



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

Welcome to the first Connected Communities newsletter!

Hello,

Welcome to the first instalment of the Staffordshire University Connected Communities newsletter!

In these newsletters, we will tell you all about the Connected Communities work going on across Staffordshire University.

In this instalment, we'll tell you more about who we are and what we do, tell you more about our Community Advisory Network, share a snapshot of some of Staffordshire University Connected Communities' work that has happened in 2022, and share the launch of the TEDxStaffordshireUniversity Event!

We are excited to share more with you in the coming months.

- Connected Communities Team

Who are Connected Communities?

Introducing Connected Communities: Staffordshire University's commitment to being a Civic University.

At Staffordshire University, we want to make Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire a great place to live, work and study.

We do this through **Connected Communities**, our approach to working in partnership with communities to make a real difference in people's lives, our place and society.



Our Connected Communities work values:

Cocreation: we want to build on the strengths of our place and its people and work together in equal partnership with communities to co-create programmes, initiatives and solutions that help Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire thrive. We do not assume we know best. We listen and use our position as a university to elevate the voices of others.

Community Giving: we want to share our resources and facilities for the benefit of our local communities. We also have a programme of community engagement activities and public lectures.

Place Shaping: we want to help make Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire the best it can be for the diverse range of communities who live, work and study in the area. We will work collaboratively with our partners and listen to communities to understand how we can best support the changes they want to see.

Community Advisory Network (Staffs CAN)



The University works with a Community Advisory Network – **Staffs CAN**. This is made up of people who live, work or study in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire who help to shape and enhance the work we do with communities.



Staffs CAN launch

On Thursday 24th of November, we launched the Staffs CAN in The Catalyst at Staffordshire University.

Staffs CAN brought together members of the community from across Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire.

The first meeting focussed on building a community network that can advise the university on place-shaping activities and different community matters of significance.



The next meeting for the CAN is set to take place in the new year. The group will meet throughout the coming year and have opportunities to have a say in our civic and community work. We've created a signup form so that you can [receive updates about Staffs CAN](#).

Scan to visit the CAN Update
webpage



A snapshot of Staffordshire University's Connected Communities work

Over the last 12 months, Staffordshire University has been involved in community-based projects across Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire.

In the video below, Associate Professor Nicola Gratton talks us through some of her research.



The Portland Inn Project



For our first newsletter, we asked Associate Professor Anna Francis and colleague Rebecca Davies to write a little about their work. Anna's practice aims to rethink city resources, through participatory art interventions, and Rebecca uses art to deeply embed collaborative practice that crosses illustration, design, performance, and events.

"We work together with our community on The Portland Inn Project, which proposes a disused pub as a community space and social enterprise, testing the role of culture and creativity in community development settings.

Since 2019 our community has been supported by a ground-breaking programme called Creative Civic Change (CCC), led by Local Trust and a consortium of partners, which comes to an end in December 2022. Not only has CCC made it possible for us to be there for local residents throughout the pandemic, but it has also enabled us to develop from a project into an organisation, and has meant we have been in a position to begin to plan for our future."

The 100-Year Plan

"During 2021 and 2022 we have been working alongside residents in our neighbourhood to write a 100-Year Plan. Working with Emmy award-winning filmmakers Junction15 Productions, we have created a film to communicate what we have been doing."



"Next month we will launch our [100-year plan website](#) which will contain resources for other communities like ours who want to start thinking long-term. It is here, but we are still preparing everything in the background.

In October 2022, we were so pleased to receive the news that our project has been selected as one of Arts Council England's National Portfolio Organisations, which means they will fund us for the next 3 years. We have come so unbelievably far since 2019 – and this gives us the support to be able to begin to enact the 100-Year Plan for our neighbourhood. We can't thank our community, partners and supporters enough and look forward to continuing to work together to make our city an even better place to live and work."

Scan to visit the 100 Year Plan
webpage



Raising Voices, Changing Minds, Ending Poverty



The Raising Voices project was commissioned by VOICES on behalf of Stoke-on-Trent Hardship Commission. The project involved Staffordshire University, Expert Citizens CIC, All the Small Things CIC, and, most importantly, the people of Stoke-on-Trent. It aimed to make a real difference for people experiencing poverty, by bringing people together, sharing stories of hardship and working collectively to influence change.

People from the local area told their stories in lots of different ways, including poetry, photography, and clay. These stories were then displayed as part of the ['Raising Voices Exhibition'](#) held at Staffordshire University in March.

Scan to visit the Raising Voices
Exhibition webpage



Manifesto for Change



The Raising Voices steering group have written a [Manifesto for Change](#). This outlines how the Hardship Commission for Stoke-on-Trent and the Raising Voices Steering Group plan to work together to tackle hardship and poverty in Stoke-on-Trent. The manifesto is the shared voice of the Raising Voices steering group and is based on what we heard from people who took part in the project.

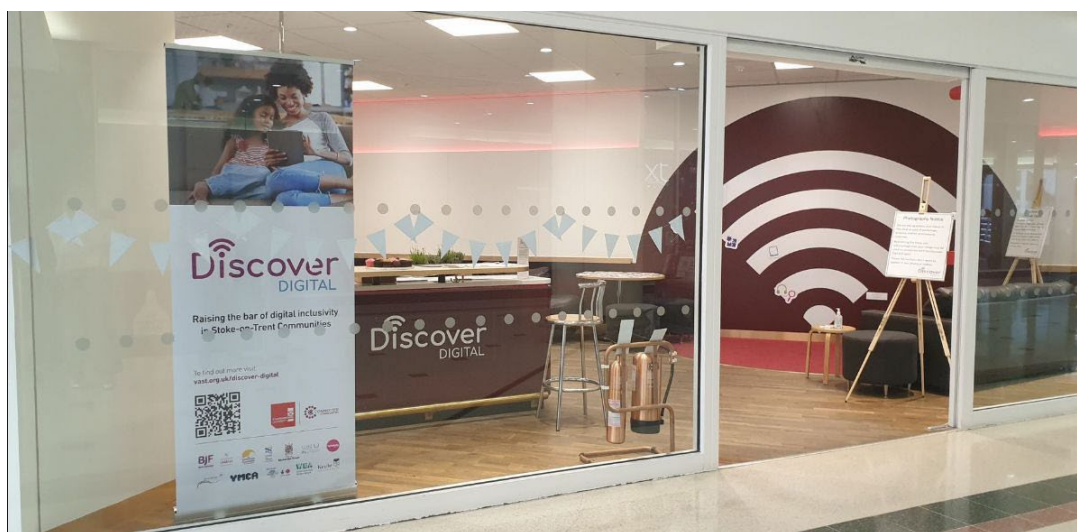
We got the information from people at Raising Voices Steering Group meetings, community events, an online form, and Raising Voices Postcards that people sent to us. We used this to help us write the manifesto.

The Manifesto for Change was agreed upon and signed by Steve Wyn Williams, the Chair of the Hardship Commission for Stoke-on-Trent and Monienne who represents the Raising Voices steering group. We had an official signing at the Raising Voices Exhibition launch night.

Scan to visit the Manifesto for Change webpage



Discover Digital



[Discover Digital](#) was designed to boost digital inclusion in Stoke-on-Trent by breaking down barriers to digital access. Funded by HM Community Renewal Fund, Discover is led by Staffordshire University in partnership with 9 local organisations.

The “digital divide” has resulted in significant inequalities in education, wellbeing, work and access to opportunities. Discover addresses this digital inequality by providing: Digital Skills Training, Grants, a Community Connector Programme, and a Digital Champions Programme.

So far, 254 individuals have received digital skills support. Grants have provided 199 individuals and 14 community organisations with equipment totalling £149,648. 154 community voices were heard through the Community Connector Programme which helped shape large parts of the project.

The project was put at the heart of the community in the Discover Digital Pop-Up Shop, open throughout April and May in the Potteries Shopping Centre. This provided an inviting space where relationships were built, knowledge was shared, and barriers were broken down.

Scan to visit the Discover Digital webpage



Get Connected Grants

Discover Digital want to make sure that everyone in Stoke-on-Trent can access training and support to boost digital inclusion if they need it.

The Discover team have reopened the [Get Connected grants programme](#) to provide the equipment you may need to get online. If your application is successful, the equipment will be yours to keep, and we can even help you to get started with your new equipment.

Applications close on **Monday 5th December!**

The video below shows some local people that have been supported by Discover Digital's 'Get Connected' grants.



Scan to visit the Get
Connected Grants
webpage



Call for creative minds to speak at TEDxStaffordshireUniversity



Staffordshire University is appealing for the region's most creative minds to be part of its [TEDxStaffordshireUniversity](#) event on Wednesday 1 February 2023.

The theme of the event, which will take place at Staffordshire University's Stoke-on-Trent campus, is "Thinking through Making" and any potential speakers with ideas worth spreading are being invited to pitch to a TEDx panel made up of movers and shakers in the region.

Chairing the panel for TEDxStaffordshireUniversity is Vice-Chancellor Professor Martin Jones. He said: "As a civic university and an education hub, it's a privilege for us to host this independently organised TEDx event at Staffordshire University, and especially in The Catalyst building which is a thriving hub for knowledge exchange and sparking new and original ideas."

"While this is an open call for TEDx speakers, we hope our selection process and the event will uncover people whose experiences and ideas fit the 'thinking through making' theme, some of which help make Staffordshire 'the creative county' and others with the potential to change the world."

Scan to visit the
TEDxStaffordshireUniversity
webpage



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

Events



Scan to visit the [events webpage](#)

Work Vacancies



Scan to visit the [work vacancies webpage](#)