

**Busy babies' 785
tonne bottom**

**Win a first-class
trip to London - p4**

Ask Shirley

p2

Vision's Shirley gets you the answers you need!



●THE new Burnley Campus, which should be complete in September 2008. A Whitehall go-ahead is to be sought for school refurbishments or new buildings across the county.

NEW SCHOOLS HERALD REBIRTH

**Parents to
help design
fresh start
in county
classrooms**

PARENTS, pupils, governors and teachers are to be asked what they want in a huge £250m schools building programme that will eventually be a blueprint for schools in the whole of Lancashire.

Before the month is out, a variety of people involved in schools in Burnley and Pendle will be asked to workshops to say what they want in the next phase of school renewal in their area.

The scheme for Burnley and south Pendle involves seven new colleges, a sixth form, three special schools, a primary and nursery school - a wholesale replacement of old and unsuitable existing facilities.

The first buildings will open in September 2008 with the entire project due for completion in 2010.

Education chiefs in Lancashire have already said they will seek the



●NEW: Shuttleworth College will boast a circular hall for assemblies, exhibitions and even performances.

Whitehall go-ahead to renew schools across the entire county. Schemes elsewhere in Lancashire may be on a smaller scale than Burnley and Pendle's £250m project - but all will involve bringing schools up to 21st century standards.

About 500 people attended an exhibition of plans for the proposed Burnley Campus, Pendle Vale College and Shuttleworth College at Burnley FC last month.

Janet Newton, project director for Building Schools for the Future, said: "What we are doing in Burnley and Pendle is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create exciting, high-tech learning environments for pupils."

cont back page

Audit report points to county's value for money

INDEPENDENT auditors say that Lancashire County Council is one of the best-performing councils in the country and that it offers good value for money.

The Audit Commission audits and inspects the council each year and its "management letter" covers accounts, performance management and financial management of corporate governance.

Mike Thomas, district auditor, added that the council is well placed to deliver good services.

County Councillor Hazel Harding, leader of the county council, said: "The county council provides around 85 per cent of local authority services in Lancashire so it is important for people to know that the organisation is well run."

"The first page of the report states that the county council's financial statement is sound and that we are continuing to improve outcomes for local people."

"That means the services we provide for children and young people are doing well, and adults and older people are receiving even better services."

"Recycling is up and we are also making good progress on Lancashire's rural recovery plan."

"However the audit is not just designed to tell us everything that we are doing well - it also points out where the council can improve."

"Setting longer-term goals for customer access and strengthening partnerships are areas that still need attention. The level of sickness absence is also of concern."

Road tour sparks local look

WATCH this space – decisions on some road repairs could be devolved to local level.

Roads chief County Councillor Tony Martin said Lancashire Local committees – which devolve power down to elected representatives at district level – were ideal bodies to direct parts of the county's roads budget.

He was speaking after a tour of roads in Tarleton, Hesketh Bank and Banks at the invitation of County Councillor Malcolm Barron.

Councillor Barron said: "There are tremendous numbers of heavy wagons using roads in this area because of the intensive nature of agriculture – and the small roads can barely take this type of traffic."

"There is also a particular issue of 'moss' roads in the area. The good news is that a report is now going to be prepared on the roads in the area."

Councillor Martin added that huge food wagons were damaging B roads and that he hoped that district councils across Lancashire and the county council could work together to prioritise road budgets.



Ask Shirley

Are you having difficulties knowing who to contact when you need help? Are you baffled when you open the phone book to ring for help? Then this new section is for you

If you are having problems getting hold of someone to help, Lancashire County Council has many staff trained and willing to assist.

Sometimes you just can't think who to ask - and this is where Vision's Shirley can help.

Shirley answers all the letters she receives and some will feature on this page. Others may take a while as Shirley will seek responses from other council teams.

Shirley is not able to offer legal advice.

Break the boundaries

MRS B from Preston writes:

Please help, I have heard so many conflicting stories regarding the proposed free travel for the over-60s.

I am 67 and have had an over-60s concessionary bus pass (NoWcard) for the past few years and use it regularly. I currently travel for half fare.

How will this affect me?

From 1 April if you are aged 60 and over or are disabled, living in Lancashire and a Nowcard holder you will be able to travel for free within your district boundary after 9.30am Monday – Friday, all day Saturday, Sunday and bank holidays. Your current concessionary fare will apply before 9.30am.

As an added bonus, for a limited period, you will only have to pay a flat fare of 50p for journeys which cross district boundaries.

If you have any further queries please contact the NoWcard Helpline on 0845 058 1096.

Help with school travel

MISS J from Padiham writes:

I am on benefits and my daughter is due to start high school in September.

Will she qualify for a free bus pass to get her to and from school? If so, how do I apply and when?

Eligibility for free school travel is not income-based. As a general guide the child must live in Lancashire, be travelling two miles or more if aged under eight, three miles or more if aged over eight and attending the nearest suitable school. The child's age, religion and the availability of places is taken into consideration.

Application forms are sent out at the end of April to children due to start primary or secondary school if it is considered they may be eligible. If you have not received a form by 1 May then you should ring the School Transport Helpline on 01772 534588.

Privet investigators

MISS S from Lancaster writes:

At the top of my road there is a badly overgrown hedge that reaches right out over the pavement causing an obstruction.

I am concerned for the safety of my young son as when I take him out in his pushchair I have to step onto the busy road to get past. Who should I contact to complain to?



●FREE travel bonanza on Lancashire buses: see "Break the boundaries".

You should contact the Lancashire Highways Partnership on 0845 053 0011.

You failed to mention whether the hedge is on the highway or is privately owned. Hedges which are the responsibility of the highway authority will be trimmed as required on receipt of a complaint.

The highway authority cannot take arbitrary action on private property; they must serve notice of at least 21 days on the owner of the hedge, giving them notice to remove the obstruction.

If they do not trim the hedge adequately within the time given, the highway authority can do the work and charge them.

Mum's the word

MRS A from Garstang writes:

My son is eight-months-old and I am due to return to work after my maternity leave so I need to arrange childcare for him.

How do I go about finding a childminder or nursery?

You can get all the information you require from the Lancashire Childcare Information Service. They provide accessible and impartial information on childcare services, resources and issues.

They can provide information and advice on choosing the right childcare for your child. You can contact them on 0800 195 0137.

You can also search online for local childcare at www.childcarelink.gov.uk/lancashire where you will find information of up-to-date contacts and availability in your local area for a wide variety of childcare solutions.

Permit puzzle solved

MR D from Grimsargh writes:

I am planning to springclean my garage so I will have to take a van load of household rubbish to my local Household Waste Recycling Centre.

I have been told by a friend that I will need to apply for a permit. Is this true and, if so, how do I apply for one?

Yes, your friend is correct. If you are taking a van to the Household Recycling Centre you will need to apply for a "tip permit".

A van shall be deemed to be any vehicle without side windows at the rear, any "flatback" vehicle or any "pick-up" vehicle.

However any vehicle with more than four wheels, any trailer more than 3m long or any vehicle carrying trade waste will not be permitted to deposit rubbish at a HWRC.

You can apply for a permit by calling the Waste Helpline on 0845 0500 957 or you can apply online by visiting the Lancashire County Council website www.lancashire.gov.uk

Your flexible friend

Mr F from Bacup writes:

I am planning to start my own business and wondered if there are any grants available from the county council to help me get going?

Unfortunately we cannot give grants for business start-ups. However, the county council's economic development company, Lancashire County Developments Ltd, works closely with businesses to create employment and growth.

Its Rosebud source of funding can be accessed by any business in Lancashire, including social and community enterprises.

Rosebud loans can range from £5,000 to £750,000. Micro-credit of £4,999 to even below £500 is possible through a pilot scheme with credit unions.

Rosebud often forms one element of a package of finance including bank loans, partners' or directors' cash, asset finance and other venture capital money. As part of a package Rosebud often includes an option for shares.

To find out more contact Lancashire County Developments on 01772 551888.

Email: inquiries@css.lancscc.gov.uk or write to: Ask Shirley, Customer Service Centre, The Red Rose Hub, Bluebell Way, Preston PR2 5PX. Telephone 0845 0530000.

Paid work for students to boost business



●WORK experience: student placement Liz Cam with prospective entrants.

RURAL tourism businesses in Lancashire are benefiting from a special paid undergraduate placement scheme offered through Lancashire County Council's economic development company – Lancashire County Developments Ltd.

The three-year project is being run in partnership with the Lancashire Rural Tourism Initiative (LRTI), Lancashire County Council and the Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board.

The project aims to help small and medium-sized rural tourism businesses with marketing and associated projects and to help undergraduates gain valuable experience in the world of work.

With the first three students nearly half way through their placements, LCDL is now recruiting applicants for 2006/7 and is offering 11 to 12 placement opportunities. Successful applicants will take part in a 12-month placement with the first three months spent at a relatively large organisation, followed by nine months at a much smaller operation.

Companies benefiting from the first placements made under the scheme included the Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board, Bashall Barn and Oswaldtwistle Mills.

Undergraduates interested in working on tourism-related marketing projects in Lancashire for a year should contact Louise Kite at Lancashire County Developments Ltd on 01772 551888 for application forms and further information.

Companies willing to offer placements should also contact Louise.

Ask now to save cash with free booklet

SIMPLE steps to a new and healthier life are outlined in a booklet that Lancashire County Council travel planners are giving away.

Free to Vision readers, Cutting Your Car Use, shows how getting rid of your car can actually save you cash.

It can mean convenience for some journeys – but, author Anna Semlyen says, most journeys are easily compatible with less car use.

Daily commutes, family visits, even weekly shopping can be done either on foot, using public transport or by cycling.

Trips such as the annual holiday, of course, still need a car but it can be cost-effective to hire one on such occasions.

Readers may also be surprised to learn that car use often does not even save time as roads get more and more congested.

Even if you don't get rid of the car, but simply minimise its use you will find Cutting Your Car Use is a great help.

Copies are available free from: Information and Marketing Group, Guild House, Cross Street, Preston, Lancashire PR1 8RD or via email: travelwise@env.lancscc.gov.uk

Start a a caring careers to play a vital role for others

COULD you do the little things that make a big difference? That is the question being asked by Lancashire County Council which is encouraging more people to consider a career in frontline social care services.

Interest in "caring careers" is growing, according to figures published by the Department of Health.

Eleven per cent of people said they had thought of switching their career to a more caring job, and 56 per cent of 16-21 year olds consider a course or career which enables them to give more back to society.

In addition, social care workers nationally rate themselves highest for job satisfaction with 40 per cent being "very happy".

Lancashire County Council provides a range of social care support to around 39,000 adults, with over 18,000 people contacting Adult Social Services every year for advice and support.

In addition, more than 4,000 children and families are supported through integrated children's services and, at any one time, around 1,200 children and young people are looked after by the authority.

Jobs in social care work include roles that support older people, children and families, young people leaving care and services that support adults with a learning disability, mental health problems and those with a physical disability or sensory impairment.

These services are supported by 631 qualified social workers across the county and a total of 3,436 social care workers involved in all aspects of caring and supporting vulnerable people in the community.

Richard Jones, executive director of Adult and Community Services, said: "The social care profession plays a vital role in caring and supporting vulnerable members of the community.

"Our staff and people working in caring careers make real differences to people who need a little support with everyday living.

"It is the small things that make a big difference to people's lives."

For careers with Lancashire County Council in social care, contact the recruitment line on **01772 534406** or visit

www.lancashire.gov.uk/socialcarejobs.

Nappy team's 785-ton clean-up

ASK anyone about cotton nappies and most people would think of terry squares, nappy pins and plastic pants.

Wrong! Big changes mean they are now as convenient and easy to use as disposables.

Over the last year the Bottom Line Nappy Project has had the task of dispelling the myths surrounding cotton nappies and has been offering parents all over Lancashire the chance to try modern cotton nappies for themselves.

More than 750 of them have jumped at the chance - leading to some interesting statistics:

●On average a child spends 2.5 years in nappies, needing a whopping 5,000 nappy changes. If those changes are with disposable nappies

then the waste produced weighs 1 tonne.

●The Bottom Line Project has converted 785 babies out of disposables, meaning that about 785 fewer tons have been sent to landfill sites around the county.



Team worker Janine Lund said: "Once people see the nappies they are really surprised by how

easy they are to use.

"I have a 14-month-old son in nappies and have never regretted the decision to use cotton."

The team has also recruited a group of volunteer Nappy Nannies, parents who either are currently using cotton nappies or have in the past. They are available to offer advice and support to other parents.

If you would like to volunteer as a Nappy Nanny or would like further information, then call the Waste Help Line at Lancashire County Council on **0845 0500 957**.

Extra information on projects aiming to reduce landfill is available at **www.lancswasteinfo.com**



●INDIAN treat: Martin Downes gives a head massage to Moira McTaggart.

TUTORS are taking the headache out of adult education - with special sessions on stress-busting Indian head massage.

A taste of the east was enjoyed in Bacup and Whitworth libraries when family learning days included henna painting, children's crafts, Indian cookery, head massage and digital photography.

Lorraine draws on her past

County council help goes full circle for determined artist

LIFE has gone full circle for paint and ceramic artist Lorraine Preisner - with a little help from social services.

Lorraine, who is deaf and blind, has received social services information and support on her climb to artistic merit. She is now so independent that she now helps Lancashire County Council train staff and also helps others who are deaf and blind.

Lorraine, from Preston, has Usher Syndrome - a genetic condition whereby a person is born deaf and gradually loses their sight. Without ambition and the right support, the condition can cause despair and misery.

Despite being born with a hearing loss, throughout school she was labelled as having learning difficulties with her hearing loss unrecognised until her mid teens.

She was in her thirties when she was first told she was going blind.

She described it as her world falling apart and began to grieve for all the things she would never be able to do: "to see the beauty of the world around me and to achieve my dreams. The thought of being plunged into darkness and being dependent on others filled me with absolute despair."

As a trained nursery nurse, Lorraine had to give up work as her sight and hearing deteriorated. As a result she became low, isolated and frustrated.

With her emotions in turmoil she made the decision to pursue her dreams whilst she had some sight. "I wanted to dance, create art, paint and perhaps rule the world!", she says.

Lorraine enrolled on an advanced art course and Egyptian dancing.

She said: "I quickly learned that there is a lot of stigma attached to deafness and blindness. People assume that deaf and blind people cannot achieve very much.

"It was at college that I discovered sculpture where I found that I could express myself wholeheartedly. My work caused a stir and as my art progressed people were amazed."

As a deaf child Lorraine relied intensely on expression to understand people's emotions.



●TALENT: artist Lorraine stands on her own two feet - and now offers support to other people.

Fact file

●There are around 23,000 people in the UK who are deaf and blind - the condition is sometimes known as "deafblind" - and 250,000 people have some degree of combined sight and hearing loss.

●For more information about deafblindness visit **www.sense.org.uk/** or contact Lancashire Social Services on **01772 533689 (voice)** or **01772 533660 (minicom)**.

She said: "The face had become a vital way of understanding how I understood the world. This has led to a fascination for faces. Exploring the human form has become an obsession in my art. As a deaf and blind person, texture and touch are very important to me."

Recently Lorraine has worked voluntarily at Sherburn School in Preston - a school for children with special educational needs. Having taught flamenco dance to many of the children she now attends the school regularly to assist with

their artwork and will help to produce an art exhibition.

Lorraine has had regular contact with Lancashire County Council's Social Services county-wide sensory impairment service where she has received a range of help to maintain her independence.

She now assists the council in training staff and helping others who are deaf and blind.

Lorraine's aim is to make art accessible to all and to become an established artist.

Gemma Swift, a dual sensory loss officer at Lancashire County Council, said: "About 95 per cent of what we learn comes through our eyes and ears.

"Imagine the challenges that deaf and blind people face. Having a dual sensory loss or being 'deafblind' is not simply the combination of sight and hearing loss, but a separate and distinct disability.

"It can have a significant negative effect on an individual's life, causing difficulties with communication, access to information and mobility.

There are, however, various agencies and equipment available that can help."

Youth a 'beacon' to nation

LANCASHIRE County Council has scooped a top national award for its work with young people and is being highlighted as a beacon for other authorities to follow.

The council has won Beacon status for its success in involving young people in decision-making and ensuring their ideas are put into action.

County Councillor Clive Grunshaw, Cabinet member for Children and Young People, said: "Lancashire was

one of the first authorities to embrace youth councils and we've introduced a number of ways for young people tell us how things could be improved.

"This has led to improvements which have a real effect on people's quality of life, whether it's by changing the way benefits are paid to care leavers so they don't keep running out of cash or encouraging young people in Burnley to work together on volunteering projects."

The bid submitted by Lancashire for consideration by the awards panel

included details of:

●Lancashire Youth Council which allows young people to have their voices heard by local decision makers.

●Drug awareness and anti-bullying campaigns developed in schools by pupils themselves.

●The "Breaking Barriers" project in Burnley which gave young people from all communities the opportunity to work together as volunteers.

Lancashire County Council was also shortlisted for its work in road safety and CHECK CHECK



●LANCASHIRE leads the way: from left, Phil Woolas MP, Clive Grunshaw etc etc CHECK CHECK

WIN

HEAD off to London as the latest winner of this month's exclusive Vision prize.

Visit the historic Tower of London, the Tate Modern, the London Eye or any other top London landmarks during a trip to the city.

To coincide with the launch of Virgin entrepreneur Sir Richard Branson's new book, one lucky couple will receive a first class mid-week day-out in London

compliments of Virgin Trains and a copy of Branson's new paperback.

Three runners-up will win a copy of the book.

Your journey will begin in style from a choice of Lancashire stations. Enjoy a complimentary snack, read a book or listen to a choice of radio stations. In no time at all you'll be in the heart of the capital.

We're also offering the option of a River Thames day cruise - one of the best ways to take in the sights and splendour of the city.

Cruises depart frequently from Waterloo, Tower, Greenwich and Westminster piers 364 days a year.

City Cruises 500-seat modern Riverliners are wheelchair friendly with open upper-decks and spacious lower saloons.

The shortest trip between piers lasts about 20-30 minutes, whilst the full round trip takes a leisurely two and a half hours.

Westminster Pier is located close to Westminster Abbey, the Houses of Parliament and Whitehall.

Waterloo Pier is beneath the British Airways' London Eye on the South Bank and Tower Pier is next to the historic Tower of London.

Attractions at Greenwich include the National Maritime Museum and the Old Royal Observatory.

To have a chance of winning, answer the following:

City Cruises' Tower Pier is located close to which famous London landmark?

Send your entries to: London competition, Vision, Corporate Communications

Group, County Hall, Preston, PR1 8XJ.

The closing date for entries is Monday 17 April.

The prize is for a midweek day trip.

Readers wishing to stay overnight can book their own accommodation.

For more information about City Cruises visit www.citycruises.com and for information about rail travel visit www.virgin-trains.co.uk

The prize is subject to availability. Usual competition rules apply.



●CAPITAL idea: A boat trip down the River Thames.

Claude applauds 'safety school'



●SAFETY First: football Star Claude Davis with pupils.

A PRESTON school was rewarded for its road safety work with a visit from an international football star.

Preston North End's Claude Davis visited Lea St Mary's RC Primary School to hand over 50 match tickets as a reward for their work.

The Jamaican defender, talked to pupils and signed autographs.

Lea St Mary's has incorporated road safety into its school curriculum with support from the county council. The school has also implemented the Right Start Child Pedestrian Programme and Passport to Safer Cycling Scheme.

Elizabeth Schofield, head teacher at Lea

St Mary's, said: "It is great for our school to be recognised and for someone with Claude's profile to visit us."

Clare Farrer, principal road safety adviser at the Road Safety Group, said: "The school's commitment to road safety awareness is excellent."

"Claude's profile is another way of communicating the importance of safety on Lancashire's roads."

Claude is helping to promote key road safety messages as the county council's Road Safety Group's sponsored player.

For information about the road safety visit www.lancashireroadsafety.co.uk or call 0800 328 1635.

Grant groups growing well



●SLICE of the fund: (left to right) Diane Parkinson, County Councillor Niki Penney and Colette Taylor encouraging groups to apply for grants.

LOCAL organisations are starting to see the benefits of the Grants for Growth project.

There is £1million available for community, voluntary and faith groups in Lancashire to helping people access jobs and training. Geared towards moving people towards real jobs, helping them develop skills that can really make a difference, not only in their personal lives but in the workforce and in local communities

across Lancashire, Grants for Growth is accessed through Lancashire County Developments Ltd, the county council's economic development department. The funding comes from the European Social Fund with LCDL providing match funding to create a real opportunity to help people gain skills and ultimately employment right across the county.

Grants of up to £6,000 are available to community organisations with good ideas for creating jobs or helping people to access training that will lead them towards employment.

The money is already being used in many innovative and exciting ways across the county but there is still plenty available for good projects.

To find out more about the grants and how to apply contact Colette Taylor on 01772 551896.

Winners

THE Clarke's Hotel break and Windermere Lake Cruise competition was won by Bernie Robinson from Garstang.

The runners-up were Mr and Mrs D Robinson from Skelmersdale and Shirley Walmsley from Chorley.

Letters containing a name and address will be given priority. Letters may be edited. We are unable to provide individual replies.



Eve Challinger, headteacher, Haslingden High School: Specialist Arts College

PERSONAL reflections from a newly appointed headteacher:

After two terms of acting headship, Haslingden High truly became "my school" in September 2004.

Contributing to this column has given me the opportunity to reflect upon the past 18 months.

Early "highs" include the nervous exhilaration of my first staff briefing; setting the tone and establishing my agenda with students in assemblies.

I feel a great sense of personal pride and humility walking the corridors and the overwhelming responsibility of being able to transform the learning experiences and shape the life chances of the 1,500 students in my care.

Amongst my proudest achievements since taking over are 72 per cent of pupils achieving five or more A*-C passes in the summer and hosting a visit from the Secretary of State for Education to signal the start of build-

ing work for our new £2.2m sixth form centre.

Yet, small incidents throughout the school day are equally rewarding and I get a real buzz knowing that we have made a real difference.

Nothing prepares you for headship. I guess the National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NPQH) and "blue sky thinking" have a place. Networking through NPQH enabled me to gain an outstanding ICT teacher from a Burnley school.

Early headship has been a "baptism of fire". Some of the challenges I have met head-on in a relatively short period of time include: the tragic death of one of our year 10 students in a car crash and two permanent exclusions followed by an (unsuccessful) independent appeal. There was also an incident of racial tension which spilled over into the school and a thematic survey by Ofsted.

I've not yet got the work/life balance right but despite missing a number of

matches, I will be renewing my season ticket at Eastlands next season!

At times, managing the media has been particularly tricky. Making the front page of the local newspaper - with a most unflattering photograph - and the possibility of an appearance on Granada Reports were low points.

Yet, because of my well-reported high expectations of students' behaviour, the school's reputation within the community has been strengthened and we are currently over-subscribed for the next academic year, which starts in September.

I have benefited from the warmth, expertise and camaraderie of fellow headteachers particularly "the men" in district 14.

I applied for headship relatively late in my career and regret that it took me so long to get round to it.

The role is amazing and it is an absolute privilege to be the headteacher of Haslingden High School: Specialist Arts College.



You're telling us!

Send your letters to:

The Editor, Vision, Corporate Communications Group, County Hall, Preston PR1 8XJ. neil.graham@css.lancscc.gov.uk

Different ratings

I READ with great interest (Vision, Jan) that Lancashire County Council has been awarded "excellent" status.

It is beyond me in what sense this "excellent" status has been reached. Streets are dirty and full of litter, streetlights are not attended to speedily, bus services are to be diminished. Our local hospital is under threat and that is just the start.

Services dwindle but Council Tax keeps going up.

Our rubbish bins can be left at the mercy of idiots who take pleasure in chucking litter all over the place.

The county council was responsible for the closure of several residential care

homes for the elderly - ostensibly to offer better care for the elderly.

I do not know who gives these awards for excellence. They evidently do not ask the people of Lancashire for their opinions - maybe they would not like to hear the truth.

PUZZLED Lancashire

■Lancashire County Council is governed by the will of the public, so fair criticism is welcome.

It was the independent Audit Commission that awarded the authority four stars out of a maximum four. Service quality to the public - as well as value for money - were key criteria.

The county council itself asks the public what is wanted, through our 2,500 member Citizens' Panel and through regular Cabinet Question Time and mobile meetings - both initiatives



●READY to go: Is packaging too much on produce?

aimed at increasing public involvement.

Poor services concern us all. Tough decisions must be made.

Of the services you mention, the county council is responsible for streetlighting and care homes. Some care homes were closed - but replaced by a superior sys-

tem that older people find highly satisfactory.

There is a current review of subsidised buses - some are costing the Council Tax payer more than £60 per subsidised passenger and that cannot be effective.

Councillor Hazel Harding, Lancashire County Council leader

Not bin recycling

AS your correspondent has reported (Vision) there is nowhere to recycle plastic bags.

I collect cans, bottles, cardboard, glass, plastic bottles and paper.

I also collect bottles and cans from the street when I am out. They're an eyesore.

I know I don't have to, but it is very disheartening to find all that stuff scattered about.

I am very grateful for the kerbside collections as I have no transport to get to the tip.

I enjoy reading Vision and look forward to the next edition.

R MAXWELL Coppull

Bag to basics

PLASTIC is a nightmare that could easily be reduced (Vision, February).

Every store I go into, no matter how small the purchase, the assistant reaches for a plastic bag - and looks oddly at me when I refuse to take it on the grounds that I always take my own shopping bag.

It is something that my grandparents also did.

Retailers should stop supplying the plastic and get people back into the habit of using shopping bags.

A charge for every bag supplied would soon get people using their own bags again.

S MOSS Morecambe



●EAT up: Chantelle Blakey (6) is served by (from left) Sophie Burnell (8), Liam Tolley (9) and Chloe Kendrick (9), watched by Class 4 teacher Pauline Chisnall.

Pupils clean up dinner drive

PUPILS became dinner ladies for a day when their teachers wanted them to eat a more balanced diet.

Salads and fruit have been in demand at St John's RC Primary School, Poulton-le-Fylde, since staff got pupils to serve them.

Children in dinner lady outfits make the meals fun. But first they had to learn about food hygiene from Lancashire County Commercial Services.

Headteacher Brigid Gildert said: "We have a commitment to healthy eating, so we get the children to serve salads, vegetables and fruit to teachers and other pupils.

"It makes eating fun and gets them in a good habit for life."

A spin-off has been an increase in the number of children eating school dinners.

Pupil James Mason added: "Children may not even have taken the salads if an adult had served them."

Devolved power to put local people in charge

Lancashire Locals give first taste of double devolution

A HUGE step forward for local democracy is to be launched this month - a step that could see truly local "power-sharing" in Lancashire.

A series of 12 Lancashire Local committees, each empowered to shape Lancashire County Council services at grassroots level, will start work this month.

Locally elected members, of whatever party and of no party, will be shaping local services to local need.

A limited pilot scheme has been run for the last 18 months in four parts of Lancashire.

County Councillor Hazel Harding, county council leader, said: "This is real power we are sharing as the Lancashire Local members will be taking sovereign decisions within overall budget levels set by the county council.

"Each Lancashire Local will contain locally elected members of the district council and of the county council. These members will, regardless of which political party, run county council services in different parts of the county.

"It is a huge exercise in trust but one that we are prepared to make to ensure that services fit local need.

"We are real pathfinders in this field. Similar ventures have been done by district

and borough councils elsewhere - but we believe that local government power has never been shared on this scale before.

"It amounts to whole chunks of the county council being opened up and shared with others to reflect local demand."

One brief of the scheme is to involve parish and town councils.

All power shared will be real power - members will take real decisions, not just be consulted on decisions.

The new bodies will also be expected to link with bodies such as the police and NHS through localised partnership working.

Their constitutions will require that they involve members of the public.

"It is an ambitious leap forward," Councillor Harding added. "Last year's pilot schemes could only guide the county council.

"The new constitutions will pass real decision-making down to local members. Those local members will belong to any or no political party.

"People sometimes say that decision-making does not reflect what people in a particular area actually want.

"That should no longer happen as decisions will be made by their locally elected representatives."

To find out more, visit: www.lancashire.gov.uk/corporate/lancashire_local/

LCDL update

Lancashire County Developments Ltd

The County Councils economic development department

Working at the heart of the community

Lancashire County Developments Ltd, the County Council's economic development department is not just about business and industry - the company's work extends right into the heart of local communities across Lancashire.

The last month has seen some great examples of this in Burnley, Skelmersdale and at a special showcase event at Manchester Airport where LCDL, as a member of Business In The Community, hosted a seminar on its work.

Brighter Future Auction Skelmersdale



Chair of LCDL County Councillor Niki Penney and Chair of West Lancs District Council Oona Atherley help get things moving at the auction.

Support from LCDL has helped the Brighter Future organisation in Skelmersdale establish a much needed repair and maintenance workshop for wheelchair and mobility aids.

The organisation held their first auction of scooters and other specialised transport at Skelmersdale's Concourse Centre in March.

The event was a huge success and was backed by both Lancashire County Council and West Lancashire District Council.

Bee's Knee's Burnley

An initial funding input of £25,000 from LCDL helped leverage in a further £100,000 from the Phoenix Development Fund for this exciting project in Burnley.

The project brought together local groups Burnley Enterprise, Greenspace and The Hive to work together to help people with severe and enduring mental ill health to develop business and technical skills, enabling them to move towards employment.

The initial project ended in March with a special celebration event at which plans were unveiled to take forward the learning and achievements with new goals for the future.

BiC Conference Manchester Airport

Both the Burnley and Skelmersdale successes outlined above were highlighted at LCDL's seminar and workshop as part of the Business in the Community North West conference held at Manchester Airport.

Other best practice examples where LCDL has been instrumental in creating training and employment for people with a physical or mental disability in partnership with other County Council directorates and public and private organisations and groups were showcased, including a successful café venture in Chorley's Astley Park and 'Gardenable' a horticultural project based on a Nelson allotment site.

Lancashire County Developments Ltd.



Children's Centres in Lancashire

What is the Children's Centre programme?

The Children's Centre programme is about providing combined early learning and care, family support and health services from a central location, which should improve outcomes for children and their families.

What services will children's centres provide?

The way services are delivered and which services are available may vary. The expectation is that children's centres developed in phase 1 (2004-06) will offer the following main core services:

- good quality early learning combined with full day care provision for children from 0 years;
- parental outreach;
- family support services;
- child and family health services, including ante-natal services;
- support for children and parents with special needs;
- links with Jobcentre Plus, local training providers and further and higher education institutions;

How will children's centres develop?

The majority of children's centres will be developed from Sure Start local programmes, Neighbourhood Nurseries and Early Excellence Centres. However, local authorities are being encouraged to think innovatively about how to develop other local centres in the maintained, voluntary and private sectors. Lancashire have been commended for their approach to developing children's centres within other sectors.

Since the children's centre programme is very much about building on existing provision, very few new children's centres will be built from scratch and will be based in the heart of communities.

How many children's centres will there be in Lancashire by March 2006?

Lancashire have received approval to create a total of 30 children's centres by March 2006.

This is the greatest number of children's centres being developed by a single local authority.

Find out where your nearest centre is so you can start benefiting from the services.

How do I find out more information?

If you want to find out more about your nearest centre or the next phase of development then please contact the:

Childcare Information Service on:

Freephone: 0800 195 0137

E-mail: LancsCIS@ed.lancscc.gov.uk

Website: www.childrenfirst.lancashire.gov.uk

Where will the children's centres be located?

Burnley – 4 children's centres

- Sure Start South West Burnley Children's Centre
- The Chai Centre (formerly Sure Start Daneshouse & Stoneyholme)
- Sure Start Duke Bar & Burnley Wood
- Whitegate Children's Centre (formerly Whitegate Nursery School)

Chorley – 1 children's centre

- Highfield Children's Centre (formerly Highfield Nursery School)

Hyndburn – 3 children's centres

- Church & West Accrington Children's Centre } (formerly Sure Start
- South Accrington Children's Centre } Hyndburn)
- Fairfield Children's Centre (formerly Fairfield Nursery School)

Lancaster & Morecambe – 2 children's centres

- Lune Park Children's Centre (formerly Sure Start North Lancaster)
- Poulton Children's & Families Service Centre

Pendle – 4 children's centres

- Sure Start Bradley & Whitefield Children's Centre
- Family Tree Centre (formerly Sure Start Brierfield & Walverden)
- Walton Lane Children's Centre
- Sure Start Waterbridge Children's Centre

Preston – 6 children's centres

- Sure Start Preston East Children's Centre
- Sure Start Preston West Children's Centre
- Sure Start Ribblesdale Children's Centre
- Sunshine Children's Centre (formerly Sure Start Fishwick & St. Matthews)

- Stoneygate Children's Centre (formerly Stoneygate Nursery School & Centre)
- Sure Start Preston Central Children's Centre

Ribble Valley – 1 children's centre

- Ribblesdale Children's Centre (formerly Ribblesdale Nursery School)

Rossendale – 3 children's centres

- The Maden Community & Children's Centre (formerly Sure Start Bacup & Stacksteads)
- Staghills Children's Centre (formerly Staghills Nursery School)
- Haslingden Community Link & Children's Centre

South Ribble – 1 children's centre

- Wade Hall Children's Centre

West Lancashire – 3 children's centres

- Tanhouse & Dignum Sure Start Children's Centre
- Park Children's Centre (the former Park Primary School)
- St John's Children's Centre (on site with St. Johns Catholic Primary School – Full Service Extended School)

Wyre – 2 children's centres

- Sure Start Fleetwood Children's Centre
- Rural Wyre Children's Centre (on site with St Thomas C of E School, Garstang)



LANCASHIRE
Childcare
INFORMATION
SERVICE
0800 195 0137



children first
partnership
Caring for and Educating
Lancashire's Children

SureStart



Lancashire
County Council

Lancashire residents get easier access to consumer advice

TELEPHONE calls to trading standards are now automatically transferred to Consumer Direct which handled 2,000 new complaints in February from Lancashire callers.

Information provided on the complaints handled by

Consumer Direct are passed to trading standards which is now better able to identify the problems which need addressing.

Trading standards officers have joined forces with Consumer Direct to improve the accessibility for quality advice and guidance on consumer issues.

The service operating for two months is aimed to provide help

and guidance with the reassurance that trading standards officers will be available to follow up the wider issues and assist consumers more effectively where more complex advice and guidance is necessary.

Trading Standards has always aimed to be accessible and customer-focused benefiting from the positive message that is evident from its successes

highlighted in the media and by word of mouth.

It was, however, clear that access to the service by phone was sometimes difficult and that improvement in access was essential to provide the protection that consumers should expect.

Consumer Direct has begun to deliver this aim. Waiting on the phone for 10 minutes is now

a thing of the past and most calls are answered, after a short greeting message, immediately.

The service is available Monday to Friday 8am to 6.30 pm and Saturday 9am to 1pm.

Calls can be made by calling Trading Standards on 0845 600 1352 or 01772 533573 where the call will be diverted to Consumer Direct.

Adult ed helped ME in my fight for health

THERE is far more to learning than books and certificates ... for Yvonne Thompson, adult education is pointing the way to a better life.

Former financial consultant Yvonne, from Leyland, was diagnosed five years ago with chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS). But now adult education classes are helping her fight back.

Two courses later grandmother Yvonne says her self-confidence has returned.

Yvonne, who has already gained certificates in word-processing and spreadsheets, said: "If you can pick yourself up and get stuck into something interesting you can achieve anything."

"I was diagnosed with ME/CFS and that started a pretty bleak period. I used to be housebound and found that looking at a computer was very tiring and impossible on



●YVONNE: sense of achievement.

long days.

"Adult education these days, however, gives people lots of support. You can go as fast or as slow as you like – tutors will do

anything to help you succeed."

Yvonne's learning has been organised by Lancashire County Council-run Lancashire College which contains a Learndirect centre.

Other classes are held across the county at accessible places such as community centres, village halls and schools.

The thinking behind them is that learning need not end when people leave school at age 16.

Yvonne added: "The sense of achievement I have gained is wonderful."

"I find I can only do half an hour at the computer but you can do more than you think you can if your learning is structured."

"I feel my studies are helping in my fight back to health. They give me a lot of hope that I will get better."

"Eventually I hope to get back to work which I could not have even imagined a few years ago."

CHANGE YOUR LIFE

More than 6,000 classes are run each year by Lancashire Adult Learning. There is bound to be one suited to you.

It is simple to check ...

Lancaster, Fylde, Wyre

01524 60141

Preston, South Ribble, Chorley,

West Lancashire

01257 276719

Burnley, Hyndburn,, Pendle,

Ribble Valley, Rossendale

01772 799120

Or visit:

www.lal.lancashire.gov.uk

Parents sign up to keep children in classroom

MUMS and dads have been recruited in Leyland high schools in a new bid to drive down truancy.

The recent Targeted Pupil Project reduced unauthorised absence by a stunning 67 per cent – by mobilising parent power against missing children.

Research shows that almost half of truants thought they could get away with it because they believed their parents knew of their absence.

Attendance rates of 80 per cent or lower, however, mean that the equivalent of a year's education will be lost over the course of a school career. Absence of that magnitude can seriously affect a child's success both academically and careerwise.

Education welfare officer Susan Robinson said: "We wrote to almost 40 parents whose children had attendance of less than 80 per cent and told them of the dangers of non-attendance."

"We asked them to deploy their own energies to tackle the problem and gave them advice as to how to get their children on time."

Children whose attendance improved strongly have been rewarded with certificates – while parents whose children continued to truant are being warned of possible prosecution.

Top tips sent to parents included:

●Ensure your child gets to school on time. Arriving late can disrupt the class.

●Listen to your child if he or she appears to be making excuses to avoid school. You may find there is an underlying problem.

●Ask to meet teaching staff if your child is bored at school.

●Take an interest in your child's schoolwork – ask them about their day.

●Watch their behaviour. A miserable demeanour can point to problems in school.



●ROAD safety team praise for newsagent Carl Pickering. From left, Nikki Ball, Carl, County Councillor Tim Ashton and Andrew Wilson.

News staff stay safe

A LANCASHIRE newsagent is setting a nationwide example in safeguarding newspaper delivery boys and girls on the roads.

The youngsters set out on foot and on bikes while most of us are still asleep – and dark mornings and evenings can be perilous.

But newsagent Carl Pickering's efforts to keep his 25 workers safe has won him praise and free high-visibility "diddy jackets" from Lancashire County Council's road safety team.

For 14 years Carl, from Hesketh

Bank, has provided staff with fluorescent vests, bike lights and batteries. He said: "It is about common sense."

"Delivery boys and girls cannot be safe if they are not visible, so I have made high-visibility clothing a compulsory part of the job."

"I do my best to ensure that those who use bikes always wear a helmet."

County Councillor Malcolm Barron, elected member for the area, added that dark-clothed and unlit cyclists and pedestrians of all ages were a common sight on many roads – but praised Mr Pickering and police officer Phil Corrigan for reducing the problem in the Hesketh Bank area.

Councillor Barron said: "Carl is leading the way in showing what responsible employers of children should be doing to make them safer."

"Many deliverers work early in the morning when visibility is poor. It is imperative that all pedestrians and cyclists wear high-visibility clothing."

County Councillor Tim Ashton, who takes a close interest in road safety, added: "It is important that road safety is part of the training process for young people who take on paper rounds."

"It is good to see that some newsagents already have road safety measures in place."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Adding up to victory

THE Ribble Valley district heat of this year's Lancashire Mathematics Challenge was won by Clitheroe Royal Grammar School.

Teams of four year 7 pupils from local secondary schools competed for a place in the county final to be held in June.

All Lancashire's 88 secondary schools take part annually in the mathematics challenge which is organised by Lancashire County Council's mathematics team and sponsored by Lancashire County Developments Ltd, the county council's economic development department.

Pupils were given a murder mystery scenario and asked to solve clues based on mathematical problems to identify the murder scene, weapon and culprit.

Spreading the word

INNOVATION in meeting the public was the theme of a recent visit by Durham county councillors to Lancashire.

Lancashire County Council's mobile unit was demonstrated during the visit, which was hosted by council leader Hazel Harding. The council's Cabinet Question Time was also discussed.

The Durham councillors wanted to visit Lancashire to see the initiatives in action and find out if they could use similar schemes to communicate with their residents.

The methods used in Lancashire to offer the public the opportunity to talk to their county councillor and hear about the authority's services, were commended by Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott in a recent report.

What's this?

ESSENTIAL information on growing up will be available to more young people in Lancashire with the launch of a new CD-Rom from the county council's What Now? Information and Advice services.

Thousands of young people have benefited from the What Now? Handbook, which has been handed out to 16 year olds in Lancashire schools for over 15 years.

The book contains non-nonsense information on a range of topics from work and education to drugs and sexual health.

The information contained in the book proved so useful that it has become popular with many other organisations in the county that have contact with young people.

The CD-Rom has been launched to make sure the increased demand for the information is met in a cost-effective and user-friendly way.

Quiz in pipeline for 999 service

COUNCILLORS on the Health Equalities Overview and Scrutiny Committee have asked for more details on plans to form one Ambulance Trust for the whole of the North West.

Under Department of Health proposals to restructure NHS Ambulance Trusts throughout England, Lancashire would be merged with Cumbria, Mersey Region and Greater Manchester to form one regional Trust.

Allan Jude, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance of the Lancashire Ambulance Trust, attended the committee's latest meeting to outline the plans.

He told councillors that the changes were intended to improve patient care by cutting management and overhead costs to allow savings to be reinvested in front line services.

The role of the Ambulance Service would be extended to enable more patient care and treatment to be provided at the scene of an incident and to provide more support to the care of patients in the community.

It was envisaged that this would reduce the number of people attending Hospital Accident and Emergency Units.

The committee resolved to support the plans in principle but raised a number of serious concerns about the potential impact on Lancashire residents and requested more details to be brought to a future meeting.

County Councillor Tim Ormrod, committee chairman, said: "We have a number of concerns that need to be addressed before we feel able to give our full support to these changes."

"The Lancashire Ambulance Trust is currently one of the top-rated Trusts in the country and we need assurances that this excellent level of service would not be compromised by the creation of a single Ambulance Trust for the North West."

"In addition, no details have been provided as to the level of savings that would be achieved as a result of the reconfiguration."

"We also have questions about where the control room would be located, whether ambulances would continue to be placed to meet the needs of people in both urban and rural areas and how the new structure would be made accountable to the people of Lancashire."

Rebel leader's Lancashire home

Visit our museums - you'll learn some pretty interesting tales

●(Near right) **REBEL leader: Michael Davitt founder of the Irish Land League.**

●(Far right) **THE Rock Hall area of Haslingden. Davitt's family moved there after eviction in Mayo.**

Linocuts reproduced with kind permission of artist Brendon Deacy.



THE life of a hero to Irish people across the world is being celebrated in the Lancashire town he made his home.

From humble beginnings as an immigrant escaping eviction and famine in Mayo, Michael Davitt went on to found the Irish Land League, an organisation that ultimately put an end to "landlordism" in Ireland.

His sympathies were not just with the Irish. He supported the aspirations of working people everywhere, backing persecuted Jews in Russia and the Boer republics in South Africa.

A huge calendar of events is being

held in Haslingden, the town his family moved to in 1850.

Michael Cruise, one of the organisers, said: "Davitt was known worldwide. He was working in a cotton mill by the age of nine and raised his voice on behalf of the oppressed everywhere."

"As with all immigrants, it was poverty and oppression that brought him to Lancashire. There is no ethnic minority that has not been persecuted – they come, almost by definition, at times of economic depression and when indigenous people fear for their jobs."

By the mid-1960s Davitt had become absorbed in the clandestine Fenian movement and his activities within it



●MESSAGE: County Councillor Bob Wilkinson, county council chairman, at Haslingden's refurbished memorial to Michael Davitt. Significantly, it is worded in four languages.

eventually put him in jail.

On his release he formed the Irish Land League but was never a single-minded nationalist.

He went on to serve two terms as an MP and he became acquainted with people as diverse as US president Theodore Roosevelt, Tolstoy, Lenin and nationalist leaders in Egypt and India.

When he died in 1906 sympathy was manifested in many countries. A Requiem Mass was celebrated, for instance, in Argentina – a country he never even visited.

An exhibition, entitled The Irish In Haslingden, is being staged in Haslingden Library until 13 April.

Storytelling sessions have also been held at the library.

An exhibition of linocut art showing the plight of early Irish immigrants has been staged at Lancashire County Council-run Rossendale Museum.

Sunday 19 March saw a procession to St Mary's RC Church in the town where mass was led by Davitt's grandson.

An existing memorial to Davitt – on Wilkinson Street, Haslingden – has been refurbished and features plaques in gaelic, urdu, Italian and Polish.

More details at: www.ihhc.co.uk

The workbox that tells of yesteryear



●FASCINATING: Anthea shows off the newly acquired workbox.

LANCASTER'S fascinating history as a centre for world trade is revealed by a superb new acquisition to go on display at the city's Judges' Lodgings Museum.

The early 19th century lady's workbox made by the famous cabinet-making firm Gillows of Lancaster features 72 different specimens of wood from every corner of the globe.

The materials, many of them exotic, arrived in the city from India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Indonesia, North and South America, the Middle East, the West Indies, Africa, Europe and, at the time the box was made, the newly discovered Australia.

Included with the workbox is a printed sheet listing the specimen woods used in its decoration and confirming that it was made for a Miss Gifford of Nercwys in 1808.

Surviving Gillow records show that the craftsman who made the workbox was Francis Dowbiggin, who was employed by the company from 1787 to 1816.

Francis was the father of the celebrated royal cabinet-

maker Thomas Dowbiggin, of Mount Street, London, about whose origins little is known. However, evidence now suggests that he received his early inspiration and skills from his father who made this piece.

The workbox also contains a splendid collection of early 19th century and later needlework accessories, some of which may have been supplied when the piece was made.

Anthea Dennett, Judges' Lodgings assistant keeper, said: "It is amazing to think that the man who crafted this box had access to such a vast range of exotic woods right here in Lancaster."

"The workbox is a beautiful thing in itself but its real value is the insight it gives us to Lancaster's role as a trading centre for merchants from all over the world."

"Lancashire Museum Service would like to acknowledge the generous assistance provided by the MLA/V&A Purchase Grant Fund and the National Art Collections Fund in helping to acquire this fine piece for Lancaster."

The workbox will be on display at The Judges' Lodgings Museum, Church Street, Lancaster when the museum opens for the season on Friday 14 April.

Help is at hand

Bullying telesales calls

Trading Standards can be contacted on 01772 533573

Q: I have been pressured into buying books over the phone which I did not want. What can I do?

A: The legal position for consumers is that, in most circumstances, you will be able to cancel the contract with no further liability. Where you buy goods and services at a distance you will normally have can-

cellation rights.

For goods and services this lasts for seven days after you receive them and can only be excluded in limited circumstances. You should have been told of your right to cancel and should have been advised whether or not you are responsible for returning any goods supplied.

All this information should be confirmed in writing to you with details being sent in a durable medium. This does mean that if you order by the Internet you may be sent an e-mail. However, if the contract is by phone then the information should be sent in writing.

If the company fails to advise you

of your cancellation rights then the period for cancellation is extended by three months.

If you have problems with cancellation, further specific advice and guidance can be obtained by Trading Standards Partner Consumer Direct which is available on 0845 600 1352 or 01772 533573.

Lancashire consumers are strongly advised to register with the Mailing and Telephone Preference Services to stop most of the unwanted telesales and junk mail which they might be misled by.

The TPS can be contacted on 0845 070 0707 the MPS on 0845 703 4599.

Never be bored with our countryside guide

THERE'S a whole world of exciting days out and fun activities for children in Lancashire's countryside this spring.

And to help you get out and about the county council has produced "Step Outside" - a free full-colour guide packed with everything you need to explore the great outdoors.

Youngsters are being invited to take part in the Easter Eggstravaganza and decorate eggs at Wycoller Country Park at 1pm on 16 April while those of a more inquisitive bent can find out more about the wonderful world of willow at Beacon Fell (noon-4pm Thursday 20 April).

A family Scavenger Hunt – a sort of treasure hunt involving nature and activi-

ties such as orienteering - is planned for 11am-3pm on 12 April at Fleetwood Marsh Nature Park.

Events continue on 6 May with an open day organised by the Friends of Spring Wood.

A Downham-based map and compass workshop is planned for Saturday 13 May.

All the events are marked with helpful icons such as "family fun" or "pack a lunch" to help choose and prepare.

The guide is produced by Lancashire County Council countryside officers who take responsibility for stewardship of areas such as country parks. Activities will continue through the year.

The guides are available free online www.lancashire.gov.uk/environment/countryside or by calling 01772 534709.

It's a rotting job

Sweet compost is child's play with one of Lancashire County Council's free or subsidised bins



Compost guru Cat answers your queries

■Did you know? There are 28 species of British earthworm. They have no lungs and breathe through their skin which they keep moist.

■Did you know? If cut in half, the head end may survive but the tail end will die.

■Did you know? Common compost worms are brandling, tiger or red worms.

■Did you know? Typical compost worms can eat half their own body weight in waste per day. They produce six eggs per week and each egg can contain up to six baby worms. Each worm lives more than four years.

■What happens to peach stones in compost?

Fruit stones are good for compost. They rot very slowly but if they do not break down completely you can compost them again or just use the compost with them inside.

■Can you compost paper and cardboard?

Yes! Their ingredients are very safe for you and your compost. Inks, dyes and coatings today are designed to be safe while the gloss on magazines has always come from harmless clay.

■Are banana skins OK to compost? They are excellent.

Even citrus fruits will compost nicely as their acidity will soon break down.

■Composting slows down in winter because the creatures in your bin get cold.

You can keep them warm and busy by tying jumpers, carpet or bubblewrap around the bin.

WHERE there is muck, there is brass – and with spring upon us there is no better time to start composting.

With Lancashire County Council giving away free composting bins, no one has any excuse not to do so. In fact, reducing waste can save us all money through reducing Landfill Tax.

As well as being great for the garden and Council Tax-payers' pockets it can be a great family activity too, says Cat Holden, one of Lancashire County Council's "composting gurus".

"Making compost and using it in the garden is an exciting and fascinating way to learn about nature and our environment," said Cat.

"It brings out the child in all of us. It's hard to believe that the fresh-smelling compost you remove from your compost bin actually comes from the rubbish you once threw out."

Every ton of waste that goes to landfill attracts a Whitehall tax that is added to Council Tax-payers' bills – so the entire community gains when people recycle.

Things that can be composted include leaves (although they can slow the process), plant cuttings, grass, paper, cardboard and kitchen scraps.

"Some people are put off by memories of having to regularly turn the foul-smelling, decomposing waste with a spade," said Cat. "That isn't really necessary in our purpose-made composters these days. It really couldn't be simpler."

"Children love discovering the worms, woodlice and centipedes that grow in the compost. It's like a mini-safari. The children marvel at them before returning them to the bin to continue their important work."

"It really is a win-win situation as the rich compost that results is great for the garden. Willing gardeners can then grow vegetables and flowers in the compost. Nothing can be more satisfying."

"Spring is the ideal time to get busy. People who already have compost bins should be emptying them onto their vegetable patches and be thinking about the next batch of compost."

"The coming months will be very busy – there will be grass to cut, branches to trim as well as kitchen waste to dispose of."

"All of it reduces landfill and that reduces production of greenhouse gases like methane."

Learner gardeners often worry about using grass cuttings for compost. Their experienced counterparts know better – it makes good compost if mixed with rolled-up balls of paper.

Discover more about composting

COME along to a discovery session at a venue near you. Meet a member of Lancashire County Council's waste minimisation team and learn the secrets of good compost at the hour-long sessions.

7-8pm 27 April – Clitheroe Library, Church Street, Clitheroe.

2.30-3.30pm 17 May – Blackburn Central Library, Town Hall Street, Blackburn.

7-8pm 24 May – Colne Library, Market Square, Colne.

6-7pm 6 June – Morecambe Library, Morecambe Drive, Morecambe.

Compost section at 'heart of charity garden'



●GARDENER Dawn Taylor finds better soil nutrition boosts her charity displays.

PROUD gardener Dawn Taylor loves her garden so much that she holds open days for the public.

Even more, she is so proud of her compost that the garden now features a compost display area.

Dawn, from Rossendale, said: "A mix of compost and leaf mould is great for beefing up the garden. The garden looks glorious for

open days.

"I get improved soil nutrition and condition. What else could I do with all my clippings, trimmings and other bits? It is far too good to throw away."

The First Responders' Heart of Lancashire Appeal is the biggest winner from Dawn's charitable open days – she has raised more than £4,000 since 2001.

Get a bin for spring

Composting bins are available either free or at subsidised rates in Lancashire. Free bins are very popular while composting enthusiasts can part with £10 for a larger Komp 250 or £20 for a huge Komp700.

To order your bin, ring

0845 6588550



Simple! Evie and Dawn make it a family affair

YARDS and gardens come in all shapes and sizes. So do compost bins!

Dawn Brook and daughter Evie (3), from Lancaster, use their Komp250 bin to make rich compost for pot plants. They did not have room for the traditional composters.

Evie helped Dawn construct the bin when it arrived in December, so it was ready to use in no time.

Dawn said: "We eat lots of fresh soups and casseroles, so there are loads of vegetable peelings for compost."

Similar to the Komp 250 is the larger Komp700. At more than twice the size of the free bins it is ideal for big gardens.

Young adventurers sought for rubbish course

YOUNG people are being placed at the forefront of a greener future for Lancashire.

Members of Education For a Greener Future are planning a Rubbish Education Day for 6 May and also a Rubbish Racers event for 10 June.

The Rubbish Education Day, free to Lancashire residents, is aimed at youth leaders and voluntary groups such as

Scouts, Guides and church groups and will include paper-making activities, compost and water-education activities.

Rubbish Racers, on 10 June, will be similar to TV's Scrapyard Challenge in that 11 to 15-year-olds will be asked to make a vehicle from rubbish – and then use it to transport an egg for nearly 20ft.

More information on both days is available on 01772 752930 or at: <http://www.greenerfuture.com/>



**A full job description
of all vacancies is available
on our website**

www.lancashire.gov.uk/vacancies



School project 'will regenerate entire area'

from p1

"We know that we have many unsuitable school buildings which do not offer the best facilities for youngsters.

"It makes sense to grasp this great opportunity to provide the best facilities for all children and the whole community.

"These will be schools for everyone, open from 8am to 10pm. We want pupils to feel valued and be proud of their schools.

"The quality of the buildings we have already planned is at the forefront of schools in the entire country.

"Additionally, this project will contribute to the whole regeneration of Burnley and Pendle by improving the area's skills and knowledge base while funding a large number of craft apprenticeships for youngsters in Burnley and Pendle.

"The aim is to transform the life chances of pupils – and when the programme in Burnley and Pendle is com-

Youngsters who win are those who want to be at school - project leader

plete we will look at doing something similar for every part of Lancashire."

Even the planned Burnley and Pendle centres will be a teaching "resource".

They will use solar and windpower while woodburning boilers will burn woodchips from Lancashire forests. Rainwater will be recycled.

The already agreed Burnley Campus will feature a Burnley Sixth Form, a primary school, a primary special school, a nursery school, a faith centre and a public library.

Shuttleworth College will boast a breathtaking circular hall to bind together three storeys of balconied "learning zones". The hall will be used for assemblies and public exhibitions.

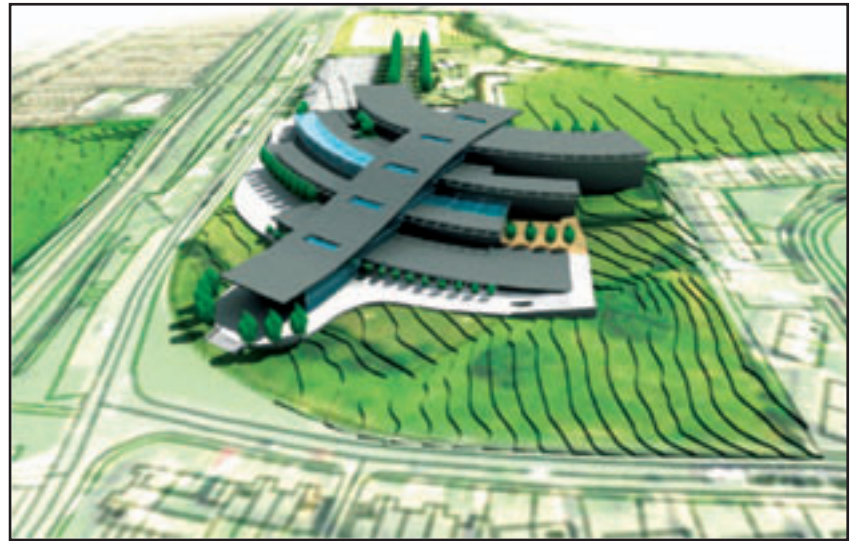
Pendle Vale College will feature particularly impressive architecture in a vibrant and welcoming environment.

Janet added: "The youngsters who succeed at school are those who want to go to school.

"The next generation of learners in Lancashire will have many opportunities to learn and grow.

"Soon we will be able to switch to learning any time, anywhere. The new centres we plan will be linked by powerful technology to give students access to the newest learning materials and to help them communicate with each other.

"Teachers will be able to share lesson plans and study materials to benefit all learners in their work."



●STRIKING: the planned Pendle Vale College.

You can't lick a lollipop job

**Short hours
on offer but
jobs remain
unfilled**

AN appeal has been launched to counter a growing national crisis – and keep Lancashire's schoolchildren safe on the roads.

Thousands of lollipop patrol "sits vacs" are unfilled nationwide – so Lancashire County Council crossing patrol chiefs are leafleting communities, parents and even churches to recruit lollipop patrols.

More than 20 lollipop jobs are vacant in Lancashire, despite job security, short hours and a wage of £5.76 per hour.

"It used to be easy to recruit people in years gone by", Ken Speak, Lancashire school crossing patrol manager, said.

"But we now have growing competition for staff from employers such as supermarkets which offer more flexible hours.

"Benefit rules also require that people work 16 hours before getting financial help and we can't offer lollipop staff that many hours.

"Pupil safety is paramount and we are

more active than most authorities in filling vacancies.

"We're looking for people to take up positions across the county.

"The hours suit people with time to spare in the morning or afternoon. It is an ideal opportunity to play an important part in your community."

Steps taken in Lancashire to keep recruitment levels high include trying to increase working hours to 16 by combining lollipop work with other school jobs such as cleaning and catering.

Letters are also sent home with children in areas where recruitment is difficult.

Jobs are advertised in newspapers, local shops and leaflets are even sent direct to homes and to voluntary groups such as churches.

Applicants must be between 18 and 70 and in reasonable health and have clear eyesight.

For more details, telephone the recruitment hotline on 01772 538999 or visit: www.serving.lancashire.gov.uk



A great job - if you don't mind the cold!

CHILDREN and their parents never cease to make a working day into a fun day for two Lancashire lollipop ladies.

Rossendale's Mandy Nuttall, pictured right, and Lynne Whalley say the job can be a bit cold – but chil-

dren's happiness wears off on them.

Lynne (32), who helps children cross Newchurch Road in Stacksteads, said: "Children come out with all sorts of comments that brighten your day and it's usually nice to meet their parents as well.

"I've been doing the job for seven years and it fits in ideally with childcare

arrangements. There aren't many hours to work and that can be a problem, but I get around that by also working in school – both jobs dovetail nicely."

Mandy, who works further along the same road, adds: "I really like helping children. I find it very satisfying to know that I am helping the community."

Partners excel in classroom

LANCASHIRE County Council has been put in the spotlight for its work on a plan to help train more people for working in schools and education.

Schools minister Jacqui Smith MP has met with representatives from the county council, Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) partners, the Training and Development Agency and the Learning and Skills Council in London to highlight the work of the recently launched CoVE.

Lancashire leads a CoVE with partners from Stafford, Blackburn College and Star (Training and Consultancy) Ltd. The aim of the CoVE is to support teachers and pupils to further their skills, as well as offering training opportunities for teaching assistants, higher level teaching assistants and technicians.

The CoVE programme has been instrumental in developing new qualification for support staff who work in schools.

A 4-star council
Awarded top marks by the Audit Commission



Office of the chief executive

Temporary graduate trainee accountant

Ref: RD/06/044

£16,137 to £22,293 a year.

37 hours a week at Finance Group, County Hall, Preston.

We are looking for an enthusiastic, forward thinking and energetic person to join our Finance Group as a graduate trainee accountant on a training contract to qualify as a member of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.

Essential: You must be an effective communicator, highly motivated, numerate and a teamworker. You must also be able to develop excellent working relationships with colleagues across the council, and have a minimum of a 2:2 degree or equivalent.

Informal discussion: Rachel Parker on 01772 531274.

Interview date: 13 and 14 July 2006.

We are working towards building a workforce that reflects Lancashire's population. We welcome applications from ethnic minorities.

Apply online at: www.lancashire.gov.uk/vacancies or email: rd.personnel@css.lancscc.gov.uk. Tel: 01772 533383, 24hr answerphone.
Closing date: 9 June 2006.

Lancashire County Council is an equal opportunities employer welcoming applications from all sections of the community. Applications from ethnic minorities are welcome. You must be committed to equality and diversity in the workplace. Lancashire County Council are currently undergoing an equal pay review and the grades of some posts advertised may be subject to review in future months.



A full job description of all vacancies is available on our website www.lancashire.gov.uk/vacancies

LOOK LIVELY

Should Council Tax be abolished?

If so, what should replace it?

COUNCIL Tax has rarely been popular and politicians are always seeking ways to reform or abolish it.

Local government services have to be paid for – the question is how.

Both the old rates system and the current Council Tax are property-based, meaning that bills are, allegedly, linked to a resident's wealth. We could keep the Council Tax or return to the rates.

Other options include a localised increase in income tax, a local sales tax or even a Whitehall takeover of services with all services funded by general taxation.

Vision went to Burnley bus station where people were in a forthright mood ...



Padiham's **Graham Patterson** said: "We should abolish Council Tax. To me the best system is the rates.

"I can't dispute the fact that we have to pay for services – it is just the bills the current system generates. We are paying ridiculous amounts under the Council Tax system. I didn't like the poll tax either."

The old rates system made sense for Burnley's **Linda Glynn**. She said: "The rates were best. Even so, it is unfair to be assessed on the basis of your capital worth rather than your income."

"An addition to income tax sounds alright but not everyone pays income tax so things would be no better."

"I accept we have to pay taxes although it annoys me that I live on a private road – we have to pay for our own road and then pay for everyone else's."

"Not everyone will be happy no matter what system you introduce."

Typical rates bills were about £100 per year for Burnley's **Susan Haythornwhite**. She prefers to take a step back in time.

Susan said: "We should go back to pre-poll tax days. I only paid £100 per year then. Everyone should pay a fair share based on their wealth."

Visiting Lancaster resident **Peter Seed** said: "We need some form of payment to pay for services such as bins and general

improvements to our towns.

"It's not something I really have to bother about at the moment as my mum pays the bill."

"In the future I expect to be happy with the Council Tax system as long as it does not go up too much."

The government should finance local services, says **Eleanor Smith** who notes that "we pay enough income tax as it is".

She said: "I don't see why we should pay a local tax. We already pay tax on so many things."

"The police precept, for instance, is included in the Council Tax bill yet I think the government should pay for them."

"I thought the poll tax was a good idea and I also liked the old rates system. Many people object to all the systems because they just object to paying full stop!"

One man, who asked not to be named, said: "Local services have to be paid for, as simple as that – and people will want the system that is cheapest for them."

The Council Tax should definitely be abolished, according to **Jackie Gaughan** who said: "I agree with having to pay locally for services. I feel, however, that the Council Tax system is not fair."

Tax levels should be linked to income – which the Council Tax fails to do, according to Burnley's **Anne Parker**.

Anne said: "I pay too much for a relatively small house. It is a nice house so the tax level is high yet me and my husband are pensioners so our incomes are low."

"It really should be linked to income. I like the idea of a local sales tax which will put that link there."

What do you think?

Write to: Stop Right Now, Vision, Corporate Communications Group, County Hall, Preston PR1 8XJ

Blonde librarians seek musical fame

THE Long Blondes, a rock group from Sheffield, are to perform at Lancaster Music Library as part of a project to interest young people in libraries.

The "gig", at 7pm on 25 May, is part of the Get it Loud

in Libraries project which aims to remove old prejudices about libraries. Fittingly, all members of the group are librarians.

Tickets for the concert are already on sale at £2.50.

Details from 01524 580712 or:

stewart.parsons@lcl.lancsccl.gov.uk

Joint effort fuels war on drugs



●PICK a card: from left, Jake (11), Oliver (10), and Abbigail (11), pupils at Stanah Primary School, Thornton.

CHILDREN and staff at Lancashire primary schools are learning how to make the right moves to tackle drug issues with the launch of a new educational board game.

"Joint Efforts – Primary Edition" has been designed by Lancashire County Council staff to help young people, teachers, youth workers and parents learn how to handle situations involving drugs.

Players move around a board representing

their school and local community where they encounter situations or questions that challenge their knowledge of substances.

The winner is the first player to reach "home" having answered most questions correctly.

Appropriate sets of question cards are used depending on whether young people, teachers, youth workers or parents are playing the game.

A Lancashire County Council spokesman said: "Learning about drugs and their effects is the first step towards students being able to make

informed choices when they encounter a situation involving drug use."

"The Joint Efforts board game is an excellent way of introducing young people to the topic and allows them to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need in adult life."

"The game does not just cover illegal drugs but is designed to teach students about alcohol, tobacco and medicines and their effects on health."

"Lancashire County Council has a long-standing commitment to supporting schools in developing drug education programmes which is a major component of drug prevention."

"All schools need to set realistic aims for their drug education which are consistent with the values and ethos of the schools and the laws of society as well as being appropriate to the age and the maturity of the pupils."

The primary edition of Joint Efforts is aimed at 10 to 11 year-olds in their final year of primary school.

Staff can also use the game to help identify potential gaps in their knowledge and to develop policies for dealing with drug-related incidents.

The spokesman added: "School staff will be playing Joint Efforts to increase their awareness of topics such as the law, health and safety and confidentiality and how they relate to drugs."

"If staff have a clear view of how drug-related incidents are dealt with and are able to react fairly and consistently it helps students to understand the consequences of drug use."

Question time

• • • •

1. Wallace Hartley, band leader on the doomed Titanic, was from which Lancashire town?
2. How many meals on wheels are provided across Lancashire each week?
3. How many people do you think contact Social Services for advice and support each year?
4. What is Lancashire's longest school name?
5. In which Lancashire town was the passenger jet invented?
6. What is Lancashire's shortest school name?
7. Which Lancashire port/resort is the sunniest most northerly site in the UK?

ANSWERS

1. Colne; 2. 26,500; 3. 18,000; 4. Foulridge St Michael and All Voluntary Aided Primary School; 5. Preston; 6. Elms School; 7. Fleetwood.

YOUNG people and their concerns bring great job satisfaction to Amy Shaw. For more than a year, Amy has been one of Lancashire County Council's staff on the What Now? helpline.

Among confidential questions on careers, housing and health, Amy is often asked how to ask someone out and even how to dump them ...

How did the What Now? helpline start?

It started as a support to youth workers who needed somewhere to ring to help them answer difficult questions. The number was advertised in youth centres and young people started to ring us direct. We now operate 12 hours per day, 365 days per year.

What sort of difficult questions?

We get 250 telephone calls per day so there is everything. One of the most frequent is asking for help in asking someone out. There must be a number of couples around Lancashire that we have helped get together. People also need advice in dumping someone!

We also have to help with serious problems such as health, homework, careers and finance. I am not expected to know everything, but have lots of back-up.

Do you ever go home with a headache?

Some off the work can be very distressing but I manage to switch off when I leave work. Some people

Voice of *Vision*



Amy Shaw - information/advice worker

don't want a definitive answer, they just want someone to talk to.

Do they find it difficult to ask about very personal matters?

Yes, but it is an anonymous service, which frees

them up to ask difficult and intimate questions. Some people say they should ask their parents but that is not always helpful. Take bullying, for instance – a parent could just go storming to school and make the matter worse. Children often want techniques to handle a problem themselves.

We are a general information and advice service, not a specialist crisis service.

What qualities do you need?

You have to be able to see things from the other person's point of view. You have to genuinely care for people – I actually look forward to coming to work.

What are your favourite calls?

I like relationship questions – happy hearts and broken hearts. I like it most when people ring back and let us know how they are getting on. Some people ring once only and others stay in touch for years. You feel you know them quite well, even though we are anonymous.

Are there any questions you dread?

I am not so good on dry subjects such as benefits. Fortunately I have a lot of information to hand. There are a total of 10 staff – we are available to callers from 10am to 10pm – so there is always someone around who can help. Concerns often include step-families, drug use, eating disorders and friends.

What Now? confidential advice, provided by the Youth and Community Service, covers the whole of Lancashire 365 days per year, 10am-10pm. Staff can be telephoned on 0800 511111, texted on 07786 511111 or emailed on www.q2a.co.uk