



STAFFORD'S HISTORY HAS SEEN IT COME AND GO FROM THE TOURIST MAP OVER THE YEARS WITH THE TOWN ENJOYING PERIODS OF NOTORIETY BUT ALSO TIMES OF OBSCURITY.

# PUTTING Stafford ON THE MAP

With the dramatic development of Birmingham and Manchester as popular tourist locations and the increase in 'City Breaks', Stafford has often been lost in the traffic of the M6 or used as a stop-off destination for travellers between the north and south of the country.

Not any more, a number of developments have been announced over the last two years with the aim of making Stafford headline news and a desirable destination. The tourism industry is already one of Staffordshire's most important growth sectors, currently responsible for generating over £700 million a year for the local economy as well as supporting almost 40,000 jobs, which is a rise of 8,000 over the last 10 years.

### Enjoying Staffordshire

2006 saw the launch of a new organisation, The Staffordshire Destination Management Partnership (DMP), who's objective it is to manage, develop and promote the county as a major visitor destination. The 'partnership', which was officially launched in the summer of 2006, has already attracted over 400 members from the region's tourist attractions, accommodation providers, restaurants and the County and District Councils. Officials suggest the number of members will continue to grow as the new Staffordshire 'brand' is developed and used with eye-catching marketing campaigns across the UK.

Working with a renowned international 'Brand Building' design agency and a London-based PR



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consultancy, the DMP has developed a new image for Staffordshire tourism which encapsulates the 'World of Possibilities' the region has to offer and reflects the county's diverse offering of adventure, culture and nature.

Bugsgang & Associates, are the specialist travel and tourism PR consultancy appointed to help communicate the key messages about Staffordshire and all it has to offer visitors. Activity to promote Staffordshire to the media includes a regular stream of news releases on events and activities in the area, setting up competitions and offers in selected titles and, perhaps most importantly, inviting journalists to visit the region, stay in the hotels, eat in the restaurants, visit the attractions and generally experience at first hand all Staffordshire has to offer.

Amy Clarke from Bugsgang explains how the visits work: "The media visits are targeted in line with key themes – so Adventure visits would include attractions such as Alton Towers, Drayton Manor Theme Park and the Tamworth Snowdome while Culture trips would centre on attractions like the Complete Working Historic Estate of Shugborough, Weston Park, Boscobel House and of course the historic Potteries Museum and Art Gallery. Nature is resplendent in Staffordshire, so visits to illustrate this would incorporate the breathtaking Peak District, Cannock Chase, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and much more.

The PR campaign relies heavily on regular contact between the DMP members and the agency, so that there is a regular supply of



information and newsworthy material to keep Staffordshire in the news. The PR team and the Staffordshire members are forging a great working relationship and we are very excited to be working with this unique region – the hidden gem of the UK.”

Chairman of the partnership is General Manager of the Wedgwood Visitor Centre, Graeme Whitehead who has hailed the formation of the partnership as “A major step towards creating a competitive advantage for Staffordshire’s already burgeoning tourism industry.”

He added “Staffordshire is home to some of the top attractions in the country, yet is still to be recognised by many as a major tourist destination. The aim of the new partnership is

to manage the delivery of tourism across the county in a more consistent way, to improve efficiency and effectiveness. It will help to attract visitors to the county as well as create a ‘Pride of Place’ for both residents and visitors and visitors alike.”

Chris Lewis, partner in The Lewis Partnership, welcomed the launch of the new initiative: “The DMP will help tourism-based businesses in the county both large and small. Even as one of the larger operators in the region, as an independent company it is difficult to successfully promote ourselves outside of the local market. The DMP will bring all of the local business together and create an irresistible package for visitors, essentially giving us a shop window in which we can display our wares to an international market place.”



### DMP FACTS

The official website of the Staffordshire DMP is [www.enjoystaffordshire.co.uk](http://www.enjoystaffordshire.co.uk), where visitors can explore the many attractions the county has to offer.

Businesses in Staffordshire that wish to find out more about becoming members of the DMP can contact Jo Lloyd on 01785 277397 or by e-mailing [Joanne.lloyd@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Joanne.lloyd@staffordshire.gov.uk)

The early years of the 21st century have seen changes and plans for change that will undoubtedly change the face of Stafford for a long time to come. As well as an ever-growing population, with an estimated 20,000 new homes planned for the town, there are major plans for the tourism and leisure industry in the town that will develop the town as leading destination in the region.

#### Riverscape

Work has already begun on the multi-million pound project designed to make the most of the river that flows through the heart of Stafford town centre. The project will ultimately create a safe, landscaped and artistically marked pedestrian and cycle route that will run from one end of the town to the other. The entire route will be well lit, with sympathetic and attractive lighting, and there’ll be numerous places to stop, sit down, and enjoy the view from beside the River Sow.

#### The new Stafford Leisure Centre

Due for completion in the spring of 2008, Stafford Leisure Centre will boast a 25m, eight-lane pool, together with a teaching pool with a moveable floor. There’ll also be two squash courts, a crèche, beauty rooms and refreshment facilities. The development will replace the current Riverside Recreation Centre and give leisure facilities in the town a significant boost.

#### Retail and Leisure

A number of large developments are due to be completed in the coming months and years that will boost the town’s retail offering and attract shoppers away from the crowded centres of Birmingham and Manchester. Due to open in 2007 are a new retail park on the edge of the town centre and a riverside apartment development, which will feature a number leisure and retail units. On completion of the town’s new leisure facilities, work will begin in transforming the current leisure centre into a complex of bars, restaurants, shops, apartments, offices and car parking in a similar style to Birmingham’s Mailbox.

Plans have also been submitted for a £100 million family entertainment complex in the town, potentially featuring a six-screen cinema, ice skating/roller rink, a 20-lane bowling alley, a gym, children’s adventure play centre, and an Arts Space project. ■



#### The changing face of the county town

The has been a permanent settlement in the Stafford area since approximately 800 BC when it is believed Iron Age Man settled here due to its rich mineral deposits and vast forests, which can still be seen today as Cannock Chase.

It is fair to say that the town has changed somewhat since then, the town really began to grow when William the Conqueror built Stafford Castle in the 11th century and it has not really stopped since growing since then.

By the 17th century Stafford town centre as we see it now had started to take shape, with buildings like St Chads Church and The Ancient

High House forming the central point. In the 18th century Stafford developed as a town of trade and production, with a minor pottery industry and a much larger shoe industry which brought many visitors to the town.

The 20th century saw Stafford move into the modern era. As the traditional shoe industries died, new and more large-scale industries moved in. These included large scale electrical companies, glue manufacturers, steam industries and wood yards. During the second world war a Stafford company produced tanks and shortly after a large scale munitions and storage yard was setup for the military.