



Solar discount scheme launched

Stafford Borough Council and local community organisation, Sustainability Matters, have just launched a new solar scheme - which will reduce energy bills, help the environment and make money - for residents, businesses and community groups.

Through a careful selection process we have identified Fenton-based MEB Total Limited, a reputable PV installation company, as a partner in the project and have negotiated a 20% discount for Stafford Borough residents who want to install solar photovoltaic (PV) panels.

PV systems can be installed on homes, shops, offices, community centres, schools and village halls.

Through the Feed in Tariff (FIT) scheme, customers fitting solar panels receive a guaranteed income for the electricity generated for a period of 25 years, on top of the reduction in electricity bills which the solar system brings.

Costs of fitting a system depends on the number of panels to be installed. But for a typical semi-detached three bedroom property with six panels the price would be around £5,000 for residents in Stafford Borough. Householders would get more than £250 a year from the FIT and would expect an annual saving of £80 on their electricity bills. The money generated from the scheme represents a better return on investment than banks are currently offering.

A rigorous process was followed to find a reliable company who could offer residents in the Borough a much better price than normal installation rates - and ensure good after-sales service and advice.

With energy costs rising fast, fitting solar PV is still a good bet financially and offers a green alternative to the current main power sources.

For more information contact
CALL Rob Hine from Sustainability Matters
CALL 01785 603 387
EMAIL info@saveyourenergy.org.uk
VISIT www.staffordarea.saveyourenergy.org.uk



www.staffordbc.gov.uk

Welcome

Welcome to the December edition of Newsleaf, Stafford Borough Council's e-news sheet, bringing you updates, news and progress on local sustainable development. We are thrilled to feature several brand new initiatives, including the Stafford Area Community Solar scheme and the installation of a sizeable solar PV system at the Civic Centre.

We bring news of this year's Green Awards winners, plus progress reports on activities in Penkside and Derrington. As partnership working becomes increasingly important we are pleased to introduce another great new example of locality working - the Warmer Holmcroft project. We hope you enjoy this edition and welcome your comments and contributions for future publications.

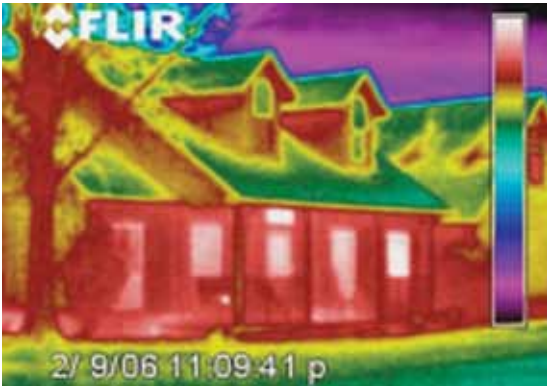


We got Gold for being Green!

On a rather murky Monday morning recently, representatives from both Derrington Way Ahead and the Penkside Project caught the train to London, on their way to the Green Apple Awards Ceremony at the House of Commons. The ceremony took place on the Pavillion Terrace, overlooking the Thames, with a view of the London Eye - just!

To our huge surprise and excitement both projects took top spot in their categories, seeing off around 500 rivals across the UK to be given Gold Awards!

For more information or to get involved in either of these projects please contact Karen Davies.



Welcome to Warmer Holmcroft

If you live in the Holmcroft area of Stafford, you can benefit from an exciting new project recently launched by Sustainability Matters with support from Stafford Borough Council.

'Warmer Holmcroft' is a new initiative offering free home energy visits by a professional energy expert. A unique feature of the scheme is the use of thermal imaging equipment to detect where homes are losing heat. A copy of the resulting thermal image is available to keep. Participants receive a report suggesting how they can best improve their energy efficiency, with tips on the most cost-effective steps to take and advice on grants, special deals, and other help that is available. The project is being funded mainly by a grant from Awards for All, part of the Big Lottery Fund, and by Stafford Borough Council, with support from local company Active Energy Assessors. If you wish to participate in this free scheme.

TEL 01785 600 262

EMAIL warmerholmcroft@hotmail.co.uk

VISIT www.staffordarea.saveyourenergy.org.uk



Village Hall Grants

Does your Village Hall or Community Centre need updating? Do you have plans for a project but need that bit of extra funding? Are you based in Stafford Borough?

We can fund projects up to the value of £5,000 and up to 20% of your total project costs (excluding VAT and contingency fund). Grants will be issued on a first come first served basis. For full terms and conditions

CONTACT Viki Ashcroft, Community Safety Co-ordinator, Stafford Borough Council

TEL 01785 619 417

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Green Awards bring smiles all round!

A school, a prison, a local village and a caravan park were among the top winners of the Council's annual Green Awards this year.

St John's Primary School in Stafford and HMP Drake Hall came top in their categories with Derrington - Way Ahead and Homestead Caravan Park making up the full list of main winners.

The awards honour the best local sustainability projects, and 26 applications were received this year from schools, businesses, voluntary groups and other organisations working locally to help make Stafford Borough a more sustainable place. The Green Awards are now in their 15th and have become a key event in the Council's calendar.

Each winning project received a certificate and a tree sapling from the Mayor of Stafford Borough, Councillor Stan Highfield, with vouchers and cash prizes for the very best, to plough into further eco-projects.

Children from St John's, Weston Road, triumphant in the Youth and Education category, were over the moon with their well deserved award. The school has created an amazing 'bottle greenhouse' and a new outdoor learning environment with raised beds, in which a multitude of vegetables have already been grown.

HMP Drake Hall took the Public Sector and Leadership title for their waste minimisation project that has slashed the amount of rubbish they throw out. Derrington - Way Ahead won the Community and Wellbeing category, for a huge range of practical sustainability projects, actively involving numerous members of the community, and finally, the caravan park won the Business and Prosperity category, for some impressive recycling and energy saving efforts.

For all the results, please VISIT www.staffordbc.gov.uk/sd or for more details CONTACT Karen Davies (details on page 4).





Growing our own veg at Cooper Perry!

Children from All Saints Ranton are concerned about polar bears and where they live!

Charlotte and Karen collect a Future Friendly Award.

Derrington - Way Ahead!

Derrington - Way Ahead! is a community led project which promotes and supports more sustainable lifestyles in the village of Derrington.

If we thought we'd been busy since we started in 2009, the last few months have been even more hectic! In the summer holidays there were 'holiday eco-activities' including bird and bat box building with the children in the village; on September 17th we held the Third Annual Local Food Festival, which, with the theme of young growers, saw two of our local schools involved, plus the Brownies and many other village children too – its so important that kids know where their food comes from and learn that they can grow things too!

All Saints, Ranton visited the Village Hall on September 21st and the children came to look at the solar panels and to learn about and discuss energy issues such as fossil fuels, CO2 emissions, climate change, impact on the polar regions and the ice sheets with Karen - then they painted polar bears with Rose the Art Teacher who had visited the Antarctic this year.

We have continued to make good use of the new IT facilities we introduced earlier in the year with many people learning new skills and gaining confidence.

We have also been celebrating! We were Regional Winner in the Future Friendly Awards, run by Proctor and Gamble, and collected our prize of £1,000 at the award ceremony held at the London Wetland Centre on 27th September. We were also the winner of the Community and Wellbeing Category in the SBC Green Awards held in October. Meanwhile, representatives from the village collected a Green Apple Award at the House of Commons on Monday 14th November!

Finally, the group has been successful in a bid for funding - to the tune of £22,000! This will fund a range of exciting community led projects, including the creation of a Village Trail, the installation of cycle parking and other environmental activities. A community consultation event for this took place on Sat 19th November at the Village Hall.

Please look at the website - there's lots on there!

visit www.derringtonvillagehall.btck.co.uk



Derrington resident who regularly walks along the Greenway, takes a breather at one of the recently installed community-built benches.

Shropshire-Staffordshire railway lines meet

In the last edition of Newsleaf we reported on the fabulous section of disused railway line called the Millennium Way (or the Greenway), which runs to the west of Stafford to Derrington and Haughton and more recently has been extended beyond Gnosall - almost all the way to Newport.

Now, to link up with this, a disused stretch of railway line between the Shropshire and Staffordshire border is to be turned into a cycleway and footpath too!

Eventually we will be able to cycle or walk from Stafford to Newport and all the way to the Silkin Way and to Telford in Shropshire. Telford and Wrekin Council is to receive £300,000 from the Department for Transport to upgrade the route.

Most of the cash will be spent on surface improvements to bring the railway line up to the appropriate standard as a footpath and cycleway. The project will be completed by the end of the 2013-14 financial year.

The route is full of railway history too. Keep an eye on the Derrington Village Trail project as we unearth lots of surprising railway archive material.

Here's to some fantastic days out on foot or by bike ahead!

Sunny outlook for Civic Centre Installation!



Stafford Borough Council recently put its money where its mouth is and installed 200 solar panels on top of the Civic Centre at Riverside in Stafford.

Through the Feed in Tarrif scheme, these have generated nearly £4,000 in the first four months they have been in use. Using solar panels is an environmentally friendly way to generate electricity, helping to cut carbon dioxide emissions produced in conventional fossil fuel power stations.

Our system is a 48.24 kWp installation and is on track to generate 38,206 kWh of electricity per annum, saving around £3000/year on electricity bills.



Home Energy Visits offer a Helping Hand in Penkside!

In the last edition of Newsleaf we featured an article on 'The Penkside Project'. This is a partnership involving local residents, community groups, the church, school and local businesses, plus various supporting agencies. To date a wide range of 'sustainable development' activities have taken place and it's great to see some of these in action!

At Silkmore Primary School for instance we have been working with staff to encourage 'green travel' and promote cycling to school and bike safety. Thanks to funding secured through Stafford Borough Council from the Staffordshire Aggregates Levy Scheme (SALGS), plus a small SBC eco-schools grant, there is now an excellent, secure, covered cycle parking area and a set of 5 super pool bikes and additional cycling kit. The school has been able to start up a new After School Bike Club this September and also ran a Bikeability Training Course in early November.

Another focus of activity in this area has been home energy visits. Nearly 100 home energy visits have been carried out, making a real difference to families - saving energy, reducing bills, tackling fuel poverty, arranging referrals to other agencies and services. Here are two of their stories...



Mrs P
Due to illness in the family Mrs P had built up a number of debts, council tax and gas and electric bills. Whilst doing a home visit Beat the Cold helped out big time. They gave lots of advice on ways to save energy (such as closing the curtains at dusk, only boiling what you need in the kettle and improving insulation etc). They updated the pre-payment meter and then applied to Npower's Energy Trust Fund for help. The Trust may be able to help people with domestic energy debts and in certain exceptional circumstances can help to clear other priority debts and purchase essential household items such as a refrigerator or cooker. In Mrs P's case, the Trust was able to pay off £350 of the outstanding gas and electricity bills, and paid off £470 owed on council tax. This was a massive relief for a family who already had big worries on their plate.

Mr M
Mr M, a young man who is registered disabled, moved into a flat in the area. He had been paying £10/week to pay for electricity throughout the summer. Beat the Cold made a home energy visit and discovered that the Economy 7 system was not set up correctly and loads of water was being heated up continuously, when it wasn't needed.
Beat the Cold reset the hot water programme, advised on how the storage heaters worked and also helped register Mr M on the Priority Services Register, which gives access to a range of benefits and advice about energy bills, metering and other help. His energy bill has been reduced by around half!

If you wish to contact the Energy Trust Fund,
WRITE TO
FREEPOST RSRX-JHTT-AZSG, Nower Energy Fund, PO Box 42, Peterborough PE3 8XH
TEL 01733 421 060, **EMAIL** npef@charisgrants.com
VISIT www.npowerenergytrust.org.uk

Stafford College students keen to conserve!



Two new courses have recently been launched at Stafford College - a Diploma in Countryside and Environment and an Extended Diploma in Countryside Management.

The Borough Council has been keen to provide support to this exciting new course provision through the donation of hand tools and by giving access to our Local Nature Reserves (LNR's). The student's work on Kingsmead Marsh LNR involved creating habitat piles of brush, cutting back reeds and carrying out a small mammal survey.

In addition, the College offers a Foundation Degree in Sustainable Communities, which aims to provide the skills and knowledge employers are looking for to help create sustainable communities and organisations.

For further information on the new Countryside courses contact Andy Taylor TEL 01785 223800 or EMAIL a.taylor@staffordcoll.ac.uk
For the Foundation Degree in Sustainable Communities contact Helen Littlewood TEL 01785 223800 or EMAIL h.littlewood@staffordcoll.

For more details and to find out about sustainable development in Stafford Borough contact Karen Davies, Partnerships Co-ordinator, Stafford Borough Council, Civic Centre, Riverside, Stafford ST16 3AQ TEL 01785 619 408 EMAIL kdavies@staffordbc.gov.uk WEB www.staffordbc.gov.uk/sd

If you need this information in **large print, Braille, other language** or on **audio cassette**
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