

# Newsletter



HAPPY NEW YEAR

*The Chairman and Officers of  
Central Staffordshire Conservative Federation  
would like to wish all our members and supporters a*

*Happy New Year*

Member of Parliament for Stone, Great Wyrley & Penkridge:

**The Rt Hon Sir Gavin Williamson, CBE MP**

For news and other information visit: [www.gavinwilliamson.org/](http://www.gavinwilliamson.org/)

20th December 2024

### Gavin enjoys festive activities at Lower Drayton Farm

Sir Gavin Williamson joined the festive spirit at Lower Drayton Farm by visiting the spectacular Christmas experience that is fun for all the family.

Staff at the Farm have created a memorable experience for children by providing an immersive location that includes Santa's Grotto, a Jingle Ville, and an indoor sledging activity. Children can also enjoy a state-of-the-art indoor play centre, whilst adults are able to relax with a hot drink and a slice of cake.



Lower Drayton Farm is a multi-award winning farm park attraction, set on a 750-acre working farm, that offers visitors the opportunity to interact with animals, learn more about farming, and provides adventurous activities including ziplining.

Sir Gavin also met with Director Richard Bower to discuss the team's efforts to create a family friendly environment, the future of farming, and possible expansion plans.

Richard Bower said: "We really appreciate Gavin taking time out of his busy schedule to visit the farm, meet our team and also meet the schools that were on Christmas visits at the farm on that day.

Farming isn't easy, battling the weather, competing with global markets and political influence. Gavin really took time to understand the challenges and help where he can. We look forward to meeting again in the future."

Sir Gavin said: "I thoroughly enjoyed visiting Lower Drayton Farm and was so impressed with the rich variety of activities on offer which caters for all ages.

Sir Gavin said: "Richard and the team have done an incredible job to create an immersive experience that allows visitors to learn more about farming which is incredibly important for sustainability, food production, and the local economy.

"We are incredibly fortunate to have such a facility in Staffordshire, and I will be doing everything I can to promote and support the Farm in anyway possible."

## Gavin calls for a binding vote on WASPI compensation



Sir Gavin Williamson has called for a binding vote to be held in Parliament regarding compensation for women affected by changes to State Pension age.

The Labour Government has ruled out compensation for women affected by changes to their State Pension age – saying doing so would “burden” the taxpayer.

This is despite many influential Labour politicians including the Chancellor, Prime Minister, and Secretary of State vowing to work with campaigners in order to “identify a fair solution for all women affected.”

Sir Gavin said: “Labour u-turns are just as predictable as night following day and it seems that the Prime Minister and his Cabinet continue to engineer new ways to alienate pensioners and the wider electorate.

“The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions now claims that ‘the great majority of women knew the state pension age was increasing’ despite previously vowing to campaigners that she would stand alongside them in their pursuit of compensation.

“Labour have well and truly conned the electorate and I know many of their voters are experiencing buyer’s remorse.

“I am calling for the Government to hold a binding vote in Parliament following the publication of the Parliamentary Health Service Ombudsmen’s report into State Pension changes for WASPI women, so the House can decide if their proposals amount to justice for those affected– as I do not believe they are.”

## Gavin visits Woolcool to discuss sustainable packaging



**Sir Gavin Williamson visited Woolcool in Stone – a company that use wool to insulate temperature sensitive items as well as to create sustainable packaging.**

The idea was an innovation by Chief Executive and founder Angela Morris, who was keen to source alternative material that is environmentally friendly but could also be adaptable to contain an array of products.

Sir Gavin also heard of the impact that the Extender Producer Responsibility Scheme (EPR) is having on the business. The regulations, which apply to all UK organisations that import or supply packaging, operates a traffic light system which explains what businesses need to pay.

Woolcool have been placed as ‘red’ meaning they are liable for increased costs under current regulations. However, this is despite the company’s use of wool which is more environmentally friendly than alternatives including cardboard and polystyrene as well as being biodegradable.

Angela Morris, Chief Executive and Founder of Woolcool said: “Woolcool is a superior insulated packaging solution using 100% sheep’s wool. Woolcool reduces food waste and enables the safe delivery of temperature sensitive vaccines and medicines, which in turn, can save lives. It is compostable (both at home and industrially). It is reusable and returnable. As it’s a unique and innovative solution, I fear it will be penalised under the EPR/RAM scheme as it isn’t plastic or cardboard, when actually it’s much more of a future proofing, sustainable solution. Woolcool uses a 100% natural, compostable, abundant and renewable material, and one that would go to waste without our product.”

Sir Gavin said: “It was wonderful to visit Woolcool and learn more about their innovation and how they are changing the face of packaging in the UK and internationally. The team are adapting to the needs of consumers, creating high performance, aesthetically pleasing, and sustainable packaging that is being utilised by many industries including pharmaceutical and food. It is vital that the Government support creative businesses as we place a greater emphasis on recycling and sustainability. I am concerned that the EPR scheme, if not applied correctly, will stifle growth and cause businesses to fold due to increased cost. “I am committed to supporting Woolcool to continue their progression and ensure they are able to thrive moving forward.”

## Gavin visits businesses as part of Small Business Saturday



**Sir Gavin Williamson visited many businesses across the constituency as he demonstrated his support for local traders as part of ‘Small Business Saturday.’**

Small Business Saturday occurs each year to champion small businesses nationwide and aims to encourage residents to shop local.

Sir Gavin visited many traders in Penkridge, Stone, Great Wyrley, and Essington as well as other parts of the constituency, to speak to traders, demonstrate his support, and listen to any challenges as well as issues that are affecting small business.

Sir Gavin visited close to 20 businesses on Saturday, 7th December ranging from sweet shops, pet stores, gift shops, and card retailers.

Sir Gavin said: “I was delighted to visit small businesses across the constituency as part of Small Business Saturday. It is extremely important that we do all we can to support small business across the constituency.

“Local traders are the heartbeat of communities. Not only do they provide excellent service, but they are key to the local economy and create a vibrant atmosphere.

“I am committed to doing everything that I can to support small businesses, enable them to thrive, as well as to understand the challenges they face.”

**Gavin fights against Aston by Stone development**

**Sir Gavin Williamson attended an Aston by Stone action group meeting to show solidarity with residents following proposals to build on a 192-acre green-field site on the Stone Business Park boundary.**

Richborough Commercial has secured a Planning Promotion Agreement to promote the land for industrial, logistical, and manufacturing use, with a potential 1.5 million square foot of space.

Dozens of local residents as well as Borough Councillors and planning experts attended a meeting on Friday, 29th November at Aston by Stone Village Hall. The plan is for an Action Group to be set up that will bring together residents with a variety of experience to oppose the plans and protect Stone's Green Belt.

Simon Bell, a member of the Action Group said: "The proposal for warehousing and more industrial development when there is a perfectly good brownfield site in Meaford four miles up the road that has only one business on site clearly shows that there is no need for more warehousing builds.

"We have one aim with our fighting Group of Talent and that is to ensure that all local residents and Councillors are aware of the visual and spatial impact the proposal would have, this would also create massive urban encroachment into the rural character of the rural village area

"Having Sir Gavin support us from day one is vital in the battle for awareness and communication."

Sir Gavin said: "I welcomed the opportunity to attend the public meeting in Aston by Stone and I join residents in strongly opposing plans to build yet more industrial units on Green Belt Land.

"Another white elephant project would not bring the benefits that the planners claim. We already have a number of large empty units in the Town, and more concreting over our green spaces would just affect residents' quality of life as well as blight local landscapes.

"Overdevelopment must be stopped as we do not want the boundary of Stone to be drawn closer to Stafford. The unique identity of the Town must be protected.

"I call on Stafford Borough Council to unequivocally state that any proposals to build on this 192-acre site are swiftly rejected and I will be doing everything I can to thwart this development and protect green spaces for residents as well as future generations to come.

## Children can participate in Winter Holiday Activities

**Bookings are open for the Staffordshire Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) winter programme.**

Thousands of children and young people can enjoy a range of exciting activities this winter as part of Staffordshire's Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme, which offers fun activities and a meal for children at holiday clubs until 4 January.

They can participate in sports, creative clubs, computer activities, winter crafts, indoor games, laser tag, horse riding, forest schools and watch a Christmas pantomime show. Two thousand children have booked their places, and many have attended already learning new skills, making friends and eating healthy meals and snacks.



Bookings are open to over 25,000 eligible children aged between five and 16 years old, who receive free school meals. Eligible children can book up to four free places each this winter, with sessions lasting up to four hours a day. Some clubs also offer paid places so that friends can attend together.

Parents and carers can book online via the county council website for a funded or paid place.

Mark Sutton, Staffordshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, said:

"We are so pleased to introduce some new clubs this year and welcome back some familiar faces as we embark on another winter of creating unforgettable experiences for children and young people across Staffordshire.

"Our Winter HAF programme offers a range of activities for learning, growth and enjoyment, giving every participating child the opportunity to have fun and enjoy the school holidays.

"Whether your children are looking to explore new hobbies, make new friends or simply have fun, our diverse range of activities has something for everyone."

To book or to find out more, search '***Holiday Activities and Food - Staffordshire County Council***'.

## Children's toy appeal delivering festive cheer to families this Christmas

**Families across Staffordshire will receive a sack full of presents thanks to their local family hubs and kind donations from local charities, businesses and the public.**

Christmas can be an especially tough time for many families and each year Staffordshire County Council's family hubs distribute thousands of toys and gifts to vulnerable children and young people. The young people may be in foster care, residential homes, or being supported by Family Practitioners.



Gifts include toys, books, games, toiletries and clothing. At Newcastle Family Hub, volunteers from local charity 'A Child's Heart' have been busy collecting and wrapping thousands of presents to be given out in the coming weeks.

Mark Sutton, Cabinet member for Children and Young People at Staffordshire County Council, visited Newcastle's Family Hub to see the project first hand. Mark said: "Many children who are being supported by our Early Help teams will benefit from the spirit of giving this Christmas, thanks to the kindness of others. For some families, they are faced with making impossible decisions like whether to heat their home, buy food and essentials, or a present for their children. Without the generosity of charities, local businesses and members of the public, some may not get a gift otherwise. This is an important project for our teams and one they look forward to each year. Seeing the reactions from families and the looks on children's faces when they receive their gifts is priceless."

In South Staffordshire, thanks again to the generosity of local charity 'A Child's Heart' and donations from the community, the family hub team received a wonderful selection of presents to distribute to families in need. The team's aim is to ensure that every child has a special gift to open on Christmas Day, bringing a smile to their faces and a little extra joy to the season.

At Lichfield Family Hub, staff are supported every year by Julie Armstrong from 'A Child's Heart' charity. This year, they collected over 100 bags full of gifts for children. Staff also paired up with 'The One Off' company through the Family Action Toy appeal this year and have received a generous amount of donations from them. The team have also been supported by RRT Global who put together food hampers throughout the year. The 'Winter Food Hampers' will be delivered on 16 December, ready for families to collect for the festive period.

Staff at Tamworth Family Hub have been distributing over 60 gift bags filled with toys collected by 'A Child's Heart' charity. Additionally, the team have received tremendous support from the 'Tamworth Round Table' again, who will be delivering numerous presents in the coming weeks. Elan Homes has also generously offered to set up a 'Toy Collection Point' in one of their show homes. All of which has resulted in many more presents being available to gift to children this month.

And in the Staffordshire Moorlands, the family hub was delighted to receive a generous number of gifts from Biddulph Methodist Church and a number of local businesses, as well as those kindly donated by 'A Child's Heart'. The team hope the gifts will make a significant difference and will bring immense joy and happiness to the families in the area. Staffordshire County Council's family hubs provide a wealth of information, support and advice for local families. Families can also access a range of services, participate in activities with their young children and find out about local groups at any of the 13-county council run hubs.

Mark added: "The support our family hubs give to people in need across Staffordshire all year round is key to making sure every child has the best possible start in life. If families haven't used their local hub yet, I'd urge them to go along and find out about all the amazing things available."



## Multi-million-pound Stafford road and transport improvement scheme reaches major milestone

**A major Stafford road and transport improvement scheme reaches a significant milestone next week – with two-way traffic set to return to a key route.**

The scheme on the A34 from Weeping Cross towards the town centre got under way in the summer. It will see improvements from the Weeping Cross roundabouts to the Queensville island and then to Queensway near the town centre next year. Surfacing of both Weeping Cross roundabouts and vital strengthening of both Radford Bridge and Queensville rail bridge was completed recently.



Included in the scheme are road and footway resurfacing, new pedestrian crossings and cycleways and bridge maintenance.

For work to be carried out safely, a one-way traffic operation was needed on the Radford Bank stretch towards town, with a one-way operation towards Baswich on Baswich Lane.

Both will be lifted this Monday December 16. Surfacing of Radford Bank will take place next spring when the weather conditions will help to make the surfacing more durable. This will be done with a series of overnight closures of Radford Bank and part of Queensville. In January work will begin on Queensville roundabout, which will involve narrowing of lanes.

Local county councillor Ann Edgeller said the scheme is much-needed, but understood frustrations with disruption. She added: The teams have done a fantastic job and this included working efficiently overnight on the Weeping Cross roundabouts. This is such an important scheme for the area and for Stafford and so we are so pleased to see it under way with the end in sight next spring. I understand that it has been disruptive so would like to thank people for their patience. The feedback I've had has been overwhelmingly positive, including from residents of Queensville who have been very complimentary about the project teams. While there will be traffic management still in place, return to two-way traffic on Radford Bank is a significant milestone for the scheme."

Staffordshire County Council's cabinet member for strategic highways Mark Deaville said: "This is a huge road and transport improvement project for Stafford and will bring lasting benefits for decades to come. It is a complex and carefully planned scheme and part of the wider package of improvements which have taken place across Stafford. It has included significant strengthening and maintenance work of the two bridges which is vital to the scheme as they carry a significant volume of traffic. The scheme continues to progress well, and we look forward to its completion next year."

Work needs to take place now due to national funding requirements. Once completed the road surface will last for between 20 and 30 years.

### 100 Club

#### DECEMBER'S **BUMPER PRIZE MONTH** WINNERS ANNOUNCED

1st Prize: **HELEN ADAMS**

2nd Prize: **PAM KITTLE**

3rd Prize: **JEAN TABERNOR**

#### **Congratulations!**

Our 100 Club helps raise funds to keep the Federation running.

If you can spare £4.34 a month or £52 a year, you could help us with keeping our Federation going...and you might win one of our prizes!

### **PLEASE JOIN TODAY**

If you'd like to join, request an application form by calling 01785 252 273 or via email to [contact@centralstaffsconservatives.org.uk](mailto:contact@centralstaffsconservatives.org.uk)

Help support the Federation and have a bit of a flutter at the same time! Subscriptions are just £4.34 a month or £52 a year for each number entered.

**Join our 100 Club today and you could be our next winner.**

Full details (application forms and other information including the terms and conditions) can be found on our website:

<https://www.centralstaffsconservatives.org.uk/100-club>

## Contacting the Federation

Your Federation is staffed by volunteers, the office is not permanently staffed. The telephone line is diverted to a mobile number and calls are answered if someone is available to take your call. But please remember that the volunteers who manage your Federation work full-time, so sometimes it's not possible to answer your calls and in these circumstances you are able to leave a voicemail and someone will get back to you as soon as possible.

Please note that members can also contact the Federation by email (which is often a quicker way of getting a response) at [contact@centralstaffsconservatives.org.uk](mailto:contact@centralstaffsconservatives.org.uk)

## Car Parking at our Castle Street HQ

The Federation generates important revenue towards the upkeep of our Castle Street HQ by renting car parking spaces to both members and non-members.

Occasional parking at our HQ remains free for members, but we would ask that members inform the office if you will be parking at HQ at least 24-hours in advance, with details of the car registration number so that you do not receive penalty notices. You can get in touch with the office to notify your intention to use our car park, by telephone to **01785 252 273** or by email to [contact@centralstaffsconservatives.org.uk](mailto:contact@centralstaffsconservatives.org.uk)

We would also ask that members please park with consideration for other car park users.

Parking is at the owner's risk. The Federation does not accept any responsibility for theft or any damage, intentional or otherwise, to vehicles or vehicle contents.

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