



Caverswall Castle Health & Wellbeing Spa Retreat

Business Plan Part II: Health & Conservation
Supplementary Information

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The History of Caverswall Castle, a Grade-I listed Building

Caverswall Castle was crafted in the 13th century when the eponymous Caverswall family was granted a licence to fortify their manor house. The resultant moated castle represents an extraordinary and enduring piece of Staffordshire’s heritage.

Over the years the castle has been occupied by numerous dignitaries and Staffordshire denizens including several High Sheriffs, the MP and first Mayor of Stafford Matthew Cradock, William Holles Vane (2nd Viscount Vane), and the Wedgwood family. It has also been home to three convent orders, most recently from 1965–1978 after which it passed back in to private ownership.

In acknowledgment of its medieval origins and historical significance, Caverswall Castle is designated on the National Heritage List for England (NHLE) as a Grade–I listed building⁽¹⁾.

As shown in Table 1, Caverswall is one of only a small minority of NHLE entries that meet the Grade–I selection criteria:

Table 1: The Designation of Listed Buildings by Grade in England and Staffordshire⁽¹⁾.

	Grade I of exceptional interest	Grade II* of particular interest (more than Grade II)	Grade II of special interest
England	2.5%	5.5%	92%
The County of Staffordshire	1.6% [‡]	7%	91.4%

[‡] 1.6% is equivalent to 81 Grade–I listed buildings in Staffordshire, 45 of which are ecclesiastical buildings⁽¹⁾.

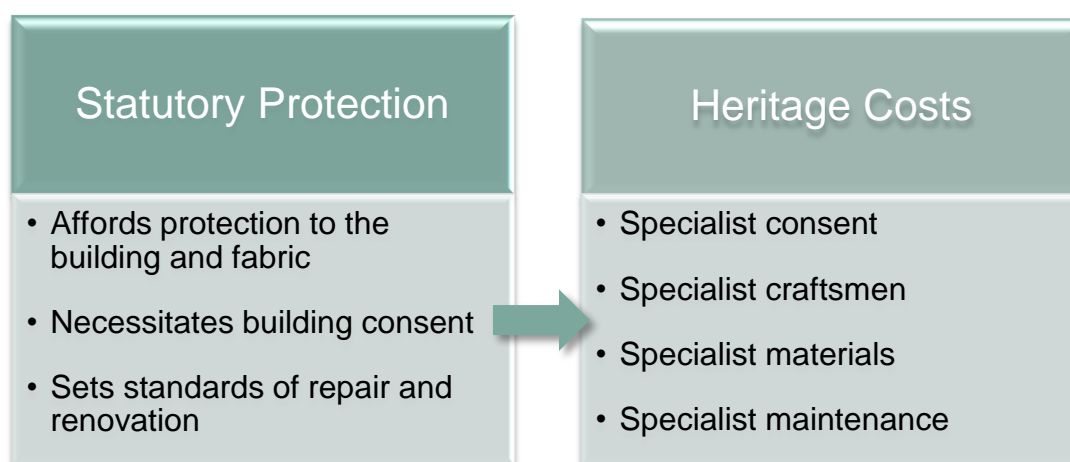
The care and preservation of the historic buildings on the NHLE is important. They are not just bricks and mortar, but special iconic symbols of England’s unique character and embodiments of our past. They are also valuable social and economic assets, attracting visitors to the UK worth an estimated £26 billion in heritage–revenue⁽²⁾.

“The national contribution of historic houses – economically, culturally, socially, and through education – is enormous.” Historic Houses Association⁽²⁾



The Heritage Deficit – The Problem

The maintenance of a listed building is expensive; more so than an equivalent non-listed structure since the statutory protection afforded to safeguard it lends itself to higher repair costs⁽²⁾.



As shown in Table 2, figures provided by members of the Historic Houses Association suggest a significant shortfall between the cost of urgent heritage repairs, and the availability of funds:

Table 2: The Heritage Deficit of 1600 Independently Owned Historic Houses in 2013⁽²⁾.

Descriptor	Value
Monies available for conservation :	£102 million
Cost of urgent repairs:	£764 million
Total Heritage Deficit in 2013: –£662 million	

Sadly, the heritage deficit is set to grow. Conservation costs are rapidly rising, the legislative and tax frameworks are less favourable for independently-owned historic houses, and regulation (e.g. Health & Safety and Fire) becomes ever more exigent. All these factors serve to present private owners with challenges to fund essential maintenance, and pose a great threat to the preserving the historic environment.

The Heritage Deficit – The Consequences

Without year-on-year maintenance or sustainable futures, historic buildings such as Staffordshire Moorlands' Wetley Abbey (right) will likely fall in to English Heritage's At Risk status and risk being lost forever.



“Maintenance and where appropriate, occupation are key to preventing heritage assets becoming at risk, whilst maintenance of those already at risk will prevent them from decaying further. Without maintenance, the cost of repair and consolidation escalates, the challenge for owners and occupiers increases, and the scope for affordable solutions declines.” ⁽³⁾



English Heritage's *Heritage at Risk Register*⁽³⁾ details more than 5700 sites, sixty-nine of which are in Staffordshire as detailed in Table 3.

Table 3: Entries on the Heritage at Risk Register by Local Planning Authorities in Staffordshire⁽³⁾

Planning Authority	Buildings & Structures	Places of worship	Archaeology	Conservation Areas	Total Entries
Stoke-on-Trent	7	4	0	5	16
Staffordshire Moorlands	5	1	2	3	11
East Staffordshire	3	0	5	2	10
South Staffordshire	2	0	5	2	9
Lichfield	2	0	5	1	8
Stafford	2	0	2	3	7
Newcastle-under-Lyme	3	0	0	1	4
Tamworth	2	0	1	0	3
Cannock Chase	0	0	0	1	1
Total of each entry type	26	5	20	18	Grand Total 69

Locally there are eleven *At Risk* sites in the Staffordshire Moorlands area, this includes six Grade-II* listed buildings, two monuments, and three conservation areas:

Grade-II* Listed Buildings/structures:

- Alton Towers country house, Farley;
- Biddulph Old Hall, Biddulph
- The Gazebo, Whitehough;
- Prospect Tower, Knypersely;
- Sharpcliffe Hall, Ipstones
- Church of St Chad, Longsdon

Monuments:

- Paynsley Hall
- Dieu-la-Cres Abbey remains

Conservation Areas:

- Alton & Farley
- Cheadle
- Leek

Buildings at Risk- a selection across Staffordshire



Grade-II* Sharpecliffe Hall, Staffordshire Moorlands



Grade-II* Biddulph Old Hall, Staffordshire Moorlands



Grade-II* Price & Kensington Teapot works, Stoke-on-Trent



Grade-II* Sinai Park, Burton-on-Trent



Grade-II* Orangery, Trentham Hall, Stoke-on-Trent



Grade-I* The Conservatory, Hilton Park South Staffordshire

The Heritage Deficit- The Solution

In order to generate revenue for maintenance and repair costs, **97% of Grade-I listed buildings engage in some form of commercial enterprise** or *constructive conservation*. The philosophy of constructive conservation is to view the historic environment as a heritage asset and realise its financial potential by carefully adapting its use. This practice is wholly endorsed by Historic England, the public body tasked with looking after the historic environment, and is the modus operandi of the leading UK conservation charities, English Heritage and National Trust.

“CONSTRUCTIVE CONSERVATION is the broad term adopted by English Heritage [and Historic England] for a positive and collaborative approach to conservation that focuses on actively managing change. The aim is to recognise and reinforce the historic significance of places, while accommodating the changes necessary to ensure their continued use and enjoyment.”⁽⁴⁾



Historic England, champions constructive conservation through several publications⁽⁴⁻⁷⁾ and lists “*Supporting Change*”⁽⁸⁾ as one of its five main duties. The organisation states it:

“...works with owners and developers to give historic buildings a future. We understand that sometimes their best chance of survival comes from adapting them to economically viable new uses.”⁽⁸⁾

The National Trust is a charity famously adept at utilising the historic environment to generate income for conservation. Its proficiency is no doubt, aided by this key principle in its stringent acquisition policy:

“The property should be, and should be expected to remain, financially self-supporting”⁽¹⁰⁾.



With its newfound charity status, English Heritage is now set to emulate the National Trust’s success asserting, “*Our target is to become completely self-funding [through income-generation and donations] by 2023*”⁽¹¹⁾.



Dumfries House Estate in Ayrshire is a successful case in point of constructive conservation. The house is one of Scotland's most important Stately homes and was marketed in 2007 due to escalating maintenance costs. To prevent the priceless collection of original 1750s Chippendale furniture being sold-off at auction, the estate was purchased by The Prince of Wales Charitable Foundation to keep the house and contents together.



As well as keeping the house and heritage intact, this intervention breathed life back in to the estate and provided a much-needed boost to the significantly deprived local economy. The house and estate are now open for visitors to enjoy, and income is generated through a café, restaurant, shop, and hire of the house for weddings and corporate functions. Dumfries House is a great example of thinking outside the box and using the historic environment as a heritage asset.

Constructive conservation is essential to the survival of those buildings whose original function is now obsolete. Many defensive castles for example have evolved in to thriving visitor attractions and musea (e.g. Tower of London, Dover Castle, Tamworth Castle), wedding and event venues (e.g. Warwick Castle, Alnwick Castle, Leeds Castle), and luxury hotels (e.g. Bovey Castle, Lumley Castle, and Thornbury Castle) to generate much needed income for their upkeep:

Investing in ongoing maintenance of the historic environment is far more cost-effective than major restoration, and the case for utilising historic places as social and economic assets to fund conservation is overwhelming. The National Trust and English Heritage have developed expert methods of doing this, and the government expects constructive conservation to be considered as an option to save listed buildings at risk.

Additionally, 97% of all grade-I listed buildings operate commercially. That statistic in itself is conclusive that if change is required then it should be encouraged not hindered by local authorities.

The History of and Necessity for Constructive Conservation at Caverswall Castle

The castle was a convent between 1932 and 1978 with up to 60 nuns living there at any one time. It also operated as a care home and convent during 1965–1978.

Between 1993 and 2006, the previous owner operated the castle as a B&B/guest house and occasionally held commercial functions and events. The turrets were hired for holiday lettings too. As it was utilised in this manner for in excess of ten years, it can be argued that this function is established custom and practice.

During 2007 – 2011 the Castle ran as a very successful wedding venue. It also operated holiday lettings between autumn 2012 and January 2014.




Caverswall is now in use as a private residence, and though it has been on the market for the last seven years, no buyer has been interested in purchasing the property for use solely as a domestic dwelling. Presently, the castle does not have an income stream, is left largely unheated and unused, and no maintenance works have been carried out in the last two years.

It is no longer feasible for the property to remain as a private residence. It is imperative that an urgent solution is found to fund the spiraling maintenance costs, and prevent the castle from further decay otherwise an important local asset will be at risk once again.

Trying to avoid a solution is no longer an option. The Castle is already suffering significantly and now requires a substantial re-investment to bring it back in to good condition.

In an attempt to find a solution to its heritage deficit, the castle has been proffered to the National Trust, English Heritage, and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. All three organisations declined the offer as detailed in Table 4.

Table 4: The Proffering of Caverswall Castle – Outcome by Organisation

Organisation	Outcome
 National Trust	Declined – property failed to meet its stringent acquisition policy due to lack of an approved commercial use or an endowment.
 ENGLISH HERITAGE	Declined – property was highly desired for English Heritage’s portfolio of event venues, but the organisation had insufficient funds to purchase
 STAFFORDSHIRE <i>moorlands</i> DISTRICT COUNCIL ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE	Declined

In the absence of an alternative resolution, an innovative commercial solution is sought to meet the castle’s ongoing maintenance costs.

Table 5 details the commercial activities of other Grade-I (non-ecclesiastical) buildings in Staffordshire.

Table 5: The Commercial Activity of Staffordshire’s Grade-I (non-ecclesiastical) buildings

Location	Commercial Activity
Alton Castle	Operates as a retreat for 9000 children per annum. The castle generates much needed income by operating as a wedding/events’ venue and offers accommodation for short breaks.
Alton Towers Park & Gardens	Part of the Alton Towers Resort, one of the UK’s biggest tourist attractions drawing millions of visitors annually.
Barlaston Hall	None – Private small hall/plot recently up for sale. Within from sale due to lack of interest.
Biddulph Grange Garden	A National Trust property open to the public. Income is generated through admission charges, a tearoom, gift shop, and the sale of plants.
Blithfield Hall	A private residence open to the public in the summer months – admission charges apply.

[Table 5 continued]

Location	Commercial Activity
Broughton Hall	None – Private residence of the local billionaire John Caudwell. No financial assistance required.
The Castle Tutbury	Part of The Duchy of Lancaster, the castle generates income for the Queen through ticketed events, and operating as a wedding/events' venue.
Chillington Hall	A private residence available to hire for civil ceremonies, corporate/private events, and filming. Guided tours offered to the public in the summer –admission charges apply.
Darwin House	A museum operated by a charitable foundation. Entry is free, but charges apply for guided tours and events. Monies are generated through a gift shop, and the museum operates as a wedding/events' venue.
The Gatehouse	Luxury self-catering accommodation owned by the Landmark Trust
Hilton Hall	A private wedding & corporate event venue. Office and virtual office space can also be leased.
Samuel Johnson's birthplace	A museum operated by Lichfield City Council. Though entry is free, charges apply for guided tours, and various events and workshops held in the museum.
Patshull Hall	A former wedding venue recently purchased by a local entrepreneur after the previous owners went in to receivership in 2013.
Shugborough Hall	A National Trust working estate and wedding/conference venue operated by Staffordshire County Council. The hall and formal gardens are open to the public – admission charges apply, and there is a restaurant, tearooms, and a gift shop.
Swynnerton Hall	The private residence of Lord Stafford, but sited on a working estate which includes accommodation rented to the local community
Tamworth Castle	A heritage attraction operated by Tamworth Borough Council with a café and gift shop – admission charges apply. Also operates as a wedding/private event venue
Weston Hall	A private boutique hotel, restaurant, and wedding/private event venue
Whitmore Hall	A private residence open to the public in the summer – admission charges apply
Wootton Lodge	None – The private residence of the family of J.C. Bamford (founder of JCB) No financial assistance required.

Table 5 indicates the majority of (non–ecclesiastical) listed buildings in Staffordshire (including those operated by charitable organisations and district councils) have adapted their original function, and engage in some degree of commercial enterprise to meet their heritage costs.

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council is also supportive of this approach to conservation. In its core development plan⁽¹²⁾, the Council refers to safeguarding and enhancing the local historic environment by:

“...preventing the loss of buildings and features which make a positive contribution to the character or heritage of an area through appropriate reuse and sensitive development, including enabling development...”.

The position of the local council and other heritage stakeholders on constructive conservation has been extensively considered, and the commercial innovations implemented by other Grade–I listed buildings have been explored.

To this end it is proposed Caverswall Castle is developed in to a health and wellbeing spa retreat/boutique hotel. In line with the majority of (non–religious) grade–I listed buildings in Staffordshire, constructive conservation by virtue of a creating a quiet wellbeing retreat at Caverswall Castle would:

- make use of the energy already embodied in its construction
- provide a special experience of staying in an environment rich in history and character
- generate the investment necessary to safeguard its ongoing preservation and prevent it becoming at risk.

Confidence to the success of this proposal is taken from the National Trust who use this business model in their three historic hotels:

1. **Bodysgallen Hall & Spa, North Wales:** Health & Fitness Spa, Afternoon Tea, Fine Dining, Weddings, Conferences & Events <http://www.bodysgallen.com/>
2. **Hartwell House & Spa, Aylesbury:** Health & Fitness Spa, Fine Dining, Weddings, Conferences & Events <http://www.hartwell-house.com/>
3. **Middlethorpe Hall & Spa, York:** Health & Fitness Spa, Fine Dining, Weddings, Conferences & Events <http://www.middlethorpe.com/>

The Benefits of a Wellbeing Retreat

Using Caverswall Castle as a health retreat/hotel is not only a positive way of creating an income stream for the castle, but is also beneficial to the local community by bringing employment opportunities to the locality and supporting the government's top health priorities.

Employment

Across Staffordshire, average household income (£39k) is similar to the national average (£40k), as are employment rates of 16–64 year olds⁽¹³⁾.

However, it must be stressed these figures averages and there are distinct pockets of rurality and poverty within the county. For example, the metropolitan borough of Stoke-on-Trent is highly impoverished, ranking at 16 in England's most deprived local authority list (out of 326). Stoke-on-Trent, Cannock Chase, Staffordshire Moorlands, and West Midlands also have unfavourable rates of long-term unemployment compared with national figures^(14,15).

Accordingly, any business-related venture offering employment opportunities, and utilising local suppliers would be a great asset to the local area.

With respect to sourcing a suitably trained local workforce, Staffordshire is fortuitously served by a number of further and higher education colleges teaching sector-specific skills (i.e. catering, complementary therapies, diet & nutrition, and hospitality management). These educational establishments are well placed to provide an ongoing supply of homegrown, appropriately trained personnel to a wellbeing retreat/hotel at Caverswall Castle.

Health

It is well-publicised that levels of obesity and stress are rising rapidly creating a plethora of health and financial consequences for the nation⁽¹⁵⁾.

In England, two-thirds of adults and a quarter of children are overweight (BMI >25 29.9<) and within this statistic, 23% of adults, and 19% of schoolchildren are now classified as obese (BMI>30). A recent press release from Public Health England issued a stark warning that **five million** people in England are on the cusp of developing Type 2 diabetes due to obesity, low levels of exercise, and an unhealthy diet⁽¹⁶⁾.

Mental illness is accounting for nearly a quarter of ill-health in England and affects more than one in four of the population at any time⁽¹⁷⁾.

In an attempt to reverse current health trends, Public Health England states its top health priorities in 2015 are⁽¹⁸⁾:

- Wellbeing and mental health
- diet, obesity, and physical exercise
- smoking, and
- alcohol and drugs

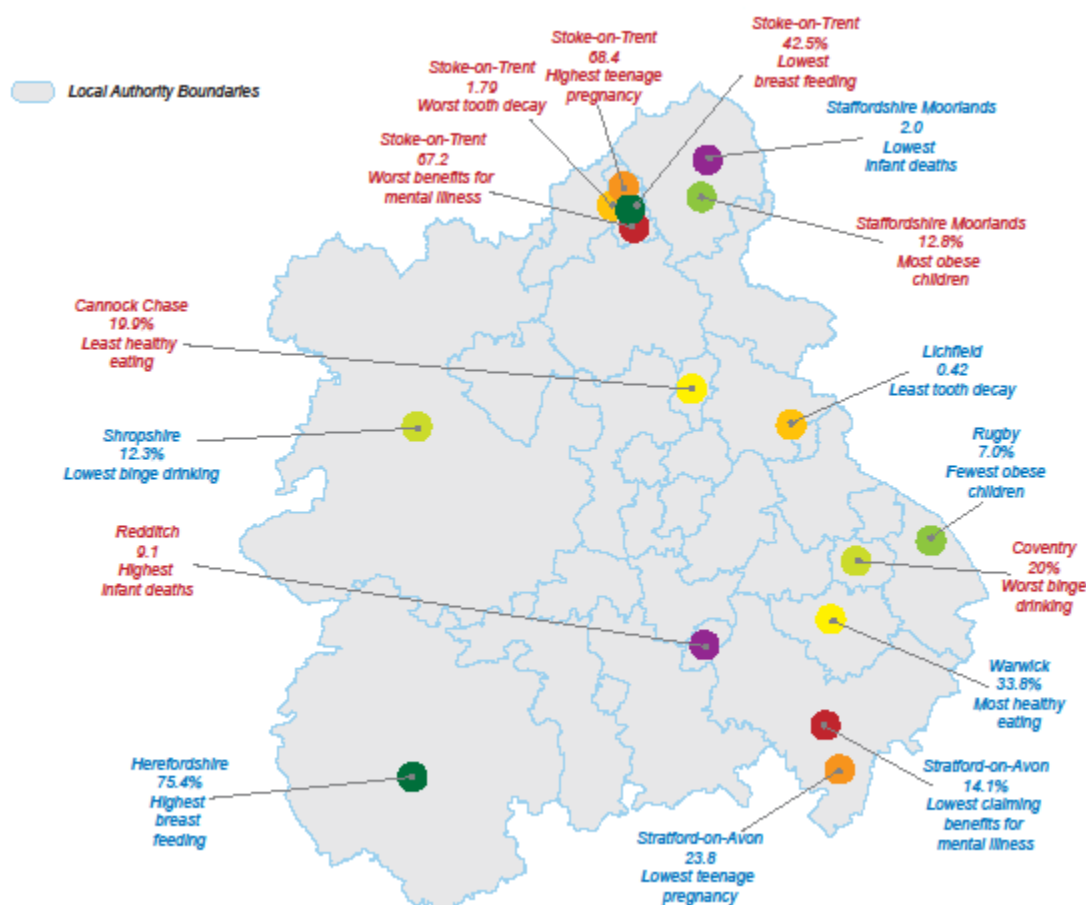


The health priorities in Staffordshire and the wider Midlands area emulate the national picture. The figures in Table 5 show how the region performs against national figures for key health indicators.

Table 5: The Prevalence of Key Health Indicators across the West Midlands⁽¹⁹⁾

Indicator	Period	England	West Midlands region	Birmingham	Coventry	Dudley	Herefordshire	Sandwell	Shropshire	Solihull	Staffordshire	Stoke-on-Trent	Telford and Wrekin	Walsall	Warwickshire	Wolverhampton	Worcestershire
Hospital stays for self-harm	2013/14	203.2	210.3	191.9	284.5	182.1	171.2	235.0	199.8	197.0	207.7	319.3	257.4	196.0	216.3	200.5	188.3
Hospital stays for alcohol related harm	2013/14	645	697	678	810	780	546	751	621	629	703	983	681	730	620	851	598
Prevalence of opiate and/or crack use	2011/12	8.4	9.5	15.2	9.2	9.6	6.2	10.7	4.4	5.7	5.9	14.3	6.9	12.8	5.1	14.0	7.3
Recorded diabetes	2013/14	6.2	7.1	8.1	6.2	6.8	6.3	8.3	6.1	6.8	6.7	7.3	6.5	8.6	6.0	7.9	6.7

Above the national average
 Similar to the national average
 Below the national average

Health Inequalities Across the West Midlands⁽²⁰⁾:

Best 3 in each category within the West Midlands

- Breast feeding**
% of mothers who initiate breastfeeding
England best 92.2
Herefordshire 75.4
Shropshire 74.2
Nuneaton and Bedworth 71.2
- Tooth decay**
average number of decayed missing and filled teeth in five year olds
England best 0.0
Lichfield 0.42
Tamworth 0.48
Bromsgrove 0.56
- Obese children**
% of reception year
England best 3.9
Rugby 7.0
Warwick 7.1
Stratford-on-Avon 7.3
- Teenage pregnancy**
crude rate per 1,000 female pop aged 15-17
England best 15.0
Stratford-on-Avon 23.8
Malvern Hills 24.0
Bromsgrove 24.2
- Binge drinking adults**
% drinking more than twice the recommended daily allowance
England best 9.7
Shropshire 12.3
Walsall 16.9
Stratford-on-Avon 17.0
- Benefits from mental illness**
rate per 1,000 of working age population
England best 8.7
Stratford-on-Avon 14.1
South Staffordshire 15.0
Wychavon 16.0
- Healthy eating**
% eating five or more pieces of fruit and veg a day
England best 45.8
Warwick 33.8
Stratford-on-Avon 33.0
Malvern Hills 31.8
- Infant deaths (less than one year)**
per 1,000 live births
England best 1.3
Staffordshire Moorlands 2.0
Wychavon 2.0
Malvern Hills 2.2

Worst 3 in each category within the West Midlands

- Breast feeding**
% of mothers who initiate breastfeeding
England worst 32.5
Stoke-on-Trent 42.5
Walsall 52.3
Sandwell 52.5
- Tooth decay**
average number of decayed missing and filled teeth in five year olds
England worst 3.2
Stoke-on-Trent 1.79
Herefordshire 1.78
Newcastle-under-Lyme 1.57
- Obese children**
% of reception year
England worst 16.2
Staffordshire Moorlands 12.8
Wolverhampton 12.2
Telford and Wrekin 11.9
- Teenage pregnancy**
crude rate per 1,000 female pop aged 15-17
England worst 79.1
Stoke-on-Trent 68.4
Wolverhampton 62.9
Sandwell 60.9
- Binge drinking adults**
% drinking more than twice the recommended daily allowance
England worst 28.9
Coventry 20.0
Warwick 19.1
Stoke-on-Trent 19.0
- Benefits from mental illness**
rate per 1,000 of working age population
England worst 59.4
Stoke-on-Trent 57.2
Wolverhampton 38.6
Birmingham 36.6
- Healthy eating**
% eating five or more pieces of fruit and veg a day
England worst 15.8
Cannock Chase 19.9
Stoke-on-Trent 19.9
Sandwell 20.3
- Infant deaths (less than one year)**
per 1,000 live births
England worst 9.6
Redditch 9.1
East Staffordshire 8.4
Walsall 8.3

As the above data demonstrates, there marked health inequalities across Staffordshire (and the wider Midlands region). As a whole though, Staffordshire is performing below the national average in the following areas⁽¹³⁾:



- Alcohol-related hospital admissions and deaths
- Depression (particularly in areas of significant deprivation)
- emotional well-being
- Healthy eating
- Obesity in children and adults (Staffordshire Moorlands has the highest percentage of obese children in the West Midlands)
- Physical exercise
- and Smoking in pregnancy

Moreover, 1 in 5 people in Staffordshire die from causes that are thought to be largely preventable i.e. smoking, excessive drinking, poor diet, physical inactivity, and poor emotional wellbeing⁽¹³⁾.

It is well documented that a greater wellbeing is linked to lower incidences of illness, faster rates of healing, greater emotional resilience, and general better physical and mental health⁽¹⁷⁾.

An important strategy in meeting the health challenges of Staffordshire and the wider Midlands region would therefore lend itself to supporting and implementing schemes, which expand the wellbeing of the population.

A wellbeing retreat at Caverswall Castle would be significantly beneficial to this area by:

- providing local employment (which in itself advances personal wellbeing)
- boosting the local economy and contributing to economic prosperity
- preserving the heritage of a local Grade-I listed building
- serving to expand the wellbeing of the population
- endorsing a healthy lifestyle in this local area

Additionally, a wellbeing retreat is congruent with all four strategic aims of Stoke-on-Trent's Mandate for Change⁽²¹⁾ Stoke-on-Trent's "Healthy City" ⁽²²⁾ status, and Public Health England's pledge to⁽²³⁾:

"Help more people have good mental health."

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