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### Keep in touch

Keep up to date with everything that's going on in Blacon by joining the Avenue Services mailing list. All you have to do is visit [avenueservices.org/contact](http://avenueservices.org/contact) and fill in the form.

Website: [www.avenueservices.org](http://www.avenueservices.org)  [www.facebook.com/MyBlacon](https://www.facebook.com/MyBlacon)  [@Avenue\\_Services](https://twitter.com/Avenue_Services)



# My Blacon

News from Avenue Services

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Driving lessons



# Welcome to the Winter edition of My Blacon

Inside you'll find everything you need to know about what's happening in your community over the winter period.

What an exciting and eventful year it has been for Avenue Services. We've seen thousands of people join together at community events, local businesses thrive at the Parade Enterprise Centre and the transfer of council assets come to fruition.

Looking back, I think it has been the most significant 12 months since the launch of Avenue Services in 2012 and we can look forward to 2017 with a great deal of optimism.

The chief highlight has to be the completion of taking over the management of 11 key assets in Blacon from Cheshire West and Chester Council, of which you can read more about on pages four and five of this edition. A huge amount of work has gone into this on both

sides and to finally see it happen is a positive step for the people of Blacon. We will ensure these sites will be used to meet local need and enhance local services, and residents will have a say in future ideas for the sites so they are used for the benefit of the community.

This will be overseen by our board of directors, now chaired by William Hogg (more details below).

Blacon is a strong community and this was further emphasised through the annual Blacon Festival during the summer. Thousands of families joined in the fun and games and it was great to see.

We are fortunate to have many talented people in our

neighbourhood and they were rightly recognised at the Blacon Awards in June.

With the £16 million regeneration of the Parade also reaching the finals of a top national award, it really has been a year to remember in Blacon.

All that remains is for me to wish you and your families a happy Christmas and an even better New Year.

Enjoy reading.

*Paul Knight*

Paul Knight - Head of Avenue Services



# Crowds flock to Christmas Fair

More than 1,000 people helped get the festive season into full swing at the popular Avenue Services Christmas Fair.

Families took the opportunity to snap up some early gifts from a host of stalls at the Parade Enterprise Centre from local businesses including crafts, cards and cakes.

Theatre group Rewind proved the star attraction with their renditions of carols, which kept people entertained throughout the event.

Rewind also performed for families at the switch on of the Christmas lights in Blacon on December 1.

They were joined by the Lord Mayor of Chester Cllr Angela Claydon who officially turned on the lights.



# Job fair proves success

Once again the Blacon job fair proved popular with a host of local employers attending to showcase vacancies and talk to people about potential careers.

Twenty one companies attended and 50 residents came along to the Parade Enterprise Centre to gather information and discuss options.

As a result, four people were offered employment with Iceland and two have since accepted the positions.



# A warm welcome to new board members

Three new directors have been appointed to the board of Avenue Services ready to continue our good work throughout Blacon into 2017.

Chartered Accountant William Hogg is the new Chair, while the former Lord Mayor of Chester Hugo Deynem is now one of three Cheshire West and Chester Council representatives.

The third new addition, Gus Cairns, will need little introduction to the people of Blacon having lived here for more than 60 years and currently being Chair of Blacon Health and Wellbeing Group.

Their arrivals take the number on the board to eight.



*Pictured above: Avenue Services Board Directors Judith Stainthorp, Gus Cairns, Cllr Carol Gahan, William Hogg (Chair), Paul Knight, Yvonne Davies, Cllr Reggie Jones and Hugo Deynem at Blacon Adventure Playground.*

Paul Knight, Head of Avenue Services, said: "I would like to formally welcome William, Hugo and Gus onto the Avenue Services Board. They are all excellent additions, bringing a wealth of skills and experience which can be drawn upon to help us continue in our objectives of helping drive improvements in Blacon for the benefit of local people."

# Looking forward to a bright future

Last month 11 Cheshire West and Chester Council assets in Blacon were transferred on a long-term lease to the management of Avenue Services.

They are: land at Shelley Road; the former Blacon Library site; Blacon Adventure Playground; Cairns Crescent Playing Fields; Playground at Wemyss Road; land at Western Avenue; Linear Park; land at Willow Drive; land at Saughall Road; Hatton Road Offices; land adjacent to Adventure Playground.

Avenue Services will ensure that these sites will be used to meet local need and enhance local services.

Importantly, local residents will have a say in future ideas for the sites so they are used for the benefit of the community.



*Pictured above: The facilities at Blacon Adventure Playground.*



Along with the assets, £340,000 is being made available from the Council as a result of past Section 106 agreements, where private developers have had to donate funding to improve the local community.

Around £240,000 of this will be spent upgrading play equipment at a number of the sites including Linear Park and Cairns Crescent Playing Fields.

A further £100,000, spread over four years, is being channelled into the creation of local training and employment opportunities at Avenue Services.

Significantly, Avenue Services has also started to invest in the Adventure Playground, in Kipling Road. This is one of the neighbourhood's most popular family attractions, open throughout the year and featuring a large indoor space for activities and an urban farm.

The indoor space is now being well-used by Blacon Boxing Club, which sees around 200 local people attending training sessions each week.

## Looking for a loan? Try the WCCU

Christmas can be an expensive time of the year and January can often be a struggle as the bills start to come in.

The Blacon branch of the West Cheshire Credit Union is urging those in need of financial support to get in touch with them rather than turn to payday or doorstep lenders.

Recommended by both Sanctuary Housing and Cheshire West and Chester Council, the WCCU will be happy to speak to you and offer advice about credit or even savings.

What's more, anybody signing up to their Child Benefit Savings and Loan Account can apply for an immediate loan of £500.

This can be paid back at £12 a week over a year (£615 in total) compared to around £17 a week (£936 in total) offered by a typical doorstep lender.

Established in 2004, the WCCU has grown to more than 4,000 members and has lent out nearly £500,000 to local residents in the past year.

For more information you can call them on 01244 399006 between 10am and 2pm on weekdays or visit [www.wccu.co.uk](http://www.wccu.co.uk)



## Sign up to study and get free driving lessons



There is an exciting opportunity for young people in Blacon to receive free driving lessons alongside Maths and English tuition.

The Centre for Training and Development, based at the Parade Enterprise Centre, has secured funding to offer the course to young people classed as NEET (not in education, employment or training).

Those enrolling will be able to complete a Level 1 Functional Skills qualification in Maths and English, as well as work skills to help them into employment, for one day a week over six weeks.

They will also receive 21 hours of driving lessons, although those who have already taken lessons can have the cost of a driving test covered.

Chris Leicester, Neighbourhood Partnership manager with Avenue Services, said: "This scheme is very welcome from an Avenue Services perspective because it helps address a number of key priorities for us including the promotion of safer driving for young people, an uplift in education and training, and improved access to employment."

To qualify, you must be aged between 16 years and nine months, and 23 at the point of enrolment.

For more details, email [john@cdandt.co.uk](mailto:john@cdandt.co.uk) or call 07706 382638.



As well as our exciting new digital programme, Here and Now Chester, a local Social Enterprise, has formed a social group where people over 50 can increase their skills using everyday gadgets such as computers and tablets.

Funded by a Big Lottery grant, organisers also hope it will help reduce loneliness and isolation by showing how technology can enhance lives.

Already, the iPads have proved popular among members and interactive quizzes are now a monthly fixture at the Waggon and Horses in Western Avenue.

## Helping you get online

Have you ever wanted to learn to use a computer? Interested in finding out how to get online and surf the internet?

Sanctuary has teamed up with training provider We Are Digital to deliver **Sanctuary Online: helping you connect**, an exciting programme of skills sessions, to hundreds of our residents in Blacon.

The sessions will start in the new year and will show you how to do your banking and shopping, manage your benefits online, apply for jobs, chat to friends and keep up-to-date with the latest news.

To find out where your nearest course is being held and to reserve a place, call 03333 442 561, text 'Sanctuary' to 07537 416 944 or email [sanctuary@we-are-digital.co.uk](mailto:sanctuary@we-are-digital.co.uk).

Run by volunteers, the technology group is open to people of all abilities, whether you have never used a computer or just want to improve your IT skills.

For more details about the group, visit [www.hereandnowchester.com](http://www.hereandnowchester.com) or call 07933 449001 or 01244 379651.

Christmas dates for your diary

- **Saturdays** – Christmas crafts at the Parade Enterprise Centre – 10am to 12pm
- **Thursday 22 December** – Blacon Adventure Playground Christmas party – 4pm to 6pm

Avenue Services will be closed from 5pm on Friday 23 December until 9am on Wednesday 28 December.

### Blacon Library events

- **Tuesdays** – Rhyme time for under fives - 10.30am to 11am
- **Wednesdays** – Job club – 9.30am to 12pm
- **Thursdays** – Code club for nine to 11-year-olds – 4.30pm to 5.30pm