

# City Management Newsletter

## Chester – Summer 2009

**The last two months have seen the start of the "Chester season". I think the Chester Food and Drink Festival has now established itself as the lead off event for the year and this Easter's event was the best one yet.**

Helped by some very good Easter weather over 20,000 people attended the event and visited the city. In economic terms this is over £1 million pounds of benefit to Chester and I know that our Coordinator, Stephen Wundke, is very keen to continue growing this event and the target is 50,000 visitors to Chester over Easter in the next 3 years. The event generated over £800,000 in publicity and really focused the regions attention on Chester.

Our aim at City Management is to not only draw more people in to the city but also to enhance that experience and of course this year we have a wealth of great events that do both.

Chester Races brings in huge numbers and economic impact for our hospitality sector. City Management ran the very successful Chester Retail Cup, with 50,000 leaflets with shopping offers featuring our leading retailers distributed throughout the hotel and guest house network and we are delighted with our partnership with Chester Racecourse who are committed to working with us on this unique programme.

We are also pleased with our partnership work with Chester Performs who are presenting the excellent Screen Diva programme and are going to work with us on the Roamin the Rows programme during August. This is a great example of the city partnerships all working together for the common good.

Coming up we have the International Polo on the 29th & 30th May, the British Masters Showjumping in July, the British Cycling Championship, Chester in Bloom, Chester Fashion Festival, the Giant Parade, Summer Watch, The Music Festival, launched this week, The Literature festival; the list of quality Chester events is growing all the time.

We really only have the one omission in our current programme and that is in the cultural offer with a theatre. I can assure everyone that this has been pushed by City Management to ensure it remains at the top of the new authority agenda - and it is. We will update you when we know more.

All of Chester's events are designed to strengthen Chester's offer and bring more people into our fabulous city. When they are here they will see our new Mini Guide, they will be able to shop on line at [www.shopchester.net](http://www.shopchester.net) which will be up and running from

1st June and of course our Virgin Train campaign through Visit Chester and Cheshire starts this month also.

We think there has never been so much attention focused on our city and given good weather we are excited about the prospects for 2009. I hope you take the opportunity to join in some of our excellent campaigns.

On a personal note could I congratulate David Atkinson, Events Manager at Cheshire West and Chester Council, who was awarded Outstanding Achievement by the Chester Food and Drink Festival at their Gala Awards dinner for his efforts over the last 8 years in establishing this event.



David Pickering  
Chairman,  
Chester City Management



Chester's Retail Cup Competitors

## National Footfall Figures for April

For the first time since August 2007 footfall in the UK's high streets increased annually in April by 0.7%.

National indicators were showing a slowdown in the decline of annual footfall with UK high streets recording a decline of just 0.2% during March. The Association of Town Centre Management's High Street Index reports that this was the smallest decline in footfall reported in any month since May 2008.

The largest fall in footfall was experienced in September 08. The British Retail Consortium reported like for like increase in sales of 4.6% in April.

The ATCM report asks the key question as to whether this indicates the start of a sustained recovery, or is "a relatively bright spot on an otherwise dark trading landscape."

## New Local Authorities for Cheshire

From 1st April Cheshire as a whole authority ceased to exist and is now split into two – East and West.

The West authority is known as Cheshire West and Chester (CWAC) and the East is known as Cheshire East.

The change is meant to be a smooth transition from county and borough councils to one point of contact for east and west. There are bound to be some teething problems in places but all essential services will run as normally as possible.

To contact your Cheshire West and Chester authority:

Visit Cheshire West and Chester:  
[www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](http://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)

Telephone: 0300 123 8123

Email: [enquiries@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)

## Business Rates Payments can be Deferred

The recent announcement from Government regarding the deferral of business rates payments has caused significant confusion for businesses. We hope the below information will assist your understanding.

Businesses have been given the opportunity to stagger the 5% increase in their business rates due this financial year over the next three years. Rates will now rise by 2% for this financial year with the remaining 3% to be introduced over the following two years. The changes will also defer increases due to the end of the transitional rate relief arrangements.

The Government has announced that it is bringing forward regulations to enable this to happen, although in practice this is unlikely to take effect before the summer. Businesses are to pay their business rates as usual until the local authority writes to them after these regulations are introduced to offer a revised schedule of payments for their 2009-2010 bills.

Under existing legislation business rates are adjusted every April in line with the Retail Prices Index for the previous September. The new measures are designed to smooth the effects of the spike in inflation of 5 percent in September 2008, which would have seen businesses facing an impact on their cash flow this year. They will also assist businesses affected by the end of the transitional rate relief arrangements which previously provided relief to businesses affected by significant increases in business rates.

The reduction in inflation and the pressures of the economic crisis led business groups to lobby for a reduction in the business rates increase. They have cautiously welcomed this deferral option but continue to press for the Government to forgo the increase.

For further information please contact Tim Moseley, Cheshire West and Chester, Business Rates on 01244 402380. Or download a factsheet from:  
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/1190988.pdf>

## Chester is named the Northwest's best day

Online poll places Chester in top spot

Chester has been selected as the region's preferred place to visit during an online poll by Daily Mail readers.

The destination was praised for its wide selection of shops found on the unique two tiered rows, restaurants and bars, historic buildings, the famous Eastgate clock, fabulous range of accommodation and its beautiful River Dee backdrop.

Cllr Mike Jones, Leader of Cheshire West and Chester Council, is delighted. He said: "We have always known that our city is a fabulous place to visit, but it's fantastic to get the official recognition."

Chris Brown, Visit Chester & Cheshire Chief Executive, added: "Being crowned Best Day Out is an exceptional result for the city and a testament to extraordinary efforts of all those who have played their part in enhancing the visitor experience."

Rita Waters, of Chester Renaissance, believes Chester offers something for all tastes. "This success can only help build on Chester and Cheshire's reputation as a must see destination," she said.

*The poll was organised by TravelMail and Enjoy England.*

# First phase of £20m gas mains upgrade begins

## The first phase of £20m scheme to upgrade and modernise Chester's gas supply network has begun.

April saw work begin to renew 37 km of old mains in residential roads in Hoole, Vicar's Cross and Broughton Heath, plus a number of the main routes into the city centre.

Staff from the North West Gas Alliance are currently visiting businesses, libraries and schools in the affected areas to discuss the scheme. Residents will receive a letter two weeks prior to the works in their street and again 24 - 48 hrs before the works.

The work, which will cost £4.5m and take a year to complete, will replace more than 88 miles of the city's iron gas pipe with polyethylene gas main. Rather than miles of trenches along Chester's roads, there will be excavations every 100 or so metres. The new gas mains are designed to have a life of 80 years.

North West Gas Alliance brought forward works to replace the gas pipe along Queens Road, Vicars Cross to enable Cheshire West and Chester Council to resurface the road this summer.

Councillor Neil Ritchie, Environment Executive Member, Cheshire West and Chester Council said: "Although a five-year programme of gas works appears to have potential for significant upheaval, the reality is that all organisations involved will be co-operating in an attempt to ensure that it will be 'business as usual.'

"Most of the gas mains are in the footway, so much of the work can be carried out without too much disruption. There are no planned road closures this year."

Timing/duration of works on main roads:

### May:

- **Lache Lane (13 weeks)** - Circular Drive to Overleigh Roundabout.

Road to be kept open, traffic lights may be needed in some sections

### June:

- **A41 Whitchurch Road (10 weeks)** - Roundabout to Bridge Drive, Christleton.

Most work in footway, traffic lights may be needed in some sections.

### July:

- **A51 Vicar's Cross Road (12 weeks)** - A55 to Green Lane

Road to be kept open at all times, traffic signals may be required.

- **B5130 Chester Road (23 weeks)** - A55 bridge to Dee Banks

Road to be kept open at all times, traffic lights may be needed in narrow parts towards Dee Banks.

### August:

- **Green Lane, Vicar's Cross (13 weeks)**. Traffic signals will be required for part of the works

### December:

- **B5130 Sandy Lane/Dee Banks (10 weeks)** - Chester Road to A51. Traffic signals will be required

### January:

- **Hoole Lane (8 weeks)** - A41 to Bridge. Traffic signals will be required in narrow parts

**For more information contact:** NWGA on 0161 790 1000 or 1010  
**Out of hours:** 0800 121 444. **Website:** [www.nwgasalliance.co.uk](http://www.nwgasalliance.co.uk)

## Find Out What's On in Chester and Cheshire

**What's On in Chester and Cheshire has been relaunched by Visit Chester and Cheshire in a new, smaller format with an increased print run to 300,000 pa.**

The new style events guide has been positively received and private sector advertising support is strong.

The monthly guide covers events taking place across Cheshire and Warrington as well as at venues in Wirral and North Wales, who also provide advertising support.

The increased distribution has enabled the publication to reach right across Cheshire and Warrington and be truly representative of the area. The What's On is now available at 250 outlets every month.

Chester Hospitality Association has endorsed the guide as part of their guests' welcome pack. Their members also receive a weekly digest of events from the What's On events database.

**A downloadable version is available on [www.visitchester.com](http://www.visitchester.com).** It is fully searchable.

## New Mini-Guide for Chester

The new Chester Mini-Guide brings together food and drink, attractions and shopping into one handy publication for the first time ever. The print run will be 500,000. The 48 page guide has attracted significant investment from private sector partners. It is also backed by Chester City Management, Cheshire West and Chester and Visit Chester and Cheshire and will be available in May. The new free publication will be distributed across Cheshire and North East Wales to hotels, restaurants, shops, attractions and Tourist Information Centres. It will be ideal for distribution to conference delegates, tour groups and visitors to the City. **A downloadable version will be available on [www.visitchester.com](http://www.visitchester.com).** It will be fully searchable.

# Full colour at the Odeon

Thanks to Chester Renaissance the windows of the empty Odeon building in Northgate have been transformed with displays promoting Cycle Chester and Chester in Bloom.

Rita Waters, Chief Executive of Chester Renaissance said 'Improving the look of our streets is a positive step in supporting Chester's businesses as it provides a more attractive appearance for visitors than empty shops during these difficult economic times. Dressing the windows is also a great way of promoting two big initiatives for Chester, the Cycle Chester Project and the In Bloom competition, as well as making Northgate more attractive.

'We are delighted with the new displays. They will make a real improvement to Northgate and brighten up this part of Chester.' said chair of Northgate Street Traders, Isabel Connell, from The Earth Collection. 'Northgate has an interesting range of independent shops and we hope that these colourful displays will encourage more people to explore this part of our City.'

Chester Renaissance will be providing more displays for shop fronts in Northgate during May.

The Chester Renaissance Board oversees the programme with support from project teams led by Cheshire West and Chester and other public agencies, the private sector and community groups. Financial supporters include Cheshire West and Chester Council and the North West Regional Development Agency.

**For further information:** [www.chesterrenaissance.co.uk](http://www.chesterrenaissance.co.uk)  
or email [chesterrenaissance@chester.gov.uk](mailto:chesterrenaissance@chester.gov.uk)



Northgate Street traders with Roz Munslow Chester Renaissance by the new displays.

## Dates for the Diary:

### Small & Independent Traders Meeting

Every last Tuesday in the month at  
Chester Renaissance Office, Vicars Lane  
**5.45pm Tuesday 26th May**  
**5.45pm Tuesday 30th June**

### Chester Against Business Crime

Members Meeting at Blossoms Hotel  
**10.30am every Wednesday**

### Sealand Road Area Retailers Meeting

Held every 1st Thursday of the month  
at Tesco  
**10am Thursday 2nd June**  
**10am Thursday 7th July**

## Useful Contacts

### Streetscene

*Litter, graffiti, fly tipping, pigeons and  
community safety issues*

T: 0300 123 7026

E: [enquiries@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)

### Chester Against Business Crime

T: 01244 403615

E: [r.elliott@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:r.elliott@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)

### Chester City Management

T: 402047

[www.chesterccm.org](http://www.chesterccm.org)

E: [roz.munslow@](mailto:roz.munslow@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)

[cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](http://cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)

### Chester City Management Coordinator

T: 01244 350233

### Chester, Ellesmere Port and North Wales Chamber of Commerce

T: 01244 669988

E: [info@cepnwchamber.org.uk](mailto:info@cepnwchamber.org.uk)

### Police

T: 0845 458 6384

**Historic Building Design  
& Conservation - Help and advice for  
signage, repairs and conservation  
issues.**

T: 01244 402327

### Community Safety Wardens

T: 0300 123 7033

### Licensing Team

T: 01244 402138

E: [licensing@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)

### Business Rates

T: 0300 123 7023