



Transforming **People** • Transforming **Places** • Transforming **Society**

Connected Communities Newsletter Summer 2024

Hello,

Welcome to the latest instalment of Staffordshire University's Connected Communities Newsletter.

This newsletter looks at some of the ways Staffordshire University are helping to make a difference in partnership with communities across Staffordshire.

In this issue:

- Action on Poverty Conference 2024
- Staffs CAN
- 'Embrace Your Place' Research Project
- Participatory Action Research 2024
- National Civic Impact Accelerator (NCIA)
- TEDxStaffordshireUniversity
- Community Spotlight- Wildlife Trust

Thanks for reading!

-Ryan

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Save The Date!
Action on Poverty Conference 2024
25th October



October 25th will see the return of the Action on Poverty Conference, held at Staffordshire University's Stoke-on-Trent campus. This year the one-day conference has been designed alongside members of the Raising Voices: Taking Action group, which is organising [Chat for Change](#) events across Stoke-on-Trent.

As with previous years, the conference is an opportunity for people to come together and talk about poverty, the actions that they are taking

The conference will be free to attend, and an Eventbrite page will go live over the coming weeks to book your free tickets.

If you have any questions about this, please email connectedcommunities@staffs.ac.uk

Staffordshire University Community Advisory Network (Staffs CAN)



We held the Summer Staffs CAN on Friday 12th July in The Catalyst Building. At this Staffs CAN we updated on some of the things that we've been working on as a team as well as launching our new project 'Embrace Your Place'.

We launched the project by playing our giant 'Embrace Your Place' game. People rolled the dice and moved their counter from the south of Staffordshire towards the north of the county. Along the way, people landed on spaces that required them to answer a question relating to research in Staffordshire.

conversations will allow more people to get involved in the project and contribute as many voices to the conversation as possible. We'll take the feedback and advice from Staffs CAN to help us in the final developments of the game, before we roll it out across the county.

If you are interested in hosting an Embrace Your Place Playful research session, please [get in touch](#). More information about this is outlined in the section below.'

We'll host the Autumn Staffs CAN in late September, or early October. Keep your eyes peeled for the newsletter invite!

We're looking for people to join our mailing list, specifically made for Staffs CAN. [To join send an email to connectedcommunities@staffs.ac.uk](#).



Want to find out more about Staffs CAN?

 [E-mail](#)

 [Website](#)

Embrace Your Place



Embrace Your Place is all about finding out what research local people think is important in Staffordshire. The project will speak with people from across the county and find out what matters most to them and what their priorities for research are.

We'll take the things that people tell us to build a picture of the research priorities across the county- we'll share this with people who make decisions in Staffordshire and researchers to help address some of the changes communities want to see.

As part of this work, we're working with 'Community Connectors' to reach out to communities and speak to people. Community Connectors are members of the community that know their place and the people that live, work, and study there. They will run Embrace Your Place sessions with people they know or people who attend their community group/organisation and send us the feedback, to add to the overall project.

If you'd like to find out more, or if you'd be interested in getting involved in the project, either to take part in the game or to become a community connector, email connectedcommunities@staffs.ac.uk

Participatory Action Research Programme 2024



Throughout 2024, [The Public Engagement and Research Team](#) at Staffordshire University have been working with staff, researchers and students from across the university to help them do research in participatory ways with communities.

[The Participatory Action Research \(PAR\) programme](#) provides staff, students and researchers from the university with resources & time to develop their skills and confidence to engage with communities on participatory research projects.

Below are just a couple of examples of some of the projects that have happened this year. Further updates from the programme will be available later in future newsletters.

Perinatal Mental Health World Cafe



As part of [The PAR Programme](#) at Staffordshire University, Dr Fiona Cust has held an event to explore the rising numbers of women/mothers who are challenged by perinatal mental health issues. Perinatal mental health issues refers to mental health challenges that occur during pregnancy and up to a year after childbirth.

“We hosted a world cafe event to bring together local charities, clinicians, and educators to explore the rising numbers of pregnant women and mothers dealing with challenged perinatal mental health. We wanted to work, collaboratively, with our local communities in an attempt to try to find ways in which we could provide better support to women suffering from poor perinatal mental health.”

The event was very well attended and the 'round the table' discussions were rich in both networking opportunities and suggestions as to how we could help. We collected information on post-it notes and we wrote on disposable tablecloths! Some key themes emerged and, following final analysis, we will be contacting our attendees again to follow up on some of their ideas, and form connected partnerships in an attempt to drive initiatives forward”.

If you'd be interested in finding out more about this project please email connectedcommunities@staffs.ac.uk or contact Fiona directly at fiona.cust@staffs.ac.uk.



Dr Laura Walton-Williams (Associate Professor of Gender Based Violence and co-founder of Staffordshire University's Violence Against Women and Girls Hub) has collaborated with [SARAC](#) (Sexual Abuse and Rape Advice Centre in Burton-upon-Trent) to build an exhibition, as part of their PAR research project.

"The pieces of artwork in the ['Undefined' exhibition](#) have been created by people with lived experience of sexual abuse and violence. By taking part in creative workshops and displaying their artistic creations we hope to give them the opportunity to be heard, to gain confidence and to take control of their recovery."

The exhibition will be on display until 11th August, at [The Brewhouse, Burton-On-Trent](#).

National Civic Impact Accelerator
(NCIA)



The [NCIA programme](#) aims to:

- Enhance the higher education sector's civic activities for local societal, economic, and environmental benefits
- Maximise universities' contributions to societal challenges and policy priorities.

Staffordshire University and representatives from their their civic and community partners were active members of three action learning groups in the first half of the programme:

1. Understanding civic impact
2. Embedding civic engagement into organisational strategy
3. Balancing the needs of students, staff and communities.

Staffordshire University are proud to be one of 14 universities involved in phase 1 of the NCIA Action Learning programme.

As a result of their learning in these groups they are currently working together to grow a collaboration between VAST and Staffordshire University to support students into volunteering roles in community settings in a way that brings benefits to all parties.

TEDx Staffordshire University



Staffordshire University hosted its second TEDx event, featuring inspiring talks from speakers like boxer Nathan Heaney, playwright Deborah McAndrew, and sculptor Andy Edwards, all aligned with the theme “Back to the Future”.

Other speakers included Nikki Barrett of Affordable Food Stoke, foodie entrepreneur Cris Cohen, and pharmacist Patryk Majewski, who discussed antibiotic development. Professors Catherine Flick and Claire Gwinnett addressed advancing technologies and microplastic pollution, respectively.

Alumni Genelle Aldred spoke on positive communication post-Brexit, while recent graduate Sharanya Ranganatha Urs tackled sex education.

[All the talks are available on the University website.](#)

Community Spotlight: Staffordshire
Wildlife Trust- Transforming the Trent



The River Trent- Credit Paul Morris

Fresh funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund to benefit more people and nature in Trent Valley

"£250,000 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund will enable Staffordshire Wildlife Trust to deliver an exciting new project in the north of the Trent Valley, called **Transforming the Trent Headwaters**.

Following on from the highly successful Transforming the Trent Valley (TTTV) scheme in East Staffordshire and South Derbyshire, the Trust is now set to focus attention upstream towards the headwaters of the Trent. This partnership project will allow the charity to expand on some of the inspiring work previously carried out in and around Stoke-on-Trent over the last decade.

The grant, made possible thanks to National Lottery players, enables us to work with local partners, community groups and others to better understand how people connect with the river. It will help us to define projects that will be designed and led by the people who live and work in this area.

Networks, says:

“This project is a really important stepping stone which we hope will bring further long-term funding into a vital landscape. We are excited about the chance to bring this river habitat back for wildlife and people to thrive, along with managing pollution and flood risk.”

Supported by the local authorities, Environment Agency and other partners, the Trust will collaborate with local communities to highlight the importance of the River Trent to their local area. We'd love to hear from you to learn about you and your community group's views about the rivers and green spaces near you. Please email ttv@staffs-wildlife.org.uk

Louise Morris, TTTV Project Manager, said:

“The Trent Valley area is one of Staffordshire’s most treasured features. Through Transforming the Trent Headwaters project we hope to make the landscape more accessible to everyone and encourage communities to learn more about the cultural and natural heritage of the Trent Valley.

The focus is on engaging communities along the River Trent with their local natural spaces. We’ll work with them to support and develop environmental community action and volunteering opportunities.”

For more information about Transforming the Trent Valley's work visit: www.thetrentvalley.org.uk.

You can follow us on [Facebook](#), [X](#), and [Instagram](#)."

Community Spotlight



Do you want to shine a spotlight on the things that you, your community, or your organisation do?

We're looking for community contributions towards future instalments of the newsletter, to amplify the voices of our community.

For more information please contact connectedcommunities@staffs.ac.uk

Vacancies



[View all the latest work vacancies at Staffordshire University.](#)

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