

Newsletter



****SUPPER CLUB IS BACK****

Our first Conservative Supper Club of the 2025 Season will be at The Moat House on 20th March 2025.
More details inside.

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/

28th February 2025

Gavin calls for increase to Listed Places of Worship Scheme

Sir Gavin Williamson has called for the Government to reverse their “damaging cuts” to the Listed Places of Worship grant scheme, following a visit to All Saints Church in Sandon.

The Government has made the decision to cap the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme to £25,000 per building per year. While the previous Government allocated up to £42 million per year, the Minister has announced that the funding available has been reduced to £23 million.



Previously, the Grant Scheme enabled All Saints Church to recover VAT on past works carried out on the Grade I listed church. In the Church’s budget, the delivery phase is an amount of £98,000 in recoverable VAT. If the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme is not extended beyond March 2025, there will be a significant gap in the Church’s funding.

Janet Dawson, Treasurer of Sandon and Burston Parish Council said: “On behalf of the PCC we were delighted to welcome Sir Gavin to All Saints’ Church in Sandon. As our MP we wanted to share with Sir Gavin our conservation story of work over the past decade and our current project to conserve the historic artefacts in the church including Elizabethan monuments, tombs and wall paintings, our Stuart Royal Coat of Arms and Victorian stained glass windows.

“We also wanted Sir Gavin to be aware of the impact on our project of the introduction of an annual claims limit of £25,000 per church for VAT recovery claims to the Listed Places of Worship Grant Fund in the 2025/26 tax year.

“Our project budget includes around £90,000 of recoverable VAT for work in the next tax year and we are therefore facing a serious funding shortfall in 2025/26. For a small church community which has worked hard to raise funds for the conservation of the church for future generations this is a major setback. We are grateful to Sir Gavin for both his visit and his concern about this issue for us and for other churches and cathedrals which are a valuable and irreplaceable part of our heritage.”

Sir Gavin said: “I was delighted to be given a tour of All Saints Church and learn more about its significant history as well as the events/services which are held to bring together the local community.

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“I share the Church’s concern regarding the Government’s damaging cuts to the Listed Places of Worship Grant scheme. It is very disappointing that the Government has taken the decision to reduce the funding available to the scheme and install a cap on grants of £25,000 per building per year.

“Without appropriate support, churches across Staffordshire will be left with spiralling restoration costs and crumbling buildings. I will continue to urge Ministers to increase available funding to enable churches to be enjoyed by future generations to come.”

25th February 2025

Gavin calls for removal of ‘temporary’ Stone splitter island

Sir Gavin Williamson has called for the urgent removal of the ‘temporary’ splitter island in Stone which is located at Christchurch Way’s junction with Lichfield Road.

The £15,000 splitter island was installed in 2011 as a way to tackle a bottleneck in the area. However, motorists are regularly caught in gridlock due to traffic leaving Morrisons, whilst HGV’s and other larger vehicles struggle to negotiate the right turn exit at the bottom.



Residents have also raised concerns that those who are unfamiliar with the area do not realise it is one-way or they cannot use both lanes to travel on the A43. There have been increasing reports of accidents as well as damage to signage.

Previously both lanes could be used to access the A34 and Crown Street. However, the island was installed to filter left hand lane traffic toward the B5027 Lichfield Road, whilst all traffic for the A34 or Crown Street must use the right hand lane.

Sir Gavin said: “Staffordshire County Council assured residents and local councillors that the splitter island would be a temporary measure. 14 years later we are still none the wiser as to how temporary this measure is.

“The splitter island causes chaos and gridlock with shoppers from Morrisons joining the congestion, and creating a nightmare for all. I have heard countless stories from residents who have been late for work, or missed crucial appointments, because of this poorly designed island.

“Not only this, but there are serious safety issues which need addressing. If you are not from the area, it can be confusing as to which lane is required for access to the A34 or B5027.

“I am calling on Staffordshire County Council to urgently remove this problematic island and I will continue to campaign for its removal.”

Gavin celebrates rehoming of Brewwood quilts

Sir Gavin Williamson joined local Councillors and groups to celebrate the rehoming of Brewwood quilts which have been displayed in the library.

The heritage quilts were specifically made as a gift to the village for the millennium by the Brewwood Quilters, at the behest of the then Chair of the Jubilee Village Hall. However, during a redecoration of the Jubilee Hall, the quilts were taken down sometime during 2020.

The Hall was identified as not suitable for displaying the quilts due to the nature of events held and the potential for the quilts to be damaged.

Sir Gavin worked alongside Councillors, local groups, and others to find a permanent home for the quilts. The venue to display the quilts needed to be large enough to accommodate them, out of direct sunlight, publicly accessible, and high enough to be out of the way of touching hands.

Cllr Wendi Sutton, Volunteer Coordinator for Brewwood Community Managed Library, said: “Brewood Community Managed Library volunteers were thrilled to hang the heritage quilts in the library for all to enjoy.

“The quilts, having been displayed for 20 years in the Jubilee Hall, are such a wonderful and unique record of our recent history. The library is a perfect, warm, and welcoming space for the quilts to be displayed. We are so proud to be their new permanent home.”

Sir Gavin said: “I am delighted that after many years of hard work, the heritage quilts have found a new home in Brewwood Library.

“The quilts are of significant importance to the village and I am very grateful for the hard work of volunteers to ensure the quilts can be publicly displayed for the community to enjoy.

“I would also like to thank Cllr Mark Sutton for providing funds from his Community Fund to ensure the quilts can be displayed in the library.”

Gavin joins Dogs Trust to discuss dog welfare and responsible ownership



Sir Gavin Williamson attended a Parliamentary event hosted by Dogs Trust to discuss welfare issues as well as concerns affecting dog owners and animal welfare organisations.

The event sparked discussions regarding the need to focus legislation to ensure that dogs are protected whilst support is provided to owners living in difficult conditions. Puppy-smuggling, dog control, and other welfare priorities were also raised.

Dogs Trust is the UK's largest dog welfare charity and cares for around 13,000 dogs every year across its network of 21 centres in the UK and one in the Republic of Ireland. The charity also focusses its efforts on understanding dogs and sharing that knowledge with the wider public to prevent problem behaviours that can result in relinquishment or abandonment.

Claire Calder, Head of Public Affairs at Dogs Trust, said: "MP's are a crucial piece of the puzzle that can build a better future for dogs, so we are thrilled to host this event in Parliament, allowing us to directly engage with them on the issues facing dogs, their owners, and the broader animal welfare sector.

"With Dogs Trust continuing to receive record numbers of enquiries from dog owners in need of support, it is essential that we have the backing of lawmakers in shaping legislation that impacts dogs and their welfare.

"We look forward to continue working with Sir Gavin to address these pressing issues and further improve dog welfare across the UK."

Sir Gavin said: "I welcomed the opportunity to attend Dog Trust's Parliamentary reception to learn more about their important work and how I can play a role in raising awareness of the issues faced by dogs and their owners.

"As an owner of two dogs myself, I am extremely passionate about their welfare and recognise the importance of promoting responsible dog ownership, whilst ensuring that the appropriate mechanisms are in place to support owners who may be struggling to look after their beloved pet owing to personal circumstances. "The Dogs Trust are a wonderful charity who work tirelessly to rehome and rescue dogs, whilst supporting owners to ensure their pet receives the best possible care."

Gavin calls for urgent action to address pharmacy funding

Sir Gavin Williamson has joined Northwood Pharmacy in urging the Labour Government to address the critical need for adequate funding as ‘many pharmacies are being pushed to the brink.’

The pharmacy in Penkridge has expressed the need for drastic action as they highlight pharmacies will be forced to close without Government intervention. The Government has been criticised for failing to address the concerns of the sector, with Pharmacy Minister Stephen Kinnock MP unable to confirm how many times he has met with the sector’s negotiator.

The Government has been accused of dithering on funding contracts, with Ministers refusing to outline when the consultation will be concluded which sets out the funding contract on the Community Pharmacy Framework.

Without this clarity, pharmacists are unclear how they can successfully deliver community services and continue to relieve pressure on GP’s.

Harvey Norwood, Chairperson and Director of Northwood Dispensing Chemists Ltd said: “Every day, pharmacies across England are dispensing medicines at a loss and this simply cannot continue.

“The Labour Chancellor Rachel Reeves has implemented several draconian tax increases that will affect all businesses, not just Community Pharmacy.

“With the recent changes in National Insurance implemented by Rachel Reeves, the consensus is that these increases are expected to cost an average pharmacy an additional £15,000 per annum. Without the appropriate funding contract in place, many more pharmacies will disappear off the high street.”

Sir Gavin said: “Pharmacies are extremely valuable to our communities – particularly in rural areas, where accessing GP appointments can be more difficult. Not only do pharmacists provide valuable advice and support, but they also deliver clinical services which frees up more GP appointments. Labour continue to show that they are out of touch with the pharmaceutical sector by refusing to clarify when the funding contracts will be issued. Sadly, this causes more and more pharmacies to close their doors – leaving residents without this vital service, and increasing the pressure on GP’s and hospitals. Pharmacies are being pushed to the brink and now is the time to act. I urge the Government to act now before more pharmacies are forced to shut their doors for good.”

Gavin submits petition to oppose Hixon incinerator

Sir Gavin Williamson has submitted a petition to demonstrate residents' strong opposition for plans to develop a medical incinerator in Hixon.

Over 200 residents lodged their objections to the proposals to create a 'clinical waste treatment facility' within an existing industrial building off Church Lane, which would see 3,504 tonnes of hazardous waste being incinerated at high temperature.

It is stated that the residual gases would be discharged into the atmosphere via a 15.1m high 'stack' projecting 3m above the existing roof line. Clinical waste is generated from health care premises such as hospitals, doctor's surgeries, and care homes. The waste can include swabs, bandages, dressings, syringes, and other items which have a high risk of infection.

Sir Gavin has met with local groups, as well as visiting St Peter's C of E Primary School which is near the site and therefore, significant concerns have been raised regarding the welfare of children and visitors.

Sir Gavin said: "This is a highly inappropriate development which is understandably causing significant anxiety and concern amongst residents and others. I am very strong in my objection to this, due to its proximity to a primary school as well as environmental impacts.

"I also share the concerns residents have raised with me regarding the untested nature of the process, the chemicals that will be stored so close to residential properties, and the possible damage to air quality.

"Whilst I appreciate the need to safely dispose hazardous waste, I do not believe this is a suitable site for such a facility, and will do everything I can to oppose this development.

"Residents have clearly demonstrated their objections, and I urge Staffordshire County Council to act in the best interests of the local community."

New unitary council option proposed for Staffordshire

Early proposals for how councils in Staffordshire could be reorganised in response to government plans have been published today.

Staffordshire County Council's outline plans to create two new councils - a new council for Staffordshire and a Mayoral Strategic Authority - are being put forward at Cabinet meeting on 5 March 2025.



This is in response to the government's English Devolution White Paper which was published December and set out the government's ambition to simplify the way local councils work as part of wider plans to move powers from Whitehall to local areas.

The White Paper advocates for the creation of new unitary councils – single councils that provide all council services in their area – to replace councils in 'two-tier' areas, where council services are provided by a combination of county and district or borough councils.

Councils in Staffordshire, including Stoke-on-Trent City Council were asked by Jim McMahon, the Minister for Local Government and English Devolution, to submit outline plans for reorganisation to government by 21 March 2025.

The proposal being considered by the county council's Cabinet includes:

A new Mayoral Strategic Authority to cover the whole county, including Stoke-on-Trent.
A new Staffordshire unitary council to provide services in areas currently run jointly by the county council and Staffordshire's district and borough councils.

Alan White, Leader of Staffordshire County Council (pictured), said:

"Two-tier local government works in Staffordshire – it strikes the right balance between countywide strategic services and local council services that meet the needs of our different communities.

The government are clear however, that they want to see this replaced with fewer, bigger unitary councils in the future.

With this in mind, and despite having just a few weeks to prepare, we're responding proactively with an outline proposal which aims to do a number of important things.

First and foremost, we want to unlock extra powers and funding from Westminster to boost our local economy. We are already bucking the trend – with unemployment levels and business survival rates outperforming regional averages – but our ambition is to push further on this with the Mayoral Strategic Authority.

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“When it comes to local government reorganisation, our priority is to ensure that people across the whole county can continue to receive good quality, value for money services which recognise and meet the needs of local communities.

A new Staffordshire unitary would be set up for success, streamlining services which are built on a legacy of well-run, financially stable councils able to invest in their communities. At the same time, vital services that people depend on – such as social care – would not be dismantled, with all the risk that that could entail.”

Subject to Cabinet approval, the outline proposal will be put forward for consideration at Staffordshire County Council’s Full Council meeting on March 13, 2025.

More detailed proposals for local government reorganisation must be submitted to government by November 28, 2025. The earliest that changes are expected to be fully implemented is 2028.

Alan continued:

“It’s important to know that nothing has yet been agreed for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. This is just the start of a significant change that will take many years before it is complete.

There are alternative proposals from neighbouring councils and we will judge these on their individual merits. As we work towards submitting more detailed proposals in the autumn, we will be guided by what the evidence tells us is in the best interests of Staffordshire’s people. They are our priority.”

People can read more about devolution and local government reorganisation on the county council’s website.

Staffordshire County Council pays tribute to the Mayor of Newcastle-under-Lyme



The Leader and Chairman of Staffordshire County Council have both paid tribute to Councillor Barry Panter, the Mayor of Newcastle-under-Lyme, after hearing the news of his sudden death.

Alan White, Leader of Staffordshire County Council, said:

“Everyone is shocked by this terrible news and, of course, our thoughts are with Councillor Panter’s wife, family, friends and colleagues at this time.

Having followed his time in the RAF with 23 years as a police officer, his was a life dedicated to public service so it’s no surprise that he carried on serving his community in his later years as a borough councillor.

He will be missed.”

Phil Hewitt, Chairman of Staffordshire County Council, said:

“I had the pleasure of meeting the Mayor of Newcastle-under-Lyme on several occasions.

Each time it was clear to see his enthusiasm and pride in his community.

I am sure that the many residents, groups and organisations that he met, and helped as he could, will be as shocked as I am by this news, and they would join me in sending our sympathies to Councillor Panter’s wife, family, friends and colleagues.”

MIDLANDS CONFERENCE



****WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL CONFERENCE****

**SATURDAY 15TH MARCH - 10AM START - CENTRAL BIRMINGHAM LOCATION
(detail on location has to be kept secret at present due to security)**

The West Midlands Regional Team has put together an amazing Regional Conference for us.

Guest speakers on the main stage, including members of the Shadow Cabinet, there will be MP panels and training sessions for Association Officers, Local Government candidates and volunteers (full list available on the website)

Our three Staffordshire MPs will also be in attendance. Places are limited to 350 so be sure to book early to secure your spot at this fantastic event!

Tickets available [here](#) or contact the Federation office.

SUPPER CLUB



Supper Club is back and this year we're going to be at The Moat House, Acton Trussell.

Come and join us for a evening of delicious food (*2-courses plus tea or coffee*) and great company with some fascinating guest speakers.

Tickets cost **£22** per person and you can make your reservations by either calling the Federation Office or by email to contact@centralstaffsconservatives.org.uk.

Supper Club Schedule for the 2025 Season:

20th March

24th April

22nd May

19th June

24th July

28th August

25th September

30th October

Please reserve at least a week before the date of the supper club.

FEDERATION AGM 2025

Notice of Annual General Meeting

Date: Friday 21st March 2025

Time: 7PM

Venue:

Central Staffordshire Conservative Federation, Castle Street, Stafford ST16 2ED

Notice is hereby given of the 2025 Annual General Meeting of Central Staffordshire Conservative Federation on Friday 21st March at 7PM at Federation HQ in Castle Street.

The notice of the meeting has been sent by email to all members for whom we have an email address and whose communication preference is for correspondence by email. This includes the Agenda and Nomination Forms for the election of the Federation Officers.

For those members for whom we don't have an email address or who prefer not to receive correspondence from the Party or the Federation by email, they will receive the Agenda and Nomination Form with this newsletter by mail.

The annual accounts for the year ending 31st December 2024 are currently in preparation and will be available at the meeting.

Completed nomination forms must be delivered to the Federation office by **12PM** on **14th March 2025**.

Are you interested in standing as a ward representative? For those areas not covered by a branch, we need ward representatives to sit on the Federation's Executive Council. The branches covering South Staffordshire, Haywood & Hixon, Milford and Milwich and Eccleshall, Gnosall, Seightford & Church Eaton Branches will be electing their ward representatives at the branch AGMs imminently but if anyone living in other wards is interested in standing as a ward representative, please get in touch.

100 Club

FEBRUARY'S WINNERS ANNOUNCED

1st Prize: **PAUL STARTIN**

2nd Prize: **JEREMY LEFROY**

3rd Prize: **ROY WHALLEY**

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

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

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

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.

UPCOMING EVENTS

20TH MARCH - SUPPER CLUB, THE MOAT HOUSE ACTON TRUSSELL, 7PM

21ST MARCH - FEDERATION AGM, CASTLE STREET, 7PM

28TH MARCH - PENKRIDGE SUPPER CLUB, PEACE MEMORIAL HALL, PENKRIDGE, 6:30PM

Key Contacts

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