

ISSUE 71. SPRING 2023
THE MAGAZINE FOR
WIGAN BOROUGH
RESIDENTS

Wigan 
Council

BoroughLife



Haigh for all • King's Coronation events



Welcome

The Leader's column



Welcome to the Spring 2023 edition of Borough Life.

This time last year we were preparing for Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee and we can certainly say that Wigan Borough celebrated the milestone in style as the sun shone across our communities.

In 2023, we'll once again be joining together, this time for the Coronation of King Charles III. This edition includes an early preview of everything that's planned but keep your eyes peeled for further details as we get closer to the date in May.

As ever, there will be plenty of opportunities to get involved in your local communities so if

you have any local events in the offing, please let the Borough Life team know and they can help you spread the word.

This edition also marks an important date for the magazine given that it is 20 years since it was first delivered to households. A special feature (from page 18) compares and contrasts our recent editions with those early versions and highlights some important lessons about what key issues remain relevant for our residents.

There's also an opportunity this springtime to come on board with our Be Well movement, which is aiming to help everyone across the borough live healthier and happier lives. We have detailed the many ways you can get involved using the many facilities we have spread across our communities and we have also included an inside look at our brilliant Lake District outdoor activity centre at Low Bank Ground.

What could be better than paying a visit to the picturesque setting of Coniston Water where a whole host of activities are on your doorstep?

Elsewhere, 2023 is the year when several major development projects will either open their doors to the public or will be taking giant strides forward. For example, Leigh's Youth Hub is already welcoming scores of young people and at Pennington Flash The Hide Coffee House is now open.

We've also had the good news about Haigh Hall's levelling-up funding boost and schemes across the borough are gathering pace, so please take a look (from page 10).

There's an important round-up of our awards season, which included the Our Town community awards and the Believe Sports Awards. The wide range of talent and generosity across our borough is an inspiration to us all.

To finish off, we have our usual What's On guide that provides an overview of all the activities on offer over the coming months.

I hope you enjoy this edition – and here's to the next 20 years of Borough Life.

Councillor David Molyneux MBE
Leader, Wigan Council

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If you are a resident of Wigan Borough but haven't had a copy of Borough Life delivered through your letterbox, view it online at www.wigan.gov.uk/boroughlife

For all the latest updates straight to your phone, sign up to the weekly My Wigan Borough email update. Visit: www.wigan.gov.uk/boroughlife

For general comments email: boroughlife@wigan.gov.uk



On the cover

Haigh Hall in all its glory! Our masterplan for the jewel in the borough's crown has received a massive boost recently (read all about it on pages 10 and 11).

We absolutely loved these drone images of the hall so much - capturing it from a seldom-seen viewpoint - that it was an easy decision. Although the entire woodland park now stands on the cusp of a new era, its history and heritage will always be at the forefront.



Whenever you see these icons, you know there's more to hear and see

As usual, this edition of Borough Life is bursting with great stories, eye-catching images and handy tips.

So much so, we have a whole bunch of extra content that didn't make it in. All is not lost though, as you can see all this bonus material by visiting Borough Life Plus or listening to our brand new BoroughLife podcast: linktr.ee/wiganCouncil



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News in Brief

Dionne Doherty, founder of Complete Kindness CIC

Extraordinary acts of kindness recognised

Each February, people around the world celebrate Random Acts of Kindness day.

This year, Wigan Council joined forces with Tyldesley-based Complete Kindness CIC to offer residents the opportunity to enjoy reiki, mindful colouring sessions and a pay it forward café.

Kindness champions were nominated by residents from across the borough for their good deeds and were surprised with special treats as a thank you gift.

School children also joined the fun, getting involved to spread the joy by painting rocks adorned with positive affirmations on them and

Kindness is free; let's pass it on



BeKind.

leaving them in local places for residents to find.

Community groups, such as All Ears Mental Health and Happy Smiles CIC, also played their part by spreading the kindness vibes and we are really pleased that the kindness will continue all year long!

Keely is a star (it's official!)

Borough superstar athlete Keely Hodgkinson is set to become one of the next recipients of a Believe Star and be added to the illustrious Walk of Fame.

The Olympic medallist, who continues to break records all over the world, will be honoured later in 2023.

The 800m runner joins her coach, mentor and fellow Olympian Jenny Meadows as a recipient of a star.

Councillor David Molyneux MBE, said: "Keely is a genuine world superstar who does our entire borough proud each time she competes.

"She has already achieved so much at a young age and we're excited to see what's to come in what promises to be an amazing career."

Hundreds of affordable homes on target

Wigan Council's programme to create affordable homes for families across the borough is forecast to have a record year.

Around 450 homes are expected to have been completed for the 2022/23 financial year, surpassing the target of 338.

The local authority works alongside registered housing providers and house builders, and has its own direct delivery scheme to

boost housing supply and provide affordable options for residents.



The programme includes a mix of bungalows, houses and apartments, a proportion of which are specialist or supported housing.

Locations of the affordable housing schemes include the site of the former Pemberton Primary School, Waterside Point, Wharfdale, York Street in Leigh and Orrell Gardens.



KEELY HODGKINSON

Wigan Council

News in Brief



Tackling litter with a fresh focus



New plans to refocus Wigan Council's efforts to tackle littering and fly-tipping have been given the green light.

Removing litter and fly-tipping costs the council an estimated £4m a year, which could be much better spent delivering services and improving our borough.

Council teams are keen to work with our communities, schools and organisations to help shape the strategy so keep an eye out for engagement events and opportunities in the coming months.

Service manager for streetscene, Matt Kelly, said: "There are lots of different strands to this campaign, from tackling cigarette butts to fly-tipping enforcement, along with supporting our incredible litter-picking volunteers.

"We all have a responsibility for keeping our borough clean and tidy. We hope that by educating and engaging with people we will be able to work with communities across the borough."

Be Well journey's valued contribution

Wigan Borough's growing Be Well leisure and wellbeing movement delivered a social value of £13.46m last year, new statistics reveal.

Seven local council-run leisure centres had well over a million combined visits in 2022 - boosting the health and fitness of tens of thousands of residents.

Figures show Be Well's wide-ranging activity in the local community also contributed to a happier, healthier borough - as well as reducing the strain on health services.

Councillor David Molyneux MBE, Leader of Wigan Council, said: "The goal of our Be Well movement is to help residents live healthier, happier lives and we're proud of the massive positive impact that's being made by our teams across our borough.

"By encouraging more and more people to get active and make better lifestyle choices, we're

improving people's physical and mental health and also helping to reduce the burden on our under-pressure NHS."

The Social Value Calculator - developed by 4Global, Sheffield Hallam University and Experian - attempts to quantify the impact of sports and physical activities on communities in monetary terms, factoring in estimated savings to health services as well as the positive impact on people's happiness.

According to the model, Be Well improved the subjective wellbeing of Wigan Borough residents to the tune of £7.29m last year while providing a value of £3.3m in terms of social and community development.

Meanwhile, its impact on the physical and mental health of residents was measured as £2.76m.

Visit: BeWellWigan.org



Providing the soundtrack for a trip into town

An exciting new radio station is playing all the hits from its brand-new studio in the heart of Wigan town centre.

Wigan One will broadcast local news while promoting the town's culture and events scene, hosted by ex-Wish FM presenters Martin Emery and Kev Bailey.



The project is being led by PlaceCo and developer of the Wigan Galleries scheme, Cityheart.

Regular shows include Northern Souled Out Sunday and Northerners with Attitude, hosted by Terry Christian.

Listen online at www.wigan.one or download the FREE app at the Apple or Android Store, or simply ask your smart device to open Wigan One Radio.

COME AS YOU ARE

CELEBRATING WIGAN BOROUGH'S WOMEN

Embracing equity across the borough

Wigan Council reaffirmed its commitment to gender equality as part of International Women's Day.

This year's theme was embrace equity, and the borough came together to celebrate the day in March.

A specially curated event, held at The Edge, featured a jam-packed schedule of talented performers and speakers from across the borough.



Local businesswomen, Aimie and Kiera Lawlor, shared their story of creating their successful global brand, Feel Good Club, from their spare room in Astley.

Poets from Louise Fazackerley's writing group voiced their views on what it means to be a woman and local member of youth parliament, Izzy Garbutt, spoke about her experiences of being a young woman interested in politics.

Business scheme bolstered by 300 members

Wigan Council's flagship Deal for Business scheme has attracted over 300 members since it was refreshed in late 2021. The refreshed deal was only made possible with the collaboration and commitment of local businesses through the Business Consortium.

The initiative is designed to support the local economy through the council and businesses working together to create growth and opportunities for all. 300 businesses covering 28 different sectors including construction, health and social care, retail and hospitality have already signed up.

Through the Deal, the council commits to connecting businesses with recruitment and training opportunities, providing advice and guidance, hosting an online directory and more.

The Deal
for business

Members - awarded gold, silver or bronze membership - play their part by employing locally as much as possible and investing in local supply chains.

To sign up for the Deal for Business and to register your interest in becoming part of the Business Consortium please visit: www.wigan.gov.uk/thedealforbusiness

Free weekend parking boost extended

ENJOY FREE WEEKEND PARKING

This offer applies to Wigan Council owned car parks. Further terms and conditions apply.

The weekend parking scheme that covers Wigan and Leigh town centres will be extended for another year.

It means all council-owned car parks will be free to use at weekends through to 2024, as they have been since 2018.

Leader of Wigan Council, Councillor David Molyneux MBE, said: "We know our free parking offer is really popular all year round and makes

it even easier for people to visit our town centres.

"I'm delighted to extend it once again for 2023 and would encourage everyone to support local and visit our wide selection of independent businesses and traders."

For full terms and conditions, and to see where council owned car parks are located in the borough, visit: www.wigan.gov.uk/carparking

News in Brief

Time for an ad break in Wigan town centre

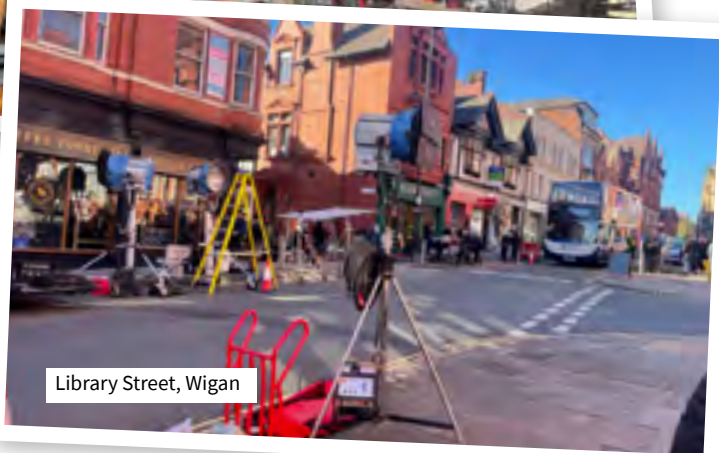
Have you spotted some familiar scenery on your TV recently? We had not one, but two high-profile adverts filmed in the borough late last year, which have recently aired.

Aviva found Wigan town centre to be the perfect missing puzzle piece as they took over Library Street, transforming Wigan Life Centre into a makeshift coffee shop and McNulty's shoe shop into a florist. We also welcomed Quorn to the borough as they filmed their advert

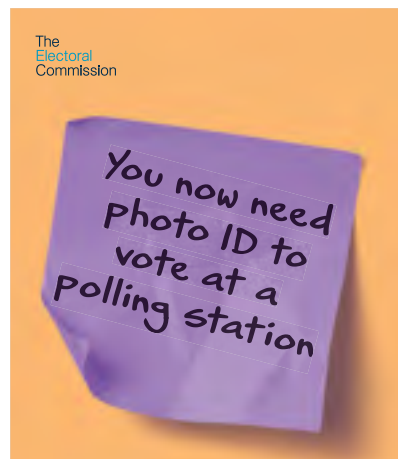
on King Street and Market Place. Local businesses also got on board and opened their doors to the cast and crew for two days.

We're super excited that people love our borough as much as we do and think we can all agree how exciting it is to see a familiar place on our TV screens.

We can't wait for more filming opportunities to come to the borough.



Voter ID is new thing to remember



New rules requiring voters to show photo identification will come into play for the first time for the upcoming local elections.

It means residents will need to show valid ID – such as a passport, driving licence, blue badge or travel cards, among others – at polling stations on Thursday, May 4.

If you don't have an accepted form of ID, or you're not sure whether your photo ID still looks like you, you can apply for a voter authority certificate.

To do this, or for more information on which forms of ID will be accepted, please visit:

www.electoralcommission.org or call the helpline on 0800 328 0280.

Gearing up for the all-out elections

Wigan Council's local elections will take on a different form this year, with each of the 75 seats up for grabs.

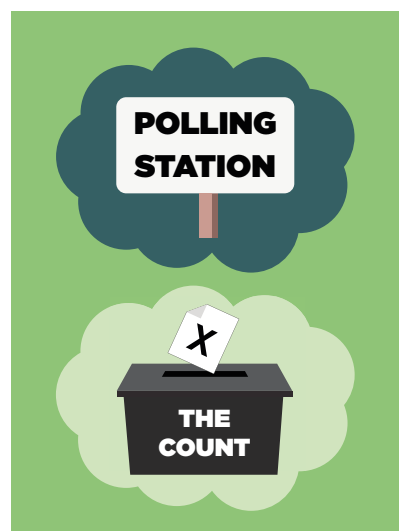
This is following the changes made to ward boundaries by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) last year.

The vote will take place on Thursday, May 4 between 7am and 10pm, across the borough's 25 electoral wards.

Three councillors will be elected in each ward. Usually, one councillor per ward is elected every three out of a four year period.

The count will take place the following day, Friday, May 5, with results available as they arrive from www.facebook.com/WiganCouncilOnline

If you are not registered to vote, or would like to request a postal vote, visit: www.gov.uk/register-to-vote



Embracing culture, heritage and sport



From Northern Soul and Wigan Casino to the Buzzcocks, brass bands and bobbing along to George Formby – this new exhibition is hitting all the right notes.



Chief Executive Alison McKenzie-Folan with museum staff and local band Flechettes



Make Some Noise – from Stage Door to Dance Floor is now open at the Museum of Wigan Life and will be in residency throughout 2023.

Featuring a wide range of musical genres and performance trends associated with our borough, it will provide a personal experience, taking visitors back in time while also keeping them up-to-date with the latest bands.

And it all comes as the world-famous Wigan Casino’s 50th anniversary approaches.

“It will truly showcase the unique history and incredible

range of musical genres our borough has embraced and called its own,” explains Louisa Attaheri, assistant business partner for culture, arts and heritage.

“From jazz to Northern Soul, to pop and the brass band movement, the exhibition will offer something to everyone, and we hope to spark musical memories for all generations.”

Throughout the year, the display at the Library Street location will change to reflect different musical themes and will play host to a packed schedule of small-scale gigs and events.

For example, every three months it will evolve to cover stage and screen, theatre, cinema, festivals and finish with carnivals.

The exhibition space features five areas, with sound pods broadcasting local playlists. There is also an opportunity for families to pick up an instrument or two and make a start on a new musical journey or just enjoy making some noise.

“It is very dynamic and colourful, we’re very excited,” says exhibitions development officer Joan Livesey. “There is a mini-auditorium where we hold events and small

Embracing culture, heritage and sport



A FEW EXTRA MUSICAL NOTES



Wigan Casino first opened its Grand Ballroom doors at 2am on Sunday 23 September 1973 and is today, still as iconic as ever.



The Lathums beat international rapper Drake to the top spot of the official chart, claiming the UK's number one album in 2021.



Wigan's International Jazz Festival – known across the globe – started in 1986.

gigs, and visitors can sit and watch film footage whilst surrounded by an original drawing of the Wigan Casino balcony by local artist Emily Calland.”

With it being a milestone anniversary for Northern Soul, visitors to Make Some Noise will be able to indulge in classic memorabilia from the world-famous scene, and the balcony that hosted famous DJs and live acts such as Jackie Wilson and Betty Wright will be recreated.

Given the current thriving music scene here in the borough, the exhibition

will also sing the praises of the local bands making an impact on the national stage like chart-topping The Lathums, Stanleys, Lottery Winners, Flechettes and Rivver.

Fans of jazz – we are the host of the acclaimed International Jazz Festival, after all – will also be well catered for with the tunes of The Count Basie Orchestra, Maynard Ferguson, Bobby Shew, Horace Silver and Jools Holland and his Rhythm and Blues Orchestra, also on the playlists.

And who could forget classic names such as George

Formby, Georgie Fame, The Beat Boys, The Verve and Starsailor? Well, not us, as the stories behind them all feature.

The exhibition is at the Museum of Wigan Life and will run through until January next year.

We'll leave the last word to Joan: “Music is so important to our borough and we've had such a depth of talent down the years. This is really something special.”

Hear more on the Borough Life podcast



Embracing culture, heritage and sport



Haigh, ho... Let's go!

Earlier this year it was announced Wigan Council's bid to the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) had been successful. The Borough Life team visited the historic hall to hear about what this means for the site's masterplan and what everyone can expect to see next.

It's a crisp January morning and the picturesque facades of Haigh Hall are basking in the winter sun.

The clear skies and fine weather reflect the mood as key figures behind the much-loved site's masterplan gather outside the grand entrance.

The last 48 hours have been a whirlwind of activity after it was confirmed that £20m had been allocated by central government to help with the vision to restore the

hall and create a visitor destination of cultural significance.

Along with significant match funding from Wigan Council and extra cash from the National Lottery Heritage scheme, it's the missing piece of the financial jigsaw.

Councillor Chris Ready (pictured below) is grinning from ear-to-ear.

"We're all ecstatic about it – 20 million reasons for us all to be happy today," he tells us.

"There's been so much work gone into this over the years, it has been a great partnership with the community.

"With the funding from the council, the project will see more than £37m of investment."

With creative directors Al and Al at the helm, the masterplan will see the hall restored and become a beacon for arts, culture, heritage and the environment.

The wider site will provide a welcoming space for visitors to relax and enjoy the beauty of the Woodland Park.

It will also become a focal point for the local economy, providing employment and training opportunities.

"The hall is so precious to everyone in the borough, it was important to us that the plans are driven by the community," explain Al and Al.



Al and Al, council representatives and members of Haigh Hall Matters



Heritage centrepiece a nod to mining history

Plans to install a stunning new gate at Haigh's Mowpin Lodge – which features a shovel and pickaxe motif – are taking shape.

Following a public vote, the design that recognises Haigh's 900-year mining history was chosen last year from three options created by Al and Al.

The concept is being brought to life by local company Lost Art Limited who specialise in repairing, restoring, reproducing and reinstating historic landscape furnishings. Watch this space for further updates.

Visitors will be able to explore the borough's rich heritage and history across the hall's five floors.

From an underground cinema experience in the cellars to stargazing on the rooftop terrace, with stunning artwork from Theodore Major on the floors in between, it promises to be an incredible experience.

'This is the jewel in the crown for us.'

"Along with the lottery funding, it's going to be massive for the entire Woodland Park," adds Councillor Ready, who is cabinet lead member for communities.

To view the masterplan in full detail and learn about its three themes; Humanities, Horticulture and Hospitality visit:

www.wigan.gov.uk/HaighMasterplan

Al and Al, creative directors

The vision for the masterplan was inspired by the people. We opened the hall for a month in 2021 with hundreds coming in to talk and share tea and cake with us.

We listened to what everyone had said and from that we went away and came up with this masterplan that responded to everyone's hopes and dreams. People are so passionate about Haigh and have such strong family memories.



James Winterbottom, director of digital, leisure and wellbeing services

The first thing that residents will see is the external fabric of the hall being regenerated.

We know that Haigh Hall and the wider Woodland Park are so popular and much loved by everyone. We get hundreds of thousands visiting every year, this new masterplan will transform Haigh Hall into a destination of national significance with culture on every floor.



Cabinet commits to further bids

Wigan Council will submit further LUF bids if permitted to do so in further rounds after missing out on its Leigh and Ashton-in-Makerfield applications, it has been confirmed.

The council is now waiting on further information from central government on the next round of LUF and any changes to entry criteria.

Speaking at a recent cabinet meeting, Council Leader David Molyneux MBE (pictured), said: "As much as I'm very pleased about the Haigh bid – we're going again and whatever we need to do (for Leigh and Ashton), we'll do it and make sure we're successful with those further bids."



See more at Borough Life Plus



Economic growth that benefits all

Building towards a bright future

A number of key development projects across the borough are taking shape. Here's the lowdown on their progress and further details on how to find out more

Matt and Yvette from The Hide Coffee House at Pennington Flash

One with nature; a new place to Hide...

The brand-new lakeside café at Pennington Flash officially opened its doors at the beginning of March, serving fresh coffee and delicious delights with stunning views across the water.

Make sure to pay The Hide Coffee House a visit when you can and give them a follow on Facebook and Instagram (@thehidecoffeehouse).

The new café and visitor centre is all part of the £2.7m makeover project at the Flash, with the top-class facilities also including

new visitor toilets and improved parking.

Progress is also being made on the nature-themed adventure play area which will be opening later in 2023.

The Hide is set to become your new favourite with fresh coffee, breakfasts, lunches, cakes and snack options all on the menu.

They can all be enjoyed in the indoor café area or outside on the decking area with full views of the Flash.



The Hide Coffee House
Access Car Park via
St Helens Rd, Leigh,
Warrington, WN7 3PA

Economic growth that benefits all

Spread the word, the hub is the place to be!



Leigh Youth Hub
Leigh Sports Village
Sale Way, Leigh, WN7 4JY



The spectacular Leigh Youth Hub has already opened its doors to hundreds of young people and celebrated its official opening in February.

Offering amazing facilities, thanks to a £2m investment from Wigan Council, it has been shaped from day one by young people.

But don't just take our word for it!

For an episode of the Borough Life podcast, we visited the new venue at Leigh Sports Village on a busy Friday evening not long after its opening.

We caught up with Reece (15), who has been part of the project's steering group, and Eleanor (11), who is a new member.

They told us all about what the hub means to them, how they're spreading the word to get their friends to join in the fun and what facilities and training courses are available.

Hear more on the Borough Life podcast



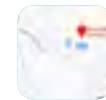
A tasty treat at Howe Bridge

A fantastic new family-run community café has opened its doors at Howe Bridge Leisure Centre in Atherton.

Café Iris is the latest venture launched by local entrepreneur Colette Alexander (pictured right). It serves hot drinks, breakfasts, lunches and a wide range of healthy snacks and delicious treats.

As well as catering for Leisure Centre customers, Colette wants the wheelchair-friendly venue to be a focal point for the local community - with Chatty Café tables to combat social isolation and a community bookcase already part of her plans.

Café Iris is open 9am to 8pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 4pm at the weekend.



Cafe Iris
Howe Bridge Leisure Centre, Eckersley Fold Lane, Atherton, M46 0PJ

And a few more to keep your eye on in 2023

Standish mineral line extension

Works are already underway to extend this popular walking and cycling route from junction 27 of the M6 through to Preston Road and are scheduled for completion later this year.

The Galleries

Wigan Council and partners Cityheart 'broke ground' on the transformational project in Wigan town centre in November. Significant updates are expected throughout 2023 so watch this space!

Future high street plans in Ashton

Central government's High Streets Taskforce visited Ashton in 2022 and despite not being granted levelling up funding in the latest round, Wigan Council has committed to delivering the 'Plan for Ashton'. Further details are expected later in 2023.

Civic Centre revamp

Proposals to transform Wigan's civic centre building into a business innovation hub are under consideration. Further details are expected very soon so definitely one to look out for!

Library and recreation area funding boost

In late 2022, the town hall confirmed funding received from housing developers had been approved for improvements projects for Golborne library and the popular Golborne Bonc recreation area. These works are underway and will progress through 2023.



Happy, healthy people

5 ways to Be Well

Be
Well

Be Well is on a mission to help everyone lead healthier, happier lives - and with the warmer months approaching, now's the time to shake off the winter blues and really 'spring' into action.

Here are five ways you can 'be well' as part of our growing leisure and wellbeing movement...



Hit the gym

At Be Well we're not about fitness fads or body image. Our members come from all walks of life with all sorts of different goals and aspirations. It doesn't matter if you're an experienced gym user wanting to take your workouts to the next level, or if you're taking the very first steps on your fitness journey - you'll be met with a warm, friendly welcome and feel right at home.

You'll also find everything you need to be your personal best... from high-quality Technogym™ equipment that syncs with our free downloadable app (allowing you to track your activity and chart your progress) to friendly expert instructors on hand to support you and set you on your way with a free personal workout plan designed just for you.

Your single all-inclusive membership unlocks access to all seven Be Well Leisure Centres across the borough... perfect if you're looking to fit your workouts around your commute, or if you just fancy a change of scenery.

Join a class

If the gym's not your thing or you're looking to mix things up, why not try group exercise? It's a sure-fire way to work up a sweat while having a great time and maybe even make new friends!

There are so many options to choose from... whether it's yoga, pilates, or one of the more intense signature workouts from the world-renowned Les Mills™ - with Body Pump™, Body Combat™, RPM™ and more, all included in your membership.

So if you're looking to get lean, toned and fit - fast, or if you want to punch and kick your way to fitness while learning moves from Karate, Taekwondo, Boxing and more, make sure to check them out. Or why not get into your groove at Latin dance? You might not end up on the next series of Strictly, but you'll smash your daily step count and have a laugh while you're at it!

Get back to sport

From walking football and netball to the increasingly popular pickleball, there's so much to try as part of Be Well's Back to Sport schedule. So what if the last time you picked up a badminton racket was back in high school? That's the whole idea of Back to Sport!

The focus is firmly on fun - with all ages and abilities welcome. You'll have a great time, meet new like-minded people and you can even stay for a brew and a chat afterwards. And who knows? You might just discover a new sporting passion!

All Back to Sport sessions are **FREE** to Be Well members and prices start at **£3** for non-members.



Happy, healthy people

Make a splash

Having a swim works your entire body head-to-toe - it gets your heart beating faster, tones your muscles and builds strength and endurance. As a Be Well member* you get access to all of our five pools across the borough... so why not fit in a swim before or after work?

Just getting started? We've got swimming lessons for kids and adults alike plus baby and toddler sessions too. Or, if you're ready to dive in at the deep end, you can even learn to scuba dive at Wigan Life Centre and Howe Bridge Leisure Centre**!

Fancy a more relaxed pace? Check out our new 'Swim Socials' where the emphasis is more on meeting new people and having a pleasant time.

(*swimming also available to non-members on a pay as you go basis
** at an additional cost)

Get off that couch!

There are so many great benefits to running but getting started can seem like a scary prospect. That's where Couch to 5k comes in...

Whether you've run before or you're a complete beginner, this 10-week programme will get you going at a comfortable, sustainable pace and gradually build your stamina. By the end we guarantee you'll be a confident outdoor runner with a real sense of achievement and pride at just how far you've come!

Couch to 5k is **FREE** to Be Well members or just **£1.50** per session for non-members. Check the Be Well social media channels for the next starting dates at venues across the borough, or contact us for more info on **01942 488481** or wellbeing@bewellwigan.org.



Join the movement...

Discover our range of all-inclusive adult and junior memberships at bewellwigan.org.

Find your local Be Well leisure centre:

- Ashton
- Hindley
- Howe Bridge
- Leigh
- Robin Park
- Standish
- Wigan Life Centre

Be Well... for free!

There are also lots of fun ways to get active that won't cost you a thing!

Our Active Outdoors team have a full timetable of walks all across Wigan Borough that are completely free to join - from Nordic Walks (using poles) to Bump and Buggy and our Social Walk and Talk.

We've also got a range of guided cycle rides for beginners and intermediates which are again completely free to join (you can even borrow bikes and helmets too!). Find out more at wigan.gov.uk/activeoutdoors

Born to run? Why not get involved with your local Parkrun at Haigh Woodland Park or Pennington Flash? Visit parkrun.org.uk for more info.

Or why not go at your own, more leisurely pace and explore one of our many wonderful parks and green spaces - from the recently designated Flashes of Wigan and Leigh National Nature Reserve to Mesnes Park and the 35+ urban parks and formal gardens all across the borough.

Even if it's only an hour or two every week, you'll find that just a little extra activity can make a big difference.

Best start in life for children and young people



It's a hard job, but it's the best

Andrea Jukes is one of the borough's longest serving foster carers, dedicating more than a decade to supporting local children and families.

Here, in her own words, she reveals the inspiration behind taking up the role, its challenges and the joy it has brought her.

I always remember my mum talking about how she wished she could become a foster carer.

She never had the room, or opportunity, to do it, but it always stuck with me.

I've always been good with children. I was the eldest of three, so I was often the babysitter growing up and I went to America

after university and worked as an au pair.

It was more about living in a different country and the new experiences than it was about wanting to take care of children, but it's interesting when I look back and think that's what I decided to do.

Years later it was only when a friend was looking into becoming a foster carer, and asked me for a reference, that I started to consider it.

I went home and discussed it with my husband, Andrew, and everything fell into place at the right time. I worked at a bank but there had been a lot of changes, so I asked, and was accepted, for voluntary redundancy.

Andrew and I both completed the foster carer training, although he chose to keep his job, so I take main responsibility.

Our two sons, Ben (20) and Tom (23), were aged nine and 12 at that time, so of course we discussed it with them.

They were both really happy. Although I don't think any of us realised how intense it might become at times, the boys saw it as having a new brother or sister.

We decided we would only take young children as we thought it could be difficult for them having children of the same age living in our house.

Best start in life for children and young people



“ Over the years I think we’ve fostered around 40 children, some for several years, some for very short periods ”

One young person told me he really appreciated those boundaries as he knew it meant we cared about him, because we wanted to keep him safe.

The most common questions we get asked are: “How do you not get attached to the children? Isn’t it hard when they move on?”

Of course, you do get attached, especially if they’ve stayed with you for a number of years. When one of our first foster children was eventually adopted, and we didn’t know whether we would be able to keep in touch with them, it was very hard.

It remains difficult trying to process that a child has moved on, even though that is ultimately the aim, and usually a very positive thing.

Your training helps and after a while you develop your mindset. We always compare it to if you had to suddenly look after a friend’s child, if they had to go into hospital, for example.

You’d know that the child wouldn’t be with you forever, so you approach it in that way.

One highlight is when you see a child returning to their birth family and you know you’ve played a part in making that possible. We’ve kept in touch with nearly all of the children we’ve looked after.

Lots of ours are in high school and doing really well. It’s exciting to follow their journeys. It means so much to us that we’re still in their lives.

Tom and his partner Megan are now going through the training

to become foster carers. They were always a massive help when they lived with us and it’s lovely to think they’ve been inspired to do the same.

To be a good foster carer I would say you need to have empathy for others, be very patient, open, and honest, and to know when to bite your tongue!

Make the most of the good days and be prepared for the bad days.

Being a foster carer is the hardest job I’ve ever had, but it’s also the best job.



Andrea with fellow foster carers Paul and Tony

If you’re interested in becoming a foster carer or know someone who you think could make a great foster carer and can help spread the word, visit: www.wigan.gov.uk/fostering



When the first child came to live with us, it was understandably very strange, and I think we were all a bit anxious.

You never really know what each individual child’s needs are and it was a really quick learning curve.

Even now, I always hope that the children will fit in with our family, and sometimes they do and sometimes they don’t.

Over the years I think we’ve fostered around 40 children, some for several years, some for very short periods.

I’ve learned that you can always find something they’re interested in to help get to know each other.

I’ve also discovered the importance of having routines and boundaries. Some of the children who come to us might not have had many in place before but children need them.



A Borough Life birthday!

Back in spring 2003, the very first Borough Life dropped onto your doormats. To mark this special anniversary, we have taken a closer look at some of our early editions on the lookout for hot topics, familiar faces or surprises from 20 years ago.

How BL was born

The magazine's origin can be traced back to a series of citizens' panels set up by the council to feedback on important issues.

The readers' letters pages in the early editions (yes, it is hard to imagine a world not dominated by e-mail and social media) suggested residents welcomed the new magazine format and its sense of community.

Setting the scene

Unbeknown to everyone across the borough, we were heading for a summer heatwave that was Britain's hottest for more than a decade.

David Beckham was on the verge of signing for Real Madrid, iTunes was launched by Apple and social media website Myspace was introduced.

Here in Wigan Borough, the features in the first year of Borough Life provide an insight into causes for celebration and concern back then.

And many of the themes remain important to us today.

Recycling

The start of 2003 saw the trial of the borough's very first recycling scheme, when a third of the borough's residents received separate bags for their waste-paper collections.

The successful pilot was rolled out across all of our communities by the end of the year, with glass collections following in 2004.

In addition, we now collect garden and food waste, cans, tins, plastic pots and tubs, aerosols and aluminium foil for recycling, run recycling schemes for schools, and accept numerous additional items at our recycling centres.

In the UK, recycling is now estimated to save more than 18 million tonnes of CO₂ a year, the equivalent benefit to the environment of taking five million cars off the roads.

Young voices

The behaviour of local young people was both celebrated and a subject for discussion in 2003.

The first few editions of Borough Life drew attention to some of our young successful sporting heroes, a tradition we've been proud to continue at our annual Believe Sports Awards.

Young people across the borough elected their first ever representatives to the UK Youth Parliament, who discussed their hopes for the future in the magazine.

20 years on, the UK Youth Parliament continues to be supported by our thriving Wigan and Leigh Youth Cabinet group today; last year saw 20 young people putting themselves forward as candidates and an amazing 13,722 local young people casting votes.

Despite the number of young people getting involved in key crimes falling steadily in the early 2000s, teenagers were still perceived as a problem by many adults, with local police receiving an average 11,000 telephone calls per year about 'youth nuisance'.

"You only need to step off the kerb and someone will ring the police to complain about us," a young person complained to Borough Life in 2003.



Embracing culture, heritage and sport

In the years since 2003, discussions with young people - who have continued to tell us that they most want safe, informal, indoor places to go in their free time, ideally staffed by professional adults and with optional activities - have led to the opening of Wigan Youth Zone in 2013, and, this year, Leigh Youth Hub.

Sport

Our rich sporting heritage means the fortunes of our local teams play a big part in defining any period in our recent history.

Wigan Warriors were about to embark on their Super League VIII campaign that would end in Grand Final defeat against Bradford.

Leigh Centurions were on their way to the Second Division Championship under Paul Jewell, while Leigh Centurions (no Leopards in sight, yet) had started their campaign in National League One.

Plans for Leigh Sports Village were unveiled in the first edition of the magazine, with residents invited to have their say on the new £75m complex before the planning application was submitted at the end of March.

Rugby League legend Billy Boston also celebrated the 50th anniversary of his move to Wigan in the magazine's second edition.

The early editors of Borough Life even attempted to unite Wigan and Leigh's rugby league fans, by inviting them to create their own 'Borough Dream Team' made



Billy Boston playing for Wigan against Leigh

up of a combination of past and present players from each team.

Who would make a Warriors/Leopards combined XIII in 2023?

Technology

Technology is often the biggest indicator of the passing of time.

The competition prizes in the early edition of the magazine highlight some of the most coveted tech of 2003, including a DVD player, CD microsystem and signed copies of Kym Marsh's latest CD (post Hear'Say).

In 2003, fewer than half of the borough's households were online and local libraries were essential in hosting free access to the internet for all local families, a service which is still available today.

In 2003, libraries also introduced us to the curiously named Xreferplus, a pioneering digital reference library of the time.

Not to be left behind, our parks services purchased a state-of-the-art satellite GPS tool to help them monitor the condition of trees across the borough.

Enabling everyone to access digital technology remains an important priority for the borough today with many initiatives up and running including regular coding classes, a tablet lending library and the TechMates digital mentor scheme.

Green spaces

The borough's beautiful green spaces were valued and celebrated in 2003, as they are now.

20 years ago, the borough's flashes were officially named a local nature reserve and the millionth tree was planted at Viridor Wood at Bryn Gates.

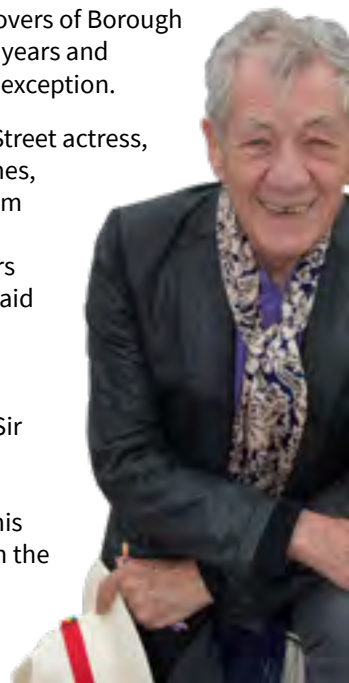
The preservation of our green spaces continues today and will long into the future, with ambitious plans for Haigh Woodland Park and Pennington Flash.

Last year saw the declaration of the Flashes of Wigan and Leigh as a National Nature Reserve.

Famous faces

Some famous faces have graced the covers of Borough Life over the years and 2003 was no exception.

Coronation Street actress, Jennifer James, originally from Ashton, who played Rovers Return barmaid Geena, was interviewed for the first edition and Sir Ian McKellen (pictured) returned to his roots to open the



Embracing culture, heritage and sport

The first four Borough Life front covers



restored gardens at Mesnes Park and was covered in the third edition.

Clive Powell, 1960s RnB and jazz musician better known as Georgie Fame, originally from Leigh, featured in the fourth.

The borough itself has also become increasingly recognisable on screen.

In 2003, as TV companies began to realise the benefits of venturing outside London

to create television, the borough started to be recognised as a potentially exciting venue for filming. The BBC's hit drama of the day, Clocking Off, was filmed at Trencherfield Mill.

Take a close look at ITV's show, The Bay, and this year's Aviva Insurance and Quorn advertisements to see Wigan Borough's more recent appearances on the small screen.

So, what's new?

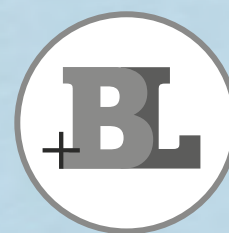
Our lookback on 20 years of Borough Life has provided some reassurance that some things haven't changed; we still celebrate our wonderful borough's achievements and sense of community.

And we try to keep the conversation going with our readers and embrace new channels and technology. We love our outdoor spaces, appreciate local culture, and like to recycle.

Above all, we hope Borough Life - with its original aims of providing clear information and celebrating the things that make Wigan Borough tick still relevant - remains an enjoyable read. Here's to another 20 years!



BoroughLife
Podcast





BoroughLife Podcast



Join us on our podcast journey

It's our new thing; your residents' magazine as a podcast.

We're always trying to find new ways to communicate with our wonderful communities and we hope each episode will bring you a step closer to the fantastic content that makes Borough Life what it is.

You can expect a new episode each month from hosts Rosie and James, so get ready with your answers to those quick-fire questions.

For our early episodes, we've heard all about the borough's thriving arts scene, visited the amazing Leigh Youth Hub and

delved deeper into the council's Here For You campaign with the help of some amazing guests.

We also hope to bring you behind-the-scenes of how we create Borough Life and provide some added insight into the stories we get to share with you all.

So please join us on our podcast journey, we think it's going to be an exciting one!

You can listen via all major streaming platforms, like Spotify, Amazon Music and iTunes.

Simply search for 'BoroughLife podcast' to listen, or scan the QR code on this page.



Hosts Rosie and James



linktr.ee/wiganCouncil



Back on track

If you're feeling the pressure of rising costs and are not sure where to turn, remember that we're here for you.

There are many people and organisations across the borough who are on hand to help you get back on track if you're feeling the squeeze.

As part of our Here for You campaign, we're working hard to spread the word so that no one feels alone through the cost of living crisis.

One way that we're doing this is through our live Facebook question and answer sessions.

You might have already tuned in to see Jo Mitchell (pictured), our assistant director for customer experience and support, with one of her special guests.

So far we've heard from Unify credit union, Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service, and most recently, Citizens Advice Wigan Borough.

Michael, who is a debt advisor at Citizens Advice, joined us to give us his top tips on managing the post-Christmas financial hangover.

From producing an accurate budget with the help of online budgeting tools to sharing how you can make the most of Breathing Space - a debt respite scheme that prevents creditors from

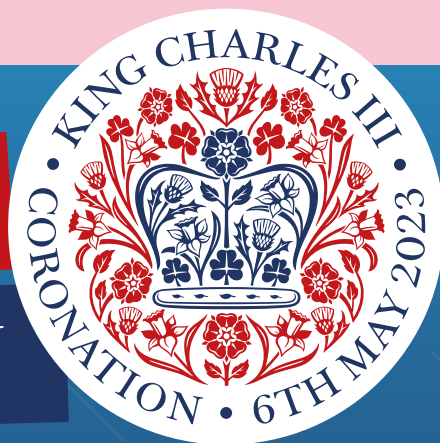
taking action for 60 days - hundreds of you join in each month to ask questions and receive handy tips.

If you're looking for advice, we would love to see you at the next Q&A session, or if you can't wait visit our dedicated cost of living pages: www.wigan.gov.uk/HereForYou

Our cost-of-living Q&A takes place on the last Tuesday of every month. Tune in on our Facebook channel.



A CRACKING CORONATION CELEBRATION



Dear residents of Wigan Borough,

You are cordially invited to join the celebrations of the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III taking place on the early May bank holiday.

In addition to the events taking place in our nation's capital, Wigan Council will be hosting two flagship gatherings, which will be supplemented by the many community-led activities over the three days.

It is, of course, a UK-wide celebration that will be mirrored in many nations across the world and the community spirit displayed in last year's Platinum Jubilee celebrations will once again be at the forefront.

We do hope you can join us to make it a cracking Coronation celebration.

Yours faithfully,
The Borough Life team

THE NATIONAL SCHEDULE - WHAT'S PLANNED?

The Coronation Ceremony for His Majesty The King and Her Majesty The Queen Consort will take place on **Saturday, May 6** at Westminster Abbey.

The programme includes the procession and service, which will be conducted by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Buckingham Palace says the service will 'reflect the Monarch's role today and look towards the future, while being rooted in longstanding traditions and pageantry.'

On **Sunday, May 7**, a special Coronation Concert will be staged and broadcast live at Windsor Castle by the BBC.

The Coronation Big Lunch will take place across the country on the same date, at which neighbours and communities are invited to share food and fun together.

On **Monday, May 8**, The Big Help Out will encourage people to try volunteering and join the work being undertaken to support their local areas.

For the latest updates on the national plans, visit: www.royal.uk

Communities that care



WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE IN THE BOROUGH?

Wigan Council will be hosting two flagship events. A Coronation Community Day will be held at Leigh Town Hall on **Sunday, May 7**, and the Mayor's Coronation Gala will be held at Mesnes Park in Wigan on **Monday, May 8**. Please keep an eye on the council's channels for further details.

As with the Platinum Jubilee, the council will be encouraging our communities to host their own street parties – further details on how to apply here:

www.wigan.gov.uk/KingsCoronation

To keep up-to-date with the latest Royal celebrations planned for your local community, check out www.visitwigan.com



COMMUNITY CALL-OUT

Are you a performer, local trader, organisation or community group that would like to be involved in our Coronation celebrations or wider events schedule through 2023?

We're always on the lookout for new contributors so please get in touch to find out more:

events@wigan.gov.uk

PRIDE OF OUR TOWN

If you know Wigan Borough, it will come as no surprise to hear that it is brimming with kind-hearted community heroes.

They might be a neighbour who helps their elderly friends to appointments, climate heroes who keep our streets clean and tidy, or a networking leader who shines bright and brings the whole community together.

These unsung heroes are spread across our borough, building on the community spirit that became so important to each of us throughout the pandemic.

That's why it was wonderful we were recently able to gather so many people into the same room to celebrate their achievements at the Our Town awards.

It was the first time that the annual awards had been able to be held in person, and what a night it was.

With the sounds of traditional African dance troop, Leigh-based Kubatana, ringing in everyone's ears, along with the inspirational words from poet Louise Fazackerley and the strumming of Wigan Ukulele band, the ceremony was a true celebration of the people that make our borough shine.

There were 10 awards categories which celebrated unpaid carers, climate heroes and everyday kindness.

We caught up with winner of our Be Kind resident of the year category, Jim Martlew.

77-year-old Jim lives in Worsley Mesnes. His kindness shone through in his nomination, which

included making hedgehog houses and running errands for neighbours.

"It was absolutely amazing to win!" Jim remembers. "All of my neighbours came together to nominate me, and I knew absolutely nothing about it.

"No-one said a word – not even my partner! I was overwhelmed on the night, I had tears in my eyes – I was completely shocked."

Explaining why he helps his community, Jim continues: "I just do it, you just help people – none if it is for the recognition."

Each winner scooped a prize of £500 to spend in a local business of their choosing.

Jim chose to spend his money on something quite cool: "We bought a fridge freezer with the prize money, and we're made up with it.

"We've had all of the neighbours round to come and have a look!"

The celebration showed just some of the incredible work taking place across the borough.

In the words of Louise Fazackerley's poem: 'We are Wigan Borough, and we are proud!'

The Our Town awards will return later this year, with nominations opening in the summer. Keep an eye on our channels for further updates!



Jim with presenter Dave Guest



In the spotlight



Boxing for Better CIC

Community project of the year

Boxing For Better was founded in March 2021. Working in communities, schools and business, the community interest company uses boxing to improve the health, fitness, attitude and character of its participants which in turn is reducing local anti-social behaviour and crime.

Communities that care



Poet Louise Fazackerley



Farai Nhakaniso, who performs with Kubatana



Kerry Cunningham

Community leader award

Kerry turned a hard situation into a positive when her community faced floods, leading on the community flood response. Kerry was inspired by this and has since opened Kerry's Corner, based at Higher Folds Community Centre. Kerry's Corner is home to a community library and offers wellbeing drop-in sessions and cost of living advice groups.



Tony Brierley

Carers Champion

Tony Brierley became a carer for his wife, Sue, when she became ill with pulmonary fibrosis. He regularly advocates for the rights of carers and has even appeared on national television to raise awareness of the issues carers face.

All winners

Carers Champion:
Tony Brierley

Young Rising Star:
Evie Blackburn

Climate Hero:
Alison Ball

Be Kind Resident:
Jim Martlew

Be Kind Business:
Mark Cowley, Ashton Upholstery

Community Project:
Boxing for Better

Community Leader:
Kerry Cunningham

Best Street in the Borough:
Kirkwood Close

Leader's Award:
UEFA Women's EURO
tournament
volunteers

See more at
Borough Life Plus



BELIEVE IN SPORTS

Community heroes weren't the only group recognised during our awards season back in November, as rising stars, inspirational achievers and unsung heroes of our thriving local sports scene were celebrated at the Believe Sports Awards 2022.

Almost three months on from the award ceremony, the outstanding talent, hard-work and dedication of the winners was recognised once again at a special



The Mayoral reception

VIP reception hosted by the Mayor of Wigan Borough, Councillor Marie Morgan.

The gathering provided another chance to look back on an incredible year of sport across the borough - including hosting high-profile fixtures at the UEFA Women's EURO tournament and the Rugby League World Cup.

November's ceremony - the first to be staged since the pandemic - saw former badminton world champion and Olympic

silver medallist Gail Emms MBE on hand to present the prestigious prizes to our worthy recipients in front of 350 invited guests at The Edge Conference Centre.

Among the winners on the night was top cycling prospect Emily Burgess, who was named Young Sports Achiever of the Year having retained her British Women's Individual Championship title as well as triumphing at the British Elite Women's Grand Prix.

Standish Community High School's Year 8 rugby league team won Team of the Year after an unbeaten season led to them being crowned National School Champions on top of lifting the Wigan Schools Cup and the North West Schoolboys Trophy.

The Wilf Brogan Unsung Hero Award was presented to Gary Pennington, the chair and secretary of Highfield Grange FC, for his dedication, drive and determination to help the club thrive; while Volunteer of the Year went to Stephen Price who has started his own football team for members of the local armed forces community.

Inspirational teenager Daniel Brennan took home the Changing Lifestyle Recognition Award having overcome numerous setbacks to achieve a healthier, more active lifestyle with the help of Be Well's Let's Get Movin' programme.

WIGLE DANCE CLUB



Wigle Dance receive their award



Embracing culture, heritage and sport

“

The gathering provided another chance to look back on an incredible year of sport across the borough - including hosting high-profile fixtures at the UEFA Women's EURO tournament and the Rugby League World Cup

”

Club of the Year was presented to WigLe Dance, who have engaged more than 200 young people aged 5-18 in dance and physical activity over the past 12 months and staged weekly dance holiday clubs during the Easter and Summer holidays as part of the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme.

Meanwhile, charitable organisation One Vision Media scooped the Inclusion in Sport Award for their work supporting people with disabilities to be more active and confident; and St George's Central Primary and Nursery were the winners of the Martin Lynn School Commitment to PE and Sport Award - recognising their high-quality provision of physical education.

With outstanding dedication recognised across the board and another excellent year of sport set to impress across the borough, we're looking forward to seeing what comes next.



Gail Emms MBE hands out the prizes

Gary Pennington receives his award

2022 Believe Sports Awards sponsored by JJJ Building Contractors Ltd

Full list of winners

Team of the Year - sponsored by Wigan Warriors Community Foundation:
Standish High School Year 8 Rugby League Team

Young Sports Achiever of the Year - sponsored by Leigh Leopards RFLC:
Emily Burgess

Martin Lynn School Commitment to PE and Sport Award sponsored by Edge Hill University:
St George's Central Primary and Nursery

Inclusion in Sport Award sponsored by XN Leisure:
One Vision Media CIO

Changing Lifestyle Recognition Award sponsored by Technogym:
Daniel Brennan

Volunteer of the Year sponsored by Wigan Athletic Community Trust:
Stephen Price

Wilf Brogan Unsung Hero Award sponsored by Agilysis:
Gary Pennington

Club of the Year sponsored by FCC Environment:
WigLe Dance CIC

Vibrant town centres



Flying the flag

The Wiend, Wigan town centre

Last autumn, Wigan town centre was awarded Purple Flag status in recognition of the towns vibrant, safe night-time economy.

We wanted to find out more, so Borough Life caught up with some key figures to hear what this could mean for the whole borough.

In the heart of the town centre and part of the Old Courts complex, Bailiff Bar bursts with local character.

With locally sourced artwork decorating the walls, it's a perfect hideaway to enjoy a quiet drink, or to take in a performance, depending on the time of day (or night).

"The Purple Flag is a huge step in the right direction," says Rebecca Davenport, Director at The Old Courts.

"We're working hard to continue a vibrant cultural offer and this can't be achieved without a diverse, safe and welcoming environment.

That's what this accreditation recognises.

"Here at the Bailiff Bar, we have a dynamic year-round programme of events and social opportunities for all walks of life. Working alongside The Old Courts we provide a stage for hundreds of artists.

"We're constantly working to celebrate and promote what Wigan has to offer and to introduce new events and artists to the town. The future looks bright and we're excited to continue our journey."

A short hop under the railway bridge lands us at The Hideout on Queens Street. This stylish bar offers both the opportunity to have a cosy catch-up with friends over homemade coffee and cake to a wine tasting experience and an extensive list of cocktails.

For bar supervisor Jessica Mawdesley the Purple Flag highlights an exciting future for the borough.



Hideout



Jessica Mawdesley

Vibrant town centres

“Wigan Borough has a strong sense of who they are, it’s embedded in personality, humour and heritage, and we love that,” she explains.

“We’ve noticed that Hideout has created a community within a community, it’s great to see our regulars and support local businesses, just like us.

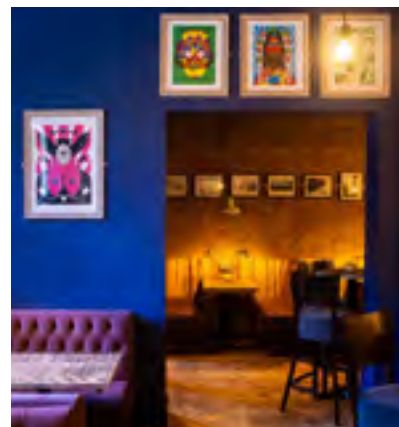
“Purple Flag describes its towns as diverse and vibrant and the Hideout brings just that to Wigan.

“We’ve seen it first-hand with our customers, we welcome everyone from all walks of life, all enjoying the food, atmosphere, catching up with friends and loved ones.

“We can’t wait to see what the future holds, not just at the Hideout, but for the exciting projects that are coming to the borough.”



Bailiff Bar



King Street



What next?

The Wigan town centre partnership will work together to continuously improve a thriving night-time economy and maintain its Purple Flag status.

To find out more about what Wigan Borough has to offer, visit www.visitwigan.com



What is Purple Flag about?

Overseen by the Association of Town and City Management (ATCM), it is an international accreditation programme.

It acknowledges town centres that demonstrate a safe and thriving location at night for all visitors.

The accreditation process requires town centres to meet a set of rigorous standards and identify further opportunities to enhance the evening and night-time offer.

Other locations to gain Purple Flag status in our region are Liverpool, Preston, Bury, Stockport and Chester.

Praise for safety campaign

Wigan’s application – submitted in partnership between the council and town centre businesses and organisations – was commended in particular for its Safety of Women at Night (SWAN) initiative.

This has seen awareness activity (such as the Call It Out campaign), training initiatives and safety measures such as taxi marshals in town centres across the borough.

For more information, visit www.wigan.gov.uk/CallitOut

GET HOME SAFE 



MAGIC OF THE MOVIES

A pioneering partnership using the escapism of a cinema trip is providing respite for some of the borough's unsung heroes



Kevin Lowe and Elizabeth Costello

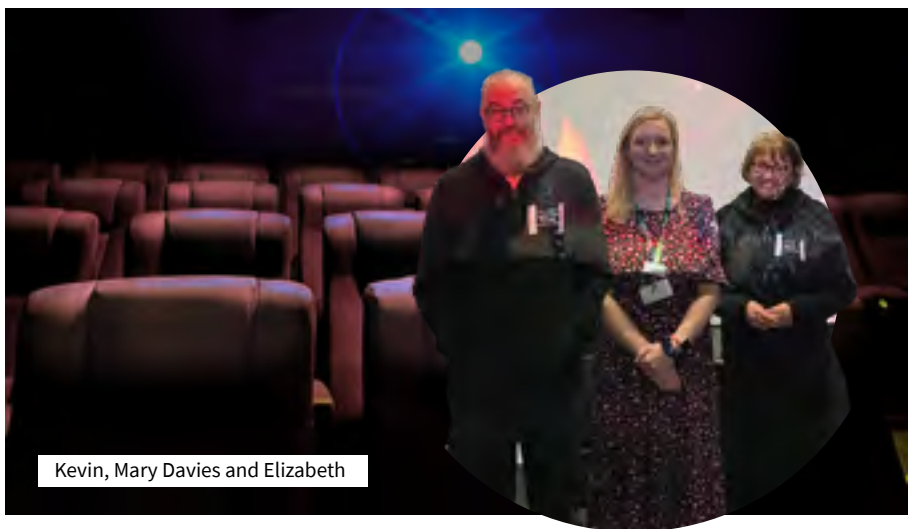
Communities that care

We will have all benefitted from a dose of cinema therapy; the chance to switch-off, sit back and be whisked away to a different time, place or universe.

Now, thanks to the vision of Leigh Film Society (LFS), those who care for friends or relatives have a regular opportunity for vital rest and recuperation in front of the silver screen.

It's what the Carers Film Club is all about; utilising self-help benefits of a trip to the pictures and providing a break from potentially stressful situations.

"We launched the club back in 2020 and from day one we wanted carers to feel like they have ownership by making them part of the programming," explains Elizabeth Costello, LFS's development director and a driving force behind the initiative.



Kevin, Mary Davies and Elizabeth

Open to all carers, the free screenings and facilities at the Film Factory in Leigh's Spinners Mill are designed to be accessible - with a row dedicated to wheelchair users - allowing carers to bring along the people they care for, if they wish.

It's an ideal opportunity for carers to enjoy some time switching off from day-to-day life, says Mary Davies, a carer development officer at Wigan Council.

"We want every carer to know that we recognise what you do and want to offer you the information, advice and support you may need. Although caring can be immensely rewarding it can also be extremely challenging.

"The cinema at the Mill really is a welcoming and bespoke environment, it's a hidden gem and we would like as many carers and their loved ones to enjoy this fabulous experience to both support them and say thank you for all that they do."

Leigh Film Society celebrates its 10th anniversary this year and its new Leigh Film Factory facility is based at Park Lane.

They have created a film-going experience - open to all - with a great deal of dedication and attention to detail.

"It is steeped in the love of film, a passion that offers an experience unlike traditional multiplex cinemas," explains events manager Kevin Lowe, who supports the Carers Film Club.

"Visiting our cinema is not just about going to see a film, it's about film as an experience."

If you are a carer and would like to get involved with the Film Club, visit: Wigan and Leigh Carers Centre at wlcccarers.com

For full listings and schedules for Leigh Film Society and Leigh Film Factory, visit Leigh Film Society at www.leighfilmsociety.com



"We invited young carers to select films that were age appropriate and adult carers selected films we may have previously screened during our film society events."

Elizabeth provided a presentation to the council about the benefits of cinema therapy that sparked the partnership that now works to provide the Carers Film Club.

WHERE ADVENTURE AWAITS...

BE WELL
OUTDOORS



LOW BANK GROUND

Our Lake District activity centre is available to book now, so what are you waiting for?

The very mention of the name stirs heart-warming memories of childhood fun and adventure.

And as mist settles above the tranquil waters of Coniston on a dry winter morning, Low Bank Ground still feels like a place of possibilities and wonder.

It's peaceful here now. The reflections of the beeches and oaks lie unbroken on the placid surface of the lake, and all that's tempering the quiet is the dew-soaked earth underfoot and the cheerful chirping of invisible birds.

But close your eyes and you can hear something calling.

Somewhere close, hidden among the rare natural beauty of this spectacular landscape, white water cascades from mountain streams into the foaming pools below.

Focus and you can feel the bracing chill and the light spray on your cheek as you go ghyll scrambling; hear the exhilarating splashes and the echoes of thrilled laughter.

Or perhaps it's the gentle breeze and the rough grip-touch of the climbing rope as you scale a jagged rockface; or the warming sunlight reverberating through your soul as you wander through the glorious Cumbrian hillside.





For team leader Adam Heathcote, nothing beats being on water - whether he's commanding a sailboat on a rough windy day or getting wet and wild in his kayak.

He's fresh from a daring once-in-a-lifetime holiday experience along the Zambezi when Borough Life checks in for a short stay at Rough Close - the smaller of two quaint cottages, nestled among tree-laden hills and undulating open fields, which make up the residential quarters of Low Bank Ground Outdoor Centre.

"I love that everything's on our doorstep here," says Adam. "We can just walk out the door and be out onto the lake, or up in the mountains, doing all the things we enjoy. We're right at the centre of it all - yet there's also a genuine local feel away from the main tourist areas.

"People are always taken aback by the view and by how peaceful it is here," he reveals. "We get a lot of comments about there being a real homely feel too, which I think is partly down to the staff here and the atmosphere we all try to create."

Adam heads up a small, passionate and knowledgeable team of adventure enthusiasts who call this picturesque Lake District retreat home all year round. Each has their own specialism, their own personal favourites of the many and varied outdoor pursuits on offer.

There's so much to do here too, whether it's canoeing or paddleboarding out on the lake, orienteering or rock climbing in the hills and mountains, or if it's archery, axe throwing or raft building that floats your boat.

No wonder Low Bank Ground holds a special place in the hearts of generations of Wigan Borough residents as something of a pilgrimage site of personal development and discovery; nothing short of a local rite of passage.

And no surprise either it attracts many private and corporate bookings, from businesses and sports clubs seeking the perfect team-building getaway to families celebrating a landmark birthday or simply plotting

an escape and a shared adventure far removed from the day-to-day grind.

First opened by Wigan Council back in 1983,

Low Bank Ground is currently marking its own special anniversary and - just as the old saying goes - in this case life really does begin at 40.

A brand-new exciting chapter is underway as part of Be Well Outdoors; the outdoor activity arm of the borough's growing Be Well leisure and wellbeing movement which also oversees one of Wigan's hidden gems, Scotman's Flash, and the High Ropes Adventure course at Haigh Woodland Park.

With Be Well Outdoors the clue's in the name. Its mission is to stimulate, challenge and inspire with exhilarating experiences that connect more and more people to the beauty of nature and the physical and mental benefits of outdoor activity.

Standing here in this secluded spot on the stunning shores of Coniston, admiring this glorious vista and breathing in the pure countryside air, those benefits are only too obvious.

**'THIS IS A PLACE TO
LEARN; ABOUT NATURE,
ABOUT YOURSELF!'**

ALSO PART OF BE WELL OUTDOORS...



SCOTMAN'S FLASH

Part of The Flashes of Wigan and Leigh National Nature Reserve, this fantastic facility just 10 minutes from the heart of Wigan town centre offers canoeing, sailing, kayaking and more.

The perfect place for beginners to dip their toe in the water, or for the more experienced to escape for a few hours without the travel or expense. Great for group bookings and schools too - with bespoke activity packages to suit.



HAIGH WOODLAND PARK

Our High Ropes Adventure course offers aerial thrills for all the family. Start with our low ropes to get your head for heights and then step up to our high ropes challenge (including a 40 metre zip wire)... or even take the 'leap of faith'!

We also deliver forest school activities with bushcraft, scavenger hunts, archery, orienteering, den building, bug hunting, campfires and crafts. Plus with so much else to do at Haigh Woodland Park, why not make a real day of it?

**Book now at: www.wigan.gov.uk/outdooradventure
or follow us on instagram @lowbankground**

What's on in Wigan Borough?



Until January 2024

Make Some Noise – From Stage Door To Dance Floor

An exciting new FREE exhibition that showcases music and entertainment from across the borough, celebrating the rich heritage, incredible venues, and wealth of talent that we are known for world-wide.

10am – 4pm, Tuesday – Saturday

✦ Museum of Wigan Life, Library Street, WN1 1NU ✦ Tickets: Free

www.wigan.gov.uk/museum



**Tuesday 21 March
- Saturday 25 March**

An evening in Little Grimley

Tyldesley Little Theatre present a triple bill of David Tristram's Little Grimley comedies.

✦ Tyldesley Little Theatre, Lemon Street, Tyldesley, M29 8HT,

✦ Tickets: £8, tlt.org.uk



**Saturday 1 April
- Saturday 17 June**

Climate Exhibition

Curated by young people, the Turnpike Gallery's newest exhibition focuses on the climate emergency.

10am – 4pm, Tuesday to Saturday

✦ Turnpike Gallery, Leigh, WN7 1EB

✦ Free, www.turnpikegallery.org.uk



Saturday 8 April

Mister Magnolia

Based on the book by Quentin Blake. Suitable for ages 3-10 years.

2.30pm, ✦ The Old Courts, Crawford Street, Wigan, WN1 1NA ✦ Tickets: £10
<http://bit.ly/3YJaYMb>

Wigan and Leigh Markets



11am – 3pm, ✦ Wigan Market, WN1 1AR, www.wigan.market

Saturday 1 April

Craft Market

Treat yourself to hand made gifts by visiting Wigan Market's craft market.

Saturday 8 April

Easter facepainting

Hop along to Wigan Market for free kids facepainting and bunny makeovers.

Saturday 22 April

Kids activity day

Arrr! Head on down to Wigan Market to meet Pippa the Pirate in this special activity day.

Throughout Spring and Summer Leigh Market entertainment

To keep up-to-date with events and activities hosted at Leigh's Market Hall, follow us on Facebook.

✦ Leigh Market Hall, Market Hall, Spinning Gate, WN7 4PG,
www.facebook.com/LeighMarket



Leigh Film Society

Leigh Film Society provides professionally delivered, quality film screenings in venues across the borough.

✦ Leigh Film Factory, Leigh, Spinners Mill, WN7 2LB

Friday 28 April

The Lost King

7pm ✦ Tickets: £5,
<https://bit.ly/3GEU3UQ>

Friday 26 May

The Banshees of Inisherin

7pm ✦ Tickets: £5,
<https://bit.ly/3X4a19E>

Friday 30 June

The Menu

7pm ✦ Tickets: £5
<https://bit.ly/3WPFsQG>



**Tuesday 23 May and
Wednesday 20 September**

Cycle Three Sisters

Enjoy a free afternoon cycling event for all ages at Three Sisters Race Circuit.

3pm – 8pm ✦ Three Sisters Rd, Ashton-in-Makerfield, WN4 8DD ✦ Free,
www.wigan.gov.uk/cyclethreesisters

What's On guide



From Saturday 27 May Big Wigan Walk Week

Join us for a Boroughwide walking festival to celebrate walking across the borough, suitable for all ages.

🆓 Free

www.wigan.gov.uk/BeWell



Wednesday 31 May Tour of Leigh Town Hall

Join the team for an exciting tour of Leigh Town Hall and see behind-the-scenes of the new Archives: Wigan & Leigh.

11am 📍 Leigh Town Hall,
Market Street, Leigh, WN7 1DY

🆓 Tickets: Free

<http://bit.ly/3XqA1CC>



Saturday 24 June Armed Forces Day

Wigan Borough celebrates its armed forces personnel with a town centre parade and show.

11am - 4pm 📍 Wigan Town Centre

🆓 Free, www.visitwigan.com



Wednesday 5 July - Saturday 15 July

David Copperfield

Wigan Little Theatre presents an adaptation of Charles Dickens' book.

7.30pm 📍 Wigan Little Theatre,
Crompton Street, Wigan, WN1 3SL

🎟 Tickets: £10, <http://bit.ly/3E5kZLA>



Thursday 13 July - Sunday 16 July

Wigan International Jazz Festival

The world famous celebration of all things Jazz returns with a star-studded line-up with tickets available across the weekend.

📍 The Village on the Green at Aspull
<https://wiganjazzfest.co.uk/>



Saturday 12 August Wigan Comic Con

Stall holders, retro gaming, cosplay and special guests come together for a special Wigan comic con.

📍 Robin Park Leisure Centre, WN5 0UL

🎟 Tickets: <https://bit.ly/3YuYFn0>



Saturday 12 August Wigan Pride

A celebration of our borough's LGBTQ+ community will be back in Wigan town centre.

📍 Wigan Town Centre 🎟 Tickets: Free

www.wiganpride.com



Saturday 2 September Mesnes Park Proms

A fantastic night of brass, fanfare and fireworks. Bring along your picnic, wave your flags and enjoy this great end-of-summer family evening in Wigan's historic park.

📍 Mesnes Park

🎟 Tickets: www.visitwigan.com



Saturday 9 September Pennington Hall Park Proms

A fantastic night of brass, fanfare and fireworks. Bring along your picnic, wave your flags and enjoy this great end-of-summer family evening in Leigh's historic Pennington Hall Park.

📍 Pennington Hall Park

🎟 Tickets: www.visitwigan.com



Sunday 3 September Wigan 10K and family mile

The epic 11th Wigan 10k, organised by Joining Jack and sponsored by HW Moon Toyota Wigan, will return to the streets of Wigan. Entries open now.

10am 🎟 Tickets: www.wigan10k.co.uk



Coming later in 2023: Pride In Leigh

Pride in Leigh will return for its third exciting instalment later this summer. To keep up-to-date with the latest news and updates from the organisers follow @PrideInLeigh on Twitter.

📍 Leigh Spinners Mill, Leigh
www.leighspinnersmill.co.uk

What's On guide

Haigh Woodland Park

www.facebook.com/haighwoodlandpark

The last Friday of every month, starting Friday 31 March

Foodie Friday

Free food and drink event with live music and multiple street food vendors.

From 6pm 📍 Kitchen Courtyard - Haigh Woodland Park



Saturday 20 May and Sunday 21 May

Haigh Dino Days 2023

Family fun and entertainment all with a unique Dinosaur theme. Journey back to Mesozoic Times! Experience Spinosaurus to Pterosaurs, T-Rex to Triceratops.

📍 Haigh Woodland Park 🎟 Tickets: Adults £10, Children (3-12yrs) £8, Children (under 3) free
www.facebook.com/haighwoodlandpark



Sunday 11 June

Scruffs Dog Show

Bring your four-legged friend and join us for a unique dog show and competition - it's going to be a woof-ly day.

📍 Haigh Woodland Park (Walled Gardens)



Sundays 4 June, 2 July, 13 August and 3 September

Picnic Brass

Free event brought to you by Friends of Haigh Woodland Park and Greater Manchester Police Concert Band.

From 1pm 📍 Haigh Woodland Park



Sunday 18 June then 3rd Sunday of every month

Artisan Market

The Market Co. bring you more than 60 stalls selling hand-made goods. From food and flowers to crafts and creative goods.

10am-4pm 📍 Haigh Woodland Park (Stables Car Park) 🎟 Free



Saturday 24 June and Sunday 25 June

Haigh Busker's Bash

A family music festival celebrating the region's street-based musical talents. Enjoy two days of great and varied music alongside children's entertainment, food and drink.

📍 Haigh Woodland Park



Wednesday 2 August

National Play Day

Part of the National Play Day celebration. A FREE day of fun for children encouraging play and the great outdoors.

📍 Haigh Woodland Park, Wigan, WN2 1PE 🎟 Free
wigan.gov.uk/BeWell



Friday 25 - Sunday 27 August Pictures in the Park Series

Haigh's unique outdoor cinema event, bringing together live music and film.

Friday 25 August - Grease

Saturday 26 August - Mamma Mia!

Sunday 27 August - Encanto

7pm start 📍 Haigh Woodland Park

🎟 Tickets: www.facebook.com/haighwoodlandpark

Sporting fixtures

Wigan Warriors
wiganwarriors.com/fixtures



Wigan Athletic
wiganathletic.com/matches



Leigh Leopards
leighsportsvillage.co.uk



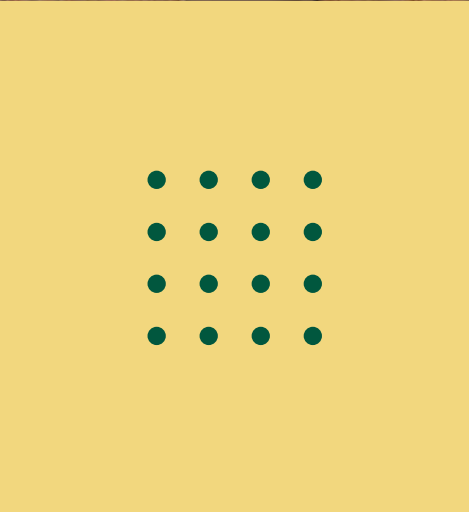
the soul of
the north



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made for
exploring



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heritage



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Wigan Council

Feel Well.

Live Well.

Be Well.

Discover your local

Leisure Centre



 BeWellWigan.org