groups for organising activities and putting on events.

With their know-how and encouragement and the possibility of finding financial support, your project or event can be brought to life.

The development officers are: **Rachel Taylor** covering the north of the District, including Great Wyrley, Cheslyn Hay, Featherstone, Huntington, Penkridge, Wheaton Aston, Brewood and the villages in between.

**Mark Jenkinson** covering the south of the District, including Kinver, Wombourne, Codsall, Bilbrook, Perton and the villages in between.

South Staffordshire Council is

committed to supporting its rural communities and a number of schemes are already up and running.

For example, Live & Local provide support to groups of people who would like to have professional theatre shows in their village hall. The shows are less about 'high brow' theatre and more about getting together with your neighbours for a good night out. The shows are chosen by the local community (usually a small, representative committee), and audiences repeatedly comment on the friendly atmosphere experienced at Live & Local performances.

The choice is very wide - comedy, serious drama, puppet theatre, shows for kids, shows for adults, family shows, barn dances & blues

music. There really is something for everyone!

Flicks in the Sticks is very similar to Live & Local, focusing on showing films. Again, the local community chooses the films and people have commented how nice it is to be able to walk out of the front door to the village hall to see a film.

Spring & Autumn Concerts are targeted at senior citizens and people who would struggle to get to larger cities to hear professional music live. We work with local contacts to organise the concerts, and promote them locally.

The key to all of these schemes is local contacts and promoting events locally. The best way to sell tickets is for people to be talking about it in the local shop, in the pub, or in the queue at the chip shop!

To contact the Community Development Officers call: **Rachel Taylor on 01902 696534** **Mark Jenkinson on 01902 696533**.