



Leigh on Sea Town Council News

issue 13

www.leighonseatowncouncil.gov.uk



@LeighTCevents

Tel: 01702 716 288

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Note from Chairman

By Cllr Paul Gilson



Being Chairman of Leigh-on-Sea Town Council is like many things, frustrating and rewarding. We can be so limited on what we can do to improve things in Leigh, but we do have some resounding successes with the likes of the Skate Park and the Leigh Lights. We would like to do more and we are trying, we have plans for some improved facilities in the Library Gardens and Bonchurch Park and are working with Southend Borough Council on this. We are also in talks with the police over improving policing in Leigh and what Leigh Town Council can do to help.

Why? we are asked, do we want to put all this time and effort into what is just a big parish council? We do it because there is a chance to make things better and that's the reward. For example, the positive feedback we have had from the lights in Library Gardens this Christmas makes it all worthwhile.

I dressed up as Father Christmas to turn on the lights on a Christmas tree for the public, placed on Broadway West. It was wonderful to bring some joy to local children and their comments brought tears to my eyes. "You're real," "I have never seen you before!" They then went on to tell me they had been good and what they were hoping Father Christmas would bring them. Powerful stuff, good job I had a mask and beard on so they couldn't see me crying!

Leigh is a great place to live and I love it here, and I am sure Father Christmas will be back next year!

STAFF DETAILS

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Senior Caretaker **Richard Flint**
Caretakers: **David Skeels, Mark Doolan**



Note from the Town Clerk, Helen Symmons

With the Government's roadmap to recovery now published, we are busy working on our own roadmap to get the Council's facilities and services back up and running. The skate park reopened on 29th March and, all being well, the Community Centre reopened on 12th April albeit with very limited hire allowed. Please do bear with us as we approach each stage as, although we want our Centre to become the vibrant hub that it was pre-COVID, I do have to be mindful of the staff, the building and to keep everyone safe and protected whilst we transition.

Leigh-on-Sea Town Council is part of the Borough reopening safely and so, the Safer Southend Stakeholder meetings are still taking place which you may recall I mentioned in the last edition of the magazine. Additionally, I have been part of the Leigh Partnership Group that has brought the new walking, wayfinding signage to the town as well as working towards the Totally Locally Southend campaign for all of our wonderful independent businesses. With the Southend Tourism Partnership, I am helping to work on all the priority areas to help get visitors back here safely as well as highlighting to residents all that Leigh - as part of the Southend Borough - has to offer.

It has been a busy, albeit a lonely, time with only myself and another member of the team in the offices within the Community Centre and we can't wait to get back to working all together. Zoom has been a lifeline but it's not the same as our great face to face team camaraderie.

We had a reminder of that camaraderie at Christmas over a Zoom afternoon tea so I treated the team to another one on International Women's Day, as the President of the Society of Local Council Clerks had arranged a national Zoom lunch where we had several guest speakers including Jackie Weaver – yes her of Handforth Parish Council fame! Please be assured that not all Town and Parish Councils behave like Handforth and whilst Jackie did her best to control the meeting, she is not a Clerk. As a Clerk we actually do not have the authority to chuck people out of meetings, although rest assured, we read the Standing Orders all the time, so definitely do understand them! Up and down the country there are nearly 10,000 Town and Parish Councils with the majority doing amazing things for their communities to enhance where they live. Sadly, Handforth is not quite doing what they should be for their community.

Thank goodness Leigh is not like that and so if you would like to do more for the Leigh community, then please do keep an eye on our Councillor vacancies that we have here. We have just filled one vacancy for the St. Clements Ward and will have a by-election taking place at the appropriate point for the Elms Ward vacancy. As I write this, there is another new vacancy in the Highlands Ward which we can move to co-opt a new Councillor. Being a Town Councillor can be very rewarding, working on behalf of all those that live in our wonderful town. Have a read of the Good Councillor Guide if you would like to know more, at www.leighon-seatowncouncil.gov.uk/the-council. Leigh-on-Sea Town Council is non-political and being a corporate body, our Council is all about team working, striving to improve the quality of life in the Town. As one Councillor has stated...

"Being a councillor is a team game, and we all need to play our part. But remembering that we are there to represent our community and so finding as many ways as possible to listen to their views, seizing every opportunity to meet them, being honest about what we can and what we can't do – is probably the most important of all".

Council News and Updates



Annual Community Meeting 2021

Our Annual Community Meeting would normally take place yearly around the end of April. We were saddened last year when we were unable to hold the meeting due to the pandemic, so this year we have pushed this date back until late May to allow for further easing of restrictions. However, at this time we are unable to hold the meeting physically and the Government are not extending the provision for Councils to hold remote meetings. If we can hold it remotely (there is a court case pending) then it will start at 7:00pm on Friday 21st May.

The annual meeting is held for our electors. Each year we plan to show our community the work of the Council as well as bringing information from community groups via displays and talks. The Council present their Annual Report, and we also hold an open forum to allow electors to raise questions with their councillors. We present our Good for Leigh Awards, celebrating some of the wonderful people in our town, and our Volunteer of the Year Award in memory of our late councillor Donald Fraser.

If the meeting is unable to go ahead, we hope to be able to present our Good for Leigh and Volunteer of the Year Awards at an event later in the year. Don't feel like you have to wait for a meeting to contact your council though, if you have any questions, ideas, suggestions or concerns we are happy to hear from you, you can contact us by phone, email or post. When the Centre reopens you will also be able to visit us in person too!

Leigh-on-Sea Town Council recently received a prestigious award as part of the Local Council Award Scheme.

The scheme is in place to recognise local councils that achieve good practice in governance, community engagement and council improvement. Having already been awarded the first and second status – Foundation and Quality – Leigh-on-Sea Town Council has proved that it goes above and beyond the legal obligations, leading the community and continuously seeking opportunities to improve and develop even further, and has therefore received the Quality Gold award.

The Local Council Award Scheme is a peer assessed programme that has been designed to both provide the tools and encouragement to those councils at the beginning of their improvement journeys, as well as promoting and recognising councils that are at the cutting edge of the sector. It is through the sector working together to share best practice, driving up standards and supporting those who are committed to improving their offer to their communities, that individual councils and the sector as a whole will reach its full potential.



Painted Stones at Leigh Community Centre

Leigh-on-Sea Town Council are encouraging the younger residents of the town to decorate stones and leave them outside Leigh Community Centre to help spread a little cheer and community spirit.

During the Easter and Summer school holidays, a supply of stones will be left outside the community centre for children to take home and then bring back to be left on our wall. The Town Council has a limited supply available but you are welcome to leave your own as well. We also suggest you seal the stones before returning them, though we may be able to do this for you!

We'll be sharing images of the stones on our Facebook page throughout the year. @LeighTCevents

Our new COVID Community Recovery Award

Leigh-on-Sea Town Council run and manage Leigh Community Centre. We recognise that last year was an awful year for so many of our regular hirers who run their businesses through the centre. In response to this and to help hirers recover their businesses, we have launched a COVID Community Recovery Award programme to offer some support for those hirers who were not eligible for the Government grants throughout lockdown.

Any hirer that qualified for the regular user discount rate at the Community Centre in March 2020 or between September and December 2020, who provides a valuable service for the young and elderly, for health and well-being or the disabled (whether fully or in part), will be able to apply.

The Award will take the form of free hire of facilities at Leigh Community Centre as follows:

Small & medium rooms - 12 x 1 hour sessions

Large room - 8 x 1 hour sessions

Lower Hall - 6 x 1 hour sessions

These hires may be consecutive, e.g. 6x 2 hour sessions in a small room = 12 sessions, and is aimed at organisations or groups which can demonstrate a clear need for accommodation in order to re-establish themselves after the pandemic and which will benefit the Town by providing a community service to residents. All award bookings will have to be completed by 30 September 2021.

More details and an application form will be available from the end of March. Our hirers will be contacted directly if eligible for the grant.



Virtual Farmers' Market

The Leigh Farmers' Market has unfortunately not been able to run during the last year, however for Christmas we set up a Facebook group to allow our traders to sell to members of the public directly. The group was a great success so we have chosen to keep it running for the foreseeable future. If you would like to join the group, search for "Leigh-on-Sea Farmers' Market *VIRTUAL*" on Facebook, a direct way to purchase delicious, homemade, locally sourced produce.

2021-2022

Council Budget



**£5000 AVAILABLE IN GRANTS TO
SUPPORT EXTERNAL COMMUNITY
PROJECTS FOR LEIGH**

Total: £431,350

**£8,000 to fund
allotments**

**£12,000 for two Council
news magazines per household**

**£32,900 funding for
health and
wellbeing
programmes -
includes social club,
Farmers' Market,
events and Library
Gardens Christmas
display**

**£15,000 TO FUND
CHRISTMAS
STREET LIGHTS**

**£4,000 BY-
ELECTION
COSTS**

£1,500 for councillor training

**£18,500 for
Community Infrastructure
Levy Projects**

**£4,700 to fund
school crossing
patrols**

**£9,000 TO
FUND SKATE
PARK**

**£10,000 FOR
STRATEGIC
PLAN
PROJECTS**

**£5000
to
fund
the
council
youth
group**

COUNCIL CONTACT DETAILS

Website: www.leighonseatowncouncil.gov.uk
Email: council@leighonseatowncouncil.gov.uk
Phone: 01702 716288
Post/In-Person: Leigh Community Centre
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Councillor Contact Details

BONCHURCH WARD

Cllr Jill Healey
cllrhealey@leighonseatowncouncil.gov.uk - 07854 959389

ELMS WARD

Cllr Douglas Cracknell
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Cllr Mike Wells
cllrwells@leighonseatowncouncil.gov.uk - 07768 703584

VACANCY BY-ELECTION CALLED FOR MAY 2021

HERSCHELL WARD

Cllr Dr. David Bowry
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Cllr Damian O'Boyle
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HIGHLANDS WARD

Cllr Emma Smith
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Cllr Vinice Cowell
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VACANCY

LEIGH ROAD WARD

Cllr Anita Forde
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Cllr Paul Gilson (Chairman)
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ST CLEMENTS WARD

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Cllr Andrew Wilkins (Vice-Chairman)
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Community Engagement Survey

In order to make sure we're focusing on the areas most important to you, we'd love to hear from you directly with ideas, concerns and comments. If you can, please fill in the survey below and return to us at Leigh Community Centre, 71 – 73 Elm Road, SS9 1SP.



Alternatively, scan this QR code. Open your phone camera and hover the lens over the QR code until a web page opens - where you can fill out the survey. You can access the survey here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/86BLGRZ>

If you needed to contact your Ward Councillor, would you prefer to:

- a. speak with them in person 1-2-1? ☐
- b. speak with them at a group event? ☐
- c. email them directly? ☐
- d. email the Town Clerk? ☐

We're hoping to host some face-to-face events when we can, how likely are you to attend?

- a. unlikely - I don't understand why it would be relevant to me ☐
- b. unlikely - time constraints ☐
- c. likely - if it was relevant to me ☐
- d. likely - I'd love to meet the Councillors ☐

What would you like to see more of from Councillors?

- a. updates on what they have been doing ☐
- b. how they contribute to the community ☐
- c. attendance at local events ☐
- d. face-to-face events ☐
- e. other? Please specify

Getting to know our Councillors!

To help our residents get to know our Council we will be interviewing 2 of our Councillors in each issue. This time it's the turn of our longest standing Councillor, Carole Mulroney and relative newcomer Doug Cracknell.



What made you want to become a councillor for Leigh-on-Sea Town Council?

Doug - Apparently, I had become a grumpy old man, constantly moaning to whoever would listen about issues I had noticed locally, whether it was cars parking on pavements, rubbish being dumped illegally, or dog mess being left everywhere. When my wife started referring to me as 'Victor Meldrew' I thought it was time to do something more positive! I saw the notice about a vacancy for a local town councillor and decided to research and apply. I was elected in 2019 and have never looked back!

Carole - I have worked in and around local councils since leaving school in 1969, first with Essex County Council and then in a private law practice, always within a legal arena. I think I was made for it. I love being in a community, working in partnership with others and enjoy the ability to see the outcomes in your everyday life, debate issues and push projects through.



What is your favourite thing about being a councillor?

Doug - Being able to engage with the community and hear the positive and negative comments and ideas residents and businesses have in relation to our town.

Opportunities to meet with residents and business owners are important for councillors to learn what issues are of concern and how we may be able to help them. I see this as being one of the most important and engaging aspects of my role.

Carole - The ability to make a difference, people find the bureaucracy scary and overwhelming but I don't, so as a workaholic I just get stuck in. That's why I like Facebook because it gives me a window into what's going on locally, what is pleasing or annoying people, and trying to be helpful and straightforward on how to deal with and get the best out of the Council.

Where is your favourite place in Leigh-on-Sea?

Doug - The Old Town – I love its 'uniqueness', its history – and the lure of the cockles and a pint never wanes!

Carole - How could I not say the Old Town, it is my ancestral home. My connections to that little street go back many centuries through all the Old Town families, many of whom are still in Leigh. I lived away from Leigh for many years but my Dad left, but never left, so I grew up loving the place as much as he did.

What has surprised you most in your role as a councillor?

Doug - How the limited powers of local councillors and Leigh Town Council are not understood by residents. It is always disappointing to have to advise residents that we cannot make planning decisions, only comment on them. I think, as a Council, we need to make sure our residents understand what powers we do have and when they need to approach Southend Borough Council.

Carole - I would love to be able to convince people that the Council is not the big ogre they think. It is made up of ordinary people just like them, trying to do a job to the best of their ability and as councillors it is our job to meet the people, listen to them and, if we can, alleviate their concerns and find answers to their problems.

What issues are you most passionate about?

Doug - Anti-social behaviour! I love living in Leigh-on-Sea and get angry, frustrated and sad when I see that other people do not respect our town. Why do we have to live surrounded by discarded rubbish, walls sprayed with graffiti, pavements covered in dog mess etc?

Carole - History - any history – I am fascinated by the past and family history, focussing on Leigh over the centuries and the local history of our town. As a councillor – the environment - being Southend Borough

Council Cabinet member for the environment has been a steep learning curve, it's a vast subject and I am learning every day. I was never interested, and pretty useless, in science at school being a bit of a book worm, but the range of the subject is both enthralling and frustrating in turns, and now I am older I can appreciate it more.

Tell us something about yourself that people wouldn't expect

Doug - I became a househusband in 1992 when my wife and I moved to Leigh-on-Sea with our first child. Almost 30 years ago househusbands were few and far between and I was the odd one out queueing up outside the local playgroup, with no offers to join the coffee mornings! My return to 'paid' work came in 1999 when Leigh North Street Infants School (as it was then) advertised for a Midday Assistant – that fitted in nicely with my parenting duties at that time. That was many years ago and I continue to enjoy being a part of the Leigh-on-Sea community.

Carole - I am completely engrossed in the Great War. Particularly the role women played and researching our Leigh men who served, as well as my Great Grandfather from Somerset, who was killed on the Somme – it is an obsession.

Southend Airport Night Flights update

Article by Cllr Damian O'Boyle



Leigh-on-Sea Town Council maintains a unanimous position in opposition to night flights over Leigh. This is a stance that is supported by all the main political parties in the Southend Borough.

Councillors continue to receive numerous complaints from local residents which illustrates the detrimental effects that these flights are having on the wellbeing and mental health of our residents.

Towards the end of 2020, those within the flight path or vicinity of the airport were being routinely woken up as often as four times a night. This is counter to NHS guidance that advises that between 6-9 hours of uninterrupted sleep per night is required by adults (and more by babies and young children).

In November 2020, in an attempt to resolve this matter, the Town Council issued a letter to the airport management stating our position and requesting that immediate rectification measures be taken to protect residents. The response from the airport was disappointing in that it offered no tangible actions for change.

The council remains supportive of the airport but firmly believes it should seek to be a 'good neighbour' to the surrounding communities and that the impact of activities on population health and the environment should be at the forefront of any planning and contractual considerations.

In an effort to understand the extent of the night flight issue a simple comparison of complaints per thousand passengers was used to plot Southend Airport against other airports in the South East and one of a similar size (Bristol). The comparison used publicly available data sources (primarily quarterly and annual reports).



The graph illustrates that, prior to the commencement of Amazon night flights (in October 2019), Southend airport had complaints that were broadly in line with other airports across the country. However, following the introduction of night flights, the complaints then grew at a drastic rate (over 600%) to the point whereby Southend is now the most complained about airport in the cohort group. This is a very disturbing trend that, as councillors, we find unacceptable and unsustainable.

It is apparent that it is clearly within the gift of Southend Airport, and its owners Esken, to return to being a 'good neighbour', and stopping night flights is a pressing first step.

To encourage further action, in February 2021 this information was presented to the Southend Airport Consultative Committee who are responsible for monitoring adverse environmental and social impacts from the airport.

Leigh-on-Sea Town Council is listening to your concerns and will continue to press for the urgent cessation of night flights using all available avenues. In the absence of the airport taking suitable action, we will continue to lobby locally and nationally in support of community wellbeing and environment.

Myth-busters!

There are many issues that we face in our day to day lives that we need help with, including our local authority and other organisations. This new feature will answer some of the questions on what to do and the right person to contact when you have a problem. If you have any suggestions that you would like us to tackle in future issues, then please contact us via post, email or phone.

How do I report issues with waste? The easiest and quickest way to report any waste issues is through MySouthend, the online portal for Southend residents on the www.southend.gov.uk website. There are lots of forms available here to report all sorts of issues. For waste issues in particular you can do the following:

REQUEST

- a 'New Residents Pack'
- a new or replacement blue food waste bin or paper and card box

REPORT

- a missed collection
- a non-delivery of sacks
- graffiti or fly-posting
- fly-tipping, street cleansing and weeds
- litter/dog bins that are full or damaged

When reporting any issues, you will need to provide your name and contact details as well as the exact location and details of what you are reporting. You can also provide photos if reporting graffiti or fly-tipping. If you do not have internet access, you can call us on 01702 716288 and we can fill in the online form for you. Once a form is submitted, action will generally be taken within 7 days.

How do I report a blocked drain or burst water main?

Neither Leigh-on-Sea Town Council nor Southend Borough Council can resolve issues with blocked drains. In the instance of a public drain being blocked this needs to be reported directly to Anglian Water. This can be done via their website www.anglianwater.co.uk or by phone on their 24 hour helpline on 03457 145 145.

How do I raise an objection about a planning or licensing application in my neighbourhood?

Leigh-on-Sea Town Council has chosen to be a consultee regarding planning applications submitted within the area, but we have no power to determine these. Southend Borough Council notify us of all the applications within the Town Council area. The Councillors should view the plans prior to our Planning, Highways & Licensing Committee, which takes place every 3 weeks. Members of the public are permitted to attend meetings and send in written communication prior to the meeting to express their views.

Any decisions made by the Committee will be sent to the planning department at Southend Borough Council. Our views are then taken into account when the Borough Council are making a decision, providing the objections made are relevant to the determination of a planning application. Leigh-on-Sea Town Council will only comment on what are known as "material considerations". Issues, for example, boundary disputes or loss of view will not be considered.

The final decision is made by the Planning Authority, not the Town Council.

Members of the public are normally made aware of any planning applications in the immediate vicinity of their homes by post and will be provided with a reference number to view the plans. You can view plans online via the planning portal on the Southend Borough Council website. From here you can register your contact details to make a comment on an application within a consultation period of 21 days usually.

If you don't have internet access (we normally allow members of the public to view plans in person at Leigh Community Centre, but as this is currently not possible due to COVID restrictions) please call on 01702 716288 and we will try and help in any way we can.

If you want to make an objection you can do so through the online portal or you can write to us directly to raise any concerns. You must also write to Southend Borough Council too. You are also welcome to attend our meetings, to raise any objections in person. Meetings are currently taking place remotely, but you can dial in to these meetings if you do not have internet access.

Leigh on Sea Skatepark

Article by Cllr Vinice Cowell

Last summer's lockdown restrictions and limitations on travel saw young and old refresh their love and appreciation for skateboards, scooters and roller-skating culture. All things wheels were officially back "en vogue" with world-wide shortages of equipment, a spike in google trends for all things skating that remains fairly consistent today and as we have experienced in Leigh-on-Sea a rush back to the local skatepark with unprecedented demand for skate space.

The Leigh skatepark is a not-for-profit community project that Leigh-on-Sea Town Council have been privileged to financially support. The parks re-development was started by the team at June Stores and they continue to be the parks figure heads. Works to update facilities were finalised last year and since completion it has fast become one of the most vibrant, inclusive and thriving assets within our community.

Skateparks and their associated sporting activities provide great social value for relatively small cost. Encouraging children to risk assess, plan and push themselves but most importantly allowing our young people to break free from the mundane and play together with each other in real life in a structured but not rules enforced way.

Speaking to young people that use the park, the benefits are clear: "it's been a place to escape to and not worry about the pandemic. I couldn't skateboard before I went to the park but I can now drop in and do a kick flip. I now have a new hobby that I can always take part in as I don't need to pay or anything and I get outside much more than I used to" Freddie aged 11.

The skatepark's popularity and the uptake in participants over the summer means that the facility is frequently busy with crowds of partakers and spectators on a nice day being the norm. In Leigh-on-Sea the uptake in skating is such now that further capacity to meet demand is required and is something, I believe we should be encouraging. Young people like to take risks, it's part of their brain development and growth. As adults we may see all the health and safety holes; wincing as we see a skateboard fly into the air, but for them it is pure joy.

We are extremely fortunate to have this resource and as a Town Councillor I am proud that we have been able to play our part in its redevelopment. Leigh-on-Sea is a great place to live, let's make it even better.

Local Leigh lad and skatepark regular Joshua is petitioning Southend Borough Council for the creation of another facility in the north of the borough at Oakwood Park, please sign and support here:

<https://democracy.southend.gov.uk/mgEPetitionDisplay.aspx?ID=37&RPID=10216159&HPID=10216159>

The experience of lockdown and living through an international pandemic is one of the hardest things that many of us will go through in our lifetimes. We want to personally thank and highlight some of the wonderful people who have done the most positive things for their communities.



Positive-Leigh!

The Great Outdoors!

Article and photos by Alfie Winters

I'm a 17-year-old photographer from Leigh-on-Sea. During the winter, due to the restrictions, I was taking a lot more walks than usual along the seafront. I started to notice people going for a swim in the freezing conditions of December and January. As a previous club swimmer, it fascinated me so much. So much so, that I gave it a go! The first time I did it I could feel my individual muscles tensing up as I got out of the water, it gives you this amazing feeling of being so warm once you get out, energising and raising my mood so much!

I've been an avid street photographer for the last three years. I'm a massive fan of Martin Parr who takes a lot of inspiration from British summer/beach culture. I thought it would be interesting to take inspiration from Martin Parr and use what I have on my doorstep and document the crazy brave locals who go for a swim in the sometimes below-freezing estuary.

The community that meets down on the seafront, especially the Blue Tits group, was extremely welcoming to me in letting me document this positive and inclusive hobby. I had the opportunity to follow the swimmers around every day for two weeks, photographing them in the snow and the winter sun, allowing me to turn it into a mini-series or a photo essay if you will, that will be contributing towards my A-level photography coursework.

I massively enjoyed this experience and can't wait to continue documenting the sea swimmers into the spring months.



As close to being there as being there by Mike Elliot of Living Walks

When we started our small YouTube channel some time ago, we'd never have imagined how important it would be when the pandemic hit. A desire to experience a completely natural sound and sight walk-through of the cities we'd like to visit arose when we planned a trip to Cuba.

We were curious to know what the country was really like in the raw, away from the cruise ships and tourist hotspots. We liked the idea of the travel equivalent of the 'Slow TV' films we'd seen from Norway, which were free from narration and music. But instead of crackling fireplaces or woodcarvers crafting chairs, a choreographed walk-through in Havana's streets at eye level, as if we were really there, with immersive, unedited sights and sounds of life, was what we wanted to see. This however didn't seem to exist, so we decided we must be the ones to film it.

Now 3 years later we have 180 'virtual tours' on our YouTube channel "Living Walks". Our early subscribers told us how relaxing and absorbing they found these films - drawn in by smooth, slow camera movements, by continuously unfolding streets and squares. Or how useful they have been as a guide for their weekend trip away. But, most touchingly of all, were the comments we receive from those unable to leave home, whether through age, illness or some other restriction.

Soon of course we were all to find ourselves in this situation, when lockdown began. Viewers now tell us how wonderful it is to escape the confines of their homes; to forget their isolation and relax by travelling to new cities, albeit virtually; to revisit the cities they'd loved, to rekindle memories happy or poignant. Viewers came together in sharing their stories, including a wheelchair user, who for the first time in 20 years was able to view the world from a standing perspective. Here we had created an unexpected community - joining the one we had nurtured through our Yoga and Mindfulness classes (that we gratefully transitioned to Zoom and kept running).

Both seemed to naturally draw out the best in people. Both communities have carried us through too and we are so happy to be a part of it.

www.youtube.com/c/LivingWalks

Classes at **leighyoga.co.uk**



Anita's Little Free Library

by Cllr Anita Forde

In the Summer of 2018, Leigh-on-Sea Town Councillor and hairdresser, Anita Forde, set up a "Little Free Library" for both children and adults, outside her place of business on the London Road in Leigh. It was established in order to provide a book exchange, 24/7. "The scheme was important to me, as I believed it would help foster creativity and neighbourhood exchange. I have loved sharing my books and it creates a dialogue between people that you would never have had otherwise. Anyone can take, leave, exchange or donate books at the Little Free Library, which functions on an honour system, in the trust that people will return the book, or replace it with an alternative one.

Developing the free library was all part of my ethos of building community connections. That's one of the reasons I became a member of the Town Council in April 2017, to serve people of the Leigh community. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis the community have taken ownership of, what is essentially, their library. It has been so vital during the three lockdowns and it humbles me when I get messages of 'thanks' from users and beautiful pictures left by the youngsters. I have also had a number of enquiries from people interested in setting up their own libraries across the town. It is currently housing literature and films by women, about women, for women to promote International Women's Day (8th March).

Before the lockdowns I had always planned to install a bench to provide a safe destination for local children and families to stop and read as well as make new friends. Hopefully, with the slow easing of current restrictions, I will be able to do that this summer.

For more information, you can contact me on 01702 715070.

Join the Smileigh revolution!

by Francesca Smith



On the 21st March 2020, just as the country was reaching the first lockdown, local man Michael Cranston was scrolling through Facebook. He was feeling fed up with negative posts and nasty comments on different local Facebook groups, so, he decided to start his own group.

The "Smileigh" Facebook group started with just 50 of Michael's friends and only one rule; that every post or comment had to be positive. As the lockdown went on more and more people started to join the group and as of March 2021, it now has nearly 10,000 members. With some members from as far away as New Zealand, as many as 100 new members join each day. Over the last year Michael has received many messages of praise from people in the group for introducing some positivity into their lives, helping some people through depression, or doing shout-outs for people's birthdays who have been stuck feeling isolated whilst shielding.

The group also rallied at Christmas time to raise over £1300 for the One Love Soup Kitchen, and have now started a further fundraising scheme with smiley face badges; that will not only help identify group members locally but also raise money for the One Love charity once again.

They are hoping to hold a big party when restrictions are lifted so that everyone can meet in person and they can carry on the positive vibes.

When Michael first started the group, his wife laughed at him and didn't think it would go anywhere, but the couple can't believe how much it has taken off. "The positivity has been infectious and it is lovely to see people complimenting each other, helping each other out, just having a laugh and being nice to each other, which can be a rarity on social media these days."

Michael hopes that his fun and easy-going group will continue long past the days of COVID, and help to keep spreading some joy and laughter.



A Better Perspective

Article and Photos by Jamie Crompton

I'm a local drone photographer from Leigh-on-Sea, and I've been locked down in Scotland for the best part of a year. I've really missed the area and the photographic opportunities that the Estuary has to offer. My main line of work filming weddings and music festivals was affected by the pandemic, so I had to look at other ways to earn a living. This gave me the push I needed to start selling my shots, and where better to start than my hometown. I decided to print and frame my favourite shots of Leigh (the curly-wurly bridge) and reach out to local businesses to see if they would like to feature my work. My favourite cafe in Leigh 'The Corner Club' decided to take on and showcase my work on one of their walls. From there I've received several orders and inquires to do some bespoke work, such as creating a video using shots taken locally for Leigh Road Baptist Church.

I'm looking forward to returning home this summer and capturing Leigh in the sunshine. You can view all of my drone work on my website and socials.

www.betterperspective.co.uk

[@better.perspective](https://www.instagram.com/better.perspective)



Crocheting away the lockdown boredom

Linda Catling is 74 and has been knitting since the age of 14. She learnt to crochet whilst travelling up to work in London in the 70's along with a very close friend. By the end of their daily journey many passengers had become interested and learned how to crochet themselves! Since moving to Leigh in November 2016, Linda joined a "Knit and Natter" group at St. Clement's Church, which under normal circumstances would meet each Thursday.

At the beginning of the pandemic, Linda became partially sighted and partially lost her hearing, and thought that her crafting days were possibly coming to an end. However, during the first lockdown she started to make teddies wearing face masks to display in their windows for children to see when out exercising. Neighbours caught on and Linda started making masks for their teddies too.

By May 2020, Linda thought she would take the next step and try making a mask for their local post box, situated three doors down. Unfortunately, this didn't really pan out as expected and so instead she had a go at knitting a hat! Within the first design she incorporated a thank you message to essential services. After encouraging feedback on Facebook, Linda decided to have a go at some more designs. Themed or seasonal decorations were now happening on a monthly basis. Following the first NHS hat, there was an autumn hat, a Halloween hat, a Remembrance Day hat that raised £50 for the Royal British Legion, and a Peaky Blinders themed Christmas hat. Coming in to the new year Linda also designed a snowman bobble hat, a Valentine's Day hat and a tribute to Captain Tom. She is also working on designs for Mother's Day, Easter, St. Patrick's Day and St. George's Day.

Linda says "the feedback has been inspiring and at times overwhelming. The number of people passing by taking photos, selfies and waving to us has been incredible. The snowman hat in January featured in the ITN evening news and more or less went global. I have had comments back from as far away as New Zealand, Australia, US, Malta, France plus other countries. I also featured on BBC Look East, and Nova Radio North East." The local community have been so grateful for this during lockdown, with thousands of positive comments on Facebook. Even the postman has been complimentary and encouraging.

My Lockdown Hero

by Camille Catling

My Nanny is famous for knitting hats,
But not just any hats, they're postbox hats!
COVID meant that she was locked in her house
She felt bored, gloomy and without purpose.
Snowman, Valentine's and Captain Sir Tom
She is knitting today with more to come.
She made it into lots of Newspapers
Starred on televisions around the world
Many people have stopped to photograph
They have paused outside to wave happily.
She feels proud of herself and talented
Spring and Mother's Day are yet to appear
So have a walk along Marine Parade
Please wave to Nanny, she is very dear!



On a personal note, it has helped me to get through the pandemic as I have had to shield throughout and it has given me a great sense of achievement considering my sight loss. The actual hat itself takes 2 to 3 days to crochet, it's what I decide to put on that takes a good deal of time. If they continue to be as popular as they are, I will likely continue beyond the pandemic." Linda's granddaughter, Camille, wrote a rather touching sonnet as part of a school project entitled "My Lockdown Hero" - see above.

The Leigh Skatepark

A Leigh-on-Sea Town Council Community Project



Article by Warren Greatrex

There wasn't a ribbon cutting event when the Leigh-on-Sea skatepark extension opened last year. That's not to say it's something we missed because of the recent restrictions. It's actually much simpler than that – a ribbon cutting would have got in the way of skating the new parts of the skatepark and we, as a community, couldn't wait for ribbon.

The skatepark extension has been something that we at Junestore have been invited to work on since 2014 and last year it was time to come together to share the benefits of the Town Council and community's hard work. From regular meetings to fundraising, to literally breaking ground, we'd finally been able to get our community-driven project underway.

Like many community projects, we were told it could take up to seven years to seek money through conventional grants where skateparks often rank poorly as a priority. Thankfully our efforts would be supported by Leigh-on-Sea Town Council who shared our vision for creating a larger space for the community. It was their unrelenting support for the project and their belief in the need to have creative outdoor spaces that gave us a chance to not only develop an under-utilised space but also take social action through the promotion of health and wellbeing through skateboarding.

At first, money was raised through conventional methods and it quickly became clear that we couldn't just be supported by skateboarders and what little money they

might have had. Family, friends and members of the community got behind us and donated what they could. We were lucky to have a positive word-of-mouth and countless stories of instances of someone taking their child to the skatepark only to have a random skateboarder give them advice or help them with their skateboard setup. Leigh-on-Sea Town Council provided funds that would lift us up and enable the project to begin. Additionally the Town Council secured a grant from Enover Community Trust which meant that the project could fund the design the community wanted. The plan was and still is – to do it step by step.

Daryl at Betong Skateparks, a leader in European skatepark design, came on board and we managed to find real momentum. What made their involvement even more incredible was that they'd said yes to our request to make our skatepark better on the modest budget. We had to confess that we weren't asking for a new skatepark – we couldn't afford one. Instead, we wanted to take what we had and realise its full potential. Like us, they believed it was possible and were up for the challenge. They were able to find ways to dismantle and reconstitute parts of the old skatepark to create contemporary designs that offered many more possibilities for the users. It meant that in early 2019 we were nearly there, even if we were still short on the funds we'd need and the building expertise and equipment.

When Graham Newton, a member of the Leigh-on-Sea community and life-long skateboarder, got wind of what we were doing he stepped in and graced us with his involvement and what we would need to break ground; not only did he donate generously to the project, but he also managed to get local contractors to donate machinery and builders to get the park extension built. The skatepark extension simply wouldn't have been possible without Daryl who waived the design cost and Graham who injected the project with extra funds on top of the Council's initial budget. Graham also brought in the workforce it needed to come off the page and onto the marshes. We were also indebted to the builders and volunteers involved who worked overtime for donuts and coffee to help us get the extension completed within the time we were permitted.

In 2020 the first phase of the extension was completed, skateable and more popular than ever thanks to the larger space and introduction of new obstacles for those who were experienced and just starting out. News of the extension being ready had spread and it was only a matter of days before the skatepark was full of users of all ages and spectators alike who were keen to share how skateboarding had influenced their lives or those of their children.



People shared with us that they were able to instantly enjoy free regular physical activity in a creative and inclusive outdoor space in a way that just wasn't possible beforehand.

In phase two, we're now working towards having a dedicated seating area and to have a street art wall for our creative community to join in.

If you'd like to join our vision and support us in completing further phases then head over to **www.junestore.co.uk** where you can find a place to donate as well as services like skateboard lessons and t-shirts. The proceeds from these products and services all go directly towards the next phase and towards the materials and services we need to begin building.

The charity Bar'n'Bus was established in 1993 and was often recognised by its use of a converted double-decker bus – used as a mobile youth centre. Now the bus has gone but Bar'n'Bus has the same core objectives, to meet young people in their own environment, support their wellbeing, offer them help and advice, if they want it, and to encourage them to pursue positive involvement in their communities.

Bar'n'Bus employs three full time youth workers working across south Essex with local teams of trained volunteers. In February 2021 Zahna Hull joined the team as the newly appointed Youth Development Worker for Leigh and Westcliff. Zahna has already started to make contacts with schools, existing youth workers, Church groups, the Police and Southend's Integrated Youth Support Team to look for ways to collaborate and develop work with young people. A particular link of interest has been with some fabulous art projects in the area, one of which, 99by19, is an opportunity for young people to be active and creative in the area.

Zahna and colleagues have started regular street-based sessions in Old Leigh, making themselves known to the young people they meet. They are recognisable in branded clothing with 'Youth Worker' written on the back. Teams also carry photo ID for easily identification.

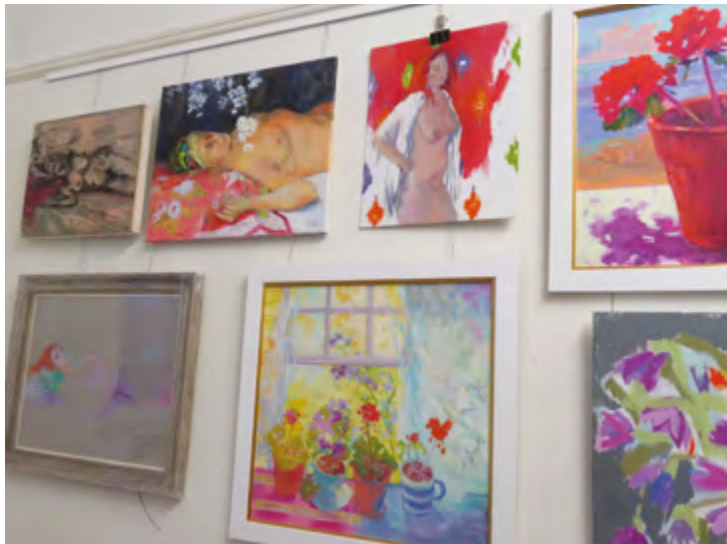
Zahna said, 'I am very pleased to say that the young people I have met are polite, supportive of each other, and proud of their environment. They seem particularly pleased with the skatepark and I agree it is a wonderful facility. I believe that the young people of Leigh can make a positive contribution to the life of the community and if called upon they could offer a valuable insight into how the town can be improved or enhanced.'

'I have contacted local schools to offer mentoring and I am pleased to say Bar'n'Bus will be working with a group of students next term. I believe that we have all suffered during the pandemic and looking out for the well-being of our young people is valuable as it could aid their long-term mental health. Please join me in voicing how proud we are of the young people in our area and let's all help them to grow into strong, resilient, and well-rounded adults.'

As part of developing the growing work in the area, Zahna will be looking to recruit and train some volunteers soon to assist with sessions. Bar'n'Bus runs a full training and supervision programme for volunteers, as well as offering a wonderful opportunity to join a team supporting local young people.

You can find Bar'n'Bus, and the 99by19 project on Facebook and Instagram. For more information visit **www.barnbus.org.uk**





It's been a funny old year!

by Kerry Doyland
Artist in Residence 2019 – 2021

I know it wasn't the year any of us were expecting, but having residency in the attic at Leigh Community Centre made those times when we were still allowed to teach and paint together that much more special.

Life drawing is one of the best ways to switch off from the stresses and strains of modern life and enter that blissful state of calm that we access when we are using the right lobe of our brain. We slow our breath; we slow our brainwaves and we drop into Theta State. The physical body and conscious mind take a back seat and our healing (parasympathetic) nervous system kicks in. What a wonderful feeling that is!

Because of this, and because 18 months ago my Artist's Residency was the perfect platform for me to do so, I introduced a scholarship for students to come and experience life drawing at a younger age than I first did.

Each month a new student joined me in the attic studio for an introduction to life drawing and then, with an armful of art supplies, we'd go downstairs to room 4 and join a life drawing class for 2 hours of blissful, creative calm. The students loved it and the schools made contact to ask if the scholarship program would be carried through to the next artist's residency. Susan, our next resident artist has already got a waiting list!

As well as that, I was able to use the attic space to construct room sets and invite other artists to join me in painting and drawing from life. . . it's rare for an artist to have the room to dedicate to this.

The Art Wall exhibition that was hung just before Lockdown showcased almost a hundred pieces of creative work by over twenty artists, that would not have existed without our access to that attic studio.

I'm grateful to all those who made it possible and I wish Susan Allen the same joy in her time as Artist in Residence.



Susan Allen Artist in Residence 2021-22

Life in Leigh-on-Sea is a source of endless inspiration for Susan. From delightfully muddy shores to the textures and colours of life by the sea, all are embodied in her paintings. Drawn to work that straddles the borders of both realism and abstraction, she creates acrylic paintings of Leigh and the Estuary which capture dramatic and peaceful landscapes. "It's important to me that each painting tells a story; that it speaks of the weather that day, the colour of the water, the local people."

Susan has always loved art - drawn particularly to the paintings by the old masters, looking to JMW Turner for his dramatic landscapes and the more contemporary Matisse for his joyful use of colour and pattern. Susan began honing her figure drawing and realism skills at Ontario College of Art in Toronto, Canada (also where she was born) before travelling to Europe and spending the year in Florence, Italy. Drawing and painting became a way of life there, working daily in a studio off Piazza Santa Croce and living in a villa on the outskirts of the city. "It was an amazing experience, and has had a lasting impression on my artwork."

Moving to Leigh at the end of the 80's, Susan fell in love not only with her husband who lived here, but with the town itself. Welcomed in by the community of artists Leigh is home to, she began exhibiting as part of the Leigh Art Trail in 1999 and has never looked back. For the rest of the year, Susan exhibits at Two Tree Gallery (13 Rectory Grove), a fantastic little spot tucked away behind Irma's Pizzeria, along with 8 other artists. Together they established the gallery, realising that the art scene in Leigh was missing a place where people could see and buy artwork by local artists.

As this year's Artist in Residence at Leigh Community Centre, Susan has exciting plans for her time there. Keen to share her love of the local landscape with the community, Susan will be offering on-location drawing, sketching and painting groups throughout the summer. Small groups will then be guided through the process of developing sketches into completed works, exploring different media and techniques in a safe environment. Making these skills accessible regardless of age or ability sits at the core of Susan's teaching philosophy and approach to art, and it's clear through her time spent in the classroom with everyone from young children to retired students that this is something she'll be continuing throughout her residency. Susan will also continue to offer the Life Drawing Scholarship for students and adults to learn and experience life drawing. "I truly believe that art is for everyone, whether you're a beginner or more experienced. Art is great for your mental health too, the relaxation and positivity that it encourages can have a really deep and lasting effect."



www.susanallenpainting.weebly.com
www.twotreegallery.co.uk
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 Facebook: susan.allen.39948
 Email: susan_allen_smith@yahoo.co.uk

Susan has really felt the grounding effects of painting regularly throughout lockdown. Continuing to teach painting and drawing classes through zoom, Susan spends time outside the digital classroom discovering "new colour combinations and watching images come alive on a blank canvas". Susan's favourite piece is often the one she has right in front of her, indulging in each brushstroke as the story of the painting takes shape. "At the moment I'm feeling really excited about a painting called 'Wind Sea Sky' – it's a view of the beach with richly textured sand and reflective pools of water, and in the middle are 3 figures going to explore. Where they're off to is for you to decide!"



GRANT AWARD SCHEME

Continuity of Carers – Midwife Team

We are group of 8 midwives that work for Southend University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. As of July 2020, we started Team Rosa. This was for us to be able to provide 'continuity of care' to women and their families in the SS9 postcode area. A further team has been rolled out in the Westcliff area and there are plans for more teams to be rolled out in the coming months in all areas covered by Southend Hospital Maternity Services.

To facilitate this, it is important the women and their families are able to meet the whole team while they are on this special important journey.

We have a vision to be able to use the rooms at Leigh, particularly as it is a central part of the community, to offer educational classes, meet the midwives and to invite guest speakers to provide education and support.

We as a team are looking forward to using the space in our local community setting.

PEAC(e) Parents of Estranged Adult Children

Prior to becoming estranged from our son, I had never heard of this, and like many people, I might naturally have assumed that it must have been something the parents had done to cause this. I couldn't have been more wrong. There are hundreds of thousands of parents around the world experiencing all manner of emotions, including shame, guilt, embarrassment and heartache at being estranged. Talking to friends and other family members doesn't help as they cannot comprehend what we are going through and so I decided to start my own support group here in Leigh-on-Sea.

The first thing I had to consider was a venue, so I popped along to the Community Centre and made my first enquiries. The lady at the desk was so lovely when I explained what my group was going to be for and she said, "This is so sad and cruel, but I've heard your story from a lot of people, so you're not alone". Her kindness really touched me. I didn't feel judged or ashamed or embarrassed, on the contrary, I felt uplifted and positive.

I originally called my group PEAC because the four letters stand for Parents Estranged Adult Children, but then I realised that when you read it, it might be misread because phonetically it read PEE ACK. Bit more thinking and I came up with the idea of putting an 'e' in brackets in lower case at the end. Now, not only would it read PEAC(e) but it made more sense because of what has happened to us, true peace has been cruelly taken away from us.

Our first meeting started in October 2018 with just three people! We've grown a little since then, and although we're still quite small, the reassurance that we all give one another is invaluable. Certain days of the year, for example, birthdays, Christmas etc., are especially painful for us, but we get through it and come out the other side smiling. I always say to new mums and dads that I can't take their pain away, neither can I make things better for them, but I can offer support and friendship and above everything else, we've learned to laugh again.

I was thrilled to receive the grant from the Council; it has gone towards our room hire at the Community Centre for a year, thus enabling me to spend other money on advertising costs, for which I am very grateful indeed.

If anybody knows of someone who may benefit from coming along to PEAC(e), we would be only too happy to have them join us.

Friends of Love Leigh Cliffs

In August 2020 the group was formed on Facebook to bring Leigh Cliffs East back to its former glory and we now have a membership of 200 giving their support and effort.

The gardens have been a much-loved feature of Leigh since the 1930's. Most beautifully laid out with large sandstone rocks, forming flowering rockeries and terraces running down to the sea. They had unfortunately become overgrown over the years but volunteers found it a pleasure to clear and garden there, enjoying the company, exercise and beautiful surroundings.

We received excellent support from Southend Parks Department and are most grateful to Leigh Town Council especially for awarding us a grant of £500 which made a huge difference, as we used half to purchase our insurance, enabling us to get so much more done, as we could then work more often, without needing a Parks Department member to attend.

We also purchased some 250 bulbs, daffodils, English bluebells, snowdrops and crocuses, miniature red maple trees, a variegated weigela and a syringa and some Christmas decorations.

We have saved some funds for purchasing flowering shrubs for spring planting, and will urgently need to look into funding water connection to the site for the summer. We are very much looking forward to continuing our gardening once lockdown is over.



Friends of Leigh Library Gardens

It's been a long winter for the Friends of Leigh Library Gardens. Lockdown restrictions have prevented us from working in the Gardens, but we have been delighted to see so many local people making use of the space and enjoying the fresh air, the peace and the snow in February.

We have many plans but at present so much is on hold. Thankfully many of the bulbs and plants we put in last year survived the worst of the winter and are now waking up to give some colour to the Gardens. We had very much hoped to be able to hold an event in the Gardens at Easter but those plans are now rescheduled to a time when we can safely gather together.

With the grant kindly awarded to us from Leigh-on-Sea Town Council, we aim to work towards an event to promote inclusion and wellbeing in partnership with a local arts group. In late spring and during the summer, we hope to be able to run some arts and crafts activities in the Gardens and engage with more local residents to improve the quality of life in Leigh-on-Sea. Follow us on Facebook for more information.

Leigh Lymphoedema Support

Group Lymphoedema affects nearly a quarter of a million men, women and children in the UK causing swelling of the limbs or body and an increased risk of infection. Once a person has lymphoedema they have it for life. Our main objective is to help support people, signpost them towards medical advice and treatment and demonstrate the various self-exercises that can help. Most of all we aim to "be there" for people with the condition, their friends and family, meeting up in a sociable environment to chat, laugh and make friends. Once the Community Centre can re-open we look forward to launching this new support group.

STAYING HEALTHY

by Sarah Weston
Personal Trainer at
Club One Hundred,
Leigh-on-Sea.



It's no secret that Covid is having an impact on our physical and mental health at the moment, our entire way of life has changed over the last year and whilst there is now an end in sight, I am finding that there are people that are struggling at the moment.

Exercise and good nutrition doesn't just benefit your body, it also helps with your mental wellbeing.

So here are my top tips on how you can support your physical and mental health with exercise and good nutrition.

Find a form of exercise you love Leigh is a beautiful place to live and has many lovely places to walk or run, and there is also a great fitness community that runs all sorts of classes from Zumba and Pilates to bootcamps online at the moment. When you exercise, your body releases endorphins, which is what gives you that happy feel-good feeling after a workout. Exercising regularly has also been proven to have a positive impact on anxiety, depression and helps to relieve stress and boost your overall mood.

Stay hydrated! When you become dehydrated this has an impact on all your bodily functions, it can make you feel dizzy and tired and can make it difficult to concentrate. As a rough guide try to drink between 2-3 litres of liquid (preferably water) throughout the day at regular intervals.

Eat your fruit and veg! The government guidelines states that you should eat at least 5 portions of fruit and veg per day, aim for that as a minimum and try to eat a few more if you can. This food group is packed full of essential vitamins and minerals that help the body to function at its absolute best, so try and make sure you get as many different coloured fruits and veggies as possible, eat the rainbow as the saying goes.

Get a good night's sleep The exact amount of sleep needed varies from person to person, but if you aim for somewhere between 7-9 hours you won't go far wrong. Try to keep the time you go to bed and the time you wake up consistent, and sleep in a dark cool room.

It's pretty normal to feel a certain level of stress on a day to day basis, but prolonged very intense stress actually has many negative effects on the body. Managing your stress is a very personal thing, and what works for one person won't necessarily work for another. It is important to find what works for you, whether that be reading, mindfulness, going for a walk or simply turning your phone off and taking some time away from everyone.

I hope you find these tips useful, if you would like to have a more in depth chat about health and wellbeing I am always happy to help! please send me an e-mail at sarah.weston@clubonehundred.com

The Royal British Legion

Leigh-on-Sea Branch



Although the Leigh-on-Sea Branch of The Royal British Legion is comparatively small in number, they have huge plans to celebrate the centenary of the Legion which was formed on 15 May 1921, bringing together four national organisations of ex-Servicemen that had established themselves after the First World War, namely: The National Association of Discharged Sailors and Soldiers; The British National Federation of Discharged and Demobilized Sailors and Soldiers; The Comrades of The Great War and The Officers' Association. The amalgamation of these diverse bodies can be attributed largely to two men: Field Marshal Earl Haig and Tom Lister of The Federation of Discharged and Demobilized Sailors and Soldiers. Lord Haig served as the President of The Royal British Legion until his death in 1928.

As a result of the war, Britain's economy plummeted and in 1921 there were two million people unemployed.

Over six million men had served in the war. Of those who came back, 1.75 million had suffered some kind of disability and half of these were permanently disabled. Then there were those who depended on those who had gone to war – the wives and children, widows, and orphans, as well as the parents who had lost sons in the war, on whom they were often financially dependent. The Royal British Legion was established to care for those who had suffered as a result of service during the First World War, and they have been helping the Armed Forces community and their families ever since. The Leigh-on-Sea Branch had its inaugural meeting at St Clement's Church Hall on 22nd September 1937 but now hopes to resume its monthly meetings in the Moose Hall in Cranleigh Drive as soon as COVID-19 restrictions will allow.

To celebrate TRBL's centenary the Branch is hoping to organise an afternoon tea party, with musical entertainment, at the Community Centre for 100 guests including veterans, members and local dignitaries. They are hoping that this will be arranged in September, depending on Pandemic restrictions.

They are also hoping to develop an idea, which would get local artists to create large painted figures of soldiers, sailors and airmen that would be sponsored and displayed in local shop windows during Remembrance tide in November. It might also be possible for these to be auctioned to raise funds for the Legion or the Branch which provides limited welfare support for a number of local veterans.

As the Legion celebrates its centenary and looks to the future, they have decided that they need one consistent and clear brand that helps people to understand who they are and the wide range of things they do. This year has thrown into sharp relief the importance to its work of digital channels, for both providing and receiving support. From keeping its community connected through video calls, to engaging with new audiences and delivering a very different Poppy Appeal with lots of new ways to get involved online – the role of digital can't be overstated. But critically, its existing brand identity – created about 30 years ago, before many of the digital channels we now rely on - is no longer fit for purpose for a digital world. In the last year alone, over 6.3 million users visited TRBL website, over half of which were using a mobile phone. But when used on these channels at a smaller size, its identity and logo becomes illegible. Over the years, the current logo has evolved into 36 different logos and sub-brands which is not only confusing for people, but it also means we are missing opportunities to better explain what we do. Our new identity and logo shown above will help us to be fit for the future whilst celebrating our history.

If anyone is interested in joining the local Branch, or would like more information about the work that they do please email Bob O'Leary, the Branch Secretary at leighonsea.secretary@rbl.community



Article by Francesca Smith

What is Phenology?

Phenology may not be a study that you are generally aware of, but it is incredibly important. It is the study of seasonal changes in plants and animals from year to year. Research gathered on these seasonal changes helps us to further understand the weather and changing climate.

The term “seasonal changes” covers all sorts of natural events, it may be the first flowering of daffodils in spring, or snowdrops in the winter; the emergence of insects or the migration of birds, and the falling of leaves in autumn.

Nature’s Calendar is a database that was set up by the Woodland Trust where anyone can enter records of seasonal changes. This could be based on plants and wildlife in their garden, local woods, coastlines or countryside.

The data collected is used by scientists to help calculate the impact of climate change on our flora and fauna. Studies show that the overall period of active plant growth is lengthening each year, and it has been calculated that across Europe as a whole, spring is now advancing by 2.5 days per decade.

get involved

Phenology is a great activity for all ages, and is especially good at educating children about nature in a fun and accessible way. It can be done from the comfort of your own garden. But if you want to venture outside, it's also great for those that walk similar routes on a regular basis, eg. on the school run or walking the dog.

To get started, visit the Nature's Calendar website for full information and where to add your records.

Here is a quick guide to show you how easy phenology is!

CHOOSE THE SPECIES AND EVENTS YOU WANT TO RECORD The website has a list of species and events you can record. It is advisable to choose one or more that you can check at least twice a week. Trees, for example, will need to be checked more regularly than butterflies or migrating birds.

CHOOSE YOUR RECORDING LOCATION Choose somewhere that you visit regularly as part of your usual routine

RECORD YOUR OBSERVATIONS Ensure you record the date. You can also take photos to add to a record. Records can then be viewed instantly on the live map.

LIST OF SPECIES Full details of the different individual species or events to record can be found on the website. The main categories are: Amphibians / Birds / Flowers / Fungi / Grasses / Insects / Shrubs / Trees

www.naturescalendar.woodlandtrust.org.uk

Although this may seem fairly insignificant, these sorts of changes have a butterfly effect on the food chains for plants, insects, birds and other wildlife. Every species will react differently to climate change and when they drop out of sync, it can become very difficult for some species to survive. The science of phenology can also help to predict what species may thrive and those that will struggle.

Phenology has been a popular pastime for centuries. Britain's first phenologist, Robert Marsham, recorded his 'Indications of Spring' between 1736 and his death in 1797.

In the autumn of 2000, the Woodland Trust joined forces with the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology to promote phenology to a wider audience. Since then, thousands of people across the UK have added records to the Nature's Calendar.



Free family fun!

Article by Nicola Crisp

Are you looking for a new activity to persuade your children to go outside? Or are you looking for a new challenge for yourself? Then geocaching might be the answer. There are millions of caches hidden all over the world, including dozens in Leigh and Southend, and anyone can use their phone to find them. It doesn't even cost anything to get started.

Caches are containers ranging from tiny magnetic pots the size of your fingertip, to ammo cans, and even a walk-in garage! Frequently they are film pots (who remembers when cameras used film?) and small lunch boxes. Sometimes it is a box in a camouflaged bag, but sometimes it is disguised as a stick or a bird box. The possibilities are endless, but they all have one thing in common – the log sheet inside for you to sign, so don't forget your pen. The larger ones also have treasure which is great fun for children – the only rule is that you must swap it for something else. Party bag toys are perfect things to take to swap.

To get started, all you have to do is download the Geocaching app and create an account. You'll be amazed when you realise how many there are nearby. Some will be in places you visit all the time and some will take you to places you never knew were there, which is for me the best thing about geocaching. There are lots of other variations as well – puzzles that you have to solve at home to find out where the cache is, puzzles to get them open, questions to answer about geology, caches up trees or in tunnels – there's something for everyone. Your caching adventure awaits!



Going Green

Article by Francesca Smith

15 easy ways to be an eco-warrior with not too much effort!

1. Hang your washing outside to dry and cut down on using your tumble dryer. Clothes will also still come out perfectly clean on a cold, quick cycle!
2. Where possible buy locally sourced fruit, vegetables and meat. Our Farmers' Market is the ideal place to do this, when we are able to reopen and Leigh also has a fabulous array of butchers, bakers, greengrocers and the Refill Room too.
3. Refuse plastic shopping bags and always have a cotton bag handy! Get involved with Boomerang Bags and make your own out of scrap fabric - boomerangbags.org
4. Leave part of your garden to grow wild to encourage bees and wildlife.
5. Switch to paperless billing from your utility suppliers.
6. Ditch the plastic toothbrush and start using bamboo, which is biodegradable. There are lots of other bamboo alternative items available, such as kitchen utensils, paper products and razors.
7. Reusable is key – use your own water bottles, coffee cups and lunch boxes wherever possible. Try and find a new purpose for things that may have otherwise been thrown away.
8. Invest in a water butt to collect rainwater for watering plants in the garden.
9. Reduce meat in your diet. Even cutting out a few meaty meals a week can make a big difference!
10. Invest in naturally sourced cosmetics, such as shampoo bars, not only do they have less packaging, but the lack of synthetic ingredients is better for your hair and the environment.
11. Start litter picking. You will be amazed how much you can collect even on one street. It's also great exercise and the kids love to get involved too.
12. Boycott fast fashion. Buy second hand from charity shops, vintage stores or reselling apps. If you do buy new, invest in classic pieces made from sustainable, natural materials.
13. Switch to eco-friendly cleaning products or go old-school and use bicarbonate of soda, lemons and vinegar to make your own cleaners.
14. Check your home for draughts and reduce your thermostat to save energy at home.
15. Switch to a renewable energy supplier.

nature hunt!

A fun game for little ones, cut out this page and take with you on your next adventure, whether it be in the woods, at the park or on the seafront... See how many you can find! We'd love to see how you get on, tag us on social media @leightowncouncilevents.



Smooth Leaf



Red Flowers



Footprints



Butterfly



Feather



Ant



Blossom



Nest



Dandelion



Spiky Leaf



Snail



Worm



Bench



Flower Bud



Pebbles



Daisy



Acorn



Bee



Rough Bark

New signage puts Leigh-on-Sea on the map

Article by Katie Sogorski



If you've had a walk around town over the last few weeks you'll have spotted the new maps that have been installed.

The maps were created by local artist Joanne Holbrook, better known as 'Playing with Pens'. She worked alongside the Leigh-on-Sea Partnership who commissioned the maps following feedback from local independent businesses who felt more signage and marketing was needed across town. The maps won't just help visitors to the area but remind locals to shop small too.

The maps have been installed at Chalkwell Station, Leigh-on-Sea Station, Broadway, Leigh Road and Gypsy Bridge and there are eight finger posts installed around town. The move away from the traditional town centre style map was an opportunity for our town to bring to life the eclectic community it has become known for.

The maps are bursting with people depicting musicians, artists, cyclists, fishermen, independent shopkeepers, families and groups of friends. Artist Joanne admitted one of the hardest parts of the product was choosing what to leave out: 'Leigh-on-Sea is a really special place. I'm constantly inspired by the people, the buildings, the history and this was a great way to celebrate it all. It wasn't hard to put pen to paper to bring to life our town in map form and share all the best bits with visitors and locals!'

If you want to keep up to date with how the Leigh-on-Sea Partnership is supporting local businesses, you can find them on Facebook by searching 'Leigh-on-Sea Partnership'.

If you're an independent business in Leigh-on-Sea and want to provide feedback or have questions about how the group can help you, you can email them on

hello@totallylocallysouthendonsea.co.uk





GONE SHOPPING!

Online marketplace dedicated to Southend-on-Sea businesses goes live



A one-stop online shop for local independent businesses launched this month. Totally Locally Southend-on-Sea is a website dedicated to local independent businesses in the borough. Each business has their own shop within the website. Customers can browse, shop at multiple local businesses on the site and then pay for it all in one go - like one big local department store.

Totally Locally Southend-on-Sea features both shops and services on the site including everything from bikes and roof repairs to art, wine, candles, coffee and clothing. Business owners can choose to offer delivery or click and collect and can update their shop whenever they need to.

The website is part of Totally Locally, a UK-wide initiative that believes local businesses are the lifeblood of towns and villages but that the future of independent high streets is a combination of bricks and mortar shops with a strong online presence.

A number of Leigh-on-Sea businesses are already listed on the website including Nicola Sutcliffe, owner of Three's Company on Leigh Road and James Goldring, director of Cellar Wine Shop on Broadway.

Nicola said: The Totally Locally online shop is hope for the future for small independent retailers following a really tough year. I have read and heard about how well it has worked in other areas of the UK, and I'm so excited to see it in Southend-on-Sea.'

James added: 'The website is fantastic for the local community. It is easy for businesses to use and update when we need to, and it's just as easy to shop on it. You can tell it really has been created to make it easier to shop local!'

The website isn't just an opportunity for local people to shop local, but everyone is encouraged to share with family and friends living outside the borough who are buying gifts for someone in the local area. With the delivery service available, someone living in Leeds could visit the site and buy someone a bunch of flowers to be delivered to Leigh-on-Sea, avoiding big national chains, and supporting local independent businesses in other areas of the UK.

Helen Symmons, Town Clerk at Leigh-on-Sea Town Council is optimistic about the potential of the website for local businesses. 'The website has been a huge success in other towns. We know of one shop that went online and took £4,000 in sales in a couple of months. That gives you some idea of the power of being on this website and we can't wait to see what doors it opens for our Leigh-on-Sea businesses.'

The website is welcomed and financially backed by Southend-on-Sea Borough Council. Sujun Fieldhouse, Economic Development Officer, explains: 'The way we shop is changing, and we want to support local businesses to be able to adapt with this. The website is a great way to have lots of our Southend-on-Sea businesses under one roof, open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.'

The online shop is only one part of Totally Locally, which has a number of different initiatives to keep local businesses alive and kicking throughout the year. Totally Locally Leigh-on-Sea began in 2019 with the launch of Fiver Fest — a regular two-week event that gets local businesses to offer a product or service for just £5 to encourage people through their doors or to their website. Following requests from other areas of the borough to take part, Totally Locally Leigh-on-Sea has become Totally Locally Southend-on-Sea which means that there are now more businesses to explore and support.

Katie Sogorski, a volunteer on the Totally Locally Southend-on-Sea team and founder of ABOUT communications has seen the impact local marketing initiatives can have. 'We've run Totally Locally Leigh-on-Sea for the last two years and Fiver Fest as part of that. It is a great example of what can happen when a community comes together to support local independent businesses. During Fiver Fest businesses sold out of items, attracted new customers and increased average spends. We want more of this excitement and passion for local businesses across the whole borough and the new website brings us one step closer to that.'

There is still time for local independent businesses to sign up at:
www.southendonsea.totallylocally.shop

You can also follow Totally Locally Southend-on-Sea on Instagram and Facebook by searching '**[totallylocallysouthendonsea](#)**'

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA INDEPENDENT HIGH ST. ONLINE!

**INCLUDING SOUTHEND-ON-SEA, LEIGH-ON-SEA, WESTCLIFF-ON-SEA,
THORPE BAY, SOUTHCHURCH, SHOEBOURNESS AND EASTWOOD**

LOTS OF OUR AMAZING INDEPENDENT SHOPS NOW ONLINE IN ONE PLACE AT:

WWW.SOUTHENDONSEA.TOTALLYLOCALLY.SHOP



IF YOU SHOP ONLINE, YOU CAN NOW SHOP LOCAL TOO

**BROWSE OUR BOROUGH'S INDEPENDENT SHOPS, PAY WITH ONE PAYMENT, CLICK & COLLECT OR CHOOSE DELIVERY TO
YOUR HOME. HELPING TO BOOST OUR REAL HIGH STREETS BY KEEPING MONEY IN THE LOCAL ECONOMY.**

IT'S NEVER BEEN EASIER TO SHOP LOCAL SOUTHEND-ON-SEA

BROUGHT TO YOU BY

TOTALLY LOCALLY

A GRASS-ROOTS PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE INDEPENDENT BUSINESS
DISTRICTS & SUPPORTERS ACROSS THE BOROUGH OF SOUTHEND-ON-SEA



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