

SPRING 2014

the reporter

www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk

A photograph of two young children in winter attire. The child on the left is wearing a blue and white patterned knit hat and a dark jacket, holding a wooden birdhouse. The child on the right is wearing a pink hat with a cartoon character and a pink puffer jacket, also holding the birdhouse. They are standing in front of a tree trunk and a wire fence. The background is a grassy field.

**BUDGET SPECIAL:
EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW
ABOUT THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

HAVE YOUR SAY ON SERVICES

<https://www.snapsurveys.com/wh/s.asp?k=139264998138>

Safety in numbers

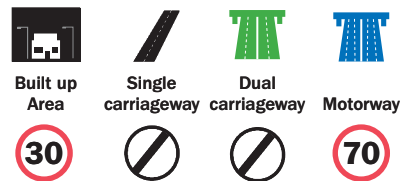
Speeding - risks and consequences

Speed limits are set for the purposes of safety on the road and they reflect the maximum permitted speed.

The most obvious risks of speeding are of causing death or injury to yourself or others which can lead to you spending several years in prison. Even if you are lucky not to be involved in an incident, if you are caught speeding, it can lead to you losing your licence.

In an increasingly environmentally-aware age, it affects exhaust emissions and increases your costs in fuel consumption.

National speed limits



Cars and motorcycles
(including car derived vans up to 2 tonnes maximum laden weight)

Cars towing
(including car derived vans and motorcycles)

Goods vehicles
(not exceeding 7.5 tonnes maximum laden weight)

Goods vehicles
(exceeding 7.5 tonnes maximum laden weight)

	Built up Area	Single carriageway	Dual carriageway	Motorway
Cars and motorcycles	30	60	70	70
Cars towing	30	50	60	60
Goods vehicles (not exceeding 7.5 tonnes)	30	50	60	70*
Goods vehicles (exceeding 7.5 tonnes)	30	40	50	60

All speeds stated are in miles per hour and apply to all roads unless signs show otherwise

*60 if articulated or towing

Top ten tips to avoid speeding

- Make enough time for your journey**
Plan realistic journey times and avoid the temptation to put your foot down if running late –remember that you **will** be late if you're involved in a crash!
- Check your speedometer regularly**
Just as you should with your mirrors.
- Expect the unexpected**
Always drive at a speed that will allow you to react in time to hazards that can suddenly appear.
- Don't get pushed on by tailgaters**
Don't let aggressive drivers influence your driving. Pull in to allow them to pass where necessary.
- Street lights generally mean a 30mph limit applies**
Unless signs say otherwise.
- Take extra care when 20mph limit applies**
These speed limits, whether advisory or mandatory, are in place for the safety of all road users. Take extra care when driving in residential areas and especially outside schools.
- Look out for camera warning signs**
The black and white camera symbols indicate that the location has a crash history and that enforcement may be expected.
- Stay alert**
Lack of attention on driving can lead to increasing speeds inadvertently and is frequently the cause of serious crashes.
- Look out for speed limit signs**
They show the legal maximum speed for the road. Always drive at a speed appropriate to the conditions – within the limit.
- Know the correct limits for your vehicle**
The 'National Speed Limit' varies according to the class of vehicle and the type of road and if also you are towing.

For further information on road safety training please contact:

South Lanarkshire Council, Community and Enterprise Resources, Roads and Transportation Services, Traffic and Transportation Section, Montrose House, 154 Montrose Crescent, Hamilton ML3 6LB

Phone 01698 453620 or email enterprise.hq@southlanarkshire.gov.uk

www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk



STRATHCLYDE
safety cameras



Community and Enterprise Resources

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Building for the *future*

COUNCIL AGREES £672M BUDGET THAT WILL BENEFIT ALL OF SOUTH LANARKSHIRE'S RESIDENTS, AS WELL AS PROTECTING FRONT-LINE SERVICES AND SAFEGUARDING ITS AMBITIOUS CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME. **DUNCAN JONES** REPORTS

A FUNDING deal has been agreed that builds for South Lanarkshire's future, even in tough economic times.

Local councillors approved the area's £672million budget, plus a £251million capital investment package that will see new schools and care homes built, as well as continued investment in roads.

Council Leader Eddie McAvoysaid local residents in every part of South Lanarkshire would benefit from the 2014/15 budget and the ambitious three-year programme of capital investment.

"We've been clear with our residents all along – economic conditions continue to be difficult but we will do everything we can to protect the essential frontline services they depend upon," said Councillor McAvoys.

"I'm delighted to say that we can do even more than that. Thanks to prudent management, we can continue to build on our long-term investments to improve the lives, and life chances, of young and old alike.

"Our capital investment programme is designed to build for the future, and to do the very best we can with the money available.

"That means more new schools for local kids, new care homes for the elderly and better community facilities for all."

The £251m capital investment programme includes almost £161m more for South Lanarkshire's ambitious Schools Modernisation Programme.

Another £36m has been approved for the Roads Investment Programme, while almost £54m more will fund other capital projects.

This includes the first stages of a £12m review of Social Work's eight care homes that is expected to lead to at least two brand-new care homes. The budget package was agreed at a

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special meeting of South Lanarkshire's Executive Committee and approved by the full council.

The committee previously agreed a £13.3m prudential savings package to help shape the budget for 2014/15.

The package approved includes agreement to freeze Council Tax for the seventh year.

Other highlights of the package include:

- A total of £5.124m investment in more nursery place hours
- A total of £4.6m for ongoing investment in Information Computer Technology in schools
- A total of £4.298m to help fund owner-occupier grants for disabled adaptations and home investment programme work
- A total of £2m for essential works on cemeteries and open spaces.

The council has also announced details of a £35.8m investment plan for current and new housing, including £15.9m to improve central heating systems and a £1.5m investment in sheltered housing to support older people living independently.

Rents will rise by three per cent and the council will continue to harmonise rents to help tenants hit by historically higher costs.

Roads investment is another council priority and there is recognition of the importance of continuing to invest in the long-term strategy to continue to improve the network.

About a third of South Lanarkshire's network has been resurfaced since the Roads Investment Plan began in 2008 and there have been significant improvements, particularly to main roads.

Other capital budget investment includes £4.1m for the Clyde Gateway regeneration programme.





IMPROVING THE LIVES, AND LIFE CHANCES, OF YOUNG AND OLD ALIKE

Council Leader Eddie McAvooy outlines the authority's plans and priorities for the coming financial year and explains how we are working hard for all our residents

PRUDENT financial management of a budget of £672m means that South Lanarkshire residents can continue to rely on their frontline council services this year, despite the continuing global economic difficulties.

Everyone who runs a budget of any size – from the Government to a householder – knows that those difficulties put pressure on every single penny and pound.

The council's budget is no different, having risen only marginally from last year's £665m at a time when pressures on services are rising due to demographic and other demands.

The Council Tax will also be frozen again, for the seventh year in a row.

Despite these pressures, your councillors and council officers have worked hard to make sure we balance our budget for 2014/15.

But we've done more than that. We've also planned a £251m three-year package of capital investment in our schools, homes for the elderly, roads and other vital services.

That ambitious programme includes almost £161m more for South Lanarkshire's Schools Modernisation Programme.

That programme has already created what is arguably the best learning environment for pupils in Britain, with every one of our secondary pupils learning in state-of-the-art schools. Almost 18,000 younger pupils – about three-quarters of the total – are being taught in 85 new-build primaries or one of four totally refurbished schools.

'OUR PLEDGE CONTINUES – EVEN WHEN MONEY IS TIGHT – WE WILL STICK TO OUR PROMISE AND DELIVER ON KEY PROJECTS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO PEOPLE IN EVERY PART OF SOUTH LANARKSHIRE'

Our work to complete the primary modernisation programme is on track.

It's not just bricks and mortar either – a total of £4.59m has been committed for ongoing investment in new computer technology in schools, to ensure our children and young people have access to up-to-date learning technology in a modern and changing environment.

Investment will also continue in our superb care homes for the elderly and in sheltered housing. Our three-year capital investment programme will lead to a review of all eight of our Social Work homes.

And as part of this we expect to build at least two new homes.

In fact, budgets have increased this year across our frontline service areas, honouring our pledge to protect the essential work that is done by the council, day-in, day-out.

To do this in the current climate we had to work hard to find £13m of savings but the fact that the savings package received cross-party support indicates that we got it right.

Even then, we were able to make some late adjustments to limit price increases for our meal services for the elderly and drop a proposal to raise the cost of community alarms.

Our pledge continues – even when money is tight – we will stick to our promise and deliver on key projects that make a difference to people in every part of South Lanarkshire.

A good example of that is our Roads Investment Programme, which has already seen about a third of our roads resurfaced.

That's good progress but we want to do more, so we will invest a further £12m in the next year alone to improve around 200 more roads and footways. Road safety will also be boosted, with £553,000 allocated to cycling, walking and safer streets projects.

We've also been working hard to improve our housing stock and recently announced 500 new council homes would be built.

Our £35.8m investment plan includes £15.9m to improve central heating systems and a £1.5m investment in sheltered housing to support older people living independently.

The council has also continued to lead the way over the "living wage" for its workers, which not only benefits them but also the local economies in which they live.

We've agreed a minimum pay rate for 2014/15 of £7.76 per hour, which is above the National Living Wage of £7.65 and is believed to be the highest rate outside London.

So I've great confidence that South Lanarkshire is on the right track for the coming year and beyond.

We've stuck to our promise to protect essential frontline services – but we've done much more than that. Thanks to careful management and by squeezing the best value out of every pound, we are also continuing to build on our long-term investments to improve the lives, and life chances, of young and old alike.

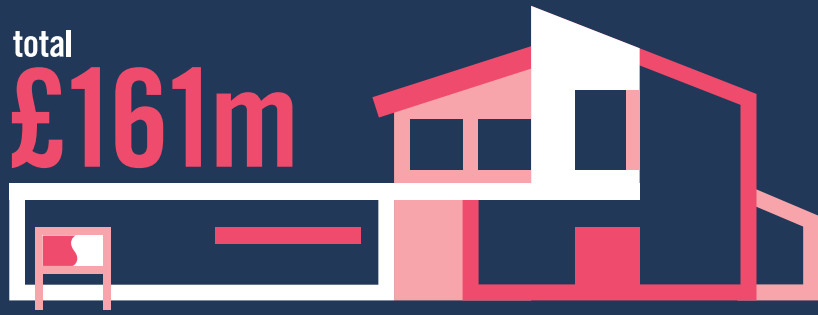
● Budget special continues over >>>

£5.1m



towards more nursery place hours

total £161m



to continue the schools modernisation programme

£4.1m



clyde gateway regeneration programme

£2m

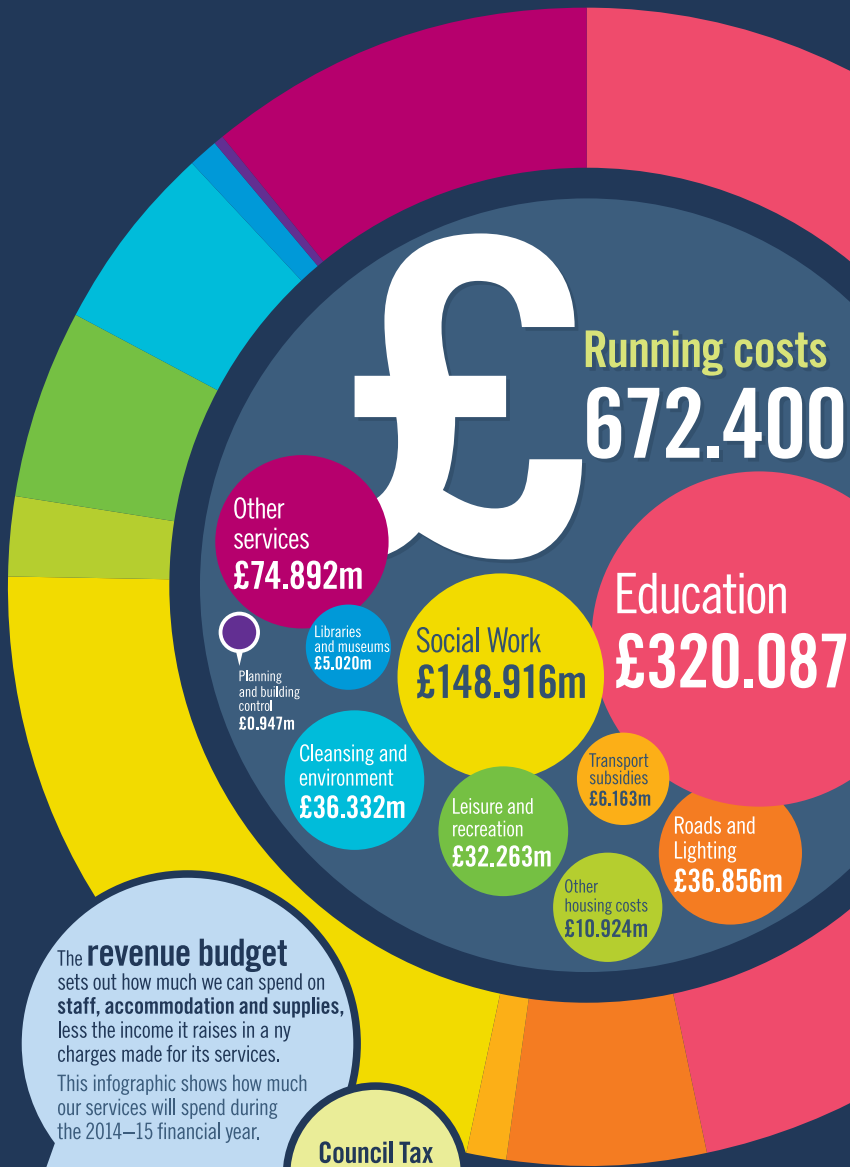


investment in cemeteries and open spaces

£4.8m



building new houses and assisting owners through mortgage to rent scheme



The **revenue budget** sets out how much we can spend on **staff, accommodation and supplies**, less the income it raises in a ny charges made for its services. This infographic shows how much our services will spend during the 2014–15 financial year.

Council Tax frozen for the 7th year.



97 schools completed
15 currently under construction
11 new schools to start in 2014/15



I.T. investment in schools

AT-A-GLANCE GUIDE TO THE COUNCIL'S NEW BUDGET

THIS is your handy guide to the council's budgetary plans for the next financial year, 2014/15.

It shows exactly how the council's £672.400million running cost is to be spent between the various different services, resources and facilities we provide for South Lanarkshire residents, and further capital investments for the next three years.

As you will see, council resources cover a diverse range of services from schools and care homes to street lighting and economic and environmental regeneration, as well as nurseries, the massive roads network and initiatives to keep our streets safe.

BEHIND THE NUMBERS



THE council provides a wide range of services. Most of the council's funding comes from central Government and we raise some money by charging for services.

In 2014/2015, we depend on Council Tax to provide 19 per cent of our budget.

In a typical year, we will spend our budget as follows:

- Teaching 23,700 primary pupils
- Teaching 19,130 secondary pupils
- Providing 7000 nursery places
- Caring for 3013 older people at home
- Looking after 1732 older people in care homes



- Collecting waste from 146,404 households every week
- Maintaining 2270km of roads
- Running 26 libraries

Council tax is not spent on maintaining council houses, which are funded entirely by tenant rents.

If you're behind in your rent payments, please contact us – we can make arrangements for affordable payments to help you clear your arrears.

Contact your local housing office now to find out how we can help.

0303 123 1012

www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk

We are here
to help you

struggling
to pay
your
rent?



HIT the clicks



THE council's new-look website is designed with YOU in mind.

The key aim was to make it quicker and easier for visitors to find what they were looking for and we think you will agree that we have done just that.

You might be wondering why we wanted to change the old one when it had won awards and stars from the industry.

Well, by using website statistics and customer feedback, we knew that occasionally people found it difficult to find the information they needed, or that it was taking too many clicks to get them where they needed to be.

This information has provided the basis upon which we have restructured the website.

The new site is based around the most popular things that people go on to do, such as paying council tax, booking a bulky uplift and finding out when the schools are off.

We've also changed the design of the site to help users find things more quickly and easily.

As part of the project we invited members of the public to come in and test the new site.

We asked them to complete five tasks and, while they went through them, we filmed

and timed them to see how they navigated their way through the site, and how long it took to finish a task.

They were also asked to complete a questionnaire to tell us what they thought of the new site.

The feedback was positive and we refined wording and navigation, where possible, as a result.

Another exciting development is that the new site has also been designed to move with the increasingly different ways that we seek information online.

It will look great and work well no matter what device it is viewed on. Users can pay bills or get information on smart phones, tablets, laptops, PCs, Macs and even games consoles – the site will automatically fit itself to the device.

So now, in just a couple of clicks, residents can pay a wide range of council bills, such as parking fines, rent and council tax, find information about bin collections, recycling and school holidays, book a special uplift, report a housing repair and submit a planning application.

And what's more you won't have to wait to do things during office hours – the website is available 24/7.

It's about doing things **your** way, when **you** want. We would love to hear your feedback, too.

● **Just email us at webfeedback@southlanarkshire.gov.uk with any comments or suggestions.**

THE COUNCIL'S AWARD-WINNING WEBSITE HAS UNDERGONE A MAJOR TRANSFORMATION, MAKING IT FASTER, EASIER TO NAVIGATE AND WIDELY ACCESSIBLE FROM A RANGE OF DEVICES. HERE, **CAROLYNE MITCHELL** OUTLINES THE BENEFITS THE NEW SITE WILL OFFER USERS OF ALL DEVICES

GRASS ROOTS *action*

AREA COMMITTEES EPITOMISE LOCAL DEMOCRACY IN ACTION, GIVING KEY GRANT FUNDING TO THE PEOPLE THEY REPRESENT AND PROVIDING DIRECT HELP TO COMMUNITY GROUPS.
LYNNE CARSTAIRS REPORTS

THERE are many thousands of people across South Lanarkshire whose free time is spent helping others.

From lunch clubs to parent councils, carers' groups to toddler classes – and many more in between – our towns and villages are well served by an army of dedicated volunteers.

And, helping to support those sterling efforts, with the financial boost so often needed to make a difference, is the council's £200,000-a-year Community Grants Scheme.

The cash is administered through South Lanarkshire's four Area Committees – Hamilton, East Kilbride, Clydesdale, and Cambuslang and Rutherglen – where decisions are made at a local level by the councillors elected to serve those wards.

This means that decisions on who receive grants are being made by those closest to their communities and who will experience first-hand the difference the cash boost makes.

Area Committees also decide on smaller planning applications, or those that conform to the local plan and have not attracted a large body of objection. It is a devolved process that enables residents to attend committee meetings in a venue close to home and in an environment that feels comfortable.

Former Provost Russell Clearie is chair of the Cambuslang and Rutherglen Area Committee. Together with Depute Chair Councillor Richard Tullett, he regularly visits community groups across both towns to see the money at work.

He explains: "It is a huge privilege for me to have been appointed chair of the Area Committee, as it allows me to preside over decisions that directly affect the communities I serve.

"In many ways, it is one of the most important roles I have held in a long career as an elected member and I treat it with that level of respect.

"It never ceases to surprise and amaze me just how hard communities will work for each other. Every group we have visited to hand over a 'big cheque' to has set an example on generosity, patience and commitment. And the gratitude for the money we are able to hand over is heartfelt.

"Whether it's paying for equipment, administration costs or a much-needed outing, it makes a world of difference to those on the receiving end.

"And, for us, it is a hugely rewarding part of our work."

Gordon Bow, Administration Manager, explained that the Community Grants scheme in South Lanarkshire has three main aims – bringing people together, increasing community involvement and improving quality of local life.

Applications are sought that meet at least one of these aims.

"This means that we can ensure that we are encouraging and supporting activities that are open to everyone who wants to take part and to actively involve more people in local groups," says Gordon.

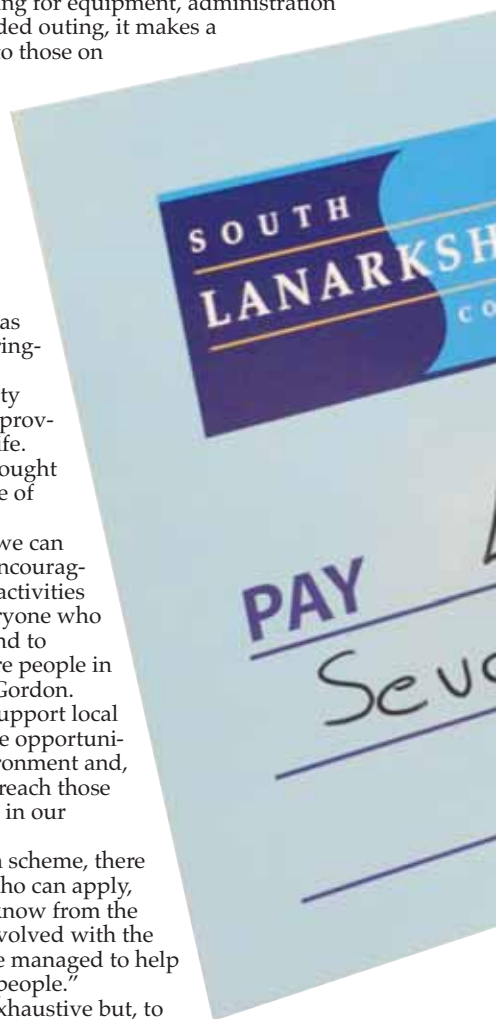
"We also seek to support local projects that improve opportunities, welfare or environment and, where possible, can reach those most disadvantaged in our communities.

"As with any such scheme, there is strict criteria on who can apply, and for what, but I know from the years I have been involved with the process that we have managed to help many thousands of people."

The list is pretty exhaustive but, to name just a few, includes sports clubs, crime prevention projects, small environmental and recycling schemes, victim support, elderly forums, pre-five development and ethnic minority advancement.

"We offer start-up grants and help with office costs and specialist transport, too," adds Gordon.

"We are fortunate to be able to play a part in improving the



CHEQUE MATE:
Four-year-old
Ben Chambers
appears to be
making a bid for
freedom with the
£700 cash
boost for Little
Rascals from the
Area Committee



lives of such a diverse range of people in South Lanarkshire as a result of this scheme and enjoy supporting our elected members in handing out these awards."

Kim Gogarty, Treasurer of the Little Rascals group in Rutherglen, is full of praise for the scheme, having received a £700 award, left, for the toddler group that paid for new play equipment and a much-enjoyed day out at the zoo.

She adds: "Little Rascals was created to give kids, mums, carers and grandparents somewhere that would provide support, friendship and life skills with people they can grow with on their own doorstep.

"As a mum who came to the area five years ago not knowing many local people, it has given me new friends that my girls and I can call on at any time, and I know that many of the other group members feel this, too.

"This grant from the Area Committee is very much appreciated as it means we can continue to provide resources and experiences that all of our little ones, and their carers, benefit from."

Charles Clark, of Cambuslang and Rutherglen Unemployed Art Club, was equally delighted to accept a £900 grant in autumn last year.

He explains: "The club was founded by half a dozen or so members in 1997 and has been meeting every Friday of the year since.

"We now have an

Little Rascals
Seven Hundred pounds

£700.00

amaz-
ing membership
of 50 who pay just £1 a
week. This covers all our costs to
run the club successfully and provides
basic materials and a tutor. Much of this success
also goes down to the work of 15 volunteers who make
sure everything, down to the tea and biscuits, is covered.

"It is a fantastic team effort that I know is greatly appreciated by our members. The grant from the Area Committee is a huge boost as the money will allow us to buy new materials and continue with our outings.

"However, what is equally important is having the support of our local councillors, and council, who have recognised and supported our efforts for more than a decade. We thank them all."

Councillor Clearie wants as many groups as possible to be aware of the scheme and avail themselves of its benefits.

"Our Community Grants Scheme is something we are very proud of and, I for one, am keen for it to be as inclusive as we can make it. I would urge all local groups to consider it as a source of support, however small, and make that first step to get in touch. I know from experience what a difference it can make," says the ex-provost.

● Any properly constituted, non profit-making group, based in South Lanarkshire can apply for a community grant of up to £1000. Full details, online forms and guidance on how to complete an application are available on the community advice pages at www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk

HOME *from* HOME

NEW SHELTERED HOUSING COMPLEX IS SETTING NEW STANDARDS IN ACCOMMODATION FOR THE ELDERLY, AS ANDY LIVINGSTONE HAS BEEN FINDING OUT

PROVIDING first-class care facilities for elderly and vulnerable members of the community continues to be a key priority for South Lanarkshire Council.

And that commitment is underlined by the council's new Eastcroft Gardens sheltered housing complex in Rutherglen, which is setting new standards of excellence.

The complex is the result of the transformation of the former David Walker care home to a first-class sheltered housing development, providing 17 self-contained flats fit for 21st century living.

Eastcroft Gardens is also a fine example of the council making best use of resources.

By re-using the former care home building, supported by Scottish Government grant funding, the council has been able to provide high-quality housing for older people, close to the town centre and local amenities.

The development incorporates a range of facilities and new technology that will support tenants to live independently for years to come.

As well as light and spacious accommodation, it gives residents plenty of opportunities to meet up and socialise with a choice of lounges, conservatory and common kitchen.

Tenants also benefit from a range of services that are provided in the comfort of a visiting services salon and a hydrotherapy room, while a guest bedroom is available for relatives.

Council Leader Eddie McAvoiy is delighted with the new facility for the elderly and says it is helping meet vital needs.

"With an aging population, there is a great need for purpose-built housing for older people and I'm pleased that Eastcroft Gardens is here to help meet that need in the Rutherglen area," he adds.

"This provides the essential ingredients of success – a location close to the town centre, great amenities, the right size of property and high standards of quality.

"Making the changes from its former

use as a care home to sheltered housing presented a considerable number of technical challenges.

"But I'm really delighted to see that these have been overcome and the quality of the finished development speaks for itself. The most important aspect of any housing development is, of course, how it works for the people living in the houses and, so, I'm delighted that the feedback from tenants has been extremely positive.

"I would like to pay tribute to all those involved in making this a success, from the council's design team and contractors, to our housing staff and to the Scottish Government for helping with funding."

The council's Executive Director of Housing and Technical Resources, Ann Gee, said the greatest demand for sheltered housing in South Lanarkshire was in Rutherglen and Cambuslang.

"This complex, along with our other new development at Clydeford View, Cambuslang, will together provide 41 much-needed homes for local people," she adds.

"The design of these flats, to the standard that can be seen at Eastcroft Gardens, has sparked a huge amount of interest locally and it is wonderful to hear the comments from the people who have moved here and see the smiles on their faces.

"I am grateful to everyone who has worked so hard to make that possible."

Many residents have now settled into Eastcroft Gardens, including Caroline McKenna, who was one of the first residents to move in.

"I am absolutely chuffed to bits. I moved from the sheltered housing at Cathcart Road and this is much handier for the shops, which is helpful because I am partially blind," she says.

"My daughters stay locally, so they have been able to help me with moving in and decorating my flat, and I am so delighted with the way it has turned out and I love the facilities."





Another delighted resident is Jessie Sullivan, who was having no difficulty in getting to know the surrounding area.

“I lived the past 18 years in Spittal but I was born and bred in Rutherglen, so I have come back to my roots,” she says.

“This is brilliant. I love it here. It is such a lovely place to move into and I couldn’t be happier. It is great having the facilities on hand that we do but we can get out and about as well when we feel like it.”

June Whitelock only moved a few hundred yards to become part of the new Eastcroft Gardens community but felt it was one of her best decisions.

“I was finding my house had become too big for me and I felt I was doing someone out of a good house,” she explains.

“It is so beautiful and I am very pleased with my flat. The rooms are big and bright, and my living room is an unusual shape that makes it interesting – I love it.”



HOME COMFORTS: Residents are delighted with the new Eastcroft Gardens Sheltered Housing Complex in Rutherglen



PUPILS from a South Lanarkshire primary school were the first to experience the magic of a new state-of-the-art digiTable in East Kilbride Central Library.

The primary one pupils, from the town's West Mains Primary, were able to experience traditional fairy tales brought to life in an amazing new interactive digital dimension.

The hi-tech 55-inch screen digiTable in EK Central Library is one of only a handful in Scotland, and is a joint venture between South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture, the Scottish Government and the Scottish Library and Information Council.

The level of broadband uptake in Scotland is the lowest in the UK at 61 per cent and in Lanarkshire it is even lower at 53 per cent, with 'lack of interest' being the most commonly given reason for not going online.

But there was no such lack of

interest among the West Mains pupils who seemed caught up in the excitement and wonder of the digiTable.

The huge interactive touch screen table brings a whole new meaning to digital participation and fully immerses users in the digital world.

This project also brings a new, social perspective to digital participation, removing the one-user-one-PC element and presenting something that is genuinely unique, visually stimulating and, above all, exciting.

Best of all, no one needs to be a computer whizz to enjoy using the digiTable, making it accessible to a whole spectrum of ages and abilities, no matter their computer experience.

The digiTable is a key component of the Digital Exclusion agenda, aimed at encouraging people to use the internet in new and imaginative ways.

Incredibly easy to use, the digiTable dispenses with the traditional mouse

and keyboard approach to computers. Its 'touch-and-go' interface recognises and responds to the user's touches and gestures.

The digiTable takes enjoyment of using the internet to the next level and there is a whole programme of activity planned around it, including news-groups and virtual tourism, as well as advice on health, lifestyle and benefits.

Donna Green, left, South Lanarkshire Leisure's new digiTable officer, said: "The digiTable is a fantastic resource that will make the internet far more accessible to our customers, who will learn and have fun at the same time.

"There will be exciting and eye-popping digital activities for the whole family over the coming months, ranging from digital tourism to news groups to online gaming.

"And, of course, we will continue to welcome school groups for a variety of topics."

STATE-OF-ART DIGI-TABLE MAKES INTERNET ACCESSIBLE TO EVERYONE AS IT'S SUCH ...

AN EASY *touch*

Dedicated volunteers spent a dozen years transcribing some of the last words of brave soldiers who perished on the bloody battlefields of the First World War from their ...

Diaries from the trenches



Sunday 27th June, 1915

Dear Mother,

Just received Lizzie's Letter (first one to Date) and also one from Maw & Arthur Cusack and Molly. It was a blow to me to hear you were still unwell but I hope and trust that your holiday at Aunt Kate's has brought you back to yourself again, and also that when the holidays come, you take the advantage of another fortnight's rest.

Well Mother about myself, I'm keeping A1 now, and pushing through this life as best I can. It's not a pleasant one but its got to be done. Things have been very quiet here lately but, as the saying goes, there's always a calm before a storm. We've been resting now since Thursday, so that I think we'll be going back to the trenches tonight.

Well Mother, as there's nothing more to say at present, I'll start summing up give my best love to Liz and all at home, and tell all my friends I was asking for them. Tell Maw Cusack I got her letter alright, also one from Arthur, and that I'll answer them as soon as possible.

I'll draw to a close now, with the hope that it won't be many weeks or months before were sailing back to Bonnie Scotland.

From Your Loving Son

Tuddle Bonny
XXX

This is the poignant last letter Private John Gray, left of the 7th Battalion Scottish Rifles sent to his mother. Sadly, Private Gray was killed on June, 28, 1915 during the 7th Battalion's attack on Gully Ravine at Gallipoli, Dardanelles, just the day after he wrote these final words to his mum ...



IT took more than a dozen years for volunteers and museum officers to painstakingly transcribe military diaries from the First World War and the poignant task was finally completed last year.

In 2001, volunteers from the Lanarkshire Family History Society embarked on a project to transcribe the First World War battalion war diaries of The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles), held by South Lanarkshire Leisure & Culture's Museum service.

By August 2005, the volunteers working on the project had reformed themselves to become The Friends of Low Parks Museum Society and the task continued.

There are currently four volunteers active with the society who have all been involved with the project for more than 10 years, transcribing original material onto laptop computers provided by The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) Regimental Trustees.

At the end of the project, the volunteers transcribed 24 battalion war diaries of The Cameronians.

This includes 16 diaries from the First World War and six from the Second World War, as well as war diaries from the 1936 campaign in Palestine and the Malayan Emergency of the 1950s.

The volunteers also managed to transcribe, with help from Campbell Thomson of the Lanarkshire Yeomanry Group, the First World War diary of the Lanarkshire Yeomanry.

The original war diaries are important historical artefacts in their own right, having been produced on the fields of battle in the First World War trenches of France, Belgium and Gallipoli, to the Second World War deserts of North Africa and the jungles of Burma.

War diaries are an official record of a battalion's movements and activities while on campaign.

They describe the battles and operations that each battalion took part in, often detailing numbers of men wounded, killed or reported missing, as well as recording examples of men being awarded medals for bravery.

The diaries from the First World War were generally

hand-written by an officer at the end of each day, or at the first opportunity if the battalion had been involved in an attack or battle, while those from the Second World War were often typed on a manual typewriter.

Barrie Duncan, Assistant Museums Officer, explained: "The diaries themselves are often in poor condition, written on fragile carbon-copy paper with fading text that is difficult to read.

"It was for these reasons that having transcriptions of the diaries was desirable and we can't thank all of our volunteer Friends of the Low Parks Museum Society enough for their momentous effort, dedication and hard work. Transcribed copies allow

easy access to the fantastic information held within each diary while, at the same time, reduce the need for museum staff and researchers to handle the original documents and risk further deterioration of these important documents."

The transcriptions are now stored digitally and are key-word searchable, making it very easy to search for individual names, places and battles.

"The transcriptions have proved of immense value to museum staff carrying out research for our exhibitions on the history of The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) and also in answering the hundreds of research enquiries submitted to the Museum Service each year," says Barrie.

"The transcribed diaries have also been used by numerous academics, authors and genealogists carrying out their own research."

By their nature, the war diaries often describe battlefield action in great detail, regularly reporting high numbers of casualties.

One such period that sticks in the mind of Alan Johnstone, a volunteer with The Friends since 2002, was the ill-fated Gallipoli campaign of 1915.

Says Alan: "Having only arrived at Gallipoli two weeks earlier, the 7th and 8th Battalions of The Cameronians were involved in battle on 28th June 1915 at a place called Gully Ravine. The casualties among both battalions that day were extremely high - 720 officers and men killed, wounded or missing in one single day of fighting. What a tragedy."

Allan Colthart, who has volunteered with the project since its inception, made a sobering observation regarding the handwriting in the diaries.

"On several occasions, I noticed that the handwriting would change," he says.

"In at least one instance this was because the officer responsible for compiling the diary had been killed or wounded, with the next entry in the diary made by his replacement."

The war diaries is not the only project the Friends have undertaken for the Museum Service.

They have also photographed and indexed 13 volumes of The Cameronians' enlistment books from the 1920s and early 1930s.

A series of letters covering the period 1794-1817 relating to the formation and early years of the Perthshire Light Infantry have also been transcribed by the Friends.

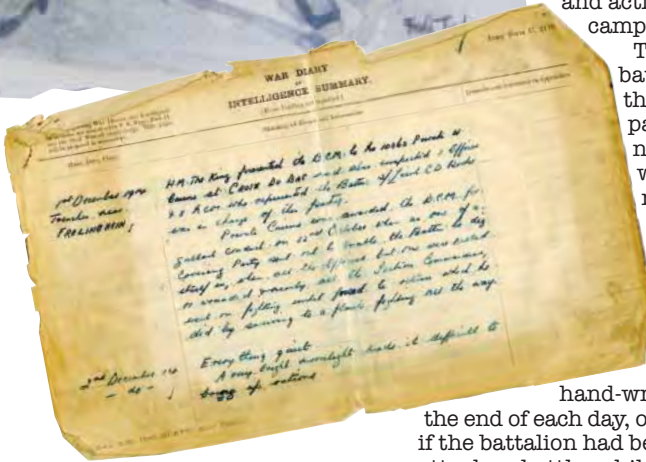
And they are currently transcribing a number of personal letters and diaries from the museum's First World War collections, which will be a great boost in the run-up to this year's centenary commemorations of the conflict.

"A good relationship has built up between the volunteers and staff over the years," says Barrie.

"We would like to thank and acknowledge the huge contribution all the volunteers, past and present, have made over the years in helping us develop our collections and improve access to the wonderful stories contained within these fascinating documents.

"We would like to thank, in particular, Marie, Irene, Alan and Allan for all their hard work and dedication over the past 12 years."

● **All the material transcribed by the Friends of Low Parks Museum Society, and from earlier projects, can be viewed by appointment. Please contact Low Parks Museum for details - 01698 328232 or email lowparksmuseum@southlanarkshireleisure.co.uk**



NEWSCHOOL OF *thinking*

WHAT EVERY PARENT NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT THE INTRODUCTION OF NEW 'NATIONAL' QUALIFICATIONS AND HOW THEY WILL AFFECT THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION AND PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE.
REPORT BY
JOAN McFADDEN

SCOTLAND'S unique education system has been undergoing a radical transformation over the past decade in the form of Curriculum for Excellence.

At the start of the August term last year, the latest changes came into effect, including the phasing out of Standard Grade exams, along with Intermediates.

The focus is on giving pupils a "broad general education" during the first three years of their secondary education, with the emphasis on developing a range of knowledge and skills relevant to life, learning and work.

According to the Scottish Government, Curriculum for Excellence "goes beyond a narrow focus on exams" and gives teachers the flexibility to deliver "a broad and deep general education" from the age of three until the end of third year.

At the beginning of fourth year, pupils move into the 'senior phase' and prepare for their new National 3, National 4 and National 5 qualifications.

Schools have worked with parents and parent councils in deciding how many National Qualifications its pupils will take, varying from six to eight, and making sure each individual pupil is able to cope with the level of study required.

In S4, maths and English will be compulsory National Qualifications for pupils.

The core subjects of physical education, personal and social education and religious and moral education will also continue to be compulsory, although these courses will not necessarily lead to National Qualifications.

There are some important changes in the way the courses are set up and how assessments take place.

The majority of pupils will be able to cope with National 4 courses, which are made up of units and an assessment, known as an added value unit.

Added value is part of the course that tests the pupil across all of the units they have studied.

It shows that the pupil acquired skills, knowledge and understanding in every area of the subject.

For example, in National 4 Practical Woodworking, pupils work on three units, followed by an added value unit where their finished





product uses the knowledge gained in all three units.

To achieve National 4, pupils need to pass all units plus the added value unit assessment.

National 4 assessments are set and marked by class teachers, though the work completed can be checked at three points in the year by the Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA).

This means sending off evidence to the SQA or a visit to the school by a verifier to ensure a consistent standard across schools nationally.

While pupils will sit class tests to achieve the award, there is no traditional end-of-year exams at National 4. This style of assessment fits the way many further education colleges assess their work and should better prepare pupils for this type of studying when they leave school.

National 5 courses usually consist of three units, plus one or two external assessments that are generally an exam and/or an assignment.

The assignment is usually done in school under controlled conditions but marked externally.

It allows pupils to go into the exam having already 'banked' marks and the proportion of the total marks varies from subject to subject.

The external exams for National 5 take place towards the end of the school year in May or June, with these dates set by the SQA.

Pupils must pass all the Units plus the external assessments to gain National 5, graded A to D.

Previously, pupils were presented for Standard Grades at Foundation/General or General/Credit levels, which provided a safety net to ensure some qualifications were gained, even if they did not achieve the top level.

Under the new structure, one of the main changes is that, if a pupil fails National 5, they will not automatically be granted a National 4 qualification.

In South Lanarkshire, schools are addressing this by ensuring pupils cover work for National 4 and where appropriate National 5.

The decision about whether a pupil should be taking National 4 or 5 in a particular subject can be taken at a variety of stages throughout the school year.

Teachers will regularly check the work and assessments of pupils and, if they are coping well with National 5 work, will continue to keep them at this level. However, it

is possible that, if during the year, pupils are not coping with the work of National 5, they may be presented for National 4 instead.

Pupils and parents in South Lanarkshire are being kept updated about all these key changes, with schools organising parents' events and providing information on their websites.

Staff are always ready and willing to answer questions and are aware of the importance of keeping parents as well informed as the pupils.

Tony McDaid, Head of Education (Curriculum and Quality) at South Lanarkshire Council, welcomed the changes and said the new exam structure would deliver long-term benefits.

"The new National Qualifications have been designed to allow pupils to gain recognition for the knowledge and skills they have been developing within Curriculum for Excellence, better preparing them for life beyond school," he added.

"The main questions are likely to come from parents of pupils in fourth year who are studying for the National 4 and National 5 qualifications."

"Schools and teachers continue to work hard to ensure pupils benefit from the introduction of new qualifications. There are lots of websites and information available on the new National Qualifications.

"Parents should also continue to contact their school to discuss any specific issues."

As in the past, example question papers and other support materials are available to help pupils revise and prepare, and to help parents understand and support them.

Changes are also in store for fifth and sixth year pupils when redesigned Highers are introduced in 2014/15 and Advanced Highers in 2015/16.

This means that ongoing communication and discussion between schools, pupils and parents is vital to ensure everyone knows how the new system works and that pupils are supported during this time of change.

● Further information from:
The Scottish Qualifications Authority – www.sqa.org.uk
Education Scotland – www.education.scotland.gov.uk/parentzone
BBC – www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize
The National Parent Forum of Scotland <https://blogs.glow.scotland.org.uk/glowblogs/NPF/>
SPTC – www.sptc.info/

JOANNA Kilpatrick has developed an amazing ability to get the best out of the worst, even when she was the victim of a random act of violence.

"I was out with friends four years ago and was attacked for no reason by a group of girls," explains Joanna, who lives in East Kilbride with her husband, Robert, and two children, Keir, nine, and seven-year-old Ava.

"It was an absolutely terrifying experience and I was subsequently awarded criminal compensation, which I decided to invest in a bridal business."

Before she had a family, Joanna, 37, worked in the travel business but always had an interest in the bridal industry.

"That started when Robert and I got married 10 years ago and I couldn't believe some of the poor customer service," she says.

"There was a real lack of personal service and a sense of all the customers being on a conveyor belt, sometimes almost tripping over each other in changing rooms.

"It's such an important day and such a big buy that I couldn't help feeling I could make the whole experience so much more pleasant."

She started Bibbidi Bobbidi Boo Bridal Boutique from her front room, offering a one-to-one bridal service that proved so popular she soon converted her double garage into a studio.

"I contacted people who were selling second-hand bridal gowns and concentrated on providing dresses for customers who weren't a standard small size and word got around," says Joanna.

"I started getting enquiries from shops and bridal shows wanting me to sell ex-samples, which was great. Then the bridal company Sophia Tolli got in touch and said, 'we love what you do and would like to supply you direct'."

That was in November 2012 and Joanna found business premises within a week and contacted Robert Tomkins at South Lanarkshire Council Business Support and they arranged to meet to discuss her plans.

Between January and March 2013, Joanna's business had a five-figure turnover with a grant from SLC Business Support helping towards exhibition costs, as well as some infrastructure improvements.

"That was really useful but, as much as anything, it was Robert's support and belief in my business that meant the most," says Joanna.

"This is practical, useful support, such as funding a young apprentice, and being available for any queries.

"By the end of last year, my turnover was six figures and I now have six staff, as well as taking over other premises to facilitate expansion, which the council helped with by providing a business grant."

According to Joanna, the secrets to her success are her own business confidence and the help she received from the council.

"I have great faith in myself but I'm so grateful for the council's support," she adds.

● Visit www.bibbidi-bobbidi-boo-bridal-boutique.co.uk

When Lindsay Barbour launched Lily's Special Events in March 2012, it was the culmination of a long-held ambition.

After completing an Honours Degree in Interior design at Glasgow Caledonian University, Lindsay spent two years gaining experience in areas, such as window dressing, before starting her own business.

"I applied for funding through the Princes Trust Youth Business Scot-

land – and was actually regional winner of the award – and I'm now discussing expansion through South Lanarkshire Council Business Support," says the 27-year-old.

"What I like is being able to discuss my plans with them, knowing that they have the expertise to understand what I've done so far and also the potential for expansion.

"This is a specialised and highly competitive area, covering all the major events in people's lives. Everyone wants their event to be unique, which is a particular pressure.

"Weddings are my main line of business but I also do christenings, proms, engagements and special birthdays – any event where people want decor and accessories to reflect how important it is."

Lindsay had a table display in a local restaurant that caught Joanna's eye, so she got in touch and they discovered how beneficial the connection could be for both businesses.

"We're not in competition but rather overlap, which is working well for both of us," says Lindsay.

Up until now, she has worked from home but, due to her success, she is now considering business premises.

● www.lilyspecialevents.co.uk

Frances O'Neill decided to go for a completely new career in 2012 after taking a severance package as a lecturer and began by going back to studying with a screenwriting course at Napier University.

She then set up Global Treasure Apps but one business wasn't enough for Frances and she also started Sainted Media, which publishes children's books and graphic novels.

"Digital publishing gives you an instant, worldwide audience, which I'm taking advantage of by translating my books into 20 languages," says Frances.

A South Lanarkshire Council business grant of £1000 towards external consultancy costs helped produce a book on St Andrews, which is voiced by TV presenter Neil Oliver.

She plans to distribute the books across a range of devices in several different languages.

The launch of her biggest success to date almost came about by accident but she was quick to pick up on an idea that is now making a big impact.

"I was entering a competition for tourism innovation funding and was planning to do pilgrim trails, when my friend Gillian suggested a tourism app offering treasure trails," says Frances.

"I launched Global Treasure Apps, which adds value for visitor attractions and city walks by providing location-based quizzes and now has over 40 treasure hunts around Scotland and Ireland."

● www.globaltreasureapps.com

Stephen Keating, Business Support and Property Development Manager, says: "It is really encouraging to see entrepreneurs taking the plunge into the world of running their own business.

"This is a huge step that cannot be underestimated and South Lanarkshire Council's Business Development team is delighted to be able to help.

"Hopefully, our new online application system should make it even easier for businesses to enquire about support 24/7 via our website.

"We connect people to the most relevant support, whether it is financial or talking to someone."

● For more info on South Lanarkshire Council Business Grants visit www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/businessgrants or call the Business Development Team on 01698 455143 or email business.support@southlanarkshire.gov.uk



LADIES WHO *launch*

MEET THREE WOMEN WHO HAVE SUCCESSFULLY TAKEN THE PLUNGE AND STARTED THEIR OWN BUSINESSES, HELPED BY GRANTS AND ADVICE FROM SOUTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL'S BUSINESS SUPPORT. BY JOAN MCFADDEN



Frances O'Neill, main, Lindsay Barbour, below, and Joanna Kilpatrick, below right, and Joanna with her business partner Yvonne McNicol, far left





RAPPING TEACHER USES HIP HOP
TO SWITCH PUPILS ON TO POETRY

FIGHTING

TALK



A SOUTH Lanarkshire teacher has started a 'word war' in the classroom, *writes Sarah Burrows.*

Peter Kelly's unique approach to second-year English at Hamilton's Holy Cross High School has seen him introduce 'hip hop' as a means of improving literacy.

The 35-year-old 'Teacher Ambassador' for the Scottish Book Trust came up with the concept when asked by the group to create an interactive approach to a poetry slam.

And with this 'word war' was born.

Teenagers in his classes quickly bought in to the new teaching style with increased enthusiasm for language and they knuckled down to produce 'lyrics' worthy of an end-of-project 'rap battle' with their peers.

"The results have been fascinating and, although some pupils were a bit reserved to start with, their communication skills improved, their listening and reasoning skills developed and, most importantly for an English class, their understanding of word pattern and rhyme has soared," explains Peter.

And he is comfortable drawing parallels between the work of rappers and that of the traditional poet, more commonly associated with traditional English lessons.

He adds: "There is the wordplay and the rhythm of the sentences and the rhymes themselves. But, beyond that, there is a sophistication to the best of rap that sees metaphor continued beyond any shallow insult.

"Rap battles are very clever, very witty and demand that the participants create a form of poetry on the spur of the moment. This seems to have a resonance, particularly for boys. It is very difficult to approach the subject of poetry with boys because they see it as a bit soft, or flowery.

"But putting poetry into a rap context with a competitive element is a good way to raise attainment. Having said that, girls are involved as well and enjoy it just as much."

Following the success of the project, Peter has delivered training sessions to colleagues throughout South Lanarkshire and presented a seminar on the topic at this year's Scottish Learning Festival.

The Word War project has also been developed into a South Lanarkshire-wide rap battle between Holy Cross High, Carlisle High and Calderside Academy. They conducted class battles, and class v class battles, before meeting for an inter-schools battle at Christmas.

To kick off this inter-schools competition, an 'MC' Event was staged at council headquarters in November.

All of the pupils involved formed the audience as three of the most skilled and high-profile figures currently working in Scottish hip hop – Dave Hook, of Stanley Odd, Louie, of Hector Bizerk, and Darren McGarvey, AKA Loki, left with Peter, took to the stage.

Peter said: "This was a very exciting opportunity for pupils to hear professionals speaking about their introduction to rap, their experiences in education and their approach to writing and performance, as well as demonstrating their skills as poets in the rap form."



PRIMARY pupils have teamed up with the council's countryside rangers to attract more wildlife to the park crowned Scotland's favourite.

Bird Buddies from Kirklandpark Primary School have been working with Grounds Services Landscape Development Team and the Countryside Rangers to erect 10 bird boxes at Strathaven Park, as part of its on-going Green Flag programme.

The youngsters were on hand to watch the bird boxes being put in place beside the wildflower meadow, which was introduced last year and will ensure an ongoing food supply for the birds during the breeding season.

The Bird Buddies have also been gifted 20 more bird boxes by the council's Countryside Rangers and Ground Services Team that will be erected in and around the school grounds and throughout the Strathaven area for all of the community to enjoy.

Many members of the local community are already actively helping to further improve their park and the council's long-term aim is to set up a friends' group to continue to involve local people in the park.

Strathaven Park was one of a record-breaking 51 parks and green spaces in Scotland awarded the prestigious Green Flag last year.

And following a UK-wide public vote, Strathaven Park also scooped first place in Scotland, and fourth place in the UK-wide People's Choice awards.

● If you would like more information about the formation of the friends group then please phone Countryside Ranger Susan McNeish on 01698 543 425.

BIRDS OF A *feather*

PUPILS TURN BIRD BUDDIES TO HELP ATTRACT WILDLIFE TO A LOCAL PARK, AS MHAIRI ANDERSON REPORTS







Pupils from St John's Primary in Hamilton help spread the word about the problem of pollution posed by idling car engines during the school run



DON'T IDLE AWAY KIDS' *health*

COUNCIL LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN TO
REDUCE AIR POLLUTION AROUND
SOUTH LANARKSHIRE SCHOOLS,
MHAIRI ANDERSON REPORTS

CHILDREN'S health has become the key focus in a council campaign aimed at encouraging parents to switch off stationary car engines during the school run.

South Lanarkshire is the first local authority in Scotland to take decisive action to curb the problem and say £20 on-the-spot fines may be issued if a driver fails to comply with a request to switch off their engine when stationary.

Council staff have been patrolling drop-off points around local schools in recent months in a bid to raise awareness about air pollution caused by idling engines.

Shirely Clelland, Head of Fleet and Environmental Services, said the council was unaware of any other authority in Scotland taking such a proactive stance on air pollution.

"There is a legal requirement regarding inappropriate engine idling and we have decided to focus near schools, as children are more susceptible to the effects of air pollution," she adds.

Council officers will also be handing out leaflets explaining just why engine idling is so potentially harmful to the environment and to the health of young children.

They will also be highlighting other ways of doing the school run, such as walking and cycling or using public transport.

"Leave the car behind and use more active ways to travel to school," suggests Shirley.

"Children and adults all benefit from being more physically active – use the school commute to improve your health and reduce pollution."

Winter was specifically chosen to launch the campaign as there is a greater temptation to keep the engine running during the school run when temperatures are low.

"This can have a negative impact on the quality of air – the air our children have to breathe," said Shirley.

"Children are more vulnerable to air pollution because they breathe 50 per cent more air per pound of body weight than adults.

"Exhaust emissions from vehicles contain a range of pollutants such as carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, hydrocarbons and particulate matter.

"Air pollutants irritate and cause inflammation of the lungs, as well as lowering resistance to respiratory infections such as influenza. People with heart and lung conditions are particularly susceptible and 62 per cent of people with asthma report that traffic fumes make their conditions worse."

Councillor Hamish Stewart, Chair of the Community Services Committee, urged people to get behind the campaign.

"To support our campaign, we would very much appreciate everyone's help," says Councillor Stewart.

"Many people idle their vehicles because they think it is better for their cars or uses less fuel.

"This is not the case and we must protect our children all we can from the harmful pollutants we cause by keeping our engines running while stationary."

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

Walk, cycle or use public transport

Leave the car behind and use more active ways to travel to school. Children and adults all benefit from being more physically active – use the school run to improve your health and reduce pollution.

Park further away from the school

Consider driving only part of the way to school and walking the rest of the way. This reduces the amount of pollution at the school particularly at the school drop off and pick up points.

Turn off your engine

As a rough guide, if you are going to be parked for more than 30 seconds turn off your engine.

Vital *lifeline*

PASSENGERS GIVE GLOWING TESTIMONIALS FOR THE BUS SERVICE THEY SAY IS A 'SAVING GRACE', ENABLING THEM TO GET OUT AND ABOUT AND MAINTAIN THEIR INDEPENDENCE.
KIRSTEN SWEENEY REPORTS

A door-to-door bus service has been providing a crucial lifeline for more than 25 years for vulnerable members of the community who may otherwise feel isolated in their own homes.

The MyBus initiative aims to reach those who live in remote areas, the elderly, or live with a disability, who find accessing public transport generally difficult.

It is a wheelchair-accessible service that can be booked in advance and aims to give people greater freedom and independence at the click of a mouse or simple phone call.

Uddingston pensioner Ann Harper has been using the MyBus service for around 20 years and says she doesn't know what she would do without it.

"I am a wheelchair user and I am now unable to get in and out of cars," she explains. "The weight of my wheelchair can't be accommodated in a lot of vehicles."

The service is a real life-saver for Ann, who had an unfortunate experience when trying to use the main bus service.

"I tried to get on the local buses once and, unfortunately, I got stuck as the ramps often don't go down far enough," says Ann.

"And we don't have Hackney taxis in our area, which would possibly be suitable."

Ann frequently uses MyBus on Tuesdays and Thursdays to go shopping, to go out for lunch and for trips to the bingo and for

other outings depending on her plans.

She adds: "Some days I take the bus with my mum or my daughters if we are all going out shopping, or for lunch and it's lovely that we are able to travel together – they all think it is great.

"I was fascinated that a service existed that could take you where you wanted to go and at the time you wanted to go there.

"The service is my saving grace – I don't know what I would do without it."

According to Ann, the service, though good from the start, has improved over the years with an additional number of buses making a great difference and she has nothing but praise for the drivers.

"The drivers are second to none," she adds. "Especially John on the M961, who is more than just a driver – he is a friend to everyone.

"The staff you speak with on the phone are all lovely, too.

"It's a personal service. They take the time to get to know you and are so helpful. They always try very hard to accommodate the time you request."

Ann has also made many new



friends thanks to the MyBus service, with nine regular passengers meeting up every Thursday. "It is a lot of the same faces and you get to know people," says Ann.

"For some of the elderly customers this is maybe the only people they get a chance to have a chat with.

"We all appreciate the company on the bus and enjoy the chat so much we don't want to get off."

Indeed, Ann is such a fan of the service that she would love to see it extended to go from Uddingston to East Kilbride and reckon there would be plenty of demand for it.

"I have no hesitation in recommending the MyBus service to other people – indeed, I already do," she says.

"If I see someone who doesn't get out, I tell them about the service and give them the enquiry line number.

"Sometimes people don't realise it is available or that they



can use it. MyBus, for a lot of people, is their only means of getting out and about."

The Braehead Village Hall lunch club have been using MyBus for around seven years.

Many of the 77 men and women who attend the club on either a Tuesday or Thursday would be unable to get there if it wasn't for the MyBus service.

They travel from villages including Forth, Carnwarth and Braehead.

Mrs Mary Gibson organises the bus on behalf of the lunch club and first started using the service after her husband died.

Mrs Gibson says: "As I don't drive my husband used to take care of all our transport needs.

"Any time I needed to make a journey, he would be the designated driver. Having MyBus means I can still make the most of my life by getting out."

Once Mrs Gibson started using the service she offered to organise a pick-up for other

members who were using taxis.

"I've used the service for seven years to attend the lunch club and also to go to the shops, the doctors and for other weekly errands," says Mrs Gibson.

"Having the MyBus service means I can still make the most of life by getting out and about. There's no way for me to get about Lanark otherwise."

South Lanarkshire Councillor and SPT Vice Chair, Denis McKenna, recognises the essential role MyBus plays in local communities.

"This vital service makes a real difference to the communities it serves," he says.

"I would encourage anyone in South Lanarkshire, who hasn't considered it before, to give it a go. If you live in a rural area poorly served by public transport, or if you are having difficulty using conventional bus services, you should really take advantage of this excellent door-to-door facility." Run by

Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT), which receives funding from the council, MyBus is a free service for Strathclyde Concession holders.

It is a bookable bus service that takes customers directly from their home to their destination and can be used for shopping, visiting friends, attending local clubs, GP appointments, hospital visits and much more.

Bookings can be made up to two hours before travelling but booking the day before is advised.

Users are reminded to have their destination and date they wish to travel to hand when booking a time slot.

Before using the service you must hold a Strathclyde Concessionary travel card and register with the MyBus service.

● **More info and application forms are available from Q and A offices, at Strathclyde Partnership for Transport offices, or by phoning 0845 128 4025.**

'WE DON'T JUDGE
PEOPLE ON WHY
THEY ARE IN DEBT
BUT IT IS CARDS-
ON-THE-TABLE
TIME AND WE
NEED THEM TO
GIVE US FULL
DETAILS OF
EVERYTHING THEY
OWE AND
EVERYTHING THEY
HAVE COMING IN'



POACHER TURNED GAME *keeper*



FORMER SHERIFF'S OFFICER
NOW WORKS AS A COUNCIL
DEBT ADVISOR, HELPING
PEOPLE FIND SOLUTIONS TO
THEIR FINANCIAL PROBLEMS,
CATHIE RUSSELL REPORTS

TWO years of surgery and rehabilitation following injuries received in a serious car accident transformed Joe McMonagle's life in more ways than one.

Before the accident, Joe had worked as a sheriff officer enforcing court orders against people who were in debt.

But his ordeal served as a game changer and, when he got back on his feet, he decided going back to his old job was no longer an option.

Joe eventually decided to embark on a new career providing debt advice with the council's Money Matters Team.

"I came to the conclusion that I was disenchanted with my job as a sheriff officer and that I would rather help people who were experiencing financial problems," he explains.

"Don't get me wrong, sheriff officers are decent people and there is more protection for debtors under Scots Law than exists in other countries.

"But the accident made me appreciate just how quickly someone's life can change. Debts that seem perfectly manageable one day can be impossible to deal with the next, particularly if you lose your job, take ill or have a relationship breakdown.

"Regardless of the reason why people have debt problems, we can usually help them to sort things out."

And Joe advises anyone who finds themselves falling behind with payments to make an appointment with the council's Money Matters team as soon as they can.

Having taken that step, it's vitally important that people are completely upfront and honest about their debt issues, in order for advisors to give the necessary advice accurately.

"We'll sit down with the clients and explain the remit of our service, which is free and completely confidential," he adds.

"We don't judge people on why they are in debt but it is cards-on-the-table time, as we need the clients to give us full details of their circumstances, the debts they owe and complete a financial statement."

According to Joe, they have a very wide spectrum of clients from all types of careers and backgrounds.

"I have helped professionals like teachers, medical staff, company directors and police officers, as well as many people who, by any standard, have very little income," he says.

"I'm keen that people turn to Money Matters Advice Service or the Citizens Advice Bureau for assistance because there are debt management companies that charge for their services.

"We are free and completely impartial and the advice we give is what's best for the clients given their particular circumstances – we're not influenced by any financial reward."

When a money advisor meets with clients, they will ascertain their circumstances, maximise income, verify their liability for the debts and prepare a financial statement detailing their income and expenditure, which is verified by pay slips, benefit award letters, bank statements and bills.

Where appropriate, budgeting advice will be provided to help improve the clients' finances. For example, Joe recently worked with a couple who were able to improve their budget by £200 a month after they reviewed what they spent on their food shopping, insurances, mobile phones and satellite television.

The verified financial statement identifies the level of surplus income – if any – and, depending on the client's circumstances, that will determine what options are available.

The options could include the Scottish Government's Debt Arrangement Scheme; voluntary repayment plan; token payments; moratorium; full and final settlement; protected trust deed; bankruptcy or write-off.

The money advisor will fully explain the appropriate options and provide any relevant literature to the clients, who are encouraged to take their time before making their decision.

Usually the money advice process can take several appointments before a final decision is reached and this will depend on the individual case and if there are any complex issues, such as legal action by creditors.

Whatever the client's decision, the money advisor will contact the creditors and negotiate on their behalf.

"Nowadays, I work mainly on training and providing specialist support for our money advisors but I still find working directly with clients very worthwhile," says Joe. "And it's great to see the change in people when they start to see the light at the end of the tunnel. It can be emotionally demanding and it's not unusual for some clients to break down and cry. They can really be at the end of their tether. But we can help them to get their lives back on track."

● To make an appointment with one of our money advisors at Money Matters Advice Service, call 0303 123 1008.

ICE RINK UPGRADE GETS A SKATE ON



ICONIC FACILITY IS TO BE TRANSFORMED IN MULTI-MILLION-POUND REDEVELOPMENT DESIGNED TO MAINTAIN EAST KILBRIDE'S STATUS AS SHOPPING AND LEISURE MECCA. SPECIAL REPORT BY **JAMES DAVITT**

A NEW multi-million-pound ice rink leisure facility is to be created in East Kilbride.

An initial £1.5million being spent on upgrading and improving the ice rink by South Lanarkshire Council is likely to be added to by a variety of new family-orientated restaurants and a new gym by the owners of the EK shopping and leisure centre.

Advanced discussions are underway with a number of high-profile restaurant chains and a gym operator, with all the new elements operating with the existing cinema complex.

The full development programme – which is scheduled to start this year and could be completed in late 2015 – will also see major improvements to the public areas throughout the Olympia mall.

Upgrading work on the ice rink will begin later on this summer and is expected to take around 12 months to complete.

The developments follow months of work by the East Kilbride Task Force, which includes representatives from the council, Scottish Enterprise, Business Gateway, Lanarkshire Enterprise Services, Skills Development Scotland, Lanarkshire Chamber of Commerce, South Lanarkshire College and Cogent on behalf of EK, East Kilbride.

Council Leader Eddie McAvoiy said: "This is fantastic news for East Kilbride. Creating a leisure hub within the shopping centre is something we are delighted to support and I am sure will be a great success.

"The ice rink is still very well used, with

more than 100,000 visitors each year.

"Unfortunately, it is now around 25 years old and needs a major refurbishment if it is to continue to be fit for purpose.

"This announcement safeguards the future of the ice rink and ensures it will be at the heart of this exciting, new leisure development."

Richard Low, a partner at Cogent, said: "The opportunity of building on the cinema anchor by providing a fantastic new ice rink and, hopefully, lots of new restaurants and a state-of-the-art gym will create a fabulous leisure hub that will keep East Kilbride shopping centre vibrant long into the night.

"This development will build on EK's position as one of Scotland's leading retail and leisure destinations.

"The proposed new development is a key part of our ongoing development programme. Our aim is to deliver a high-quality, family-focused leisure destination that will complement the improved retail experience we are delivering across the centre.

"There is still a lot of work to be done and we appreciate that the closure of a number of units and the food court may be disruptive,.

"However, all of this is necessary to deliver a top-class leisure development that meets the aspirations of our customers and of East Kilbride."

The leisure development announcement follows a number of significant retail openings in East Kilbride, including the launch of a 22,000 sq ft flagship H&M store in Centre

West and the arrival of BANK Fashion, JD Sports and jewellery store Pandora in the Plaza.

"I am also delighted that both home-bargains and JD Wetherspoon have arrived in the shopping centre," adds Mr Low.

"These operators will serve as strong anchors to the Princes Mall/Princes Square end of the shopping centre."

The ice rink is currently operated by South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture Trust and is held under a lease by the council, with a sub-lease to the trust. This arrangement would continue once the work has been completed and a new 25-year lease agreed with the town centre owners.

Meanwhile, the Executive Committee also endorsed the council's ongoing lead role in the East Kilbride Task Force.


Approval was also given to the Task Force's Action Plan, which sets out the focus of the council and the other key partners in terms of investment over the next three to five years.

The Action Plan has four key themes:

- A vibrant town centre
- competitive business location
- An attractive location to live, work and relax
- An education and skills centre.

Councillor McAvoiy added: "These announcements are confirmation of the hard work being carried out by the council and its partners on the task force. The Action Plan gives a clear direction and focus for the town in the short, medium and long-term."





SOUTH Lanarkshire is set to play a key role during Glasgow's Commonwealth Games this summer, from providing world-class training facilities for international athletes to the dozens of volunteers who have enlisted to join the army of Clyde-siders, writes *Mhairi Anderson*.

The 11-day games, which begin on July 23, will see 4500 athletes compete in 17 sports across 14 venues. As a neighbouring authority, several South Lanarkshire Council services are already involved with the Games organising body working to ensure the smooth delivery of the massive event.

And many local people will be among the army of Clyde-siders, as the 15,000 volunteers are known, serving as the friendly faces of the games and being the first point of contact for visitors, both British and international.

Health and council chiefs are also determined to ensure the Commonwealth Games deliver a lasting legacy for South Lanarkshire and are focusing on the correlation between promoting sport, healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle.

The selection of the Dollan Aqua Centre in East Kilbride as a training venue for the Commonwealth Games has given both the town and the wider area a tremendous boost in terms of profile, ensuring the town is set to play a vital role in the biggest sporting event ever to come to Scotland.

A £6.9million refurbishment in 2010 saw the provision of state-of-the-art swimming facilities at the leisure complex, which boasts one of only five 50m competition pools in Scotland.

Gerry Campbell, general manager of South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture Ltd, said: "Being part of the excitement of the 2014 Commonwealth Games is an opportunity not to be missed and will raise the profile of the Dollan Aqua Centre worldwide.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to show the world just what we have to offer here in South Lanarkshire."

The pool will be closed to the public for a 10-day period to allow for scheduled athlete training.

Gerry added: "We will work with Glasgow 2014 organisers to look at opportunities to invite South Lanarkshire swimmers to come along to one of the training sessions, offering an opportunity to see these athletes train at close quarters.

"However, prior to this 10-day pool closure, our customers may well find themselves swimming alongside the world-class swimmers as two lanes of the pool will be set aside for them at specific times of the day.

A Glasgow 2014 spokesperson said: "Training venues are a crucial extension of the facilities required for them at Games time."

And Council Leader Eddie McAvoys said: "The council is working closely with the organisers of the Games. They are right on our doorstep and we must make sure we do all we can to benefit from it.

"The use of the Dollan is just one way in which we can achieve that."

The Glasgow 2014 Queen's Baton Relay is the curtain-raiser to the Commonwealth Games and it will visit 70 nations and territories over a total of 288 days and involve a third of the world's population.

The baton will be relayed by thousands of people throughout the Commonwealth and this iconic symbol of the games will be paraded through South Lanarkshire on Sunday, June 22, before ending its journey at the opening ceremony of the Glasgow Games where the Queen will read her message to the Commonwealth.

Recognising that sport can and does change lives, improves communities and fosters ambitions for a brighter future, South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture (SLLC) has organised a variety of sporting events to inspire youngsters to get active.

This includes SLLC's launch of its new 2014 *Game On* programme, which offers a range of activities across numerous venues so there is something to cater for all ages and abilities, including gymnastics, tennis, football and trampolining.

Meanwhile, Hamilton Active Schools will be running its "Gateway to the Games" event again in June.

It is a chance for all Primary 5 pupils in Hamilton's primary schools to take part in eight Commonwealth sports, such as badminton, athletics, hockey and rugby 7s.

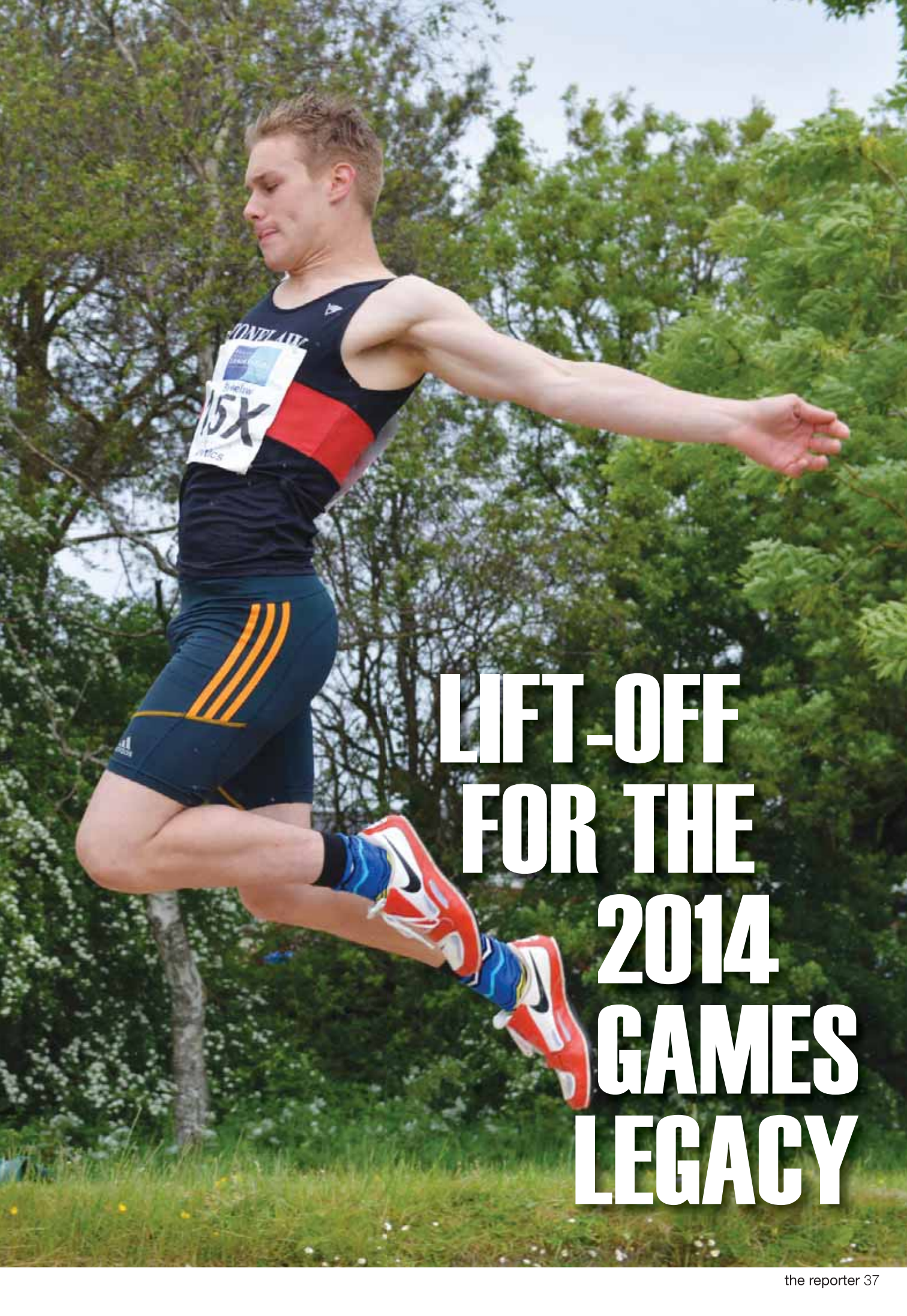
And local clubs in the Hamilton area will be delivering taster sessions to pupils to promote their facilities and activities.

This has proven to be very successful in the past with more than 1700 young people taking part in the event.

Secondary schools have been taking part in 'Giant Heptathlon' and Sport Hall Athletics and 52 primary schools have also been joining in on our Sports Hall athletics programme.

Throughout the school year there have been area netball festivals for all primary schools in South Lanarkshire to play against each other. Secondary schools have also been involved through their annual tournament that continues through to the lead-up to the games.

Health chiefs say that to maintain or improve good health, children should take part in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day of the week. This can be made up of various activities, including walking to school, playing in the playground or more vigorous activities, such as football, gymnastics and running.



LIFT-OFF FOR THE 2014 GAMES LEGACY



Pupils from Carluke High School and Glassford Primary are fully engaged during their regular homework club sessions

GOING *clubbing*

AN ANIMATED DISCUSSION ABOUT DOCTOR WHO AND LEARNING HOW TO PLAY SKIPPING – HOMEWORK WAS NEVER THIS MUCH FUN, WAS IT? PUPILS IN SOUTH LANARKSHIRE ARE DISCOVERING THE BENEFITS OF HOMEWORK CLUBS, THANKS TO SOME FORWARD-THINKING TEACHERS AND DEDICATED PARENTS. **ANNIE STUART** REPORTS.

WHEN Robbie Wilson started to fall behind in his business studies classwork, the first place he turned to was the Early Birds Club.

"I got lots of help and now I'm ahead of the rest of the class," grins the 12-year-old, who is in first year at Carluke High. "Homework club is fun – we do lots of work but there's always something funny to laugh about, too, and we get on well with everyone."

The Early Birds homework club at Carluke High has been running for 18 years and, as the school's head of support for learning Jennifer Magnus explains, it has benefitted hundreds of pupils.

"For all sorts of reasons, some children need some extra support when it comes to homework," she says. "Changes in work patterns, for example, mean it's not always possible for parents to sit down with their children and spend time going over homework."

"And, sometimes, parents struggle to know how to help their children as teaching methods have changed since their day."

She smiles: "For example, when I was at school, we were always taught to 'borrow and pay back' when you are subtracting in maths – but we don't say that any more."

According to Jennifer, some pupils, particularly first years or those new to the school, find it daunting to be at secondary and suddenly be confronted with all kinds of homework from different teachers.

"Helping them catch up, or sort out things which they have struggled to understand in class, allows them to gain in confidence," she adds.

The Early Birds club is open to all pupils, from first to sixth year, with many of the older students eager to help the younger members.

"They often work together, or help each other out with particular issues, and there is a really friendly and positive atmosphere," adds Jennifer, who runs the club with the support of one of her colleagues.

"It's a safe haven for them, where they can relax with friends and not feel under pressure. I am always delighted by the change in pupils after they have come to a few sessions of the club – they have grown in confidence and self-esteem and seem much more able to cope with the challenges of high school."

Today, Robbie is working on some home economics homework – "it's okay – we are making pillowcases at the moment, which I suppose is useful," he says, a little doubtfully, while fifth-year pupil Christopher Sleight is doing English.

"I think the support we get at homework club makes a big difference," he says. "We try to help the younger ones."

"Today, we were talking about the Doctor Who 50th anniversary special – I'm a big Doctor Who fan. It's not just about working hard, although we do that, too. We like chatting about things that interest us."

Christopher's recent efforts in class won him an 'A' in a maths

assessment. "The homework club definitely helped me with that," he smiles. "It's a good club and we know Mrs Magnus is there if we need her."

At Glassford Primary, pro-active parents got together to set up the small, rural primary's first homework club.

Andy McIntosh, chairperson of the Parent Council, whose daughters Hannah, nine, and five-year-old Chloe are in primary five and primary one respectively, says: "Twenty-eight of the 54 children at the school came along and they really enjoyed it."

Headteacher Audrey Donnelly says parents did a fantastic job making the homework club such a success.

"As a school community, we wanted to demonstrate the value and benefit of doing homework because it's an incredibly important part of a child's education," says Audrey.

"By coming along to the club, learning in an informal and appropriate environment, the pupils have not only benefitted in terms of learning, they have also grown in confidence and got to know each other much better, too."

Alison Moon, mum to Tom, 11, who is in primary seven, eight-year-old Matthew, and Gordon, 14, who is at high school, helps to run the homework club.

"As well as homework, we encouraged the children to work together on a range of topics, such as inventing their own games and playing traditional playground games, such as skipping and hopscotch which, of course, bring in all kinds of learning, too, such as counting and language," she explains.

"One of the biggest successes was the way the older children helped the younger ones. It was a fantastic opportunity for the primary sixes and sevens."

Head teacher Audrey agrees: "Volunteering at the homework club will actually help the older pupils to meet part of the criteria for the Junior Award Scheme Scotland, which they are currently working towards. So there have been many added benefits."

Primary seven pupil Emma Grant, 11, says: "It was good getting extra responsibility and being able to help the younger pupils at the homework club. Even though we are a small school, we don't always get to know everyone and this was a good way to meet new friends."

Shelby Adams, eight, said: "I enjoy the homework club very much. I didn't like spelling before I came here but now I do."

For Audrey Donnelly, the benefits for a school in having a homework club are far-reaching.

"As the mother of a child at high school, I know there is quite a jump up in the amount of homework children get between primary and secondary, so you have to plan your week," she says. "Being able to concentrate on your homework and prioritise what needs to be done is a good thing to learn as, after all, time management is such an important life skill."

"The homework club has been so successful that we resumed after the festive break. I hope it has helped pupils – and their parents – understand the value of homework."

MOTHER'S 'BEDROOM TAX' relief

SPECIALIST COUNCIL TEAM HELPED MUM WHEN ALL SEEMED LOST. COULD THEY DO THE SAME FOR YOU? BY **ANDY LIVINGSTONE**

ONE home visit was the turning point for a tenant who was at the end of her tether as a result of benefit changes and could see no way out of her situation.

Now she is urging anyone else in similar circumstances to get in touch with the council's specialist Benefits are Changing team.

The team is aware of the scale of the impact that Welfare Reform has had on individuals and the complex issues many people face, so they look at every situation on its own merits and offer help and advice appropriate to each person.

Tilly Brown had strongly argued her case after being informed that her housing benefit payments would be cut under the UK Government's new under-occupancy rules.

But, frustratingly, she was met with rejection until she was visited in her home by housing officer Gillian Beveridge.

"Suddenly, there was someone there who understood my situation," says Tilly. "And what she achieved for me turned my situation around."

Tilly, 45, lives in a four-bedroom home with her partner and two of her children.

In April, she received a letter telling her that her benefit payments would be reduced, as she had more bedrooms than were deemed needed for her size of household.

However, her two children have severe health issues and

require a high level of care, made all the more difficult as Tilly also suffers from a very debilitating medical condition.

Her son, Bobby, requires 24-hour care and is sometimes awake right through the night, while her daughter, Paris, has a kidney disorder.

Tilly has osteoarthritis of the spine, which is not only agonising but can restrict her movement enormously.

She explains: "We need extra help. My partner is brilliant but there is only so much he can do, so one of my older daughters comes to stay with us up to four nights a week to make the care possible."

The reduction in her benefits created serious financial problems for Tilly and she found it difficult making ends meet.

"I wanted to pay – I paid as much as I could. But I was struggling and I just couldn't manage it all, no matter what I tried," says Tilly.

After fighting without success to explain her need for the extra bedroom and getting nowhere, she turned to the council's Benefits are Changing Team.

"I felt as if no one I spoke to understood anything about my situation. Then Gillian came to see me at home and she got it immediately," adds Tilly.

"She helped me with the forms and explained my situation and, just weeks later, I was given the news that I had never thought I would hear – I

'I FELT AS IF NO ONE I SPOKE TO UNDERSTOOD ANYTHING ABOUT MY SITUATION. THEN GILLIAN CAME TO SEE ME AT HOME AND SHE GOT IT IMMEDIATELY'

had been granted an exemption from the deduction. I could never thank her enough."

According to Gillian, it all boils down to taking the time to grasp the person's situation, which is why personal contact and a home visit are so valuable.

She says: "There's no substitute for meeting someone face-to-face and, once I realised the extent of the difficulties Tilly faced, I was able to pass on the detailed information needed."

Tilly smiled. "She makes it sound so simple but I don't know what I would have done without her.

"Anyone else who is in difficulty with this should just keep going – don't give up – and get in touch with the Benefits are Changing Team.

"They really can help."

Gillian Beveridge, of the Benefits are Changing Team, visits tenant Tilly Brown at her home to assess her situation, right, and Debbie Smith, main



The team is also working closely with the Council's Money Matters service and helping people with fuel costs through its partner organisations. One tenant, for example, met with the team and it became clear that they had a significant problem with fuel debt.

The team has developed a good working relationship with the tenant, who was recently referred to Dea:SL, which specialises in working with tenants to renegotiate repayment of fuel debt.

The outcome was that the fuel debt of more than £3500 was written off and a more affordable and appropriate tariff was put in place for the tenant, who was both delighted and relieved.

Checking to make sure the deduction should be applied

The first thing the Benefits are Changing Team does is to confirm that the under-occupancy deduction should be applied to the person.

By undertaking some simple checks, the team has identified 255 cases where the rules should not be applied.

They then liaised with the council's Benefits and Revenue Team to make the necessary adjustments to have the deduction removed.

Supporting people who wish to move house

The council has put a letting initiative in place that allows it to help households affected by under-occupancy at April, 1, 2013.

The team is working closely with local Housing Offices to identify tenants who would benefit from the initiative.

Assistance can be given to households who have to move to a property with fewer bedrooms.

And incentives can encourage households who would like to move to a larger property, which frees up much-needed one or two-bedroomed properties for other tenants. So the advice is – don't worry – just get in touch.

● **The Benefits are Changing Team will be happy to speak to you on 0303 123 1012 or email benefitsarechanging@southlanarkshire.gov.uk.**

READY, WILLING AND ABLE TO HELP

THE COUNCIL'S BENEFITS ARE CHANGING TEAM IS A SPECIALIST GROUP SET UP TO SUPPORT COUNCIL TENANTS WHO ARE AFFECTED BY WELFARE REFORM CHANGES.

HERE, MANAGER DEBBIE SMITH EXPLAINS HOW THEY CAN HELP AND THE DIFFERENCE THEY ARE MAKING.

Helping people in hardship to get a Discretionary Housing Payment

One of the team's key remits is helping tenants access the additional funding from the Department for Work and Pensions and the Scottish Government – this funding is called Discretionary Housing Payments.

The team has successfully helped more than 900 tenants receive this money, which is paid directly into the rent account.

Confirming whether the person is entitled to protection

People with exceptional and unexpected circumstances out-

with their control may be entitled to 13 or 52 weeks' protection, during which no deduction will be made from their Housing Benefit.

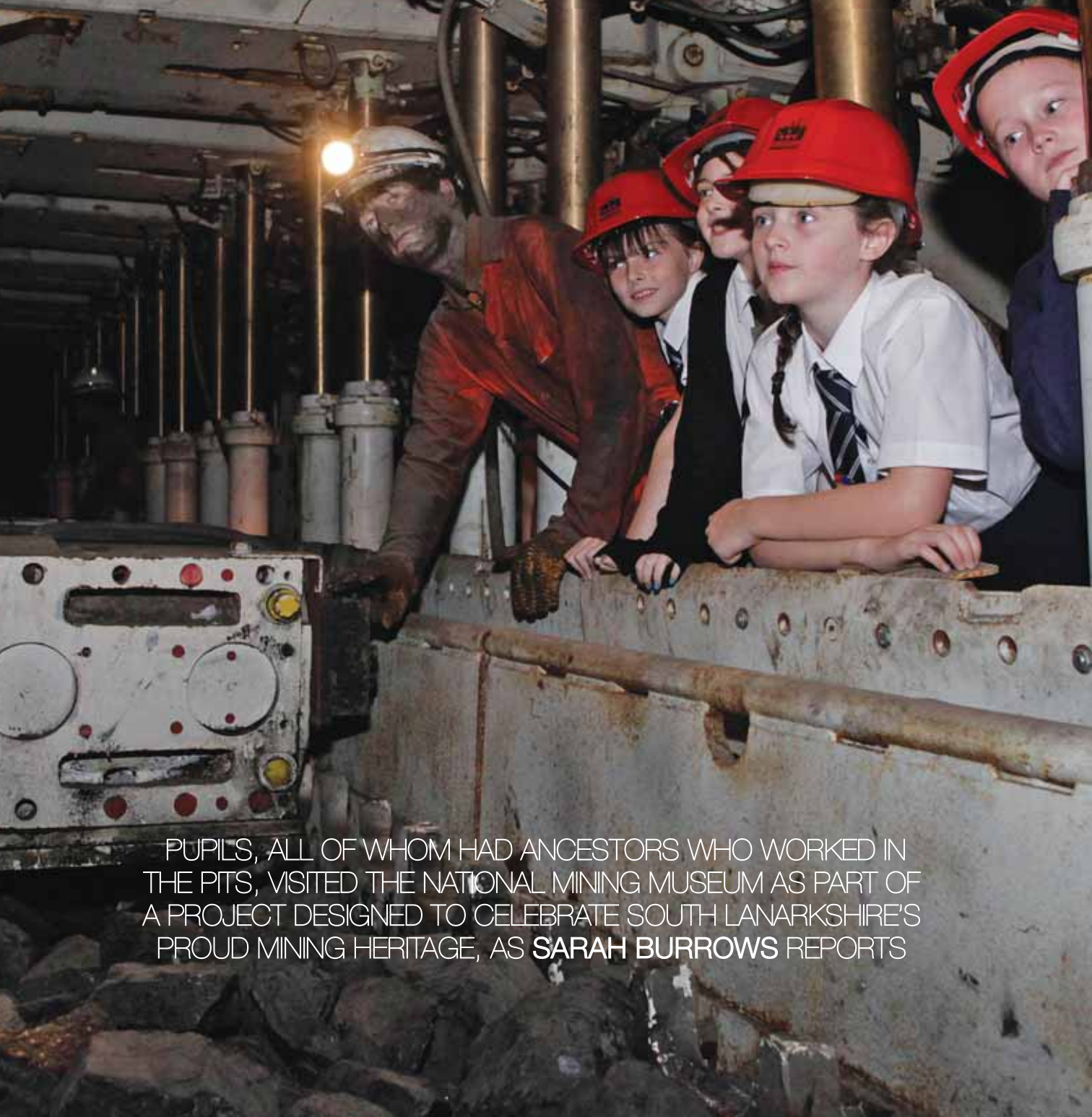
While the grounds for applying protection are limited, the team will identify if a protection can be applied.

In certain cases, a 52-week bereavement protection can also be applied.

One tenant, who had worked for 13 years and paid rent, had just been made redundant. The team liaised with the council's Benefits and Revenue Team and a 13-week protection was applied.

Providing help with money advice and fuel debt

FOOTSTEPS OF FOUR *fathers*



PUPILS, ALL OF WHOM HAD ANCESTORS WHO WORKED IN THE PITS, VISITED THE NATIONAL MINING MUSEUM AS PART OF A PROJECT DESIGNED TO CELEBRATE SOUTH LANARKSHIRE'S PROUD MINING HERITAGE, AS **SARAH BURROWS** REPORTS



It is Scotland's biggest pit disaster, during which 207 miners perished, leaving 92 widows and 250 children without a father.

The Blantyre mining disaster of October 22, 1877, lives on in infamy as the explosions that rocked pits No.2 and No.3 may have been prevented had miners' warnings about safety been heeded.

A group of pupils from Blantyre's Auchinraith Primary School paid a visit to the National Mining Museum on the anniversary of the disaster last year.

Each of the P5-7 pupils had a family member who worked in the mines. And the minute's silence they observed in the museum's new memorial room on the anniversary of the disaster was particularly poignant for all.

Lanarkshire's mining heritage is a source of fierce pride and, none more so than in Blantyre, where the community paid such a hefty price.

And helping to ensure that this proud heritage is celebrated is the Pits, Ponies, People and Stories Project, led by South Lanarkshire Council and its various partners.

It was awarded a £357,900 Lottery grant to enable the project to fulfill its objectives and takes the total contributions to £757,000.

The Pits, Ponies, People and Stories project has been in development in South Lanarkshire for the past two years, with various partners working together to consult with the community and submit an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Schools and community groups have worked hard during the development stage to ensure the application was a success and that generations to come will be able to explore the area's mining heritage.

The Heritage Lottery Fund grant will allow the project to continue for a further two years and will include a local mining heritage resource project, a schools re-enactment and story book project, an exhibition project and community film project.

Councillor Jean McKeown,

Chair of the Education Resources Committee, said:

"What a fantastic experience for the Auchinraith pupils to have at the Mining Museum.

"As they all have a family history of mining, it must have felt like stepping back in time as they had a chance to go down a mine and see the conditions their ancestors worked in.

"It is vitally important that we continue to ensure South Lanarkshire's pupils are aware of our strong mining heritage and this project looks set to ensure that the message is brought to every school in the area. I look forward to reading the book, seeing the film and going to the re-enactment over the next few years.

"Well done to all involved."

The project, led by the council, will continue to rely on the support of partner agencies, such as South Lanarkshire Museums, Libraries and Archives, Blantyre and Coalburn Miners Welfare Resource Centres, National Records of Scotland, RCAHMS, National Mining Museum Scotland, University of the West of Scotland, Strathclyde University, Caledonian University, Coalfields Regeneration Trust, Leadhills Miners Library, Hidden treasures - Wanlockhead Lead Mining Museum, The National Union of Mineworkers, Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation, Scottish Coal Industry Special Welfare Fund and the Scottish Cultural Resources Access Network, SCRAN.



A life of GRIME

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICERS ARE THE GUARDIANS OF OUR PUBLIC HEALTH, WORKING IN THE FRONT LINE AS ENFORCERS, INVESTIGATORS AND EDUCATORS.

MHAIRI ANDERSON MET UP WITH ONE OFFICER AS SHE INSPECTED A DAIRY FARM TURNED LUXURY ICE CREAM PRODUCER





NO two working days are ever the same for Environmental Health Officer Mary Harkness.

And that's hardly surprising given the huge diversity of her remit as one South Lanarkshire's guardians of our collective public health.

Variouly investigators and enforcers, Environmental Health Officers are focused on prevention, consultation, investigation and education of the community regarding health risks and maintaining a safe environment.

Their skill set includes an understanding of microbiology, risk assessment, environmental science and technology, food science, as well as knowledge relating to the tracking and control of communicable disease.

They must also have strong investigative skills and a thorough understanding of the application of legislation related to public health and the environment.

Other tasks include inspecting tanning and beauty salons and they also play a vital role in community projects, such as those concerning health promotion, tobacco reduction, food security and emergency preparedness.

They may also respond to a wide variety of complaints including animal bites, rubbish and odour complaints and sewage overflows, as well as providing information and referrals regarding lead, radon and mould.

"You may not have realised it, or even given it a thought until now," explains Mary.

"But we are responsible for ensuring the safety of your food from the minute the tiny seeds are planted in the ground in South Lanarkshire, to the harvesting of crops, their storage and the processing of the raw materials going into the food you bring to your table.

"We ensure that the animals raised in South Lanarkshire for the meat industry and the cows that produce the milk for your morning cereal and cup of tea are well cared for and healthy.

"And, we ensure that the food hygiene in the processing of your food and drink is of the highest standard.

"We're not just looking at the hygiene standards in place, we are also ensuring that the animals are well housed with good ventilation to protect them from the extremes of weather and that they are clean and cared for with plenty of feed and water.

"We also check to ensure that steps have been taken to help prevent any spread of infection."

When **The Reporter** caught up with Mary she was visiting a dairy farm that has diversified into ice cream making.

The safe and reliable production of milk is of course a key part of Mary's remit, used as it is in a myriad of food and dairy products.

Checks on milk analyse the amount of bacteria, fat and protein content, as well as ensuring that it hasn't been watered down.

Veterinary medicines are used in animal husbandry and to help prevent infection, therefore checks are also made to test for traces of these in every consignment of milk.

According to Mary, farming is a 24/7, 365-days a year job.

"It's not just a job but a vocation for most of us," says John Henderson, dairy farmer, who runs Meikle Dripps farm, near Thorntonhall, together with his mother, Joan.

"We know each individual animal so well that, most of the time, we can tell if one is a little under the weather just by looking at it.

"Our animals are not just our business, we care about each and every one of them and

their welfare is paramount." Environmental Health Officer Mary is a regular visitor to Meikle Dripps farm to ensure that the processes and the health and safety of the milk and cows meet all legal requirements.

"We are meticulous in how we look after our animals here at Meikle Dripps and our processing procedures are stringent indeed," adds John.

"No matter that, each time Mary calls in out of the blue, you are always relieved to know that all is fine once she has completed her checks."

According to John, the income from milk has been severely cut due to the economic downturn in the dairy sector since the 1990s.

He adds: "So, to help make ends meet, and with the help of a Processing and Marketing Grant, we took the decision – since we breed most of our own cattle ourselves – to supplement our income by producing ice cream from the milk from our cows, almost all of which have been born and bred on the farm.

"My wife, Micki, gave up her own job to come in and help with this new addition to the family business.

"Hard work on top of the farming it may be, but the satisfaction of running our Thorntonhall Farmhouse ice cream, produced from the milk from our own herd, is well worth all the effort."

The Hendersons converted a redundant farm building and purchased an ice cream making machine from a long-established Dutch company, which is capable of pasteurising and freezing in one, eliminating the risk of cross-contamination of pasteurised milk before freezing.

"Not having had any first-hand experience with this world-wide patented Dutch machine, and on-farm ice cream manufacture, the Henderson family invited me to come along to all the training workshops that Micki would be attending," explains Mary.

"This enabled me to learn all about its processes and cooling systems, in fact, everything that was involved in the various processes to produce the ice cream.

"Micki and John have also very willingly opened up their premises to Environmental Health Officers, not just from our authority, but from other local authorities in surrounding areas, to assist in the training of officers in the manufacture of ice cream in this way.

"We are very grateful indeed to them for giving us this opportunity."

Given the UK has the third highest ice cream consumption per capita compared to most other European countries – eight litres per person per year – Environmental Health Officers such as Mary may well be involved in checks on many more small ice cream making establishments in the future.

Environmental Health was involved from the very early stages of the new venture in providing advice and guidance to Micki and John on the design, construction and layout of the production and storage facilities.

Mary adds: "From my early days as a young Environmental Health Officer starting out in Glasgow in 1988, then in Ayrshire, Hamilton and, returning to South Lanarkshire since 2001, I can honestly say I have enjoyed every minute of it.

"The diversity of the job is fantastic. There's never a dull moment and I'm always learning.

"In fact, it's the job of a lifetime for me."

Feel better about your neighbourhood by signing up for...

the big lunch

SOUTH Lanarkshire residents are being urged to get together for a big lunch date in June and help feed community spirit.

The Big Lunch is a very simple idea from the Eden Project. The aim is to get as many people as possible across the UK to have lunch with their neighbours every year on the first Sunday in June in a simple act of community, friendship and fun.

Big Lunches can be anything from a few neighbours getting together in the garden or on the street, to a full-blown street party with food, music and decoration that literally stops the traffic.

Scottish communities, including South Lanarkshire, have been taking part since 2011, getting together from Stranraer to Shettleston.

Last year, 3.65million people took to their streets, gardens and community spaces and it's hoped even more people will take part in this year's Big Lunch on Sunday, June 1.

Getting together with neighbours can be great fun but can also have big impacts on how people feel about where they live. Taking part can feed community spirit, helping to forge local ties and encourage friendlier,

safer neighbourhoods where those who may be isolated feel better connected.

There has been an appetite to take part in The Big Lunch across South Lanarkshire since the beginning of the campaign.

The Hindu Temple of Scotland, based in Rutherglen, got involved in 2012 when The Big Lunch was an official part of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Celebrations.

They organised a successful Big Jubilee Lunch event and welcomed the wider community on the day.

To celebrate the occasion they shared lunch and a cultural programme that celebrated both South Indian and Scottish traditions.

In the run-up to last year's event, organisers held The Big Lunch Community Awards to celebrate five years of the campaign, which has been running since 2009 in England and Wales.

The Hindu Temple was the winner from Scotland due to their continued work in the community.

Temple member Srihari Vallabhajousula was a key organiser of the 2012 event and attended a ceremony held by Big Lunch patron, The Duchess



of Cornwall, to accept the award.

Srihari said: "The South Indian Cultural Centre was very proud to move into Rutherglen – an area with vast diversity.

"Our neighbours have welcomed us and made us feel an important part of the community. We wanted to thank them by making Rutherglen part of the worldwide celebration and getting involved in The Big Jubilee Lunch gave us the perfect opportunity to open our doors."

● For further info visit www.thebiglunch.com/partners/star-councils-scotland.php

Your vote counts

election/referendum



Make your vote count!
You can't vote if you're not registered.

Please register to vote and encourage your family and friends to do likewise.

To register, or check that you're already registered:

email ero@lanarkshire-vjb.gov.uk

or phone 0800 030 4333

www.lanarkshire-vjb.gov.uk



adoption

in South Lanarkshire

Could you be the parent a child in South Lanarkshire is looking for?

Children in South Lanarkshire, from babies to teenagers, are in need of families who will help them get the best out of life and the Family Placement Team want to speak to anyone interested in adoption or fostering.

The Family Placement Team's recruitment drive is being backed by local people who have already successfully adopted or fostered.

"When someone calls you Mummy you've just got to be their mother", said Michelle, a young South Lanarkshire mum.

Michelle and her husband saw adoption as the natural choice when they discovered they could not have children, for them the process from application to competition took just under a year.

She said: "It was a bit nerve-racking at first, but there was so much done to let us know what to expect and to walk us through the whole thing it all seemed to fall into place very naturally."

"The classes we attended helped us understand why children need adoption, issues they face growing up and the situation for children in care, during those classes we saw our son's profile and we knew he was our perfect match."

Three years ago Lyndsay and her husband adopted sisters aged three and four, she said: "We had thought of adopting a baby but the adoption service knew what they were doing, we can't imagine the girls with any other family."

She continued: "Your assessment does go into everything but it is important to fully engage with it, the team are committed to ensuring families are matched and that does reassure you that they are helping you get it right."

"I pack a survival kit to go out for dinner," Lyndsay joked, "but the girls are worth it, we gave them a safe, loving home but can't count what we get back."

Some children and young people do not need a new family just a safe and supportive place to stay when they can not remain at home for reasons that can range from parental illness to an unsafe environment - Foster Carers offer this vital service to in South Lanarkshire.

Phil has been a Foster Carer for 25 years, she said: "I have not had one child who has been in care because they have been in trouble - but if they come for six days, six weeks or six years you can give them memories for life."

Phil and fellow foster carers Gladys and Gill have, along with their families, specialised in fostering teenagers.

Gladys said: "I love the interaction with the older children you talk about issues that crop up and they keep you young, active and in touch."

"Just showing these kids what life can offer you give them a better chance, you can instil an aspiration to succeed and hope for better days."

When the three were asked about the most difficult aspect of fostering older children and teenagers answers ranged from never encountering any real problems to a breakdown of trust and an end to that fostering arrangement; "it happens, but rarely" was the unanimous verdict on that.

Gill summed up for the group by saying: "The support you get from Social Work is second to none they are always there when you need them and the training they offer just keeps improving."

South Lanarkshire Council is also recruiting for people to deliver more specialised Intensive Fostering, a full time job but a chance to offer a lifeline to children facing some of the worst life chances.

If you think you could be a child's future, please phone the family placement team on 01698 454895 between 8.45am and 4.45pm, Monday to Friday, or email familyplacement@southlanarkshire.gov.uk



If you are interested in finding out more please contact the **Family Placement Team on 01698 454895** or email familyplacement@southlanarkshire.gov.uk



Social Work Resources

The Benefits are Changing Team helping tenants affected by Welfare Reform



The Benefits are Changing Team is a specialist group set up to support Council tenants affected by Welfare Reform changes. Here we give you a glimpse of the activities of the team and the meaningful difference they are making to people's lives.

Checking to make sure the under occupancy deduction should be applied

The first thing the Benefits are Changing Team does is check to confirm that the under-occupancy deduction should be applied to the person.

By undertaking some pretty simple checks, the team has identified over 400 cases where the rules should not be applied. The team has then liaised with the Council's Benefits and Revenue Team to make the necessary adjustments to have the deduction removed.

Providing hardship funds to tenants affected

A key aspect of the team is helping tenants access the additional funding from the Department for Work and Pensions and the Scottish Government – this funding is called Discretionary Housing Payments.

The team has successfully assisted over 2000 tenants receive this assistance.

Confirming whether the person is entitled to protection from Welfare Reforms

People with exceptional and unexpected circumstances outwith their control may be entitled to 13 or 52 weeks' protection, during which no deduction will be made from their Housing Benefit. While the grounds for applying protection



are limited, the team will identify if a protection can be applied. In certain cases, a 52-week bereavement protection can also be applied.

One tenant who had worked for 13 years and paid rent had just been made redundant – the team liaised with the Council's Benefits and Revenue Team and a 13-week protection was applied.

Providing help with energy bills

The team is also working closely with the Council's Money Matters service in assisting people with high fuel debts through partner organisations. One tenant, for example, contacted us due to their problem with fuel debt. Money Matters put the tenant in touch with a specialist Council team who worked with the tenant to re-negotiate this debt. The outcome was that the fuel debt of more than £3500 was written off and a more affordable and appropriate tariff was put in place for the tenant.

Supporting people who wish to move house

The Council has put a letting initiative in place which allows us to help households that are affected by under-occupancy at 1st April, 2013.

The team is working closely with the local Housing Offices in identifying tenants who would benefit from the initiative. Assistance can be given to households who have to move to a property with fewer bedrooms, and incentives can encourage households who would like to move to a larger property, which frees up much needed one or two-bedroomed properties for other tenants.



Don't worry... just get in touch!

The Benefits are Changing Team will be happy to speak to you on **0303 123 1012** or you can email benefitsarechanging@southlanarkshire.gov.uk

www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk