

## **News You Can Use on the Doorstep**

### **The Leader's Monthly E-Newsletter for September**

#### **Look Ahead Now to a Busy Autumn**

August was a holiday month in the county council calendar but there was plenty of good news around that should give us cheer as the Labour Party descended into civil war around its leadership election. Without wishing to gloat it seems amazing that Labour both nationally and locally is unable to formulate any coherent policies on which they agree. The election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour Leader might seem like a throwback to the 1980s, with his refusal to sing the National Anthem, but the reality is that a Corbyn-led Labour opposition is a serious risk to our economy and puts the funding of our schools at risk. Our education reforms have seen a million more children in outstanding schools since 2010.

By threatening to reverse our plans, Labour have shown they aren't on the side of working families, and will fail to give every child the best start in life. Big arguments have returned to British politics. Let's not throw away everything that has been achieved in our country. Everyone who wants Britain to move forward, not back, should join us in this effort.

In the meantime this a good moment to reflect on our Conservative achievements on behalf of Staffordshire people and businesses. Isn't it good news that job seekers claimants at 4,159 is a new low, 0.8% —the lowest since 1993. This owes much to the County Council's focus on building and diversifying the local economy by drawing in new investment. You'd expect a county council to be strategic but this hits all the buttons.

But it's not all business. The county council has chalked up a huge success with the Ironman event which is already a sell out for 2016 and added some £2M to the economy by virtue of visitors and participants taking advantage of our great environment and tourism offer. Equally, we can take pride in the on-going cooperation between Staffordshire County Council and Bremen that brings together our young people and youngsters from Germany to look after

the German Military Cemetery at Cannock. That's exactly what a good local authority should be doing—thinking outside the box and engaging young people with their heritage and in understanding the wider context by developing friendships with youngsters from other cultures.

It really was an exciting month, with the countdown to the opening of our new Stafford Library now really underway. I was lucky enough to get a sneak preview of the fantastic new premises. It is an incredibly vibrant and attractive space that I know everyone will be proud of.

Apart from the wide range of books available, there are touchscreen tables, large computer tablets and two state-of-the-art 3D printers. There are computers available with free Wi-Fi access, a space with a projector for gatherings or story-telling and much more and it's all on one floor for ease of use.

The new facility is a great example of how libraries can be used flexibly to meet the changing needs of local communities, whilst ensuring continued access to lots of books and thousands of e-books from the wider library network.

It really does have something to benefit everyone, whether you are a resident, visitor to the town, community group, and local businesses looking to learn, create and socialise.

The library officially opened its doors on September 9<sup>th</sup> and is based on the ground floor of the county council building at Staffordshire Place. Even though the summer holidays are over, it's not too late to take some weekend time out with the family and enjoy a great day out in Staffordshire.

There are always enjoyable family days out to be had at the Shugborough Estate, Weston Park and Chasewater and historic buildings to visit like Tamworth Castle and Lichfield Cathedral. And of course we have two of the country's leading theme parks, Alton Towers in the north of the county and Drayton Manor Park in Tamworth.

Last year alone almost 25 million people, from home and abroad, enjoyed day or overnight trips to our county. This helped generate a fantastic £1.1 billion in direct spend on accommodation, entertainment, travel, shopping and food and drink. You can find out more about what Staffordshire has to offer at: [www.enjoystaffordshire.com](http://www.enjoystaffordshire.com)

## Job Seeker's Claimants in Staffordshire Fall to New Low



News that people claiming job seeker's allowance has fallen to a new record low for the second month running has been welcomed by council chiefs.

The latest figures found there were 4,519 claimants in Staffordshire in August claiming job seeker's allowance (JSA) – this is the lowest number since 1993.

This latest news means that the number of JSA claimants in Staffordshire has now fallen well below the regional average of 2.1% at 0.8 per cent of the county's population.

Philip Atkins, Staffordshire County Council leader, is pleased with the latest figures for across the county as they continue efforts to create new jobs.

He says: "This is a remarkable, sustained achievement and vindication of our focus on building and diversifying the county's economic strength.

"The county council is not resting on its laurels. It is actively promoting the county at home and abroad as a place for businesses to thrive and prosper, delivering superfast broadband across the county, supporting rural businesses and working with schools and colleges to develop students with the right skills to take advantage of good jobs close to home."

Philip Atkins says: "With such low unemployment in the county, we are concentrating on providing the foundations for delivering more, better-paid jobs to Staffordshire, so residents can live prosperous, happier, healthier lives."

## County Farms – Supporting Our Rural Economy

It is easy to forget that our County is 80 per cent rural and with an economy that makes an enormous contribution to Staffordshire's overall prosperity, it's vital that we support our local agricultural and land-based sectors.



Despite current pressures across food production, we know we will need more home grown food in the long term and an initiative that we are very proud of, that's helping grow our rural economy, is the work of our County Farms. Our 95 farms not only make a valuable contribution to our overall economy but give people the chance to get a foot in the agricultural sector, helping to set many up for a long and successful career in agriculture.

We really value the hard work and commitment of our tenants, many of whom have established thriving enterprises and help to generate over £500,000 each year for the county council. As a farmer myself as well as being Leader of the Council, I know how busy and important this time of year is. It's all about preparing for the winter and ensuring crops are harvested and there's good fodder in store for the animals and ultimately local food for us to eat locally.



People can also do their bit for the sector by buying British and looking out for the Red Tractor logo on food products – another way of knowing you are buying assured produce and supporting UK and local producers.

### **Superfast Broadband Speeds Up for More Homes and Businesses**



Superfast broadband is coming to more homes and businesses in Staffordshire sooner than expected, due to an extra £2.4 million funding being made available. The investment, from BT, will be used to provide additional high speed fibre broadband coverage to more homes and businesses

across the county as part of the Superfast Staffordshire project.

Mark Winnington, Staffordshire County Council's cabinet member for economy, environment and transport, says: "We know how important faster internet connections are for everyone and that's why we have invested in the Superfast Staffordshire project. Not only will families be faster connected than ever before, but smaller businesses will be better placed to compete with larger companies.

"We are now working with BT to decide how the extra funding could be used to extend coverage throughout the county, targeting many of those properties in hard to reach places."

The funding follows an initial £8million investment by Staffordshire County Council which has already seen over 53,000 premises fibre broadband enabled. To find out more about the project visit [www.superfaststaffordshire.co.uk](http://www.superfaststaffordshire.co.uk).

### **Seeking Waste Solutions for Uttoxeter**

Work to provide a temporary household waste recycling facility in Uttoxeter is under way. The centre will be set up at the disused county council highways depot in Hockley Road. Highways chiefs will work on the project in the coming weeks. They will undertake work to widen the entrance, improve the road surface within the compound and transfer all the equipment from the current Pennycroft Lane site.

Mark Winnington, Staffordshire County Council's cabinet member for economy, environment and transport, says: "The opening hours will be the same as usual and this will be an excellent temporary recycling centre which maintains a full service for residents."



As previously reported, the historic Pennycroft Lane tip, which is on land owned by the borough council, is to be cleared to make way for housing.

Staffordshire County Council, which is responsible for running household waste centres, will eventually open a replacement centre on land off Dove

Way. However, it will take between a year and 18 months to get the new facility up and running. Hockley Road will be a temporary provision until then.

Until the Hockley Road site opens, East Staffordshire Borough Council has put arrangements in place to collect extra green waste and accept bulky household waste at Uttoxeter's main car parks.

It had been anticipated that the Hockley Road site would be ready to open its gates in October. However, the acquisition of licences from the Environment Agency may see the opening date delayed until November.

## Staffordshire Small Business Fund Keeps 1,000 in Jobs



A loan fund for small businesses in Staffordshire has helped to create or safeguard more than 1,000 jobs since being set up by the Conservative county council in 2009. The Staffordshire Business Loans Fund, which is run by Staffordshire County Council and managed by BCRS Business Loans, has

developed 165 loans valued at £4.25 million.

It is part financed by the European Regional Development Fund and loans of £10,000 to £50,000 are made available to businesses that are unable to secure finance from mainstream lenders.

In 2013, the fund was extended to cover the whole of the local enterprise partnership area, which includes Stoke-on-Trent. Since its creation, the fund has created or safeguarded 1,079 jobs. These include 25 positions at Stafford-based façade engineering business Lordswood Architectural, set up in 2012.

The business was formed when entrepreneur Dee Benning decided to fulfil his long-term ambition of running his own business after being made redundant from a company operating in the same sector. Lordswood Architectural, based in Beaconside, specialises in facades for commercial, residential and domestic buildings. It has won major contracts across the country.

The company's success has resulted in a workforce of over 25 people, allowing for an in-house team of designers and project managers. Benning says: "During the period of intense uncertainty that comes with redundancy, when many would be feeling pessimistic about the future, I saw this as an opportunity. Unfortunately finance was my only barrier – in particular, my inability to secure it from lenders.

"I approached the fund to help me to establish the business and purchase a delivery vehicle. BCRS listened to my proposals and could see the potential in this business when others doubted me.

"My assigned loan officers came out to meet me personally and were helpful at every stage of the loan process. Quite simply, Lordswood wouldn't be where it is today without this support."

Staffordshire County Council's economy leader Mark Winnington says the loan fund is continuing to make a real difference to small businesses in Staffordshire and means more people are in employment. He adds: "Lordswood's success demonstrates this further – it has done exceptionally well to build up its workforce in such a short space of time."

### **Autumn Drive to Improve School Attendance**



An autumn drive is aiming to further improve school attendance in Staffordshire. Staffordshire's primary and secondary school absence rates are in line with national averages but education leaders want to make them even better.

The county council is setting out its priorities on what can be done to improve attendance and is working with school improvement partner Entrust to arrange a county conference to share the best way for schools to monitor and improve it.

The conference in December will focus on sharing the Staffordshire strategy and best practice on using the attendance data to improve school standards and better support vulnerable children.

Ben Adams, Staffordshire County Council's cabinet member for learning and skills, says: "It's essential that we make sure children have the opportunity to receive a good education – that's vital if they are to make the most of their opportunities as they grow into adulthood so they can live a happy, prosperous life.



"However, regular absence is a typical indicator that a child is at risk of under-achieving and we also know the consequences of that can follow them throughout their adult life. We also take it very seriously because if a child is not in regular attendance at school education then this could be an early alert for issues with their safety or welfare."

## Ironman Strikes Gold in £1 Million Boost for Staffordshire



More than £1 million was spent by spectators and competitors during this year's inaugural Ironman competition in Staffordshire.

The inaugural one-day event in June saw 2,500 entrants take part including celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay. Competitors tackled a 1.2 mile swim at Chasewater Country Park, 56 mile bike ride and a 13.1 mile run around Shugborough Estate.

The triathlon was so successful that entry spaces for the event next year sold out in one day, with organisers eager to return.

Staffordshire County Council's economy boss Mark Winnington says more than £1m was spent during the event. "The Ironman event was a resounding success and has had a positive impact on Staffordshire - not just economically but also enhancing its reputation as a place to visit and in encouraging healthy lifestyles. This was a first for Staffordshire and we're pleased to be able to host the event over the next few years.

"It brings in visitors from across the country and from abroad which is great to see and is certainly a boost to local businesses. The first Staffordshire Ironman 70.3 was a huge success story and was a great opportunity to really showcase what a fantastic county Staffordshire is to live, work and visit.

"We are delighted to see the event sell out once again for 2016 on the first day and we are really looking forward to welcoming competitors and their friends and family back to Staffordshire next summer."

Kevin Stewart, managing director of Ironman UK & Ireland, says: "The Staffordshire race continues to capture the imagination of existing athletes and first timers. I am not surprised individual places went so quickly.

"Each year competitors raise hundreds of thousands of pounds for charities and the good news is that there are still places available if people want to sign up with one of our charity partners."

## Parish Records Give Huge Boost to Family Historians

More than 1.2 million parish records have been published online which will give a huge boost to researchers and family historians in the county. The publication of baptism, marriages, banns and burial records for Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent, spanning the years 1538 – 1900, is the second phase of a project to create the Staffordshire Collection on UK genealogy website Findmypast.



The first phase was launched in July 2014 and once complete the collection will comprise around 6 million fully-searchable transcripts and scanned images of handwritten parish records.

The collection covers all Staffordshire Anglican parish registers up to 1900 deposited with the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service, as well as parishes now within the City of Wolverhampton and the boroughs of Dudley, Sandwell and Walsall.

Famous Staffordshire residents recorded in the collection include celebrated wordsmith Dr Samuel Johnson, who was born on September 18 1709 above his father's bookshop in Lichfield's historic market place. Samuel was not expected to survive so the vicar of St Mary's parish performed an emergency baptism at the family home.

Henry Paget, the Earl of Uxbridge who famously lost his right leg at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, also features in the records, At the outbreak of the French Revolutionary Wars he raised a regiment of Staffordshire volunteers and went on to become Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire in 1849.

Baptism records include the services performed for writer, feminist and pacifist Vera Brittain in Newcastle under Lyme in 1894 and Spitfire designer Reginald Mitchell in Talke in 1895. The marriage of engineer James Brindley, who masterminded some of the West Midlands' earliest modern canals, is recorded taking place in Wolstanton and his wife was 30 years his junior.

Mike Lawrence, cabinet member for children and community safety at Staffordshire County Council, says: "We are incredibly proud of our heritage

here in Staffordshire and it's great news that people will be able to search through even more of our fascinating historical records.

"We want many more people to be able to enjoy our archives and getting them online means that people from all over the world will get the chance to delve into Staffordshire's rich history.

"As part of our vision for the Archives Service we also want to encourage more people from the county to explore their own family history, and access to the Staffordshire Parish Registers on Findmypast will be free in Archive Service offices and libraries across Staffordshire."

### **New Lichfield Rail Bridge on Target for November Opening**



A new railway bridge in Lichfield is on course to open later this year – reconnecting a 130-space car park which has been off-limits since December. Work on the industrial and warehouse development Liberty Park at Streethay meant the old Victorian railway bridge at Burton Old Road had to be replaced.

The old bridge – which was the sole vehicular access to Lichfield Trent Valley railway station's new 130-space car park – was taken down over a 48-hour period on Christmas Day and Boxing Day 2014.

Last month, an overnight operation saw new beams lifted into place across the West Coast Mainline, providing the deck for the access bridge to the site, which is sandwiched by the railway and the A38.

In mid-August engineers completed the job by pouring concrete on top of the beams into temporary moulds, which will provide a solid slab forming the bridge deck. Engineers now hope to have the new bridge open to the public by November 28 at the latest, meaning pedestrians and drivers should once again be able to access the station from the Britannia Way side. Commuters are currently using a temporary car park off Crossfield Road.

Staffordshire County Council's economy leader Mark Winnington says: "It is great news that the road is on schedule to reopen for the public to use once again. The bridge installation at Liberty Park Lichfield marks a major step

forward in the development which is progressing on schedule. It means our infrastructure works should be complete by the end of the year."

The 450,000 sq ft employment space development – which will create up to 1,100 jobs – also involves improvements to the Burton Old Road access.

Staffordshire County Council is supporting the infrastructure for the site, with the development being delivered by Liberty Property Trust and its partner Stoford Developments.

Liberty Park has also been backed by £4 million funding through the Government's Growth Deal and was the first such project to get under way in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

Andrew Blevins, managing director of Liberty Property Trust, says: "Liberty Park, Lichfield is an important example of Staffordshire County Council working with the property industry to enable commercial development and jobs to come to Lichfield.

"The new access infrastructure which is opening up the development site, has been jointly funded by Government and Liberty Park developers, Liberty Property Trust, and will be completed by October.

"Since Liberty Park was launched in March this year, it has already attracted interest from potential occupiers well placed to create jobs and economic growth for the region."

### **Staffordshire Young People Help Clean Up War Graves**



Staffordshire teenagers teamed up with young people from Bremen to tend to the war graves at the German Military Cemetery.

Staffordshire County Council said 28 young people, along with representatives from the Royal British Legion and

Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services, cleaned and tidied the graves at the cemetery at Cannock Chase.

The annual event forms two weeks' worth of commemorations between the German War Graves Commission and Staffordshire County Council and has been running since 1962.

The young people, all aged 16 and 17, had the chance to improve their language skills, build new friendships, learn more about the history of the World Wars, and be involved in projects that concentrate on the theme of peace and reconciliation.

Mark Sutton, the authority's cabinet support member for health and social care, says: "Young people have been visiting Staffordshire from Germany to help tend the military graves for more than 50 years now as part of this unique friendship.

"The exchange visit gave the teenagers the opportunity to make new friends, share experiences, and learn from each other, while remembering those who lost their lives in the two World Wars.

"It's important that our young people maintain these friendships, learn from the past and work together to build a better future."

The German Military Cemetery in Cannock Chase is the only German cemetery in the country and lies next to the Commonwealth war graves.

### **Just Fancy That—Crossword Teaser for Council Staff**

A new list of the oddest requests local authority call centres receive has seen a Staffordshire woman call to ask hard working staff help her with a crossword puzzle she was struggling with. The question she was scratching her head over was "what was the name of the James Bond nemesis who had a love for felines. Seven letters. Begins with B." It is not known whether staff at Staffordshire County Council were able to help the woman finish the puzzle with the answer, which in case you have forgotten is Blofeld. The woman, who is not named, made the top 10 list of daft things which councils have been asked in the past year.



**LABOUR'S NEW LEADER**

**IS A THREAT TO**

**OUR NATIONAL SECURITY,**

**OUR ECONOMIC SECURITY,**

**AND YOUR FAMILY'S SECURITY.**



**HE BELIEVES:**

**the death of Osama Bin Laden  
was a "tragedy"**

*PressTV, The Agenda, 2011*

**HE DESCRIBES:**

**terrorist groups Hezbollah  
and Hamas as "friends"**

*Stop the War Coalition - Meet the Resistance, 3/03/09*

**HE OPPOSES:**

**Britain having nuclear defences**

*Warrington Leadership Hustings, 25/07/15*

**HE CLAIMS:**

**the last Labour Government  
didn't spend too much:  
"We actually... spent too little"**

*Nottingham hustings, 28/06/15*

**HE WANTS:**

**to print money to fund more spending**

*The Economy in 2020, 22/07/15*

**AND HE THINKS:**

people should pay  
"quite a lot more" taxes

*Interview on BBC2 Newsnight, 8/06/15*

**WE CAN'T EVER LET**

**LABOUR**

**BACK INTO POWER AGAIN**