

County Council Meeting – 16 March 2023**Question to Councillor Wilson
Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture****By Councillor Afsar**

Question

Outdoor walking and hiking in various streets, hills and open spaces are effective activities for the fight against obesity, isolation and mental health illnesses. What more can the County Council do to make these activities more popular with residents?

Reply

SCC is collaborating with a range of agencies (including Together Active) to develop partnership approaches in each of the districts and boroughs that focus on healthy eating and physical activity – known as **Better Health Staffordshire**, more information can be found here: [Better Health Staffordshire - Staffordshire County Council](#)

This is a relatively new initiative that is designed to operate over the long term – while there are no quick fix solutions, there is a huge range of opportunities across the county to encourage people to be more active. The plan is to work in partnership with those people who understand their communities best to maximise current facilities (leisure centres etc.) and resources (green spaces etc.) – not least by raising awareness of what is available and motivating people to take part by making activities easier to access and more enjoyable.

The **Environment & Countryside Service** promote access to Staffordshire's countryside estate of approximately 6000 acres of [country parks, open spaces and greenways](#), together with a [public rights of way](#) network of approximately 2500 miles. A series of [country trails and promoted routes](#) are available to encourage use of the path network which include a series of circular walks centred on the Staffordshire Way.

SCC are the Lead Authority for the [Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty](#) partnership (AONB) **Cannock Chase AONB**. We promote walks for people to get out and about to explore the AONB, as part of our forthcoming 'Walking Cannock Chase' series. Partners provide activities for the local community and visitors to improve their physical and mental

wellbeing. For example, Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles with Chase Fit in Cannock Chase District and the Friends of Cannock Chase provide a programme of guided walks.

The AONB is a partner with the **Wayfinding Project** led by Together Active, seeking to improve access for residents of North Hednesford to Cannock Chase, particularly those with health conditions and disabilities.

Our **Libraries & Arts** team promote local history walks from some libraries and are currently working with the AONB to develop information packs for children to encourage families to access Cannock Chase for well-being.

To encourage residents to access the outdoors, our activities are promoted via a range of communication channels: e.g. website, e-newsletters and social media. However, we will continue to work with our partners and our communications team to raise awareness of activities which promote healthy lifestyles.

