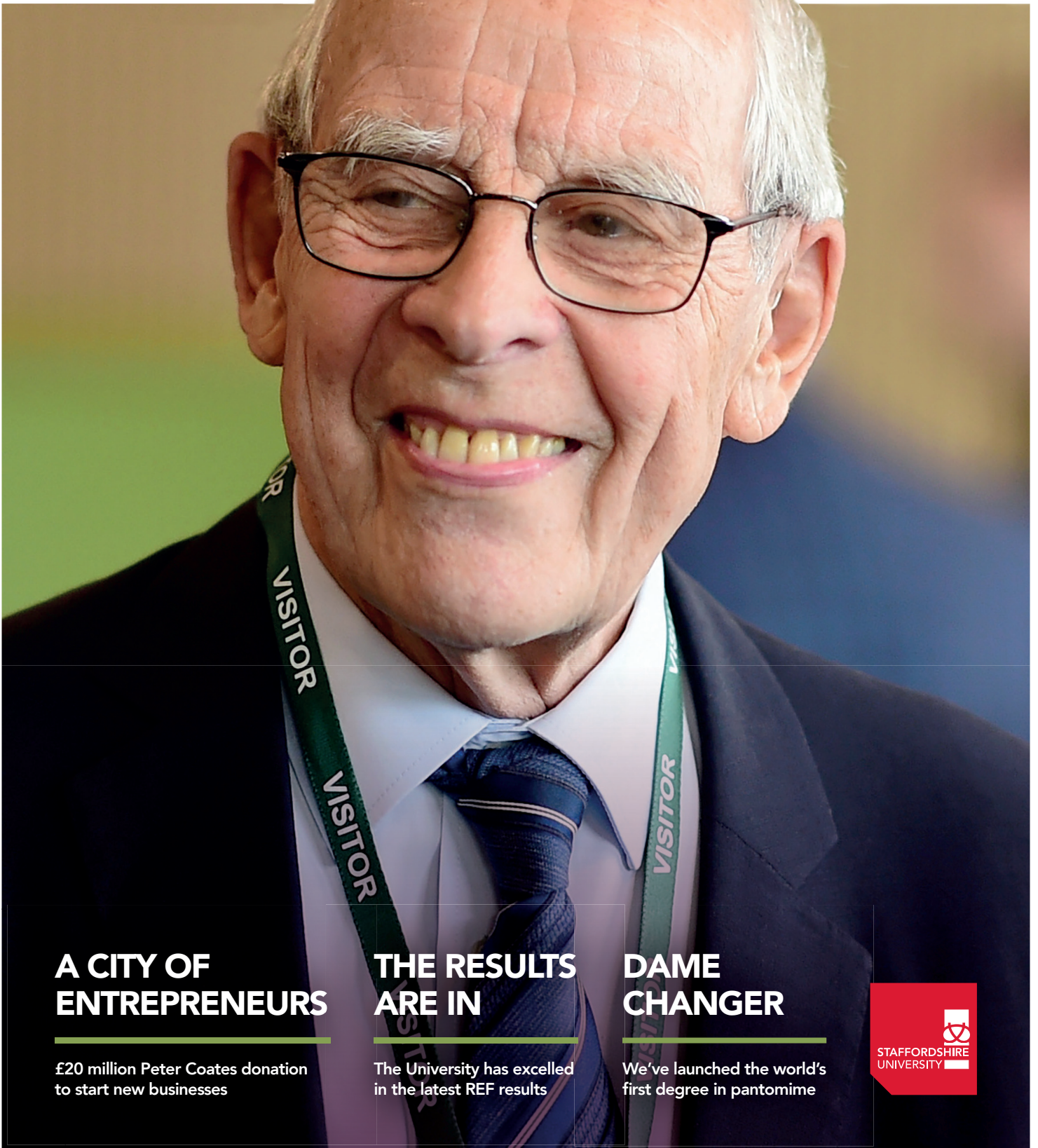


HORIZON

Staffordshire University
2022/23 ISSUE



A CITY OF ENTREPRENEURS

£20 million Peter Coates donation
to start new businesses

THE RESULTS ARE IN

The University has excelled
in the latest REF results

DAME CHANGER

We've launched the world's
first degree in pantomime



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HORIZON FUND

RAISING FUNDS,
BROADENING HORIZONS

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FEATURE ARTICLES



WELCOME



Welcome to the 2022/23 issue of Staffordshire University's Horizon magazine, the first since I became the University's Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive in January 2022.



It is a privilege to lead the University through what continues to be a time of incredible change. There is much to look forward to as we continue to cement our reputation as a catalyst for change and as a globally-connected digital pioneer.

From the opening of the £43million digitally-enabled Catalyst building on the Leek Road campus in Stoke-on-Trent to the launch of a Peter Coates MSc in Entrepreneurship facilitated by an intended £20 million donation from the Peter Coates Foundation, the past 12 months have seen some landmark developments for the University.

You can read more about the MSc in Entrepreneurship between the pages of this magazine. This is a unique opportunity which has the potential to not only change the lives of budding entrepreneurs but to drive the economy of the region forward. We believe this new one-year course will help to create a dynamic enterprise cluster and bring new jobs and wealth creation to Stoke-on-Trent and the wider region.

I'm also delighted to share the latest Research Excellence Framework results, the UK's system for assessing the quality of research in higher education institutions. This gold standard study has rated 68% of the University's research as world leading and internationally excellent. Furthermore 87% of the University's research impact has been classed as outstanding or very considerable – the two highest categories used by the REF.

I hope you enjoy this issue of Horizon and I wish you all the very best for the year ahead.

Professor Martin Jones
Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive
Staffordshire University

'UNIVERSITY EXCELS IN LATEST GOLD STANDARD RESEARCH STUDY'

REF2021 Research
Excellence
Framework

REF2021

Research Excellence Framework

From uncovering war crimes to using artificial intelligence to make our homes smarter, Staffordshire University is leading the way.

University research was rated "world leading" and "internationally excellent" in a recent study which is the gold standard for higher education in the UK.

Horizon magazine takes a look at the latest Research Excellence Framework (REF) results and speaks to some of the researchers about their cutting-edge work.

Staffordshire University is celebrating 68% of its research being rated as “world leading” and “internationally excellent” in a gold standard study. The last time the Research Excellence Framework (REF) reported its results in 2014 that figure was 37%.

In another significant boost 87% of the University’s research impact has been classed as “outstanding” or “very considerable” – the two highest categories used by the REF, which is the UK’s system for assessing the quality of research in higher education institutions.

The impressive ratings have seen the University rise 22 places in the Times Higher Education League Table to 86.

It also means it’s among the top 10 in the UK in terms of Grade Point Average improvement, which is a measure of the overall or average quality of research.

The best performance was in Art and Design where 91% of research was recognised as 4* and 3* and 100% of research impact was judged “outstanding” or “very considerable”, figures which reflect the University’s rich heritage in this area.

The University has welcomed the results, which it sees as a platform to grow its research portfolio.

Horizon magazine has spoken to some of the University’s pioneering researchers to find out more about their work.

“RESEARCH IMPACT IS INCREDIBLY IMPORTANT FOR STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY AS WE LOOK TO MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE IN OUR REGION AND THE WIDER WORLD AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR PEOPLE LIVING IN OUR COMMUNITIES”

Vice-Chancellor
and Chief Executive
Professor Martin Jones

87% OF OUR
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IS RECOGNISED AS
VERY CONSIDERABLE
OR
OUTSTANDING

68% OF OUR
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INTERNATIONALLY
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REF2021 Research
Excellence
Framework



RESEARCHER:
PROFESSOR
CAROLINE STURDY COLLS

Director of the Centre for Archaeology

100% OF OUR
RESEARCH IMPACT IN
ARCHAEOLOGY
IS RECOGNISED AS
VERY CONSIDERABLE
OR
OUTSTANDING

As Professor of Conflict Archaeology and Genocide Investigation, Caroline Sturdy Colls could help uncover war crimes and hidden graves resulting from the current conflict in Ukraine.

Professor Sturdy Colls is a leading researcher and expert in Holocaust studies and Director of the Centre for Archaeology, where case studies were classed as “outstanding” or “very considerable” in REF 2021. The department is ranked ninth in the UK for impact in archaeology.

She teaches techniques relating to the search and recovery of human remains and crime scene investigation and uses innovative non-invasive methods to find evidence.

She has already worked in Ukraine on sites where Jewish people and Soviet prisoners of war died in the Second World War. But now she could help other Ukrainian investigations, as the Russian invasion has seen more recent horrific violence.

She says: “Tragically, Ukraine is littered with mass graves from many decades of events like the Holocaust and the Holodomor, a mass starvation event in 1932-1933 that killed millions. And now there are more atrocities being carried out.

“We have vast amounts of aerial satellite imagery coming out now from different agencies. There are continual reports of mass graves and photographs of bodies in the street, so we have a good idea of what’s happening. But there will be very well hidden graves or in inaccessible areas that require an in-field response, and we would be happy to lend our expertise. We are in touch with colleagues in Ukraine and I’ve been

approaching agencies to see how we can be useful.

“Part of our job is the recovery of bodies and information from the grave to determine who the perpetrators are and what they’ve done to hide the bodies and their crimes. If you use non-specialists, a lot of that process and evidence gets lost. We also have the knowledge to distinguish between graves from the past and now, which is very important when the perpetrators may try to claim the graves are historic.”

Professor Sturdy Colls is a pioneer in Holocaust archaeology, working in countries including Poland, Serbia, Germany, Czech Republic, the Netherlands and even in Britain, on the Channel Island of Alderney. She appeared in the BBC One documentary *My Family, the Holocaust and Me*, helping celebrity judge Robert Rinder discover what happened to his family.

She says: “Our REF case study recounts how we returned to many locations that were investigated shortly after the war or places that have never been investigated, to find unmarked graves, document camps and to record killing sites.

“Our work has led to the creation of new memorials, especially in Poland and Ukraine. We have also brought together volunteers from all over the world to work with us, cleaning up Jewish cemeteries that were vandalised by the Nazis and restoring broken tombstones.”

Professor Sturdy Colls is at the forefront of using non-invasive archaeological methods, much welcomed by rabbis as Jewish

burial law forbids the disturbance of graves.

Her work begins by analysing documents, photos, plans and maps. A walkover survey systematically looks for traces, building foundations and changes in vegetation which might indicate buried remains. Then the team maps in more detail using highly sophisticated GPS equipment and ground penetrating radar.

She often works with her husband Kevin Colls, Associate Professor of Archaeology at Staffordshire University. Together they wrote the recently-published book *Adolf Island*, which documents them finding the remains of Nazi SS camps constructed in secret during the German invasion of Alderney during the Second World War. The Colls found the mass graves of slave labourers and “a terrifying warning of what could have happened to the rest of the UK”.

She says: “Our work is painstaking, often with long, intensive days on site and years spent processing data. But I do it because I have seen the harrowing impact on families of not knowing what has happened to their loved ones. If I can use my skill set to give people some answers and solace, I will. There’s also a lot of educational value in what we do, especially as the Holocaust falls out of memory. Contemporary events show how quickly history repeats itself.

“What we uncover can get to me, but that motivates me to carry on and find answers. It’s sad and traumatic but I work with a lot of amazing and courageous people who want to make the world a better place and that keeps me optimistic.”



RESEARCHER:
ANNA FRANCIS

Associate Professor of
Fine Art and Social Practice

Anna Francis is an artist who puts her money (and heart) where her mouth is. She's not dreaming up abstract ideas in a gallery far away – instead she works where she lives, on projects that directly improve the lives of the people in her Stoke-on-Trent community.

Anna graduated with a BA and an MA from Staffordshire University and now she works there, as Associate Professor of Fine Art and Social Practice.

She lives with her partner and two young children in the Portland Street area of Hanley, in a once-dilapidated house they bought for £1 and a £30,000 renovation loan from Stoke-on-Trent City Council. Part of the agreement was that the new owners of the 33 £1 houses should contribute to community life, which Anna has certainly done.

She submitted an impact case study to REF under the heading 'Driving Urban Regeneration and Empowering Communities through Socially Engaged Arts Practice'. The work is about bringing public attention to disused urban spaces in Stoke-on-Trent after its deindustrialisation and examining their potential. This has led to two distinct projects.

The first was on 'Rethinking the Brownfield' and outlines Anna's work transforming an overgrown site attached to the Spode China Hall off Kingsway, derelict since the factory closed in 2008. In partnership with AirSpace Gallery and Stoke-on-Trent City Council, the space became a rose

garden that's open to the public every day.

When a community consultation asked what people wanted to see in the space, they said they'd like the Spode heritage reflected in the design. So part of the garden, around a willow tree, uses Spode's famous Willow Pattern, while a Blue Italian Border won a silver gilt medal at RHS Tatton. Rose breeder Gareth Fryer grew 60 special rose bushes for the garden, based on a bone china rose by ceramic artist Rita Floyd. The garden is now maintained by the Friends of Spode Rose Garden.

The second part of Anna's research is around the Portland Inn Project where she lives. Four streets of boarded-up houses, many with absentee landlords, had been left with no infrastructure after the pub and shop closed – even the post box was removed. There were also problems with drug dealing and anti-social behaviour, but Anna was determined to bring life back to the area.

"We started really simply," she says. "There was no community centre so we set up a big tent on a green space. We are working now from a shipping container, using a hose running from my back garden – it would be nice to have a real plumbed-in sink!

"I started a project commissioned by the British Ceramics Biennial, called Community Maker. Neighbours held Bring a Plate events, where everyone brought some food for a shared meal. I had the idea of designing our own tableware, which would consider the ingredients of a successful community.

**100% OF OUR
RESEARCH IMPACT IN
ART AND DESIGN
IS RECOGNISED AS
VERY CONSIDERABLE
OR
OUTSTANDING**

It was inspired by a 1950s ceramic design called Homemaker by designer Enid Seeny who trained at Spode. The black and white design showed items like sofas, lamps and cutlery and was sold at Woolworths but is now highly collectable. So we held a lot of community activities with clay.

"It was designed to be a three-year project but it became clear we needed more than ceramics. We needed a permanent space for the community to come together and rebuild, so the project took a new turn."

The major aim now is to turn the derelict pub The Portland Inn into a community space. Architect Godson Egbo ran workshops to redesign the building and planning permission was granted at the end of 2020. But while the community had raised the first phase of funding, costs have now spiralled from £600,000 to £1 million.

Anna says: "We need to raise a lot more money, but we hope work can start soon. In the meantime we continue to hold activities such as a weekly youth club in the shipping container and green space.

"I'm interested in the role of artists in the community – what do we contribute? Arts can have a very practical impact and my projects have been cited as examples of how councils can work with culture to make positive change. The Portland Inn project is exhausting and slow, but we are managing to do a lot by involving local people and ensuring they have a stake in the changes that can make life better for our community."



RESEARCHER:
**PROFESSOR NACHIAPPAN
 CHOCKALINGAM**

Director of the Centre for
 Biomechanics and Rehabilitation
 Technologies

**75% OF OUR
 RESEARCH IMPACT IN
 ENGINEERING
 IS RECOGNISED AS
 VERY CONSIDERABLE
 OR
 OUTSTANDING**

Every 20 seconds, someone in the world loses a part of their body because of diabetes. Amputations of toes and feet are surprisingly common, but Professor Nachiappan Chockalingam is at the forefront of research to help this major problem.

He is a Professor of Clinical Biomechanics at Staffordshire University, applying physics and engineering principles to understand how the human body functions. He contributed two case studies for REF 2021, one on the complications of the diabetic foot and the other on footwear and assistive technologies. He also sits on one of the national REF panels.

The foot problems of people with diabetes are an increasing concern, especially as those diagnosed with the disease shot up from 108 million in 1980 to 422 million in 2014. In the UK alone, the cost of treating 'diabetic foot' is more than £650 million. Raised blood sugars can damage the blood supply to the feet and lead to problems with cuts and sores. This can lead to ulcers, which diabetics who have nerve damage often cannot feel before it's too late.

Professor Chockalingam leads a team working to prevent these problems by developing 3D printed shoe insoles. They use ultrasound and thermal imaging to detect changes to the soft tissues on the sole of the foot to see what areas are at risk of developing ulcers. Made-to-measure

insoles can then be 3D printed using special materials for optimised cushioning and to redistribute the load across the foot.

"We completed our clinical trials in India, working with an industry partner in the UK and an academic partner in Germany to develop materials to help patients," says Professor Chockalingam.

The second case study submitted to REF concerns developing practice guidelines and standards for the provision of orthotics and clinical footwear. The team's research has helped shape national and global policies.

Orthotic devices give mechanical support to the body to help alleviate pain. Foot problems and pain are common in up to 30 per cent of the adult population and can lead to reduced mobility and falls. Part of the case study is understanding how our footwear choice in childhood and our teenage years contributes to foot health problems when we're older.

Professor Chockalingam says: "Teenage girls might spend much of their time in ballet pumps which don't offer good support, for example. High heels can also be bad for you, although a certain amount of heel raise can help if you have high arches. If you don't have the right footwear for your foot type you might get problems later, such as hallux valgus or a deformed big toe."

The case study also looks at

developing guidelines for telehealth in low resource settings.

He says: "What we call allied professions in the NHS – podiatrists, physios, speech therapists and so on – were thrown in at the deep end at the start of Covid lockdowns. They were told to speak to their patients via laptops with no idea of what to say or not to say. We surveyed 890 allied professionals in the UK and now know what the perspective is of management, clinicians and funders, and we hope to help develop a framework or guidance document to change practice both within the NHS and in other parts of the world."

Professor Chockalingam is the Director of the Centre for Biomechanics and Rehabilitation Technologies, a high-tech facility in Stoke-on-Trent where detailed assessments are made on how people walk, run and carry out daily activities.

He says: "Our work is all about making the transformation from our lab to helping patients, in terms of orthotics and diabetic footwear. We are making a huge difference.

"This has been my passion for the last 13 years and I'm at the forefront of the research. We have so many firsts in terms of diabetic foot complications – for example, we were the first group to use ultrasonography and thermal imaging as a frontline clinical tool to look at complications."



RESEARCHER:

DR MOHAMED SEDKY

Associate Professor in Staffordshire University's Centre for Smart Systems, AI and Cybersecurity

Dr Mohamed Sedky's work ranges from helping with anti-terrorism training to monitoring the human impact on biodiversity. He uses physics and biology to better train artificial intelligence (AI) solutions.

As Associate Professor in Staffordshire University's Centre for Smart Systems, AI and Cybersecurity, he makes AI models inspired by the brain, using the findings of neuroscientists and applying them to algorithms. Much of his research has been on the video analytics used in CCTV surveillance. He uses algorithms to detect moving objects and classify them as human or animal, then detect whether the movement is normal or abnormal. The AI model then files a report on any occurrences, which saves security and the police looking through hours of footage to discover an intruder.

Dr Sedky submitted his Open Smart Home Simulator to REF. He built a 3D simulation of a smart house, using Blender software used in computer games. The tool, which has been made widely available to researchers, has a number of smart sensors and an avatar to simulate activities. For example, a smart carpet with pressure sensors can detect if someone is in your house, while an infra-red or temperature

sensor can detect if you've left the heating or your hair straighteners on. It will alert you and you don't even need to come back, as a smart home can turn it off remotely.

Dr Sedky says: "The main challenge with this work is building a realistic AI model with enough data to represent all scenarios. We have to reproduce lots of real world situations to train it, and we can do this with the simulation tool."

For REF, Dr Sedky also presented his Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, showing how his research has directly helped businesses and organisations. One Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) was with a company called Virtual Reality Simulation Systems. In collaboration with Staffordshire Police and University colleagues in the School of Law, Dr Sedky built an AI and VR simulation tool for anti-terrorism training. It gives police officers a more realistic training environment and can help them investigate a crime scene.

Another KTP was with Tamworth construction company Stormking, which is revolutionising the way new houses are built by the off-site manufacturing of pre-fabricated components. Dr Sedky built an AI system to get accurate readings from different sensors in their factory.

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"We can present the data to their engineers so they know everything that's going on in the factory and can increase production," he explains.

The latest KTP is with Stafford data management company Connexica, building an XAI (Explainable AI) platform. Dr Sedky says: "Deep learning models are very sophisticated, which is a problem. They are so complex that scientists can't tell you what's happening inside the machine, so it's a black box.

"If you use one to decide whether to give someone a mortgage, or make a medical diagnosis, you can't explain how the decision was reached. It's illegal not to be able to justify this. So we're trying to open the black boxes, explain their reasoning and make the models more transparent."

Dr Sedky's next project is as the only UK centre, along with 10 European partners, on the €4.9 million Nature First project. It uses forensic intelligence and remote sensing technologies to monitor biodiversity at four sites in Europe.

"We're monitoring areas at risk, for example, looking at pollutants in the air and soil. We can detect illegal activity and present actionable information to the authorities," he explains.



RESEARCHER:
**PROFESSOR
JON FAIRBURN**

School of Justice, Security
and Sustainability

**64% OF OUR
RESEARCH OUTPUTS IN
SOCIAL WORK AND
SOCIAL POLICY
ARE RATED AS
INTERNATIONALLY
EXCELLENT OR
WORLD LEADING**

Air pollution kills an estimated seven million people around the world every year. Only one in 10 of us breathes air that's within World Health Organisation safe limits. Particulate matter, nitrogen dioxide, ozone and sulphur dioxide are some of the pollutants we breathe in, contributing to strokes, heart and chronic pulmonary diseases, lung cancer and acute respiratory infections.

Professor Jon Fairburn is an award-winning researcher at Staffordshire University working with government and global agencies to help shape policy and with a leading role in a WHO expert group. He is shining a light on environmental inequalities, as his REF research reveals that the poor are more exposed to risks from their environment.

Research in the early 2000s by Professor Fairburn and his colleagues Gordon Walker, Graham Smith and Gordon Mitchell demonstrated that people living in deprived areas disproportionately experienced poor air quality and were much more likely to be living at risk of flooding than the rest of the population. The research has been used to create an air quality index which forms part of the Index of Multiple Deprivation, in turn used to target support for the worse off. This work also led to the Environment Agency spending more on flood defence projects in poorer

areas, resulting in 53,940 deprived households being moved out of the highest categories of flood risk between 2013 and 2019.

Professor Fairburn says: "My interests are in issues of environmental justice. I've always been an applied researcher to try to help the most vulnerable in society and give them the justice that other members of society routinely get.

"The main thing I've been looking at is air quality, which is the single biggest environmental factor impacting on our health. It affects virtually every organ in the body and a wide range of illnesses. Part of my work is laying out for scientists and policy makers that we do have a major problem with air quality and that it's a much bigger area than we realised. Working with the World Health Organisation, we showed that across Europe it was deprived groups and ethnic minorities most likely to be exposed to a range of pollutants.

"We have tended to use uniform approaches in dealing with environmental issues, which have been successful for the majority of the population but have always left some people behind. Bringing in higher standards for car emissions led to an increase in air quality in most places, but not so much in the most deprived areas."

Professor Fairburn has strong views on what can be done to

improve our air quality, from investing in our cycle infrastructure to looking at our fuel sources.

He says: "Lots of people don't think air pollution is a problem anymore because they can't see it, because it's at a microscopic level. One of the biggest problems we have at the moment is with wood burning stoves, especially in urban areas. They are responsible for about 40% of particulate matter (PM2.5). The use of these stoves has been growing in Britain over the last 10 years. They have an image of being a really cosy lifestyle choice yet produce huge amounts of pollution with virtually no government control over them.

"British cities are 30 to 40 years behind European cities when it comes to air pollution. The Mayor of Paris is trying to get private cars out of the city. We are starting to take action with Clean Air Zones, but we need to improve public transport and proper active transport measures.

"You can see the difference between London, where transport isn't deregulated and there are cheaper and more reliable buses and the Tube, and the rest of the country. It's viable to live in London without owning a car, although it's still not as good as other European cities where they have much more active transport plans and safe cycle routes."

A CITY OF ENTREPRENEURS

Backed by an intended £20 million donation from the philanthropist Peter Coates, Staffordshire University is offering a life-changing opportunity for budding entrepreneurs

A unique Masters course which aims to put Stoke-on-Trent on the map as a leading city for innovation and wealth creation is to launch at Staffordshire University.

The Peter Coates MSc in Entrepreneurship is supported by an intended £20 million charitable donation from Peter Coates to the Peter Coates Foundation.

Speaking at the launch of the project, Peter Coates and Staffordshire University Vice-Chancellor Professor Martin Jones said: "With this programme, we want to help our city and region by accelerating its entrepreneurial success.

"We want to give everyone who has ambitions to start a business the necessary practical business skills, funding and support, in order to give them the best chance of succeeding."

Beginning in January 2023, the Peter Coates Fast Forward Programme will offer emerging entrepreneurs the practical business education skills and support they need to start new businesses in Stoke-on-Trent.



Peter is especially keen that the MSc in Entrepreneurship is accessible to those who do not have the academic record or financial support to ordinarily undertake such a programme but who can demonstrate that they have the drive and ambition to thrive given the opportunity.

Full bursaries will therefore be available from the Peter Coates Foundation and non-academic criteria will be used to support applications.

Furthermore, at the culmination of the course, teams of graduates will be able to pitch for up to £200,000 investment in their business idea and the opportunity for ongoing mentoring and start-up support.

Peter Coates, who was awarded an honorary degree from Staffordshire University in 2008, said:

"I WANT TO CREATE A LEGACY OF A THRIVING AND GROWING ECOSYSTEM OF NEW BUSINESSES TO DRIVE THE ECONOMY AND THE REGION FORWARD."

"I want to create a legacy of a thriving and growing ecosystem of new businesses to drive the economy and the region forward. Educating and empowering our next generation of local entrepreneurs is the key to the regeneration of our city."

Staffordshire University Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Professor Martin Jones said:

"We are delighted to be teaming up with Peter and the Peter Coates Foundation on what could literally be a life-changing opportunity for individuals accepted on to the course.

“Working with and alongside those SMEs who are currently involved in the University’s Innovation Enterprise Zone, we believe the new one-year course will help to create a dynamic enterprise cluster and bring new job and wealth creation to our city and region.

“This is very much in keeping with our responsibilities as a civic university to improve the regional economy, support quality of life in our local communities and develop higher level skills in business and industry through the retention and development of entrepreneur graduate talent.”

The Peter Coates Foundation has been born out of Peter Coates’ deep roots in the Stoke-on-Trent area and his philanthropic passion for giving back to his community.

The administration of The Peter Coates Foundation will be managed by SORBUS.org, the not-for-profit division of SORBUS Partners, a leading Private Investment Office.

Max Thowless-Reeves, Founding Partner at SORBUS Partners, said: “We believe we can have a significant impact on our city’s future with this project.

“Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire will be re-energised with this perpetual stream of new businesses. These are the building blocks that will create an expanding ecosystem of high-quality jobs and opportunities.

“The impact of this legacy is not short term; it is intended to last for decades, even generations. We are delighted that Peter’s generosity is enabling this project to

come to life, and are excited to be working with him, the Trustees and Staffordshire University.”

Stoke-on-Trent-born James Routledge, the founder of mental health business Sanctus and Staffordshire University’s new Entrepreneur in Residence, is playing a key

“WE ARE DELIGHTED TO BE TEAMING UP WITH PETER AND THE PETER COATES FOUNDATION ON WHAT COULD LITERALLY BE A LIFE-CHANGING OPPORTUNITY FOR INDIVIDUALS ACCEPTED ON TO THE COURSE.”

role in the design and delivery of the course.

James said: “I’m so excited to be part of the resurgence in our creative and entrepreneurial community in Staffordshire. Our area needs hope, role models and new opportunities. I believe we can be part of creating those.”

PETER COATES’ VISION IS TO SUPPORT REGENERATION OF THE AREA BY:

- The provision of accessible, practical business education. To hone talented people, regardless of academic background, with the skills and tools they need to identify and develop business opportunities to become the local entrepreneurs of tomorrow.
- Providing financial support to successful and ambitious graduates of the MSc to start up their own businesses by fuelling these new companies with investment.

MEET JAMES ROUTLEDGE, STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY'S ENTREPRENEUR IN RESIDENCE

James Routledge is the founder of Sanctus, a social impact business that provides coaching in the workplace to create connection and belonging. Sanctus partners with more than 100 businesses in the UK and has raised £5m in investment.

James is the author of the book *Mental Health at Work*, published by Penguin. Through his writing and his work with Sanctus James has played a leading role in changing the UK's approach to mental health.

James was born and raised in Meir

Heath in North Staffordshire and is now Entrepreneur in Residence at Staffordshire University where he is supporting the growth of the region's start-up community. James is playing a key role in the new Peter Coates MSc in Entrepreneurship.



DAME CHANGER



Pantomime is a significant art form dating back hundreds of years on which many theatres rely for survival. Oh yes it is!

There may have been some who laughed at the idea when Staffordshire University announced the world's first degree in pantomime, but this is a serious business. And the level of interest shown in the course, which is backed by some of the biggest names in the industry, has proved its value.

It's estimated that more than 260 professional pantos are staged in Britain every year, bringing in around £63 million in revenue. Several theatres sell more than £1 million in tickets, vital to keeping actors and crews in work and theatre doors open all year round.

From Cinderella to Dick Whittington, and from Sleeping Beauty to Mother Goose, generations of families have shouted "It's behind you!" at stars bringing the best of entertainment to our stages.

It's a very British tradition which has never really taken off in other countries but is as much a part of our heritage as Bonfire Night. Watching a panto is often a child's first taste of the theatre. And while the basic format remains unchanged, the way pantos are presented is constantly innovating and adapting.

The first intake for the MA in Contemporary Pantomime Practice arrives in September, ready to learn everything from the history of panto

to how to stage one, taking in skills including acting, producing, marketing, directing and set, costume and lighting design.

Dr Robert Marsden, Staffordshire University's Head of Department, Media, Performance and Communication, is running the MA with course leader Richard Cheshire. A consultant is Simon Sladen, the senior curator of Theatre and Performance at the V&A and a leading expert in pantomime.

The course is run in association with the Wilkes Academy of Performing Arts, headed by Stoke-on-Trent born Jonathan Wilkes. He's become known as Mr Panto and this Christmas marks his 18th in Stoke-on-Trent, heading The Regent Theatre's production of Peter Pan with his sidekick Christian Patterson.

The actor, who was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Staffordshire University in 2009, runs the Wilkes Academy with his wife Nikki and is already partnered with the University

to deliver a degree in Musical Theatre.

Jonny says: "Pantomime is an incredibly important part of British culture and has been a big part of my life. I'm looking forward to passing on my knowledge and skills to support the next generation of panto professionals."

Dr Marsden, who has directed 25 professional pantos, adds: "Pantomime is unique, with a style of performing that's very difficult. It's a specialist art form with a perceived lack of formal training, mentoring and meaningful career development, which we want to tackle. At the moment, training is informal, with traditions passed down and most performers are left to learn on the job.

"There are up to 12 places on the MA course and we're on the right path to filling it, having had a lot of interest. Our students currently include graduates coming straight from drama school and a septuagenarian who is very interested in pantomime. It's a real mix of people who will be researching and creating together.

"We were overwhelmed with the positive press when we launched the course. We were even the 'And finally' item on the News at Ten. We were worried that people might make fun of it but it has critical and contextual underpinning at MA level. Although panto is entertainment and popular theatre, it's a serious business and we are offering the rigour of a Masters degree.

"STAFFORDSHIRE IS CALLED THE CREATIVE COUNTY AND HAS DEEP ROOTS IN THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES, FROM ART AND DESIGN IN POTTERY THROUGH TO EARLY MUSIC HALLS AND COMMUNITY THEATRES."

"It will teach skills you can apply across several contexts and include industry placements with the biggest pantomime companies in the UK. Every student will have an academic mentor and a specialist one from industry, such as Chris Jarvis from CBeebies. They will be tailored to what the students require.

"There will be a lot of negotiated learning. In the first block, everyone will learn the history of pantomime, its traditions and ethical questions. Then it will become more personalised. At the end, the students will create and stage their own pantomime."

Dr Marsden is a trustee of the UK Panto Association and has directed stars including Justin Fletcher (aka Mr Tumble), Lynne McGranger from Home and Away and the first Big Brother winner, Craig Phillips.

So what makes a good panto? "You can push the boundaries but it still has to sit in a frame," he muses. "It's a craft that has rules and tropes. Kids will tell you when they're bored. You have to hook them in with a story and it has to have its own internal logic. You can't just drop the story and introduce variety acts, it has to be weaved into the narrative.

"Our students will be asking questions on how pantomime reflects society. Duncan James's Jack came out in pantomime in Canterbury last year, going against the male/female love interest. Pantomime shows young audiences how to deal with 'otherness' and threats – how do we deal with the villains, and should we be working on redemption rather than killing them off? How can we deal with cultural appropriation in shows like Dick Whittington and Robinson Crusoe?"

"We want our students to be at the heart of how pantomime evolves."

A TIME TO CELEBRATE

Staffordshire University is about to mark two major anniversaries, celebrating 25 years of teaching drama and 55 years of film. There will be a wide range of events during the 2022/3 academic year to highlight how the University excels as a course provider in these areas.

Some may be surprised to learn that film studies pre-date drama by 30 years. Staffordshire was one of the first universities to offer degrees in the subject, having begun teaching it in 1967 at Stoke College of Art. An early pioneer was Alan Lovell, who created study units at the British Film Institute and became a lecturer in film and cinema at Staffordshire University. John Jordan set up and ran a department in Audio-Visual Communication at the then North Staffordshire Polytechnic. The BAFTA-nominated sound recordist worked on films including A Clockwork Orange and in 1974 he founded the Stoke Film Theatre, an independent cinema on the College Road campus.

Staffordshire was also first to offer a degree level course in radio, with the introduction by the polytechnic in 1990 of Film, Television and Radio Studies. Lez Cooke wrote his 2003 book British TV Drama while teaching at Staffordshire University.

Dr Robert Marsden says: "We're really proud to be celebrating these anniversaries. We were instrumental in the early years of film studies in the UK, then studying drama as a form in its own right came later.

"Staffordshire is called the Creative County and has deep roots in the creative industries, from art and design in pottery through to early music halls and community theatres.

"Now we want to make sure Staffordshire University is THE place for training in the creative industries. We are vocationally inspired and our courses are a springboard to a range of careers. We have courses in Acting, Film, Media Production, Journalism, Music Production, English and Creative Writing and Film, TV and Radio Studies.

"Our three pillars are storytelling, sense making and collaboration, and students from the different courses often work together. For example, those studying creative writing help the music students write lyrics for their compositions.

"In the Guardian League Tables, Staffordshire University was in the Top 15 for Film Production and the Top 25 for Drama and Dance.

"We have a whole year of events planned to celebrate our creative anniversaries. They include masterclasses and Q&As with industry names and a community film challenge. We also plan to bring the founders of the film and drama courses back to talk about how it all started."

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PANTOMIME

Pantomime's roots go back more than 2,000 years to Roman times, when a single actor performed a story in mime using a series of masks, while a chorus explained the story to the audience.

The art form was developed in 16th century Italy through Commedia dell'Arte, featuring a selection of mischievous characters including Harlequin, Scaramouche, Punch and Pantaloon. They began to appear on the London stage in early pantomimes in the 18th century. The term slapstick, meaning clownish comedy, came from the wooden bat with a hinged flap which produced a loud flapping noise and was used to change the stage scenery.

The characters were allowed to speak by the 1800s and acted out traditional folk tales such as Dick Whittington and Robin Hood. Elaborate scenery and stage effects were introduced in the 1830s along with audience participation, comments on current events, principal boys and dames – panto plots still involve a girl dressed up as a boy, who is usually the son of a man dressed as a woman. Throw in a pair of Ugly Sisters, two people playing a pantomime horse or cow, and it's no wonder people who aren't familiar with the art form can be confused!

By the late 19th century, the most extravagant productions could last up to five hours with stage tricks, stunning costumes and huge casts. Pantomimes often opened on Boxing Day and ran for weeks – Birmingham Hippodrome's first panto, starring Beryl Reid, lasted until 1 March in 1958.

Panto traditions which continue include the fact the villain is always the first to enter to boos from the audience, from the left side of the stage where the entrance to hell was placed in medieval times. That's followed by the good fairy entering from the right or heavenly side of the stage.

Big names have always found a home in pantomime. Over the years, audiences have seen the likes of Morecambe and Wise, Cliff Richard, Joan Collins, Cilla Black and Henry 'The Fonz' Winkler in panto. More recently, Sir Ian McKellen played Widow Twankey and Dawn French made her panto debut. People from popular culture are encouraged to make cameos, from Australian soap stars in the 1980s and battling Gladiators in the 1990s to MPs like Anne Widdecombe and even former football manager Harry Redknapp.



Imagine Theatre's 2013 production of Dick Whittington at the Victoria Theatre, Halifax.



FAMOUS FRIENDS

The University has links with plenty of famous names in the areas of film and drama.

Actress Sadie Frost graduated from Staffordshire University with distinction in her Masters degree in Film by Negotiated Study. Sadie said the degree had given her more understanding of the film industry after co-founding her own production company, Blonde to Black Pictures, in 2011.

Actor Amit Shah studied Drama before starring in *Grace*, *The Long Call*, *Happy Valley* and *His Dark Materials*. Marcus Dillstone, who graduated in Design and Film Production, directed films including *The Troop*, narrated by John Mills and a favourite of the Royal Family. Ian Clark studied Graphic Design and Animation and directed the film *The Facility* starring Aneurin Barnard.

The University also has ties with the film and drama world through its honorary degrees. The award-winning director Mike Leigh became an honorary Doctor of Letters at Staffordshire University in 2000. His films include *Abigail's Party*, *Secrets and Lies* and *Life Is Sweet*. In 1999, Doctor of Letters was bestowed upon Peter Greenaway, director of films including *The Cook*, *The Thief*, *His Wife* and *Her Lover*.

Peter Cheeseman is a name closely linked to drama in Staffordshire. A theatre pioneer, he promoted 'theatre in the round' when he founded the Victoria Theatre in Stoke-on-Trent and later the New Vic Theatre in Newcastle-under-Lyme. He helped nurture the careers of Ben Kingsley, Alan Ayckbourn, Mike Leigh and Robert Powell. The Victoria Theatre Archive is housed at Staffordshire University's Thompson Library and the materials are being digitised so they can be shared more widely.

**ACTRESS
SADIE FROST
GRADUATED FROM
STAFFORDSHIRE
UNIVERSITY WITH
DISTINCTION IN HER
MASTERS DEGREE IN
FILM BY NEGOTIATED
STUDY. SADIE SAID
THE DEGREE HAD
GIVEN HER MORE
UNDERSTANDING
OF THE FILM
INDUSTRY AFTER
CO-FOUNDING HER
OWN PRODUCTION
COMPANY, BLONDE
TO BLACK PICTURES,
IN 2011.**



FUTURE-PROOFING POTTERY

From Wedgwood, Spode and Royal Doulton through to Emma Bridgewater and Portmeirion, Stoke-on-Trent has long been recognised as the ceramics capital of the world. However, during the 1990s, the area was in decline as high-profile factories closed their doors and many manufacturers outsourced to South-East Asia, taking advantage of cheaper labour costs. Recently though, there has been a sea-change; local recruitment is on the rise again and the demand for that quality Made in Stoke-on-Trent stamp has seen a sharp increase in markets across the US and China.

At the forefront of this resurgence are students from Staffordshire University. Graduating with placements in design and manufacturing they are ensuring the rich heritage of the region continues to have a very bright future.

A REGION STEEPED IN HISTORY

Historically, Stoke-on-Trent's fame grew out of its rich coal supplies and clay. Poor soil meant farmers turned their hands to making pots, leading to a concentration of skill and collective labour. Demand quickly took hold and by the 1700s pottery was heavily embedded in the fabric of the area and its global reputation was born.

"Over centuries, it is an industry that has adapted and shown its versatility – whether that's the bricks we use to build, the plates we eat our dinner from, the sanitary ware in our homes and even space shuttle technology," explains Dr Neil Brownsword, Professor in the School of Digital, Technologies and Arts. "Our mobile phones contain 80 ceramic components, for example, while they are also

used in medical research for bone transplants. The breadth is astounding, from science to art, making the industry even more relevant today than ever before.

"Having said that, manufacturers have had to diversify enormously over the last 30 years. When I trained in the mid-1980s I was immersed in a world of skill and knowledge. It's different now, there has been a reduction in the number of factories and so we have had to learn to nurture flexibility. In the past, many companies rested on their laurels making the same things century after century. Our changing lifestyles have been key – people don't want 50-piece dinner services anymore – and as fashions have changed so too has ceramics. Today it is more about being design-led and cutting edge."

While The Great Pottery Throwdown may have piqued our interest in ceramics, Staffordshire University is doing plenty away from the TV cameras to future-proof the industry.

POTTERY BITS AND PIECES

Did you know every mobile phone contains ceramic components?

The Mars Rover contains hundreds of ceramic components.

BREAKING THE BOUNDARIES

When it comes to being cutting-edge, the University is leading the way. Offering a range of ceramics courses, students are taught next-level practical skills and given the knowledge that perfectly places them to become the designer-makers of the future.

Recent successes have seen consecutive year on year 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes for excellence from Valentine Clays, multiple Keith Brymer Jones (The Great Pottery Throw Down presenter) Promising Young Designer awards, FRANZ Rising Star Global Scholarships and the GNCCF Best Maker awards. Many have had their work realised by the likes of Royal Doulton and Wedgwood, as well as being BCB Show Highlights at the British Ceramics Biennials.

“Here we nurture independent and flexible thinkers. The courses we offer are production-led in a creative space that tests and challenges students,” says Neil. “We embrace our fabulous indigenous heritage, we certainly don’t forget that, but we are working to re-invent those traditions. We can offer a unique opportunity to engage with real manufacturers in the local area for an authentic experience.”

The Potteries has long been shaped by those willing to break boundaries. Josiah Wedgwood, remembered as the Father of English Potters, famously experimented avidly with clay, exploring its many possibilities. As a pioneer marketer, he was the man who brought us direct mail, money-back guarantees, free delivery, celebrity endorsement, illustrated catalogues and even buy one get one free.

“When you look back you can see the people and the place were very much at the forefront of British success. We’re not here to re-invent the wheel; rather we encourage our students to embrace risk just as Wedgwood and his

contemporaries did.”

As an artist, researcher and educator, Neil grew up in Stoke-on-Trent before building a renowned international profile. Since graduating from the Royal College of Art in 1995 his work has gained global acclaim, been endorsed by leading cultural institutions and represented in public collections at The V&A, South Korea’s Ceramic Foundation and the Yingee Ceramic Museum in Taiwan. In 2015 he won the prestigious Grand Prize at

“HERE WE NURTURE INDEPENDENT AND FLEXIBLE THINKERS. THE COURSES WE OFFER ARE PRODUCTION-LED IN A CREATIVE SPACE THAT TESTS AND CHALLENGES STUDENTS”

the Gyeonggi International Ceramic Biennale for his piece National Treasure. Two years later he was shortlisted for the Woman’s Hour Craft Prize, held in collaboration with BBC Radio 4, and in 2019 he was awarded the Whitegold International Ceramic Prize.

“Despite a global career I found it was almost my duty as a local to return home and put something back into the region. I joined the University three years ago, not long before Covid hit and that was a steep learning curve for us all. Some students had

workshops at home, others only had their bedrooms so it was a challenging experience. But as with any challenge, it opened up their creativity; they had to develop new ways of thinking and new materials to work with.”

A CELEBRATION OF CERAMICS

One of the key dates for students is the British Ceramics Biennial, which Neil has collaborated with, curating projects and exhibitions, since 2009. The next festival is set to take place in September 2023 and events will be hosted in established venues and non-traditional spaces across Stoke-on-Trent. Highlights include artist residencies, awards and community projects.

“As a celebration of our craft, BCB allows students to enter competitions, showcase their work alongside others from across the UK, and volunteer in a number of marketing and curatorial roles. It also offers a vital research space to share ideas and develop new skills,” Neil says.

BCB Artistic Director and CEO, Clare Wood, is keen to highlight that the BCB is more than just a festival.

She explains: “BCB does an awful lot more than people realise. We’re known for the Biennial and then I think some people think we disappear.

“But actually we’re working away to deliver a year-round programme of artists’ commissions, education and community projects in between. All of which feed into the festival.

“We do a huge array of things from international collaborations to using clay to address important social issues in Stoke-on-Trent.”

The BCB team has organised thousands of hands-on clay workshops for local schoolchildren, for example.

It’s also worked with Stoke Recovery Service to deliver clay workshops for people recovering from drug and alcohol addiction.

The BCB's vision is to 'Make Change Through Clay' and its mission is to improve lives as well as encourage innovative ceramics practice.

Clare explains: "There's so much scope and potential in clay. It's so flexible and adaptable as a material and we take that adaptability and make it real through programmes in the city and beyond.

"It's a way of exploring so many things. You get this amazing well of both inspiration and new opportunities.

"It's about raising aspirations, building confidence and getting people to think differently.

"It's an utter privilege to lead a team of people who are so passionate about the potential of clay to have all these great economic, social and creative outcomes."

Since 2009 the BCB festivals have welcomed more than 270,000 visitors to Stoke-on-Trent, including national and international visitors and many thousands of local people.

It's estimated they have generated more than £9.2 million for the local economy.

After the last festival, which is the largest contemporary ceramics event in the UK, people were asked about their perception of Stoke-on-Trent before and after they visited BCB.

"Before, 41% felt positive or somewhat positive," says Clare. "After, it was 69%.

"I'm really proud to head up an organisation that can have that much impact for the city.

"You can also actually see the difference it makes in people's lives. It's about people having really rich and memorable experiences and that for me is the most heartening impact of BCB and you can't capture that in evaluation work."

Staffordshire University is one of the BCB's official partners and works closely with the team behind

the festival, whose office is based on campus.

Clare says: "We couldn't deliver the projects and exhibitions we do without partnerships like the one we have with Staffordshire University.

"There are lots of opportunities for undergraduates and graduates to become involved. Whether it's entering the Fresh award for early career artists or through volunteering opportunities.

"It's so wonderful we've got all these routes and channels through which to engage.

"We're quite a small organisation so we have to work with associate artists on a freelance basis to deliver our projects.

"This means where students are coming through the University and graduating there are opportunities for them to stay in Stoke because we can offer them paid work.

"By BCB being here there's a richer eco-system of opportunities for graduates to keep their talents locally, which is a real point of pride for us.

"Pottery is not history for Stoke-on-Trent. It's very present and very much part of our future."

FRESH TALENT RESIDENCY PROGRAMME

Emerging ceramics artist Nico Conti has quickly made a name for himself in the industry; and as winner of the British Ceramics Biennial Fresh Talent Residency Awards 2021 he will be sharing his stand-out skills during a residency at Staffordshire University.

BCB's Fresh Awards 2021 showcased 25 of the UK's most talented early-career ceramic artists. From those who learned their ceramic skills via YouTube tutorials and community workshops to degree programmes and apprenticeships, it celebrated the diverse opportunities that are shaping the future of the industry.

Throughout the residency, Nico will work closely with students and has also been invited to present new work at the 2023 British Ceramics Biennial.

NICO CONTI'S WORK

While it's true that 3D printing is associated more with manufacturing than fine art, Nico has used this advanced technology to create delicate porcelain pieces. His art is inspired by the exceptional skill and workmanship of filigree, embracing the heritage of his upbringing in Malta.

As a former student of the Royal College of Art in 2019, Nico's graduation project included these intricate lace-like objects, using glitches in the 3D printing process to create beautiful flaws and extrusions. Having mastered this technique he has raised the bar with larger, more elaborate sculptural pieces, modern in form but still with a nod to the traditional craft.

Professor Brownsword explains: "I selected Nico's work as he is one of the few artists pushing the boundaries of 3D clay printing as a method. His presence in the department will be of great value, sharing expertise with the next generation of designers and makers."

Nico adds: "I hope I will be able to reflect on new ideas in a city where the pottery industry has been an integral part of people's lives and culture for hundreds of years.

"This will also be a fantastic opportunity for me to produce more experimental work in an educational environment where I have external resources, tools, machinery and materials readily available for me to use.

"3D printing in clay has become increasingly popular and accessible as some institutes are now equipped with 3D printing machines. Staffordshire University has two of these, which I will be using throughout my residency."

A CENTRE OF RECOGNITION

With his roots firmly embedded in Stoke-on-Trent, Professor Neil Brownsword has his sights firmly set on creating a Ceramics Centre befitting the region's unrivalled heritage.

While in the past, much of Neil's work has focussed on the decline of British ceramic manufacturing in his home town, his first-hand knowledge also puts him in a unique position to help safeguard the future of his beloved craft. He believes the catalyst for this would be the creation of a proposed ceramics centre that would utilise the experiences and shared passions of a retired workforce to provide inspiration for future generations.

Starting as an apprentice at the Wedgwood factory when he was 16, Neil's career has seen him rise to the very top as a multi award-winning and globally recognised contemporary artist. Many of his ceramic installations have provided social and political commentary on historic changes in the British pottery industry and signify the inevitable effects of global capitalism on indigenous skills. "I grew up in Stoke and learnt my craft here but like so many teenagers I wanted to leave the area behind and see the world, but I think Stoke never really left me."

It was during his time as an artist in residence at The European Ceramic Work Centre in Holland that the idea for a similar space back in Stoke was born. And so after stints in South Korea, China and Norway, he returned to the familiar streets of the Potteries to take up a position as Professor of Ceramics at Staffordshire University.

"Back in 2007 I put a proposal into the city council to create a ceramics centre here in Stoke but have had no joy in moving it forward" says Neil, who is also a trustee of the

Spode Museum Trust and remains a Charter Member of the Fu Le International Ceramic Art Museums, China. "To me it is such a no-brainer – we have a unique skillset among several generations of people with immense expertise in the industry. Added to that, we have a wealth of heritage buildings that could be repurposed and we could bring so many collections together – like a V&A for the Potteries."

Having hit many brick walls with his idea, Neil is still working to turn his dream into a reality. However, he fears the fact the UK is not part of UNESCO's Global Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage means funding won't be forthcoming.

"There are 178 countries that have signed up to the convention that effectively makes cultural heritage part of their overall policy. This helps ensure the continuation of traditional crafts, providing livelihoods and reflecting creativity within local communities. Unfortunately, we're not one of them and it is such a missed opportunity.

"The idea of a centre would not be about sitting in the past; it would be about creating a unique capsule of knowledge to inspire the next generation, bring more innovation to the region and embracing creativity while safeguarding tradition. There are invaluable archives in the city that could be used to inform and educate. I'd love to define what a museum is – that it doesn't have to be elitist. Instead it can tap into the expertise of local people, many of whom worked on the factory floors for more than 45 years."

THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT

From dainty dinnerware to game-changing aerospace technology, it's fair to say the ceramics industry has undergone a seismic change over the last few decades.

One company leading the march is Stoke-on-Trent based Lucideon, as it pushes the boundaries with its world-leading testing, analysis and characterisation laboratories to deliver the products of the future and meet the needs of a global, high technology audience.

Formed out of the British Ceramic Research Association, Lucideon rebranded nearly 10 years ago. It was a move that put the North Staffordshire business at the heart of innovation and development, as it deployed advanced materials to tackle global issues, including climate change and the move to net zero.

Advanced ceramics are often hidden but are vital components

of jet engines, electronics, medical devices, car batteries and other energy technologies and manufactured products.

They allow products to operate at higher temperatures and in more challenging environments and can be more durable than plastic or metal.

Lucideon's materials experts have developed state-of-the-art technologies that are now used across countless industries, including aerospace, electronics, medical and construction.

It's a member of the Midlands Industrial Ceramics Group (MICG), alongside companies such as Rolls-Royce and JCB.

Last year the MICG secured £18.27 million in government funding to help

the region become a world leader in advanced ceramics.

The money is expected to unlock further investment which will help fund a proposed Advanced Ceramics Campus for North Staffordshire.


Lucideon's Chief Executive Tony Kinsella has said it would be an important hub for industry and a centre of excellence for research and development, as well as underpinning academic research.

"If funded, the campus will also have knock-on benefits across the Midlands, with innovation improving productivity and competitiveness in manufacturing, helping to 'level up' the region's economy and create new efficiencies to drive down emissions."

Starfish Social Hub workshop with British Ceramics Biennial



HUNTING FOR THE FUTURE OF CERAMICS



He has one of the most important jobs in the country when it comes to preserving the past, but Tristram Hunt also has a keen eye on the future.

The director of the Victoria and Albert Museum and honorary doctor of Staffordshire University has called for the creation of a world-class ceramics centre in Stoke-on-Trent to capitalise on its heritage.

Rather than a traditional museum it could be a place to show-off the area's creative heritage to the world while providing space for today's designers and makers to develop their talents.

It could also be a destination where visitors could try their own version of the reality TV show, The Great Pottery Throw Down, by making their own creations.

Tristram believes now is an ideal time for The Potteries to capitalise on its heritage, thanks to a surge in interest in ceramics fuelled by the likes of the Channel 4 show, which was filmed at Stoke-on-Trent's Gladstone Pottery Museum.

"There's a great deal of enthusiasm for ceramics at the moment and it's a good time for Stoke-on-Trent to lay down its claim," says Tristram, who was awarded an honorary doctorate by Staffordshire University in recognition of his work championing the area's ceramics industry.

"There's definitely a lot of interest in ceramics. We've seen it with The Great Pottery Throw Down and there's been a new focus on craft and design because of the pandemic. More people are wanting to try

things like pottery courses.

"We also saw it in the great response we had to a recent V&A exhibition by Richard Batterham."

The former Labour MP for Stoke-on-Trent Central believes a ceramics centre would allow the area to build on its heritage and contribute to its economic future.

"THERE'S A GREAT DEAL OF ENTHUSIASM FOR CERAMICS AT THE MOMENT AND IT'S A GOOD TIME FOR STOKE-ON-TRENT TO LAY DOWN ITS CLAIM"

"I think it's a great opportunity to bring together the great ceramics collections of the Midlands, including Spode, Minton, the wonderful collection at Staffordshire University, The Potteries Museum collection and Doulton, which at the moment are all separate.

"To create a central facility alongside new space for young designers and artists and makers connecting the future of The

Potteries with this incredible heritage and past seems to me an exciting opportunity. That mix of past and present is so important.

"And then to connect that to a growing demand for making and throwing and firing, all of the things we have seen in Pottery Throw Down.

"There are already good examples of museums where industrial heritage collections are combined with space which supports the makers and designers of tomorrow in other parts of the world."

The director of the V&A highlights the heritage centre in Finland set up by the Fiskars Group, which now owns Wedgwood and the Corning Museum of Glass in New York.

His calls for a world-class ceramics centre echo those of Staffordshire University ceramics expert Dr Neil Brownsword.

The Professor in the School of Digital, Technologies and Arts believes such a museum could be The Potteries' own V&A.

He first proposed the idea 15 years ago and has since worked tirelessly to turn it into a reality.

Tristram is full of admiration for the role the University plays in preserving and promoting the region's heritage and making sure it's fit for the future.

"Staffordshire University is such an important part of the ecology of ceramics in Stoke-on-Trent," he explains.

"It's not just the courses, it's not just the teaching, it's the support for the British Ceramics Biennial, it's the support for material science, it's the support for creativity in the city and bringing new talent and young people into Stoke-on-Trent.

"It's the admiration that the leadership has for the culture and history of the city and just rebuilding that creative ambition and also the collection it holds. It's a really important part of sustaining and growing and supporting the culture of ceramics in the city."

Although momentum seems to be gathering behind the idea of a world-class ceramics centre there are as yet no firm plans.

"It's really up to the city council working with central government because it will take central government funds to see if they want to take it forward," says Tristram.

"I think there's lots of excitement about investing in Stoke at the moment and an appreciation of culture-led regeneration.

"There are lots of projects like the Spode site and The Goods Yard and the Hanley city centre project.

"It's now up to the city council to see whether this is their priority and if they are able to draw down central government funds."

Could the V&A be involved in the creation of a ceramics centre in Stoke-on-Trent?

"We will always happily support and advise," says Tristram. "But I think the creation of a museum needs to come from within the city. The ambition needs to be there."

The V&A already has close links with the area. Tristram played a central role in saving the Wedgwood collection of 80,000 works of art, ceramics, manuscripts, letters and photographs after the collapse of Waterford Wedgwood in 2009.

The V&A is the legal guardian of the collection which is displayed at the Wedgwood Museum in Barlaston in Staffordshire.

"We're working really closely with schools and colleges in Stoke to get as many young people to see it and involved as possible," Tristram says.

As Director of the V&A Tristram oversees the most comprehensive collection of ceramics in the world, including many historical pieces from The Potteries.

Does the historian and broadcaster have a favourite?

"We have some wonderful pieces, including a lovely teapot with an image of John Wilkes, the great radical Parliamentarian which I particularly like," he says.

Tristram is fascinated by the region's history and has written a book about Stoke-on-Trent pottery pioneer Josiah Wedgwood called *The Radical Potter: Josiah Wedgwood and the Transformation of Britain*.

Did he learn anything which surprised him about Wedgwood, a leading figure in the Industrial Revolution, while researching his book?

"I was surprised by how deeply he thought about politics, about democracy and citizenship and how these ideas were really quite important to him and flowed through into his pottery," Tristram says.

"His great love of family – his adoration of his wife and children come through in his letters too, which I think is really noteworthy. He had a real emotional intelligence."

With all the challenges the region faces does he think Stoke-on-Trent needs to employ the kind of pioneering vision Wedgwood showed to capitalise on its heritage?

"We should all be more like Wedgwood," Tristram smiles. "He had a fiendish work ethic, an enterprising mindset and an ability to move across boundaries from science, to art, to design to business to merchandising.

"He was a remarkable, remarkable individual. I think that enterprising brio is really, really important."



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A GAME OF TWO



The Boothen End sponsored by Staffordshire U

HALVES

Football is all about teamwork and Staffordshire University is proving that when it comes to getting results that doesn't just have to mean on the pitch.

By forming partnerships with professional clubs local to the University's main campus in Stoke-on-Trent, the University is using the power of sport to help fans and non-fans in the community reach their goals.

The tactic is proving a winner for students too – leading to new courses, placements and opportunities which have resulted in careers with local teams.

FIRST ON THE TEAM SHEET

It's hard to turn a corner at Stoke City FC without bumping into a Staffordshire alumnus.

Graduates are employed across the club in everything from senior coaching roles to its IT and media departments. Academy Director Gareth Owen is a Staffordshire veteran while Senior Coach Dani Taylor is studying for an MSc in Sports Coaching.

Off the pitch Staffordshire alumni are helping Stoke City FC fulfil its commitment to the community too. Adrian Hurst, who graduated with an MA in Community Practice, is Head of the club's charitable Community Trust.

The impressive roll call of alumni is a prime example of a partnership which goes back more than a decade. Last year marked the 10th anniversary since the University first sponsored a stand at Stoke City FC's bet365 stadium and to celebrate it agreed a new three-year Platinum Partnership as Stoke FC's Education and Lifelong Learning Partner.

The agreement sees the University's name continue to adorn the popular Boothen End and it is now the official sponsor of the club's Community Trust.

"We share the same ethos, passion and drive to have a positive social impact," explains Deborah Sanderson, Staffordshire University's Head of Development and Alumni Relations.

"We're now looking forward to building on our already successful partnership to create more exciting opportunities for students and initiatives to improve the lives of local people."

Sponsoring the trust will enable the University to reach thousands of children and young people who take part in its grassroots and school programmes.

"It will help us address societal issues such as homelessness by jointly championing local causes and will open-up connections across the globe through initiatives such as international football camps," adds Deborah.

The partnership's a win win situation for students too. They benefit from Stoke City FC's expertise in areas like sports coaching, business, marketing and media through opportunities like placements. The club also delivers

practiced-based masterclasses and workshops for students in areas including football coaching and business practice. One University course where students can experience placements with Stoke City FC is the two-year accelerated degree in Football Coaching and Performance.

And when it comes to careers Staffordshire University graduates often find themselves in pole position.

Steve Forrest, Stoke City FC's Partnerships and Advertising manager and a Staffordshire alum himself, says: "I think you notice when someone joins our club and they've studied at Staffordshire.

"That real world experience they have had the opportunity to gain gives them the edge.

"It's almost as if they're a step further ahead in their development."

UP THE VALE!

Staffordshire University and Port Vale FC have many decades of experience delivering education and football between them.

So it makes tactical sense for them to team up to help fans unlock their untapped potential.

The University is sponsoring a new Fan Zone at Vale Park next to the club's store.

Supporters can enjoy refreshments, music and competitions before games at the facility.

They can also find out what opportunities are available at Staffordshire University through a series of interactive activities. The goal is to encourage more local people to take the step into higher education.

Forensic science, computer games, E-Sports, health and social care are some of the subjects fans have been introduced to so far.

Port Vale's Chairperson and Honorary Doctor of Staffordshire University, Carol Shanahan, says:

"I hope we can convince Vale fans that Higher Education is possible and is for them.

"Things like the Fan Zone, where they get to talk to people from Staffs, will show that they can do that and that being part of Staffs is being part of Vale and vice-versa."

Gareth Hughes, UniConnect Hub Manager at Staffordshire University, ran an activity at the Port Vale FC Fan Zone. He said:

"In February 2022 we took over The Staffordshire University Fan Zone at Port Vale Football Club and launched a pop-up Apprenticeships Fair in-line with National Apprenticeships Week (NAW).

Exhibiting their latest higher and degree apprenticeships were local leading work-based learning providers including Staffordshire University, Newcastle &

Stafford Colleges Group (NSCG) Stoke on-Trent College, KMF, Achieve Training and some great employers such as Capula and Churchill China. The event was open to general matchday fans and many schools were in attendance to benefit from the expertise on offer. In addition to the Fan Zone fair, we had Trentham Academy students write an article for the school magazine 'ZINE' who covered the event and as a further bolt-on activity they interviewed Martin Tideswell and Carol Shanahan on their careers within journalism and running a professional football club respectively."

ALUMNI ON THE TEAM

Meet Staffordshire University alumni playing key roles off the pitch at Stoke City FC



STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY



DEBORAH O'NEILL SCHOOLS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

Degree: BA (Hons) Sport and Recreation
Graduated: 1993

Deborah O'Neill's role involves using the appeal of football to encourage primary aged children to be active and develop essential life skills.

"I work on the Premier League Primary Stars project," she explains.

"Our team works with teachers to deliver fun, educational sessions in PE, Maths, English and Personal, Social Health and Economic education.

"My main focus, as a qualified PE teacher, is to improve the knowledge, skills and confidence of primary teachers with their delivery of PE lessons across Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire."

She also supports the club's own coaches in their professional development, as well as tutoring on Association for Physical Education PE specialism courses.

Thanks to her time at Staffordshire University, Deborah has a personal insight into the benefits of working closely with Stoke City FC and she plans to capitalise on the successful partnership in her own role.

"I am particularly looking forward to creating links with students at the University who are interested in volunteering, coaching or teaching PE and sport.

"Working in partnership will lead to more opportunities to share experience, initiatives and opportunities."



STEVE GOODALL SENIOR COACH EMPLOYMENT & SKILLS VOLUNTEERS, TRAINEESHIPS

Degree: BA (Hons) Sports Development and Coaching
Graduated: 2007

Steve Goodall is another football fan whose degree at Staffordshire University has led to a career with his favourite team.

Thanks to his passion for sport and his BA (Hons) degree in Sports Development and Coaching he is now playing a key role with the club's Community Trust.

"I look after apprentices, work placements, volunteers and traineeships," Steve explains.

"I have also developed the Potters Pathway to Employment, which helps those who are unemployed back into employment."

He is also involved with the Twinning Project which helps prisoners gain new skills through football.

"It's great that the University and Stoke City FC have developed a close partnership as it means there will be more opportunities for students here," he says.

"If I was at the University now I think it would open more doors for me in my career and I would probably have joined the club sooner."



GARETH OWEN ACADEMY DIRECTOR

Degree: BA (Hons)
Professional Sports Writing
and Broadcasting
Graduated: 2012

Gareth Owen first joined Stoke City FC as a schoolchild before reaching the heights of its first team as a professional player.

Today he's in charge of nurturing the club's young talent as its Academy Director.

Even at the peak of his playing career Gareth, who also played for Port Vale, Oldham and Stockport, felt it was important to expand his qualifications.

"I was always conscious that a playing career could last one year, 10 years and anything in between or more," he explains. "So I was always keen to keep as many doors open as possible."

While still playing he enrolled on a Professional Sports Writing and Broadcasting degree at Staffordshire University.

The two-year fast-track course is designed for sports professionals and graduates have forged careers in the media, teaching, sports PR and administration.

The former defender, who was born and raised in Cheadle in the Staffordshire Moorlands, fitted his studies around his day job as a footballer. His hard work paid off and in 2012 he graduated with a First Class degree.

"I never wanted to retire and end up sitting and worrying what the future might hold," he says.

"That's why I decided to go to University while still playing to build up my skillsets and keep as many avenues open as possible."

Since gaining his degree Gareth has used his writing skills in weekly columns for local newspaper The Sentinel. He's also returned to Staffordshire University to speak to its journalism students.

After retiring from playing Gareth joined Stoke City FC's coaching staff and has worked with every age group in the youth set-up.

In 2019 he was appointed Academy Director at the club where he first made his name.

"I feel like I've fulfilled my dream twice," Gareth says.

"First as a player and now as Academy Director.

"I've been affiliated with Stoke City FC for two thirds of my life in various roles and enjoyed every single minute of it.

"Studying for a degree at Staffordshire University has been an important part of that."



STEVE FORREST PARTNERSHIPS AND ADVERTISING MANAGER

Degree: BA (Hons) Sports
Development and Coaching
Graduated: 2012

Lifelong Potters fan Steve Forrest has ended up working for his dream employer thanks to his time at Staffordshire University.

The 30-year-old is a great example of the homegrown talent the University is keen to encourage.

"I knew I wanted to work in sport but I wasn't sure which area," explains Steve, who was born and raised in Stoke-on-Trent.

"My degree allowed me to experience so many aspects, including coaching as well as the commercial side of sport and things like marketing and governance."

As a second year student he enjoyed a match analysis placement at the Potters.

"It was an amazing opportunity which I'm so grateful for. It gave me early access to the club and invaluable real world experience.

"I was able to analyse academy matches along with two other students. We'd film them, extract data and feed it back to the coaches.

"It's an example of how the partnership between Stoke City FC and Staffordshire University works really well.

"You can have all the textbook learning and lectures in the world but getting that real world experience is so important. It makes you stand out and I think it's something Staffordshire University excels at."

Steve also spent a year teaching PE as part of his course.

"Initially that's what I thought I wanted to do but after trying it I realised I wanted to go in a different direction. So that was invaluable experience too."

After graduating he worked in phone sales while waiting for the right opportunity.

"I always kept an eye out for jobs at Stoke City FC so when a chance came up I went for it," he says.

"I think because of my experience with the club as a student I went to the interview without any apprehension because I knew I was going into a fantastic club and organisation."

Steve got the job as a commercial sales executive and has now been at the club for seven years, eventually being promoted to Partnerships and Advertising manager.

"I'm proud to have been able to forge a career at the club my family has always supported and Staffordshire University has played a really important role in helping me get here." Steve says.

SHOWING POVERTY THE RED CARD

Every £1 invested in Stoke City Community Trust's work in 2017 produced a **£14 return** in terms of social value.

Stoke City was **298th out of 324** in the **Social Mobility Index** in 2016.

"It's a real opportunity to help shape young people's futures," Adrian Hurst, Head of Community at Stoke City, says when asked to describe the partnership between Staffordshire University and the Community Trust.

The potential impact is huge. Around 150,000 children and young people live within the Trust's catchment area of Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire and parts of North West Shropshire.

The Trust is the football club's official charity and its way of giving back to local people.

It uses the power of sport and its expertise to engage with people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to improve health, wellbeing and life outcomes.

It's a leading provider of sport, education and social programmes in the region. Mentoring and employment schemes and wellbeing activities, such as Stoke Memories for people with dementia, are all part of its day job.

"I think the alignment between the Community Trust and Staffordshire University makes sense on a number of different levels," says Adrian.

"Working with the University provides several opportunities and we're looking at how we can maximise those to leave a long-term legacy which will make a real difference.

"Deprivation is endemic across the region and we want to try and give local people chances to break the cycle.

"Some of the impacts we can have are significant. If you can stop one young person going into care or prison it obviously makes a huge difference to their lives and it saves society money too. It costs £35,000 to keep someone in prison for a year.

"I think we can use our two brands as an engagement tool."

The partners are already discussing the creation of a joint Esports project. It's an area where the University's leading the way after launching the first Esports degree in the UK.

Working together also provides more chances for Staffordshire students to get involved with the football club through paid employment as well as placements.

As well as full-time careers the club needs up to a thousand people each matchday to fill roles in areas like ticketing, fan safety and retail.

"It's not just about elite sport," Adrian's keen to point out.

"There are a whole range of opportunities on the business side of the club."

Encouraging more local people into higher education is another aim.

"We know some don't feel that higher education is for them but we want to show what opportunities are available and to make university more accessible."



THE BIG SLEEP OUT

Most people head to Stoke City's bet365 Stadium for a great game of football – not a night sleeping rough.

But that's exactly what hundreds of people experienced when the club hosted the Big Sleep Out 2022 on March 25.

Armed with sleeping bags, warm clothes and a piece of cardboard, young and old spent the night at the Potters' ground to help raise awareness of homelessness.

Stoke City FC heroes, including Terry Conroy and Ricardo Fuller, and local boxer Nathan Heaney were there to offer support, while soldiers from the Mercian Regiment handed out hot drinks and soup.

Everyone taking part was encouraged to switch off their phones and connect with others at the event, which is expected to raise tens of thousands of pounds for charity.

It's a powerful example of the partnership between Stoke City FC and Staffordshire University in action.

The Big Sleep Out was organised by the Community Trust and the University encouraged staff and students to get involved.

"It's a real night of camaraderie," says Stoke City FC's Head of Community Adrian Hurst.

"People don't tend to get that much sleep but they get to go home to their own bed after. It just gives them a

flavour of what homeless people experience every night of the week.

"For me, the biggest thing we can do as an organisation is make people aware of the issue of homelessness which in the past 10 years has gotten bigger and bigger."

The Big Sleep Out also illustrates how teaming up with Stoke City FC allows the University's students to gain real world experience.

Last year the University launched a unique course – the Action on Poverty and Hardship degree – and its ethos fits perfectly with the event.

Martin Coates, Lecturer in Staffordshire's School of Justice, Security and Sustainability, explains: "The course has unique aspects of lived experience, so we look at what it's actually like to live in poverty and what it's like to be homeless.

"Activism is also part of the course and the Big Sleep Out is a great opportunity for students to get involved.

"The aim of the degree is to develop the people needed to address social concerns such as poverty and hardship.

"So collaborations such as those between the University and Stoke City FC are something we value immensely."



DEAR DIARY

Staffs alum Duane Barrett, who co-founded the Affordable Food Stoke charity, took part in the Big Sleep Out. Here are some excerpts from his diary...

SATURDAY MARCH 25

7.30pm We sign in, pick up a large piece of cardboard for under our ground sheets and set off to find a 'pitch' to set up camp.

We know we're going to be safe wherever we choose. Those sleeping rough don't have that luxury and it hits home how fortunate we are.

8.00pm Luckily the weather is mild. We're being looked after by the brilliant Mercian Regiment. Tea/coffee and soup on demand and one of the soldiers (plus a few others) have a guitar and a little concert going! Music and laughter fill the stadium and the vibe is one of positivity. It's heart-warming to see so many people here. Young and old.

9.00pm Everyone has gathered around the mini-concert now. Lots of singing and dancing going on! Even though we're all having fun I think we're all aware of why we are here and what we're raising money for. Some of those participating are supported by the charities we're trying to help.

10.00pm Time for a brew and some soup. We feel a little guilty with this. If we were really sleeping rough we wouldn't have this.

Everyone is really friendly and it has been nice to get to know a few of the other participants.

10.30pm Another icon has come to lend his support - Ricardo Fuller, City's number 10! They always say when you meet your heroes you should be cool and NOT (like me) blurt out "I named my cat after you!" Thankfully Ric took it all in good spirits and was an absolute gentleman.

11.50pm Time to settle down for the night. Most of the lights are off now. The conversations are down to a minimum.

Sleeping on the floor's hard on the back and it's difficult to find a position that doesn't hurt somewhere.

SATURDAY MARCH 26

5.45am Wake up after a difficult night's sleep.

5.00pm Absolutely exhausted. Really glad we did it, raised some money, met some lovely people and overall it was a good experience. Homelessness is growing here in Stoke-on-Trent and it has one of the highest death rates among homeless people in the country. Events like this are vital if we are to do something as a city to reduce that and support charities that do.

MANIFESTO FOR CHANGE




Photo by Justina
in Raising Voices
exhibition

"IT IS DIFFICULT TO UNDERESTIMATE THE HUMAN DISASTER UNFOLDING IN PLACES LIKE STOKE-ON-TRENT," THE AUTHORS OF A STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY LED REPORT INTO POVERTY HAVE WARNED.

We are all feeling the pinch as inflation hits a 40-year high and the price of everything from food to fuel rockets. But for those already struggling, the cost-of-living crisis is rapidly turning into a catastrophe. And there are few places where this is more keenly felt than in Stoke-on-Trent.

The city is the 13th most deprived local authority in England, out of 317 districts, with one of the highest rates of people on low pay and with low skills. Some 43% of children in the city are in households living in poverty.

The Governor of the Bank of England has warned of "apocalyptic" food price rises and the prospect of 10% inflation. This will hit those already in poverty particularly hard, as the worst off spend proportionally more of their incomes on the basics of food and energy. The Office of Budget Responsibility predicts the biggest

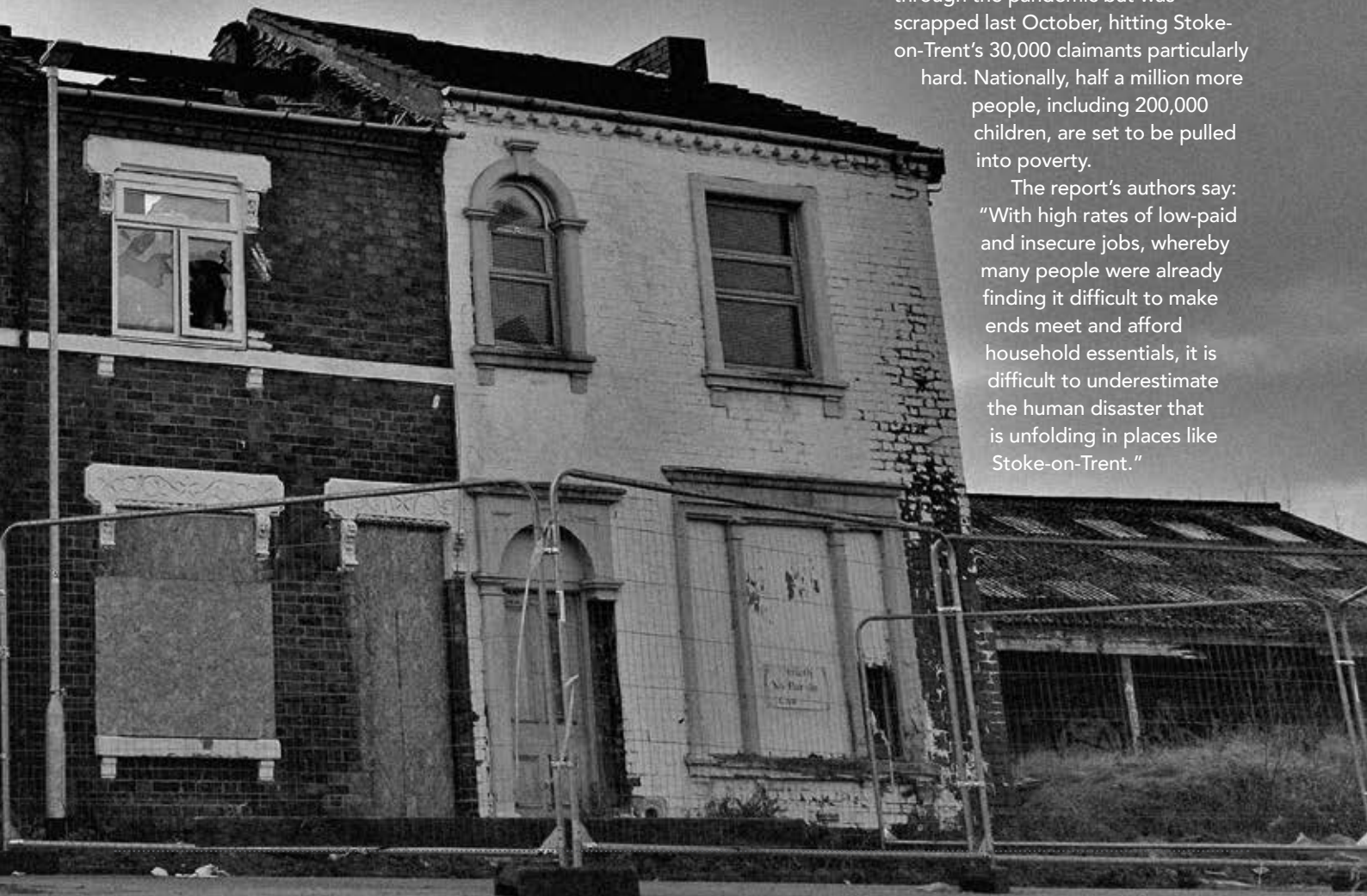
slump in living standards since the 1950s.

Staffordshire University is trying to tackle the issues of hardship in its home city through several avenues. From research – including a paper co-authored by the Vice-Chancellor – and a ground-breaking new degree, to involving communities in storytelling projects and helping produce a Manifesto for Change.

Chief Executive and Vice-Chancellor Professor Martin Jones co-authored a report with Professor David Etherington and Dr Luke Telford, in conjunction with the local Citizens Advice centre. Launched in 2021 and updated in March, it's called *The Pending Poverty Catastrophe in Stoke-on-Trent: How Benefit Cuts and the Cost of Living Crisis Impacts on the Poor*.

It revealed that more than £30 million a year was lost from Stoke-on-Trent's economy after the Government withdrew the £20 uplift in Universal Credit. The extra weekly benefit was introduced to help households through the pandemic but was scrapped last October, hitting Stoke-on-Trent's 30,000 claimants particularly hard. Nationally, half a million more people, including 200,000 children, are set to be pulled into poverty.

The report's authors say: "With high rates of low-paid and insecure jobs, whereby many people were already finding it difficult to make ends meet and afford household essentials, it is difficult to underestimate the human disaster that is unfolding in places like Stoke-on-Trent."



Steve Wyn Williams, a visiting professor in Human Geography at Staffordshire University, is Chair of Stoke-on-Trent's Hardship Commission, which wrote a letter to local MPs condemning the end of the Universal Credit uplift.

"We said it was disgraceful, and it's something I feel very strongly about," he explains. "Governments are here to support their people and it would make a huge difference. Reinstating the uplift and making it permanent is a simple way to help people quickly, as is imposing a windfall tax on energy companies.

"We talk of a cost-of-living crisis, but I think it is a catastrophe. It will affect everybody but especially those areas, like Stoke-on-Trent, which have suffered in the past from a lack of investment and a lack of a skilled workforce. It has happened incrementally over decades, but the pandemic and the war in Ukraine have been major shocks to the system, so it feels like the crisis has happened very quickly.

"There's a great community in Stoke-on-Trent and we do pull together, but it's an uphill struggle at the moment."

The Hardship Commission has recently changed its focus, from monitoring data and raising awareness to taking more direct action as a campaigning group. It has produced a Manifesto for Change by working with the Raising Voices, Changing Minds, Ending Poverty project.

Raising Voices' roots were planted in 2019 with a Staffordshire University project. Get Talking Hardship was commissioned by the Hardship Commission, funded by the National Lottery and run by Nic Gratton, Associate Professor of Community and Civic Engagement.

A team of 43 community researchers, many with direct experience of hardship, were trained to conduct interviews with 250 people. A heart-breaking picture emerged in its report, with comments such as: "We try our best to bring up our children with manners, positive attitudes and hope (when we have none)."

Nic says: "We had the data around hardship, but we understand people's stories better than percentages. I remember one person said 'Surely the statistics say it all?' but someone replied 'You're never going to change the world with an Excel spreadsheet'. It's very easy to think 'that's a terrible statistic' but it's quite different to hear of a mother who takes her kids to their grandparents three times a week because she can't afford to feed them. She gets them excited for the treat, but it's because she has nothing in the cupboard.

"We hadn't quite appreciated the emotional impact on the community researchers. There wasn't a single session when there wasn't someone in tears. We felt we needed to support them and they continue to have access to our staff counselling service at the University.

"Now we are building on that work with Raising Voices, Changing Minds and Ending Poverty. We went back to some of the community researchers and pulled together a steering group. We're telling the story in a more creative way to engage people. We have photographers who've been homeless, people who used poetry to get them through lockdown and people interested in podcasting. We produced an exhibition that's now online.

"The steering group worked with the Hardship Commission to produce the Manifesto for Change. We're

bringing together people talking about hardship and people actually experiencing it and making it one voice. The value of bringing learned and lived experience together is very powerful and has a greater impact."

The Manifesto's aims are to work closely with decision-makers, humanise the issues and reduce the stigma attached to hardship, as well as securing funding for impactful projects to address poverty.

Last year Staffordshire University launched its innovative BA (Hons) Action on Poverty and Hardship degree and also helps disadvantaged students through its Horizon Fund.

Nic says: "There's a perception that university students are rolling in cash but that's absolutely not the case. Many of our students are local and so the hardship issues of the area affect them too."

Steve adds: "Students are suffering greatly. Many have taken out maintenance loans to pay their living costs, but that's eroded very quickly these days. The £200 energy rebate applies to households, so it wouldn't go far between five people sharing a house. And lowering the threshold of when they have to pay back loans doesn't help."

Nic concludes: "Poverty is a really important issue for us as a University. Our Vice-Chancellor is writing reports and we are working with our partners and the community. We are well connected at all levels to understand the issues.

"We understand the data but we've also built up relationships and trust so we can raise the voices of those with lived experience.

"And the work we do is inspiring and creative. It's not all doom and gloom, it's very much working together to find solutions."

STATS AT A GLANCE

- The average gross weekly pay in Stoke-on-Trent is **£519**, 20% less than the UK average of **£630**.
- In the three months from April to June 2021, Citizens Advice in Staffordshire North and Stoke-on-Trent issued **45 foodbank and 7 fuel vouchers**. In less than a month this year, from January 29 to February 25, **33 food bank and 43 fuel vouchers** were issued – and that was even before the fuel price hike.
- Stoke-on-Trent Trussell Trust has **15 food banks** and gave emergency food to almost **15,000 people** in the last year.
- Stoke-on-Trent has been branded the 'capital of debt', with the highest rate of personal insolvencies in 2017, more than double the national average. The city has the **10th highest rate** in the UK for mortgage repossessions.
- Over half – **51%** – of areas in Stoke-on-Trent are classified among the most deprived 20% in England, while one third (**32%**) fall into the most deprived 10%.
- Some **84%** of wards across Stoke-on-Trent contain households that say they find it 'difficult' or 'very difficult' to manage their household income, far higher than the national average of **28%**.

WHAT STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY IS DOING TO HELP

Staffordshire University's trail-blazing BA (Hons) Action on Poverty and Hardship degree began in September 2021 to develop the change-makers of the future. It's centred on the lived experience of those who have faced hardship, and students work closely with people who have experienced poverty first-hand.

Nic Gratton says: "I'm blown away that this is a degree, that Staffordshire is brave enough to test it out."

Staffordshire University staff voted to make Alice Charity their corporate charity for 2022. The organisation provides practical and emotional support for disadvantaged and vulnerable families and in 2021 helped more than 3,500 families in North Staffordshire.

Funds raised will be split evenly between Alice Charity and the Horizon Fund, which was created to overcome the financial barriers into university and make higher education more accessible for people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Students have been awarded bursaries and scholarships, including Sherry Matthews who received a Social Action Bursary funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. This meant the 29-year-old, from Newcastle-under-Lyme, could take her place on the new Action on Poverty and Hardship degree, and drop one day working as a Nursing Assistant at Royal Stoke University Hospital to volunteer with the Alice Charity. She said: "I'm really passionate about this course because I've been there. We didn't have much growing up but having that first-hand experience, along with the skills from this degree, means that I will be able to help others in the same situation."

RAISING VOICES EXHIBITION

Photo by Simon in Raising Voices exhibition

The Raising Voices exhibition opened at the University's Catalyst Building in March and has now gone online. It includes photographs, postcards and poems.

One photograph, by Justina, shows derelict houses with boarded-up and broken windows. She wrote: "I got a frustrated feeling seeing the potential this city has of rebuilding some of these properties and providing more spaces for the people that need it. However, it's not all bad news. There are supportive networks that can help see some light in hardship."

Another photograph from Simon shows Pyenest Street where, he says, "We were confronted by dereliction, lost employment, bygone community, drug use and general unpleasantness. For those of us who've been forced to live amongst this type of disregard for the quality of our environment, its mental health, social and economic implications, it was hardly a revelation. However, photographing this place has highlighted that in each and every image there is an all too often forgotten human story."

Others wrote postcards with their thoughts on the question 'What does hardship mean to you?'. One person drew a closed shop, a foodbank van and someone pushing a huge boulder up a hill. Another wrote: "Hardship is not just about finances. Poverty is not just about food or fuel. Living with abuse, watching a loved one self-destruct, is also hardship. Living in a home devoid of love and tenderness is a poverty experienced by many - Everyone has a story to tell, some of the toughest are hidden well!"

Raising
Voices



What does hardship mean to you? Do you have a story to tell?

I've never been homeless or poverty, but round the Stone area and other areas I see how people survive and it's heart-breaking and I try doing bit and help, or just a chat and sit down. I give out food and wrap a bunch of blankets and give them all out and you listen to most people and its heart melting and all it takes is respect each other as we are all human beings and even small amounts of kindness goes miles.

Raising
Voices

What does hardship mean to you? Do you have a story to tell?

Hardship is not just about finances. Poverty is not just about food or fuel. Living with Abuse, watching a loved one self-destruct, is also hardship. Living in a home devoid of love and tenderness is a poverty experienced by many - Everyone has a story to tell, some of the toughest are hidden well!

HIGHER AND DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS

At Staffordshire University we are powering the future of higher and degree apprenticeships, the work-based route to higher education which offers on-the-job training alongside a qualification.

.....

Higher and degree apprenticeships open doors to a range of career opportunities for apprentices and help employers to develop their workforce and shape the future of their business.

Staffordshire University was one of the first higher education institutions in England to offer apprenticeships and is now one of the largest, working with more than 200

employers from large organisations to specialist SMEs.

Maighread Hegarty, Associate Dean of Apprenticeships at Staffordshire University, said: "Our recent Ofsted inspection recognised how collaboration with employers enhanced the development and delivery of high-quality provision supporting our apprentices to become skilled professionals."





The University currently has 2,619 learners employed across 148 employers, delivering 20 apprenticeship standards, 113 levy payers and 35 non-levy payers. Recruitment growth and apprenticeship completions have more than trebled over the last three years.

Staffordshire University is proud to confirm that in January 2022 it received a full Ofsted inspection which resulted in the University being awarded 'good' (Grade 2) across the entire apprenticeship division.

Feedback from the Ofsted inspectors included:

"Apprentices enjoy a culture of excellence in subjects such as level six healthcare science practitioner and the level six nursing degree apprenticeship. Teachers set high expectations for standards of written work and clinical practice. As a result, apprentices demonstrate high levels of professional behaviour in the workplace."

The inspectors also said: "Apprentices achieve well. Almost all apprentices who stay on the course achieve their apprenticeship. More than half have achieved a distinction or merit."

DID YOU KNOW...

Staffordshire University is one of the top five higher and degree apprenticeship providers in the UK.

Our strengths (as rated by employers) are:

98%

FOR IMPROVING APPRENTICE SKILLS

89%

FOR PROVIDING THE RIGHT TRAINING AT THE RIGHT TIME

86%

FOR TRAINING FACILITIES

WHO WE WORK WITH

POLICING

Staffordshire University delivers all recognised pathways into policing careers. Through our partnership with our four regional police forces, the University's Institute of Policing delivers police constable degree apprenticeships to more than 1,900 student officers across the region.

Working as police officers from day one means our student officers experience the demands involved in keeping communities safe while

working towards their fully funded degree in Professional Policing Practice.

We're proud to work with the Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Mercia and West Midlands police forces to widen access to policing careers, having developed a bespoke access course, Step Up to Policing, for those who would otherwise be unable to meet the level three academic entry requirements.



CAPULA

With a focus on operational technology and digital transformation Capula has been a leader in advanced system integration for decades, optimising efficiency and delivering performance on a massive scale.

Talking about their apprenticeship programme, a Capula spokesperson said: "At Capula we are committed to 'growing our own' by attracting, developing and retaining engineers of the future.

"We currently have 30 employees who are studying Level 3 to Level 7 qualifications across our business, which is around 10% of our workforce.

"We partner with our providers

which include Staffordshire University and combine structured study alongside further training and development opportunities to support professional development within the workplace.

"As a business we benefit from apprenticeships by not only having qualified engineers but also well-rounded employees who have demonstrated throughout their apprenticeship that they have the right knowledge, skills and behaviours to be effective and realise their potential.

"Apprentices bring a fresh perspective to our business and challenge our ideas,"



APPRENTICESHIP FAIR



In May 2022 the University hosted an Apprenticeship Fair to showcase and promote the regional apprenticeship offer and the progression opportunities from Level 2 to Level 7. A number of colleges and private training providers attended to promote their courses.

There were more than 200 attendees of various age groups and backgrounds who could engage and interact with different areas of study on the day.

MIKE JENNINGS LEARNER

Mike Jennings recently completed his Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship.



He said: "The apprenticeship gives the added benefit of applying skills learnt within the workplace. I had the opportunity to take ownership of a project that would support the implementation and development of the wider roll out of the medical examiner service.

"As a result, in June 2022 I was successful in obtaining the position of senior medical examiner officer due to my ability to demonstrate my professional development and newly gained skills."

Every year Staffordshire University nominates a charity that it supports through events and money-raising initiatives.

The 2022/23 charity of the year is Alice Charity. Based in Newcastle-under-Lyme, Alice Charity helps families in crisis. Kayla Poole, the HR Director of Alice, graduates this summer having completed her Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship. The charity's founder, Steph Talbot, completed her Level 7 Senior Leader apprenticeship in 2020.



Get in touch today

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employers@staffs.ac.uk

Raising funds, broadening horizons



Whether it's providing a lifeline in times of hardship or enabling educational opportunities, Staffordshire University's Horizon Fund is designed to help students financially. We found out more about the vital work of this long-term project.

When Staffordshire University started its Horizon Fund in 2013 the aim was to raise £1 million over four years. That total has now been reached numerous times over, with hundreds of students helped along the way.

It's important to remember that the Horizon Fund is about much more than accumulating money though. It's about making a very real difference for current Staffordshire University students.

The Horizon Fund enables the University to offer opportunity awards, scholarships and bursaries ranging in value from £20 to £2,000.

Samantha Nuttall, Senior Development and Alumni Relations Officer at the University, said: "We have more than 150,000 alumni and more than 1,600 staff at

Staffordshire University. If each of those people donated £10 then imagine the difference we could make with that. £10 feels like nothing to us but it could buy a backpack to help a student in need carry their equipment onto campus."

Staffordshire University is far from the only University to call on its alumni to make a contribution, but rather than funding buildings or future developments it's using this money to help ensure opportunities are available for all students regardless of their current financial situation.

"The Horizon Fund ensures no one feels left out or excluded," adds Samantha. "Holding down a part-time job while studying can be very difficult for people on some courses, and the Horizon Fund is here to help."



To donate now, learn more about the Horizon Fund, or for information on becoming a regular donor, sponsor or other supporter visit giving.staffs.ac.uk



CHANGING LIVES CONNECTING FUTURES

Want to make a difference?

If you would like to donate to the Horizon Fund by making a regular monthly donation or giving a one-off amount then it couldn't be easier. Simply visit giving.staffs.ac.uk to donate.

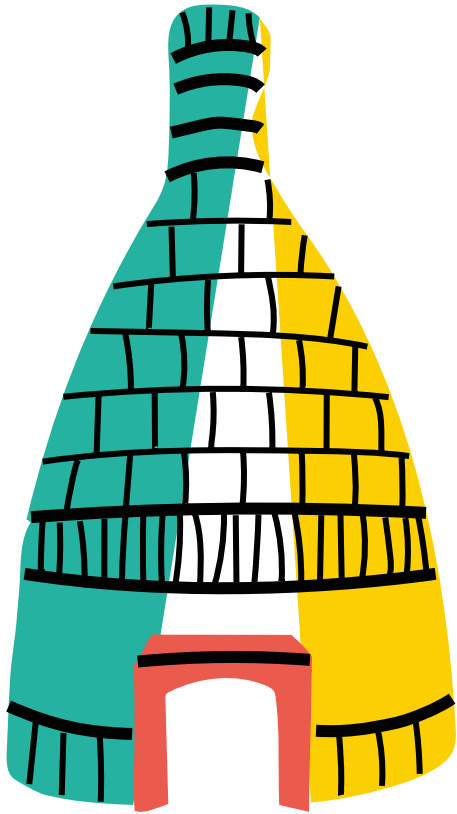
Giving money isn't the only way you can help the Horizon Fund and support future graduates - you could also create opportunities or give the gift of your time.

Perhaps you could give a student talk or guest lecture about your industry or career journey. You could share your top tips in a blog or video, become a judge for a University event or get involved in the GradEx event.

Could your business or organisation offer a work placement, internship or other employment opportunity? Perhaps you could offer a scholarship, sponsorship or opportunity funds to inspire others.

Maybe you could set a live brief for students to meet, be it a research project, logo design, an event to plan or a business problem to solve. The only limit to the possibilities is your imagination.

**Staffordshire University's
Development and Alumni
Relations Team would love to
hear from people who would
like to support current students.
Call 01782 294942 or email
developmentoffice@staffs.ac.uk**



MADE IN STOKE - ON - TRENT



Jenny Amphlett
*Made in Stoke-on-Trent
Network Coordinator*

Jenny Amphlett, coordinator of the new Made in Stoke-on-Trent diaspora network, explains the idea behind the network and how she hopes it will improve the lives of people across the city and beyond.

Made in Stoke-on-Trent is the title of a 2011 album by the musician Slash and it's also the backstamp you'll find if you turn over a plate in any decent restaurant anywhere in the world. When it comes to ceramics, Made in Stoke-on-Trent is a sign of quality. When it comes to the people born, raised or somehow connected to the city, Made in Stoke-on-Trent is a badge of honour.

So Made in Stoke-on-Trent was, of course, the natural choice for the name of a new diaspora network for the city. Diaspora means 'the dispersion or spread of any people from their original homeland' – so basically we're creating a network for Stokies all around the globe. We want to harness their creativity and energy for the good of the city.

Stoke-on-Trent isn't a city that people leave easily. Once people have put down roots here or, like so many people in this city, have local roots going back generations, it's hard to leave. This isn't the most affluent city in the country but it's one of the friendliest and mostly fiercely loyal. It's a city where people are considered to have 'moved away' if they leave one of the six towns to live in another or dare to cross the border into Newcastle-under-Lyme.

When people do relocate to other parts of the UK or around the globe they take that Stoke-on-Trent pride with them. That's why you'll find oatcake shops on the Costa Blanca, lobby on the menu of cafes in Llandudno and knowing smiles exchanged when one Stokie far from home spots another examining a backstamp.

The Made in Stoke-on-Trent network is harnessing that fierce pride and loyalty that people born, raised or somehow connected to the city feel and then using it for the good of the city. It is moving things on from warm thoughts about Sir Stanley Matthews, Roy Sproson, pikelets and pottery towards encouraging people into positive action to help the city that made them and to help its current and future population.

The Made in Stoke-on-Trent Network can help Stokies living in other parts of the UK or even around the globe to retain that sense of belonging to a place and offer them a way of reconnecting meaningfully with their home city.

And for the city itself, this new network offers the opportunity of accessing the skills, experience and ambitions of successful people from the city.

It's no secret that Stoke-on-Trent has its challenges. Covid-19 has set back efforts to address some of those economic and social issues.

The Made in Stoke-on-Trent Network can help by raising awareness of some of the incredibly positive things happening in the city; by letting people know that we're not just a midway point between Manchester and Birmingham - that this is an ambitious city with a growing digital economy that demands to be taken seriously.

Remembering to look forward as well as to honour the past is key to the success of the Made in Stoke-on-Trent Network. Stoke-on-Trent has had so many illustrious sons and daughters over the centuries - and it's incredibly important to honour them. The Made in Stoke-on-Trent Network can use the past to improve the future.

The city's oldest resource, clay, was recently used in a futuristic way to manufacture components sent on a mission to Mars. You can't really get more future thinking than advanced ceramics – which many argue can be used to help Stoke-on-Trent to stand out from other cities with digital technology ambitions. While many of us still think of ceramics as mugs and plates, the average smartphone contains around 600 ceramic parts. That effectively sums up the need to move forward but to always keep an eye on Stoke-on-Trent's unique history.

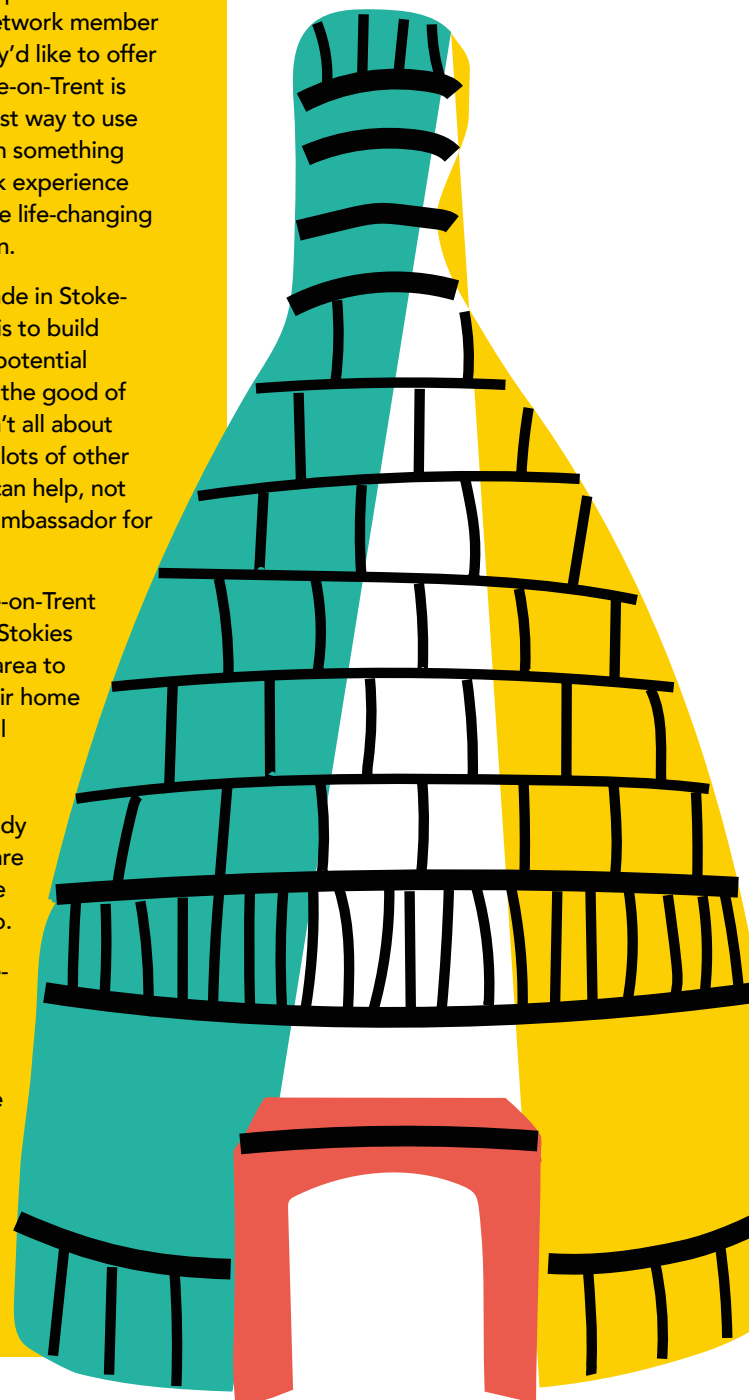
The Made in Stoke-on-Trent Network can honour members' memories of the city but simultaneously help to bring them up to date with its ambitions for the future.

Made in Stoke-on-Trent can contribute to levelling up and powering up Stoke-on-Trent, not least by using successful individuals from the city to demonstrate what can be achieved if people follow their dreams.

TO FIND OUT MORE
about the Made in
Stoke-on-Trent Network email
Jennifer.amphlett@staffs.ac.uk

SO, WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

- The Made in Stoke-on-Trent Network is a diaspora group for individuals, businesses and organisations with links to Stoke-on-Trent and the surrounding North Staffordshire area.
- The Made in Stoke-on-Trent Network is for people born, educated, living or working in Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire or with other links to the area.
- You don't have to have been born and raised in Stoke-on-Trent to have been made in Stoke-on-Trent – anyone who cares about the city and its people is very welcome.
- Made in Stoke-on-Trent is for 'expats' as well as for people still geographically based within the Stoke-on-Trent area.
- Made in Stoke-on-Trent is new in its current form but is inspired by plans originally put together by Tristram Hunt when he was a Stoke-on-Trent MP.
- Made in Stoke-on-Trent is backed by Staffordshire University, Keele University, Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Stoke City FC, Port Vale FC, YMCA North Staffordshire, Staffordshire Community Foundation and other key partners including private philanthropists.
- The network is bringing together people who were themselves 'made in Stoke-on-Trent', whether they've moved away or are still based locally, to help effect positive change in the city.
- Stoke-on-Trent has so many successful sons and daughters with talents in incredibly varied fields – just imagine what could be achieved if we harness more of that energy and creativity.
- The network can link people with opportunities to help the city and those who live here – whether that's through offering time, talent or treasure. The opportunities are limitless and if a network member has something they'd like to offer then Made in Stoke-on-Trent is here to find the best way to use that resource. Even something as simple as a work experience placement could be life-changing for the right person.
- One aim of the Made in Stoke-on-Trent Network is to build relationships with potential philanthropists for the good of the city but this isn't all about money – there are lots of other ways that people can help, not least by being an ambassador for Stoke-on-Trent.
- The Made in Stoke-on-Trent Network can help Stokies who have left the area to reconnect with their home city in a meaningful way, but obviously individuals and organisations already based in the area are incredibly welcome on that journey too.
- The Made in Stoke-on-Trent Network isn't limited to any particular sector – it's open to anyone with a link to the city and can have a positive impact on any area of life in the city.



3

VOICES

**STAFFORDSHIRE
UNIVERSITY IS
INCREDIBLY
PROUD
OF ITS ALUMNI.**

HERE, THREE
GRADUATES,
FROM A VARIETY
OF SECTORS
TALK ABOUT LIFE
POST-UNIVERSITY.



1 / NADIM

Nadim Bhatti is Executive Director, Head of Data Management Services, at UBS – a global financial services firm and the largest private bank in the world. Working and living in London, he has been with UBS for 10 years, previously as Director of the same division. He also spent more than 17 years at Deutsche Bank, worked in the finance department of Nestle and got his start in the IT industry at the European Commission, in Brussels. Originally from Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Nadim was offered a place on a HND course at what was then North Staffordshire Polytechnic in 1987, later progressing to a BSc in Information Systems, and graduated in 1992.

What drives you every day?

Making a difference. I'm all about IT and my life is all around automation, simplification, and connecting people. Making things easier for people. Even in my personal life, coming from a big family, I support and encourage family members to achieve their goals and ambitions.

What does success mean to you?

It's the feeling of achieving something myself or for someone else. I was told I'd never get into university, so that was an achievement in itself. Finding my calling every day. Helping mentor young people. I recently mentored a colleague who secured a promotion, so that was a great sense of achievement as well.

What do you do to relax?

I started writing computer games when I was 15. That's what drove me to pursue IT. Now I'm an online gamer at 54 - Call of Duty is my game. I also like to watch films and spend time with my family. That's very important to me.

What's your career highlight?

Getting my first job in IT was a very big highlight. Someone took a very big punt on taking graduates at the European Commission in Brussels and it worked out really well. Another highlight was my promotion to Executive Director at UBS.

Throughout my career in banking, for the last two decades, several major events occurred

during my time with UBS or Deutsche Bank, such as 9/11, Y2K, and the 2007/08 financial crash. They really stand out in my career.

Who inspires you?

Family is very important to me. My mum and dad inspire me. They worked very hard to give us the chance of education. We work hard too, of course, but my children have a lot of things we didn't. My wife and children are absolutely wonderful and great inspirations and friends of mine as well. After that, Mohammed Ali. He's an absolute legend. The difficulties he faced and sticking to his principles really inspire me. He came to Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1977 and I got his autograph.

What would you tell your 18-year-old self?

Don't worry, no one ever knows what they want to do. It's OK to be nervous but have the confidence and belief to do what you want to do. Spend more time with family.

What advice would you give to a new graduate?

We all start somewhere. Don't give up. No first job is a bad job. It all goes up from there. It's a step in the right direction.

What's the biggest lesson you've learnt since leaving University?

People and relationships are the most important things in life. Always be good to people. Never let anyone get you down. Networks in a job and life are invaluable. Cherish relationships. The other lesson is learning never stops.



2 / AMY

Amy Birks is a multi-award-winning singer songwriter who recently released her second solo album, *In Our Souls*. During her time at Staffordshire University, where she studied BSc (Hons) Music Technology from 2003-2006, Amy founded the Beatrix Players with fellow students Tom Manning and Helena Dove. The group was asked to represent the University during The Queen's visit to officially open the Television Centre on the Stafford campus in 2006, when they played for Her Majesty in the recording studio. After graduating, Amy moved to London to continue the band, who would go on to win the prestigious Prog Magazine Limelight Award for their debut album *Magnified* in 2017. After a four-year hiatus, the band reformed in 2021, when Amy moved back to her hometown of Stoke-on-Trent. In addition to her successful music career, Amy is also Group Head of Design and UX for TP ICAP, a world leading financial business, where she looks after the Group brands and user experience on their trading platform – for which the company won the OTC Trading Platform of the Year award from Risk Magazine, the industry's gold stamp of approval.

What drives you every day?

I love to create. A piece of design, floral arrangement, or music. It feeds my soul and gives me purpose. We get more from life if we're true to ourselves.

What does success mean to you?

To sit back at the end of a project and feel that you put all your energy into it. For me, that could be an album, and the more honest and open I can be the more chance of helping someone along the way.

What do you do to relax?

I grow flowers. I have an allotment where I grow them and then I use them in arrangements. I'm just finishing an advanced course in floristry with Adult Learning Stoke, where I completed the beginners and intermediate course. I will be doing the arrangements for my cousin's wedding in September, which is a little daunting.

What's your career highlight?

I won Prog Magazine's Vocalist of the Year in 2019. Some of my other highlights include opening for Steve Harley from Cockney Rebel a couple of years ago. The Beatrix

Players have supported quite a few big prog artists in the past, such as Big Big Train, Carl Palmer, and Tim Bowness.

Who inspires you?

I would say the other musicians around me. Tom and Helena from my Music Tech degree at Staffordshire University. And my husband, who is a passionate ultra-runner.

What would you tell your 18-year-old self?

Ground yourself. And don't find your happiness from external things. Concentrate on things that make you happy.

What advice would you give to a new graduate?

Don't let anyone or anything throw you off your own path. The people that are meant to be in your life will admire and support you.

What's the biggest lesson you've learnt since leaving University?

That it's OK to be different. To not follow the crowd. To be you.



1/KATE

Kate Boundy is CEO of North Staffs Mind, a mental health charity providing services in and beyond North Staffordshire. Kate joined the charity three years ago, midway through studying for an MBA at Staffordshire University, having started in 2018 during her previous role at an occupational health company. She was appointed to the CEO position just as the Covid-19 pandemic hit the UK – which saw demand for their specialist support skyrocket while fundraising activity all but stopped. Having navigated North Staffs Mind through this extremely challenging period, they now help over 9,600 service users a year, working with local people, schools and businesses to improve mental health and wellbeing.

What drives you every day?

It's a bit of a cliché but the old attitude of making a difference in any situation. Hopefully a positive difference. Potentially, everything we do at North Staffs Mind can make a difference to someone's mental wellbeing, which means this is a great job to have.

What does success mean to you?

Working in a job you love at a business or charity with clear organisational purpose. It's about the whole team working to deliver the best support we can for our service users. We have a fantastic team at NS Mind with 80 team members as well as a growing army of volunteers providing counselling, peer support and professional services. We also host placement students studying counselling qualifications, including those from Staffordshire University, and are looking forward to a new intake joining us in October.

What do you do to relax?

We have been lucky enough to have horses for years and me and my current horse (William) are slowly trying to improve our dressage scores – we are still calling it stressage though, which suggests it's not the most relaxing of pastimes. I also enjoy watching my children play cricket and have been known to play for our local ladies side.

What's your career highlight?

I recently watched a video of a service user talking about how our services

have changed their life. Hearing about a genuine life-changing impact on people is always incredibly humbling. I joined the charity at the beginning of the pandemic and I feel we are in a stronger position now. The pandemic brought financial challenges but, at the same time, demand for mental health services went through the roof.

Who inspires you?

Every day would bring a different answer. Service users. Colleagues. Leadership gurus. It changes all the time depending on the situation. I try to remain open minded to learn new things on a daily basis.

What would you tell your 18-year-old self?

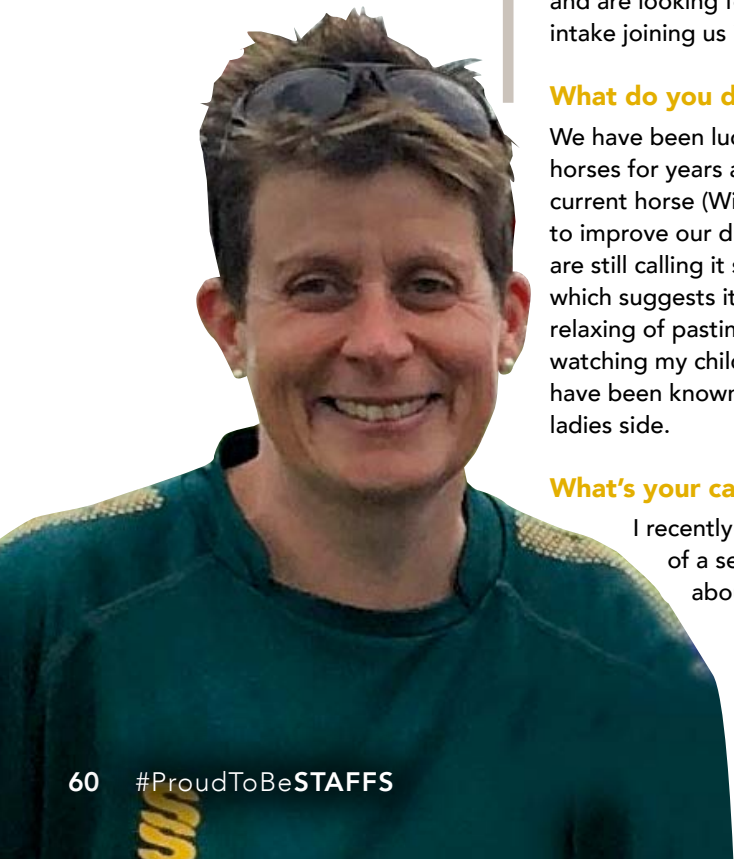
Steer clear of cider. On a more serious note: I would say it's fine to make mistakes. They make you stronger.

What advice would you give to a new graduate?

Be open to trying new things. Sometimes you have an end goal, but you have to make lots of small steps to get there. As long as you're positive about the progress you're making, no matter how small, you can keep cracking on.

What's the biggest lesson you've learnt since leaving University?

There are two things. It's brilliant to have a purpose that will drive you forward. And you will achieve the best things by being surrounded by the best team.



STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY

NEWS

NEW MEMBERS OF THE UNIVERSITY EXECUTIVE

Professor Kevin Hetherington was appointed Deputy Vice Chancellor in March.

Previously Pro Vice-Chancellor at The Open University, he has a 30-year career in higher education as an academic, researcher and senior leader.

He will join Vice-Chancellor Professor Martin Jones and the University's Executive and Senior Leadership Team in shaping and delivering the new strategic plan. Professor Hetherington has specific responsibility for mainstreaming the research agenda, leading the further development of the academic strategy and providing strategic leadership on internationalisation.

Having studied for his PhD at Lancaster University, Professor Hetherington secured his first teaching role as Sociology Lecturer at Keele University in 1992. He then moved to lecture at Brunel University before moving to Lancaster University where he was appointed Professor of Cultural Sociology in 2003. His next appointment was to The Open University as Professor of Geography. After serving as Dean and Director of Studies there, he took up the role of Pro Vice-Chancellor in 2015 with responsibilities for research, academic strategy and enterprise.

Professor Hetherington added: "I have always seen higher education as something that should be open to all and am proud of having been able to support so many students achieve that ambition throughout my career. That is something I will continue to do at Staffordshire University."



More recently, Professor Raheel Nawaz, PFHEA has taken up the post of Pro Vice-Chancellor for Digital Transformation.

The Pro Vice-Chancellor for Digital Transformation will provide strategic leadership and management of the University's continuing digital transformation agenda, together with the leadership of Digital and Technical Services.

Professor Nawaz is a renowned expert in industry-academia co-creation, especially for high impact work integrated programmes like degree apprenticeships. He has advised on the establishment and launch of such programmes in Spain, New Zealand, Canada and Pakistan. He has addressed the Westminster Education Policy Forum twice and has recently been commissioned by the QAA to systematically analyse the degree apprenticeships pedagogies across English universities and advise the sector on best academic practices.

Professor Nawaz is also a leading researcher in Applied Artificial Intelligence and Educational Data Science. He said: "I very much look forward to working with colleagues across the University to support the University's aspirations to become the UK's foremost digital University and deliver on their strategic ambition with a focus on next generation education, experience, engagement and environments."



**STAFFORDSHIRE
UNIVERSITY
LAUNCHED
NEW FLAGSHIP
BUILDING
THE CATALYST
WITH A WEEK
OF EVENTS**



The University teamed up with arts organisation Appetite to offer exciting performances and activities for all ages, ranging from robot selfies and poetry workshops, to dance performances and puppetry!

The Catalyst is a £43 million building located on Leek Road at the heart of the University's Stoke-on-Trent campus which has been described as a "University in a building" and operates as a central hub for students as well as uniting the delivery of apprenticeships and digital skills.

Professor Martin Jones, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive, said: "The Catalyst isn't just a building for the University – it's a building for

the community too. From hosting events and conferences to inviting the community in to eat at our café, deli and bistro, The Catalyst has a key role



to play. Whether you're a regular to our campus or you've never set foot in any of our buildings before, you are

more than welcome to come along and get involved with our University!"

Staffordshire University Honorary Doctors Carol Shanahan OBE and Danny Flynn, CEO of YMCA North Staffordshire, were among those joining in the opening celebrations, giving public talks and sharing insights into their careers.

The week ended with a Community Spectacular for all the family featuring performances from giant puppets.

Gemma Thomas, Appetite Director, said: "We were really excited to partner with Staffordshire University to celebrate the opening of this fantastic community and education centre on their campus."



SHE'S IN FASHION

A Staffordshire University student has won a prestigious award for a campaign which draws attention to the impact of fast fashion.

BA (Hons) Fashion student Louise Rutter scooped the 'Considered Fashion Award' at Graduate Fashion Week (GFW) during a special awards ceremony in London.

The annual event is the world's largest showcase of BA fashion talent and Louise was chosen from students across the country in recognition of her work to promote sustainable fashion.

The 24-year-old said: "I'm so proud of myself for winning the award, especially in an area I'm so passionate about. My whole project is based around sustainability, and I've tried to ensure that the way I work aligns with that, so to be recognised for this is amazing."

Louise created an advertising campaign as part of her final year project and produced a film in collaboration with film and drama students. The short film highlights how the overproduction of garments is destroying natural environments with fashion waste, including new and unworn garments, discarded in landfills and deserts, damaging the natural ecosystems that live there.

The film is supported by a poem that also focuses on the fast fashion brands, and how they are contributing towards the damage seen within the environment.

Dr Julie King, Executive Dean of the School of Digital, Technologies and Arts, said: "GFW has been the springboard for so many of our amazingly talented British designers including Stella McCartney, so it is a tremendous opportunity for Louise to start her career in fashion with such a fantastic award. She beat off the competition from 40 other fashion institutions and has shown how important a sustainability focus is in the fashion industry today."



BIODIVERSITY ON CAMPUS

Staffordshire University is continuing to implement different environmental strategies to protect and encourage biodiversity on campus.

Biodiversity is the variety of wildlife, plants and organisms that support the earth's ecosystem, and need to be preserved and enhanced, now more than ever.

To help wildflowers and pollinating insects that are in decline, the University continues to maintain "no mow" sections of campus.

University students and staff have also planted wildflowers and hedgerows along the edge of the sports pitches on Leek Road, to create a wildlife corridor.

Helen Rutherford, Head of Campus Facilities Management, said: "We are continuing to run regular planting and sustainability events for our students, staff and local community."

The University has a dedicated group of students and staff, known as the Wild Staffs Project, that is responsible for increasing the biodiversity and wildlife habitats on campus.



REACHING OUT THROUGH SPORT

A new Sports Academy led by Staffordshire University students is offering free workshops to schools, sports clubs and local communities.

The programme delivers a range of outreach activities across sport and exercise science, sport and exercise psychology, sports coaching and performance, plus sports therapy.

The Sports Academy is designed to encourage physical activity and raise aspirations among young people and communities at greatest disadvantage.

"It will increase confidence, social skills and teamworking," Gareth Barrett, Lecturer in sport and exercise, said.

Siana Holding, a sport and exercise science student, said: "I volunteered for the Sports Academy because it was a placement opportunity to gain experience in a versatile sports area."

The Sports Academy also offers a Junior Talented Athlete Scheme which provides a pathway for aspiring young athletes to study at Staffordshire University. Athletes get the chance to experience the University's facilities for themselves.

For more information about the Staffordshire University Sports Academy please contact Gareth Barrett on Gareth.Barrett@staffs.ac.uk

WE'RE ON THE CASE

An appeal to identify a suspected murder victim found twenty-eight years ago has launched thanks to new leads uncovered by students.

On 11 July 1994, the body of a middle-aged man believed to be British was recovered in the North Sea, west of the Island Heligoland near Germany.

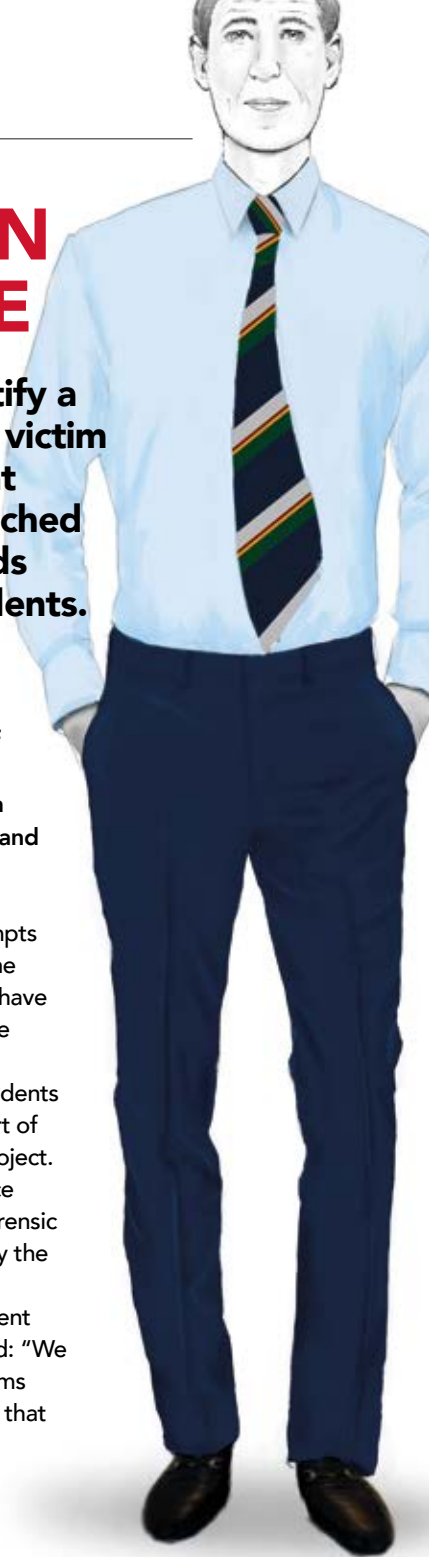
The body showed signs of intended harm. Previous attempts to identify the man dubbed 'the gentleman' by German police have been unsuccessful and the case remains open.

Staffordshire University students began work on the case as part of the International Cold Case Project.

The team revisited evidence and recommended modern forensic methods to help police identify the unknown man.

MSc Forensic Science student Pooja Prasoon Raja, explained: "We pieced together recovered items of clothing and recommended that the police produce a facial reconstruction."

Staffordshire University Professor Caroline Sturdy Colls has been mentoring the students and providing specialist advice on forensic issues.





Staff and students at Staffordshire University helped raise more than £3,000 for The Horizon Fund and mental health charity North Staffs Mind.

The total raised was split with both charities receiving £1,500 each. It follows a string of successful fundraising events including a Charity Cookbook created using recipes submitted by staff, the University's Winter Fair, dress down days and raffles, along with online donations.

Professor Martin Jones, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer at Staffordshire University was on hand to present a cheque for £1,500 to Kate Boundy, Chief Executive at North Staffs Mind.

Kate Boundy, said: "Our friends at Staffordshire University are simply amazing. We would like to say a huge thank you to staff and students."

"In the last 12 months our services have helped the mental wellbeing of over 8,000 adults, children and young people."

The Horizon Fund was launched at Staffordshire University in 2013, bringing together those who wish to undertake charitable giving on any scale, with students who are most in need of financial assistance. Since its launch more than 1,000 students have received bursaries, scholarships or opportunity awards ranging in value from £20 to £2,000.

Deb Sanderson, Head of Development and Alumni Relations, added: "Students from low-income backgrounds see finance, particularly travel and living costs, as a huge barrier to higher education. The funds raised by our staff and students will help ensure that many of these students are now able to access financial support through our Horizon Fund."

Following a vote by staff, Alice Charity is the University's official corporate charity for 2022, with funds raised throughout the year distributed equally between the North Staffordshire charity and The Horizon Fund.

Alice Charity provides vulnerable families with emotional and practical support, for as long as it is needed, and in 2021 alone helped more than 3,500 families across the region.

For more information on Alice Charity please visit: alicecharity.com



For more information on The Horizon Fund please visit: giving.staffs.ac.uk

Staffordshire University opened the doors of its new £5.8 million state-of-the-art Centre for Health Innovation at its Stafford campus earlier this year.

Featuring the most advanced health simulation technology, the centre offers a series of flexible and immersive simulation spaces designed to enhance clinical competency and the learning experience for students.

The new centre has been part-funded by Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) via the Government's Getting Building Fund. The LEP allocated £2.89m to this scheme to help bring forward the pioneering facility and generate further opportunity for learners and businesses in the area.

The facility was officially opened by Professor Mark Radford CBE, Chief Nurse for Health Education England and Deputy Chief Nursing Officer for England and honorary Doctor of Staffordshire University.



As well as being the study base for more than 2,000 student nurses, midwives, operating department practitioners and paramedics, the centre also offers an exciting platform for new collaborations with local business and healthcare and technology industries.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Martin Jones, said: "Completion of the Centre for Health Innovation is an important milestone in our ambition to become the UK's best modern university.

"Our new sector-leading facilities in Stafford will help drive the digital health agenda and accelerate the transformation of the health workforce using immersive technology and advanced teaching. We're also delighted that the centre will play a key role in supporting start-ups and SMEs through the facilities, expertise

and support we have to offer, driving new innovations and promoting new product development and research."

The Centre for Health Innovation is one of just five Centres of Excellence worldwide recognised by medical simulation training product provider CAE Healthcare.

Many new spaces within the centre are equipped with cutting-edge audio-visual observation equipment, including discreet microphones and cameras to facilitate immersive and remote delivery. It also features a range of blank canvas rooms fitted with ceiling-mounted technology that allows spaces to be switched to different real-world settings from patients' homes and hospital wards through to business environments such as factories and warehouses, and public spaces including airports and shopping malls.

Staffordshire University's popular on campus police officer has retired after nearly eight years of university life.

PC Simon Stone, 55, from Newcastle-under-Lyme, worked as Staffordshire University's dedicated Police Liaison Officer from 2014.

He said: "Since joining Staffs, I have never looked back. I'm very passionate about my work and the first thing I did when I started was to make myself available, be approachable and get to know everyone across the campus.

"We have got students from all walks of life, including international students, and many are away from home for the first time. The main aim for me has been to guide them through their

student journey and keep them on the right track so that they enjoy their time here."

Over the years, Simon worked closely with the Students' Union, Staffordshire Police, and Stoke-on-Trent City Council on a variety of campaigns around crime prevention, consent and much more.

Simon introduced the Safer Footsteps scheme to help students get home safely, this provided a well-lit route from the City Centre to campus.

Simon was recognised at the 2021 Staffordshire Police Force Awards where he received an award for the powerful suicide awareness campaign 'Just Say Something' alongside his colleagues.



Want to know and learn more about people whilst relaxing?

Tune in to our Horizon podcast for some interesting and enjoyable listening. Join and be entertained by Gaz and Sam, from Higher Horizons+ and Staffordshire University, as they meet and chat to some amazingly unique guests with fascinating stories to tell from various locations around the globe. Covering topics from education to esports; nursing to ninjas; trips down memory lane to music – and that’s just the first few episodes!

#theHorizonPodcast



HORIZON

Staffordshire University
2022/23 ISSUE

Horizon is a Staffordshire
University publication
created by University staff in
collaboration with external
writers and contributors
www.staffs.ac.uk