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# Shop local for Christmas and park for FREE!



To encourage you to look local for your presents, we're offering FREE car parking in all our car parks in Ashby and Coalville on Nov 30, Dec 7, Dec 14, Dec 21 and Dec 28.

Get down to your town centre and do your bit to support our local retailers!

## North West Leicestershire District Council office opening hours over Christmas and New Year

Monday 23 December 2013 – Open as usual  
Tuesday 24 December 2013 – Open 8.45am - 4.00pm  
Wednesday 25 December - CLOSED  
Thursday 26 December 2013 – CLOSED  
Friday 27 December 2012 – CLOSED

Monday 30 December 2013 – Open as usual  
Tuesday 31 January 2013 - Open as usual  
Wednesday 1 January 2014 – CLOSED  
Thursday 2 January 2014 - Open as usual

Out of Hours number – 01530 454789

Front cover photograph taken of the Tourist Information Centre in Ashby by Lesley Hextall (Tourist Information Assistant).

Vision is published by North West Leicestershire District Council.

To receive a copy in large print please contact the Communications Team:

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Email: [communications@nwleicestershire.gov.uk](mailto:communications@nwleicestershire.gov.uk)

Tel: 01530 454545



Please use your blue bag when you dispose of this and other magazines.

Vision magazine has a circulation of 40,500 copies.

# Welcome to the Winter edition of Vision magazine



We're facing an unprecedented budget squeeze over the next few years. Based on current information, by 2018 we need to save more than £2.8m – and £1.5m of that in the next two years.

Our total budget is just over £23.5m – so that's a big gap to close. We've been talking to local community groups, businesses and inviting residents about our proposals. Thank you to everyone who gave their views.

We've already saved £3.7m since 2007 – the vast majority of which has come from working differently and getting better value for money. And we've done without raising council tax or parking charges.

So I'm confident that, as a well organised council that has risen to the challenge before, we will do it again. But we have to make some tough decisions.

The future of our district is also about where new homes will be built and where businesses can grow. We're confident our long term 'core strategy' is robust, sustainable and supported locally. But the planning inspector disagrees. Find out why inside.

While we work out those difficult issues, let's also celebrate some real achievements – not least the completion of our 1,000th property under our £35m Decent Homes Improvement Programme.

And Keep Britain Tidy declared our roadside litter campaign the winner at its 2013 awards – a great recognition of our commitment to creating a greener district we can all be proud to call home. And our 85 volunteer litter pickers have collected an incredible five tonnes of other people's rubbish in the last 18 months.

Called us recently? Many people will have noticed we're answering phones faster now – the first part of our 'Improving the Customer Experience' programme. Next year we'll be launching a new website too – but in the meantime may I wish you all a happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

*Richard Blunt*

Councillor Richard Blunt - Leader



01827 373111



[richard.blunt@nwleicestershire.gov.uk](mailto:richard.blunt@nwleicestershire.gov.uk)

## Our priorities:

Value for money  
Business and jobs  
Homes and communities  
Green Footprints

## Our vision:

A place where people and businesses feel they belong and are proud to call home

## KEEP UP TO DATE

Follow us and find us to be first to get the news from North West Leicestershire!



**FOLLOW US ON TWITTER**  
[@NWLeicestershir](https://twitter.com/NWLeicestershir)



**FIND US ON FACEBOOK**  
where you can catch up with the latest news from our leisure centres, tourist information, recycling and our Green Footprints Challenge.

## Chairman's Civic Carol Service Sunday 15 December 2013

North West Leicestershire District Council Chairman Councillor Geraint Jones will be holding his Civic Carol Service on Sunday 15 December – 2.30pm at Holy Trinity Church, Ashby de la Zouch.

Members of the public are welcome to attend. Tea and coffee will be served after the service and donations will be split between the Chairman's Charity Appeal, and Holy Trinity Church Ashby de la Zouch.

Concordia Choir will be leading the singing and performing a solo spot. We are hoping that one of the local school choirs will also be taking part. Tickets will be issued to track numbers.

For more information and tickets contact:  
**Angela Bexton, 01530 454603 or email [angela.bexton@nwleicestershire.gov.uk](mailto:angela.bexton@nwleicestershire.gov.uk).**

## Christmas Farmers' Market

**Sence Valley, Ibstock, LE67 6NW  
Christmas Farmers' Market  
Sunday 8th December 10am - 4pm**

Over 20 specialist stalls bringing you a wide variety of produce. Free entry and car parking.

**The Manor House School, South Street,  
Ashby de la Zouch LE65 1BR  
Special Christmas Farmers' Market  
Saturday 21st December 9am - 2pm.**

Hog Roast - Mulled Wine - Festive Music  
Santa will be Visiting! 11 am - 1 pm  
£3 per Child including Present.



## Castle Donington Christmas lights

Castle Donington will come alive from 5pm on Friday 6th December – as the village switches on its Christmas lights.

Parish council Chairman Colin Burton is inviting everyone to join him for a 'celebration of Christmas cheer' – starting with a candlelight procession from St Edward's church to the Market Place.

Children from St Edwards and Orchard Community primary schools will lead the singing.

And Santa has confirmed he will just have enough time to stop by with his reindeer – before having to fly off to finish his preparations for delivering all those presents on Christmas Eve.

Remember children: Wrap up warm with your Christmas hats and scarves and bring your lanterns and torches – and don't forget to dress your parents up too!

# District's best on show for food and drink festival

A great time was had by all at our Celebration of Food and Drink in North West Leicestershire festival in September and October.

Restaurants, retailers, market traders, food producers, chocolatiers and specialist artisan bakers all over the district took part – offering special discounts and theme nights for local people to sample their produce.

The festival – organised by our Tourist Information centre in Ashby – was launched at the town's Farmers Market on Saturday 21 September by our Chairman Cllr Geraint Jones.

Looking for a great day or night out in North West Leicestershire? It's all at [www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/whats\\_on](http://www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/whats_on)



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## What's On

[www.tamworthassemblyrooms.co.uk](http://www.tamworthassemblyrooms.co.uk)

**ROLLING STONES WEEKEND**  
Come along and celebrate the 50th anniversary of The Rolling Stones gig at Tamworth Assembly Rooms.

**The Rollin Clones**  
LOCAL with the STONES - SATURDAY 30 NOV

29 November - Rollin' Clones - 7.30pm. Tickets: £12.50 (£10.50)  
30 November - Local with the Stones - 8.00pm. Tickets: £5

Please note this is a Stones 50 event.

The local Tamworth music scene is getting together for a night of Stones' classics. Featuring a host of local talent all paying tribute to one of the world's most respected bands!

**3 December**  
7.30pm. Tickets: £15 (£14)

**Cantabile**  
Great singing and fun from a British vocal group

**6 December**  
7.30pm. Tickets: £17.50 (£15)

**Swing into Christmas**  
All the Christmas classics swinging them their way

**8 December**  
8.15pm. Tickets: £4.00 (£12.00)

**PARTY POPPERZ**  
Glamtastic spectacular

**13 December**  
7.30pm. Tickets: £1.5 (£1.2)

**The Nutcracker**  
A 'cracking' story told through dance



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# Could you cut your energy bills?



**With the energy suppliers announcing another round of big price rises as winter arrives, many will struggle to pay their bills.**

So don't wait to work out the best way to stay warm – we can help now.

The most important thing you can do is not pay more than you have to. A great way to do this is to use a website like **www.moneysavingexpert.com/cheapenergyclub** - it's free, impartial and will help you pay less, if you can.



But the best way to save energy is to use less of it. Our Warm Homes Officer Alex Clark is here to help you keep the temperature up and your energy bills down. He can visit your home and give you completely FREE, impartial advice.

Just a few simple changes could save you hundreds of pounds a year – such as replacing light bulbs and understanding your heating controls.

Other low-cost improvements include energy monitors, radiator reflectors, hot water jackets, pipe lagging, draught proofing, loft hatch insulation and more.

Depending on your circumstances, you might qualify for free improvements.

**Just ask Alex! Contact him on 01530 454 775, email [alex.clark@nwleicestershire.gov.uk](mailto:alex.clark@nwleicestershire.gov.uk) or visit [www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/energy\\_advice](http://www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/energy_advice)**

## Tenants try new technology to cut bills

**We've teamed up with the Energy Saving Trust to find the best ways to help council tenants save money on their energy bills – by using the latest technology.**

We've recruited 12 volunteer tenants – who will have solar electricity panels, ground and air source heat pumps, biomass systems and other alternative energy systems fitted in their homes.

Our two year trial will help us decide the most affordable ways to help our 4,450 tenants keep warm – and cut their bills in the future.

Tenant Representative Pauline Inett said: "Keeping warm this winter is a priority especially for the elderly, the very young and more vulnerable. There are some properties in North West Leicestershire

that don't have a gas supply – instead they rely on solid fuel or electric heating which can often be much more expensive.

"We will be trying out greener energy sources – and their effectiveness will be closely monitored by specialist smart meters and temperature monitoring equipment.

"We will learn a lot about how people use their heating systems – and the tenants taking part will learn much more about how to make the best use of their equipment.

"These findings will help us to work out what will work for the different types of homes we have and how we can plan for the future."



# Local firms win slice of £35m project

**Our £35m Decent Homes Improvement Programme is fitting new windows, kitchens, bathrooms, roofs and heating systems into thousands of council homes.**

It's the biggest investment we've ever made – and we want district-based firms to supply their goods and services to our contracts Kier and Lovell.

So in September we hosted a 'meet the buyer' event – and 34 traders came to find out how they can win work.

Since October 2012 local companies have earned work totalling more than £664,000 – almost 12% of the overall spend, and well above the national average of only 2%.

Through innovative schemes like this we're determined to support local businesses and families.

We're buying **LOCAL**

Register at [www.buylocalgov.co.uk](http://www.buylocalgov.co.uk) and be first to hear about tenders and contract opportunities from us. It's easy to sign up – and could be priceless to your bottom line.

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# Planning for the future

## Setting our budget for 2014-16

**Like almost every other council in the country, we are facing a tough budget challenge over the next few years.**

Every service is valuable to the people of North West Leicestershire – but we must be honest about what we want and can afford in the future.

**We need to save £1.5m by 2016** – and a total of £2.84m by 2018 – because like almost all local councils we are getting less money from the Government (based on what they've told us – that figure could go up, or come down slightly).

We have an excellent track record of improving services and getting great value for money. We've not raised council tax since 2009 and only raised fees and charges by 4% – far less than inflation.

Since 2008 we've saved £3.7m – that's 26% of our budget. Of that, £2.9m has come from changing how we work – not cutting services.

By changing how we work and becoming even more efficient we can find another £500,000 by 2016. But that still leaves us with £1m to find – so we have some tough decisions to make.



### What have we already done to improve?

We've been very careful with your money in the last few years. For example:

- Saving £3.7m since 2008 – including £1.34m a year from our wage bill.
- Earning more money – such as £1.3m last year from recycling
- Improving our gyms and reduced running costs at leisure centres
- Creating an 'invest to save' fund to we can continue to improve services.

### We have to save £1.5m over the next two years

...and another £1.34m in 2016 to 2018 (£2.84m in total).

We've not raised Council Tax or car parking charges since 2009 – helping all hard working families

We're losing what we get from the Government – from almost £7m a year to nearer £5m – and that is set to go down again



## Our proposals include:

Raising council tax by a small amount – around 1.5%, or 28p a month, for a typical 'band D' home. **Most residents live in smaller homes, so will pay less**

**Raising car parking charges** for the first time in five years: by just 10p for one hour, 20p for two hours and 20p for all day parking. Car parks in our villages will remain free.

**Charging £25 for emptying garden bins** – just as many councils do already

**Reducing discounts** for collecting bulky waste – at the moment we lose money on this service

Charging more for some services – such as planning applications and leisure centres

**Asking others to take on/ help pay for some services** – such as CCTV and public toilets – or stop providing them..



## Investing and improving

Despite the financial pressure we are under, we are continuing to invest in our services. For example **we're spending £168,000 to modernise Coalville market** – breathing new life into the town centre and attracting more shoppers.

We're investing in our customer services to make it easier for you to get the services you need. Alongside those improvements, we're building a new website and developing new ways to keep you informed - such as our Twitter and Facebook pages.

Our Cabinet debated our proposals when it met in September – and, after listening to your views, it will look again when it meets in December. A final decision about the budget and council tax for 2014-15 will be taken in February.



**There's much more at [www.nwleics.gov.uk](http://www.nwleics.gov.uk) – click on the 'Budget' icon on our homepage**

# Long term housing plan withdrawn

## **We have withdrawn our Core Strategy – following advice from a planning inspector.**

Planning Inspector Michael Heatherington criticised our plan – which sets out how the district will develop by 2031 – when we met at the end of September. We strongly defended our approach.

Councillors voted to formally withdraw the plan when they met on 29 October – and develop a revised version as quickly as possible.

Cllr Trevor Pendleton, portfolio holder for planning, said: “We were effectively told to

withdraw the plan or see it rejected at a future public examination.

We will now work with other Leicestershire councils to complete a new strategic housing market assessment. We hope to do that by spring 2014.

We will incorporate the findings of that study into a revised plan and submit it to the Planning Inspectorate as soon as possible – following any necessary further consultation with local people, businesses and community organisations.

**Find out more:** [www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/core\\_strategy](http://www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/core_strategy)

# Jobs fair attracts 150

**More than 150 job seekers met a range of local employers at our special jobs fair at the end of September.**

More than 30 companies, colleges and expert agencies were on hand at Stephenson College to advise people about how to get into work or training.

Portfolio holder for business Cllr Tony Gillard said: “We are lucky to have quite low unemployment compared to other parts of the country – but that’s no consolation to those without a job. We want North West Leicestershire to be a better place to invest and work – events like this are part of that commitment.

“I spoke to almost every organisation that had a stand – and was very impressed with their determination to strengthen our economy and create jobs.

Organisations taking part included the National Apprenticeship Service, East Midlands Airport, David Wilson Homes, Bosworth Homecare and construction firm Connaught.



*Pictured (left to right): Helen Corten - Assistant Adviser at Jobcentre Plus and Rob Somerville - Strategic Alliance Manager at Stephenson College meet Cllr Tony Gillard.*

# 1,000 reasons to celebrate home improvements

**Our £35m Decent Homes Improvement Programme has reached a major milestone.**

We're investing in new roofs, wiring, windows, doors, heating systems, kitchens and bathrooms to modernise more than 3,000 council homes by March 2015.

Council tenant Christine Dennis has lived in Woodlands Way, Moira, since 2004 – and her home is the 1,000th to be improved.

Our contractors Kier and Lovell are creating much needed jobs and apprenticeships – while saving tenants money on their energy bills.

Christine said she was 'thrilled' with the quality and workmanship – done by Kier – and her new kitchen had made her life so much easier.

Christine said: "May I thank everyone for their hard work. I am so pleased with my new look home.

"Plumbers, tilers, electricians, plasterers, kitchen fitters and the painters – they were all polite and friendly.

As each job was completed all of them cleaned up and left no mess – and Richard and John (the resident liaison officers) looked after us so well."

Councillor Roger Bayliss, portfolio holder for housing, said: "The Decent Homes Improvement Programme has already made a massive difference – and will continue to improve the quality of life for thousands of council tenants."

**Find out more at [www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/decent\\_homes](http://www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/decent_homes)**



*Pictured: Christine Dennis (Tenant) in her new kitchen.*

## Building better business in Bardon

**Firms based in Bardon, near Coalville, came to our business breakfast in October – to discuss the key challenges to growth they face over the next few years.**

High energy prices, slow internet speeds, snow and ice blocking roads, keeping crime low and finding well trained local staff are just some of their concerns.

Portfolio holder for business Cllr Tony Gillard said: "Bardon has one of the highest concentrations of employers in North West Leicestershire. So it's

important we understand what their concerns are – and explain to them how we are committed to supporting businesses."

Almost 30 local firms came along – and experts from Leicestershire County Council, Police, Job Centre Plus,

Stephenson College and the Leicester and Leicestershire Local Enterprise Partnership.

# Beating the shoplifters

We teamed up with the police and local shopowners in October for a campaign to beat the criminals in Ashby and Coalville.

Police stepped up patrols – and community support officers visited businesses to advise them about how to avoid becoming a target.

Cllr Trevor Pendleton, Portfolio holder for regeneration and planning, said: “Crime is low in North West Leicestershire – and we want to keep it that way.

“That means we all need to work together to keep our town centres safe and make the criminals as unwelcome as possible.”

PC Mark Arjoo from the Ashby Safer Neighbourhood Team said: “I urge the owners of any retail business in Ashby and Coalville who are not members of the North West Leicestershire Retail Crime Initiative to get involved.”

The initiative sees the Police, CCTV control room, retailers and licensees in Ashby and Coalville pass on information on criminal activity and other incidents to each other via digital retail radio.

**Find out more from Chairman Dean O’Shea: [photo-video@deanandsmedley.com](mailto:photo-video@deanandsmedley.com)**



*Pictured in Ashby from left to right PCSO Jason Harriman, Avril Flowers owner of Pink and Bow Boutique, Dean O’Shea Coordinator for Retail Radio and Photo Manager at Dean and Smedley, Jamie Dixon Duty Manager at Co-Op and PCSO Tom Gregory.*

## Teaming up for safer nights out

**Councillors, licensing officers and police joined forces for a patrol of Ashby and Coalville town centres.**

They were there as part of September’s Alcohol Awareness Week to learn more about how – together with local businesses – we can reduced crime caused by too much alcohol.

Sergeant Mark Watson said: “This was a great opportunity for councillors to experience our joint work in action and to see how the night time economy is managed.

“We rely on good working relationships with licensed premises – councillors were able to see this for themselves.”

## Cash for metal now a crime

**There’s a new law targeting trade in stolen metal – and dealers must now pay a £390 fee if they want to carry on trading in the district.**

The Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 means all local scrap dealers and motor salvage operators must now apply for a licence from us – and keep records on who they buy from. Dealers must verify customers’ names and addresses – such as a

passport, driving licence or utility bill – and will be breaking the law if they pay for the metal in cash.

Scrap metal dealers will be required to display their licence at their site or on their vehicle, so you know you are trading with a legitimate dealer. Council and police officers have powers to inspect dealers’ records, close unlicensed sites and revoke the licences of dealers.

# Respect Awards

## building better places

**A community shop, a new allotment and a First World War commemoration flower garden are among seven projects sharing more than £8,000 to help young people improve their neighbourhoods in North West Leicestershire.**

The projects are part of the 2013 Respect Awards – run by the Safer North West Partnership – to help reduce crime and create pride in local communities.

Partnership chairman Councillor Trevor Pendleton said: “The projects we have chosen will offer real chances for young people to get involved, learn something new and most importantly give something back which the whole community can benefit from. I’m really looking forward to seeing the results.”

The awards are sponsored by Leicestershire Constabulary, Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service, East Midlands Airport, East Midlands Housing Association and Radisson Blu Hotel East Midlands - which will host the awards ceremony in March 2014. The projects sharing £8,050 are:



*Pictured: Oakthorpe Youth Club receiving their award last year. From left to right Jennie Lowrie, Adam Taylor, Izzi Byrd, Tom Cronin and Jamie Antill.*

**Group: F Squadron Army Cadet Force**  
**Project: The Great War Flower Project**  
– creating commemorative raised beds in residential homes  
Award: £1,500

**Group: Lewis Charlton School**  
**Project: Pride of Place**  
Training young people to produce items for a shop the school has leased in Ashby.  
Award: £750

**Group: Coalville Art in the Countryside**  
**Project: Art in the Countryside**  
Helping young people create an interactive and mobile wildlife display  
Award: £1,440

**Group: Newbridge High School**  
**Project: Lunch across the Generations**  
Pupils will make invitations, organise transport, cook and serve lunches for local older residents  
Award: £960

**Group: Castle Rock High School**  
**Project: Community Gardening Project**  
Developing the school allotment to grow produce to be donated to the local community  
**Silver Surfers Project**  
Year 9 students will develop ICT learning packages for older people  
Award: £1,000

**Group: Supporting Futurez**  
**Projects: NEETs Engagement**  
A series of sports and activity sessions for young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs).  
Award: £1,500

**Group: Donisthorpe Youth Club**  
**Project: Rural Community Arts Project** – to tell the story of the local community  
Award: £900



# Green Footprints Awards 2014 are Go!

We're celebrating the commitment of local residents, groups and business to making North West Leicestershire a greener place to live, work and visit.

The Green Footprints Awards champion the eco work of businesses, schools, young people and the community who have met the challenge of choosing greener ways to live and work. There are five categories:

- **Businesses**
- **Children and young people**
- **Partnerships and community groups**
- **Schools**
- **Sustainable urban design.**

The awards are now open at [www.footprints/nwleics.gov.uk](http://www.footprints/nwleics.gov.uk).

The deadline for applications is Friday 24th January 2014 – and shortlisted projects will be invited to the annual civic ball and awards' night on Friday 4th April.

Deena Garnham, Director of Sales at Radisson Blu Hotel East Midlands Airport said: "Having been named as the greenest hotel in the country, we are proud to be sponsoring and hosting the Green Footprints Awards.

"It's always such an exciting night for local groups, schools and businesses who have been nominated – and we're delighted to provide them with a top-class experience on their big night."

Cllr Trevor Pendleton said: "We were delighted with last year's awards. There were some wonderful projects shortlisted and we'd like to invite lots more applications this year.

"The awards really are a great way to get your project noticed and be recognised for all your hard work."

"And of course we must thank all of our sponsors – without whose generous support there wouldn't be any awards. So our sincere thanks go to Radisson Blu Hotel at East Midlands Airport, Quadrant Events, Stephenson College, the National Forest Company and Ourplace."

For further information and to apply online, visit the Green Footprints website: <http://footprints.nwleics.gov.uk/>



*Pictured above: Award sponsors Ourplace presents Blackfordby St Margaret's School with YMD Boon Ltd their award.*

*Below: Award sponsors National Forest Company presents Woodstone Primary School with their award.*



# Litter campaign wins Keep Britain Tidy's 2013 awards

Keep Britain Tidy has declared our campaign to beat roadside litter louts the overall winner at its 2013 awards.

In July we joined up with Ellistown-based Pall-Ex to develop a charter and a 'cab pack' containing a small bin, rubbish bags and sanitising gel. More district-based distribution companies – include United Biscuits – have since signed up too.

Keep Britain Tidy chief executive Phil Barton said: "Littering from vehicles is a costly problem to deal with and tackling it is a priority for many local authorities.

"North West Leicestershire's campaign, with its specific target of hauliers and their drivers, is innovative and inspiring."

Pall-Ex managing director Adrian Russell said: "We didn't hesitate to get involved. We hope that our joint actions will help inspire others around the country."

Councillor Alison Smith MBE, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Community Services said: "I'm honoured we've been recognised nationally for our determination to make people and businesses feel proud of our district."



*Pictured Ruth Mulvany, Street Environment Manager collecting the award at the Keep Britain Tidy Awards.*

# Tonnes of reasons to celebrate volunteer litter pickers

**Making North West Leicestershire a place we're all proud to call home doesn't happen by accident – we can all play our part.**

Last year we started recruiting volunteers to help us pick up litter left by inconsiderate people in our streets – and at the end of October Council Chairman Cllr Geraint Jones invited all 85 to join us in a celebration of their hard work.

Together they've collected more than 500 bags of rubbish in 18 months – more than FIVE tonnes' worth.

Cllr Jones said: "They're a special kind of volunteer – going out in all weathers. Sometimes saying 'thanks' doesn't ever seem like enough compared to the contribution they make.

"Maybe one day others will get the message that littering will not be tolerated in our district – until then we should support anyone prepared to put in a few hours of their time."

Want to do your bit to improve your community? Email [customer.services@nwleicestershire.gov.uk](mailto:customer.services@nwleicestershire.gov.uk) or call 01530 454545.



*Pictured (left to right): Christine E Fisher (Chief Executive – North West Leicestershire District Council), Lawrence Foster (Ravenstone), Nita Pearson (Thringstone), Robert Gough (Ashby de la Zouch) and Geraint Jones (Chairman – North West Leicestershire District Council), receiving a Special Recognition Award for their work to support the district wide initiative the Green Footprints Challenge – working towards a cleaner and greener district.*

# Book and pay online at leisure centres

**You now have even less excuse for missing that exercise class or gym session – because you can book from your bed if you want to pay for sessions at Hermitage and Hood Park Leisure Centres!**

For the first time, people booking fitness classes, courts and health suite sessions can now pay when they book.

Cllr Alison Smith MBE, deputy leader and portfolio holder for community services, said: “Customers can now book courts, fitness classes and health suite sessions 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 7 days in advance over the internet.

“If you still prefer to ring up to book then you’ll also be able to book all fitness classes from 8am – instead of having one booking time for morning

classes and another for evening classes. And with more people booking online, it means smaller queues at our leisure centres – so we can serve you faster in person too.”

**You need to register with us to use the system – visit [www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/leisurebookings](http://www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/leisurebookings) to find out more.**

## Cleaner, leaner and greener!

**We’re giving swimmers at Hood Park Leisure Centre a cracking Christmas present – by giving our changing rooms a fantastic makeover in December.**

The upgrade will see the poolside changing rooms fitted out with new, modern designed lockers – in a variety of sizes to meet everyone’s needs. We’ll also be fitting new vanity units, replacing changing and toilet cubicle panels – and giving the whole area a fresh new look by getting out our paint brushes.

But that’s not all. In the entrance areas we’re installing purpose built seating – making it easier to put on and take off shoes. We’re aiming to keep the building work disruption to a minimum.

Already in 2013 we’ve fitted new air conditioning and LED lighting at Hermitage and Hood Park leisure centres. That means much lower running costs – the new lighting shouldn’t need replacing for 10 years.

Councillor Alison Smith MBE, deputy leader and portfolio holder for leisure, said: “We’re committed to providing high quality, great value leisure centres that people feel proud to visit. Improvements like these make for a better experience for everyone – and by keeping running costs down we can keep improving services.”

**Remember to check for Christmas and New Year opening times for your local leisure centres.**