

Bear Necessities

With News from Congleton Town Council & Community Groups

Autumn 2025



Christmas Lights Switch-On

Congleton town centre will sparkle with festive magic on **Friday 28 November!** From 4pm-8pm, visitors can enjoy a full programme of activities, entertainment and seasonal treats, with the **big switch-on at 6pm.**

The main stage will host live music and performances, with an **accessible live-stream feed** inside the Town Hall for anyone seeking a quieter space. The Town Hall will also feature a free **Santa's Grotto** (fast-track booking on TicketSource or turn up and queue) and a **children's zone** with face painting and festive activities. An **inclusivity area in The Space** ensures everyone can enjoy the celebrations, offering a calmer, supportive environment while still joining in the fun.

At the **community stage** on Swan Bank, local schools and community groups will perform, while the **lantern parade**, led by the lively samba group Karamba and Congleton Rugby Club pulling Santa's sleigh, will make its way to the big Christmas tree for the switch-on. Entertainment on the **main stage** includes Rode Hall Silver Band, Shakermaker, and Harry Jones, with additional fun provided by street performers throughout the town centre.

Visitors can also enjoy **fairground rides** and explore **over 40 food, craft, and community stalls**, arranged single-sided for safety and accessibility. Festive cheer continues in the **Congleton Market Quarter** with even more stalls and entertainment to discover. Several town centre shops and hospitality venues will also be open, adding to the atmosphere. **Road closures** will be in place on High Street, Mill Street, and Swan Bank from 12pm-10pm.

Thanks to our **sponsors**, who help make Christmas in Congleton extra special!

SPURSTOW CAPITAL

BLOOR HOMES

Castle|||Green



Timothy A Brown

All Aboard on Sundays

Congleton Town Council is supporting local residents in a campaign to get **Northern Rail trains serving Congleton again on Sundays.** It is more than a year since a train stopped in Congleton on a Sunday, which is completely unacceptable. **MP Sarah Russell** supports the campaign, having already spoken in Parliament about the problem.

Congleton is one of the busiest Cheshire East stations, and passenger demand is growing due to the new housing in and around the town. The normal Sunday timetable of just 12 stops in Congleton is already insufficient, but with no trains running at all due to inadequate 'rest-day working' arrangements, the people of Congleton simply do not have a service.

The town council has invited Northern Rail to a meeting to discuss the situation and commit to a resolution. The group has started a **petition** calling for action. **Scan the QR code** to sign online, or visit Congleton Information Centre to **sign the hard copy** in person. Your signature can help make a real difference — add your name today!



Congleton Youth Council – Have Your Say!

Congleton Town Council is excited to announce the creation of the **Congleton Youth Council**, giving young people a dedicated platform to shape the future of their town. The Youth Council will allow members to share ideas, influence local decisions, and work on projects that improve life for young people in Congleton.

The initiative follows a series of meetings and a successful Youth Council Workshop in October, where students from local schools and community groups shared their ideas and enthusiasm. The group discussed priorities, potential projects, and ways to engage other young people.

The council is open to all residents aged **10 to 18**, with opportunities to take on leadership roles, contribute to community initiatives, and represent the voice of Congleton's youth.

Young people interested in joining or sharing their ideas can complete the Youth Survey at: **bit.ly/CTCYouth** or contact Cathy Dean, Congleton Town Council on: **07977 065 647.**



Scan the QR code on your mobile device to read this issue of Bear Necessities online.

Bear Necessities is produced by Congleton Town Council. The next newsletter will be **January 2026.** All contributions to be sent to **debbie.coxon@congleton-tc.gov.uk**

Congleton Town Council - Congleton Town Hall, High Street, Congleton CW12 1BN.

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@ info@congleton-tc.gov.uk

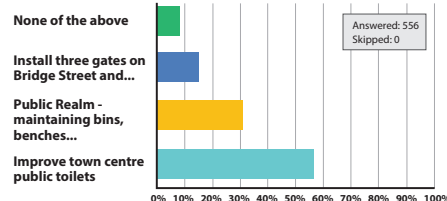
🌐 www.congleton-tc.gov.uk

Thank You for Voting!

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) survey received **556 responses**. Thank you to everyone who took the time to share their views. The results show strong support for **improving the town centre public toilets**, which received the largest vote: 56.40% (313 votes).

The council will now consider these results when planning on how to spend the £21,684 CIL funding.

Please choose your favourite option below as these were initially proposed at the Annual Town Meeting.



Congleton Neighbourhood Plan

Cheshire East Council (CEC) has launched the **Regulation 16 consultation** on the Congleton Neighbourhood Plan. All consultation documents are available on the CEC consultation portal: <https://cheshireeast.oc2.uk/>. Hard copies are available on request.

Comments can be submitted online or by post and must be received by 7pm on **Monday 17 November**. For enquiries, contact the Neighbourhood Planning Team on: **0300 123 5014** or: neighbourhoods@cheshireeast.gov.uk

#WeSpeakUp – Support White Ribbon Day

Congleton Town Council's White Ribbon Group is marking **White Ribbon Day on Tuesday 25 November**, part of the global campaign engaging men to help end violence against women and girls.

In Congleton, the focus is on ending all gender-based violence.

Look out for the White Ribbon flag, ribbons, town centre stalls, and social media posts raising awareness.

This year's theme, **#WeSpeakUp**, highlights the importance of challenging sexist jokes, catcalling, staring, and inappropriate comments, which can contribute to violence and abuse.

New Streetscape Manager in Town!

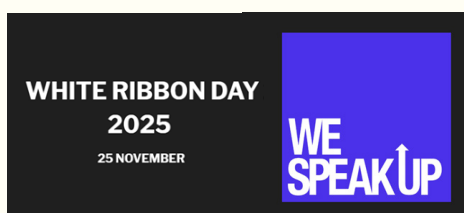
Doug Christie has been appointed Congleton Town Council's new Streetscape Development Manager. Leading a team responsible for maintaining and enhancing the town's outdoor spaces, Doug brings **over 31 years of local government experience** in grounds and streetscape management. Beginning his career in 1994 as a Parks and Grounds Maintenance Apprentice, he has progressed through senior roles, with Cheshire East Council and most recently as Senior Team Leader for Grounds Maintenance at Ansa Environmental Services. Doug combines practical expertise with strong leadership and is committed to enhancing Congleton's green spaces for everyone to enjoy.



£1000 boost for No Tier Snooker

No Tier Snooker has been awarded a **£1,000 grant by the town council** in recognition of the group's outstanding work bringing together people living with early onset dementia and Frontotemporal Dementia (FTD). Meeting weekly at Congleton Snooker Club, No Tier Snooker offers a safe, welcoming space to enjoy snooker, friendship, and fun.

The town council are inviting other local charities and groups to apply for funding. Applications are considered at the **Finance and Policy Committee**. Meeting dates are 20 November, 12 February and 26 March 2026. Visit: www.congleton-tc.gov.uk/your-council/grants



Keeping Congleton's Nightlife Safe This Christmas

Local hospitality venues are encouraged to stock up on **free Drug Testing Kits** ahead of party season. Provided by the town council, the kits allow anyone who suspects they have been spiked to take quick, discreet action. Spiking is a serious offence, carrying up to 10 years imprisonment, and victims are encouraged to seek support and report crimes immediately. **Congleton Street Pastors** continue to support the nighttime economy with Saturday patrols from 9pm–1am, offering first aid, emotional support, and a valuable, reassuring presence.

Don't Miss Out on the Purple Pound

Dr Deborah Lawson, Chair of the Town Council's Equal Access Group, has written the **Purple Pound Guide** to help businesses understand the spending power of disabled customers. In the UK, around 16 million people are disabled, with their households spending an estimated £274 billion annually - a figure known as the **Purple Pound**. With the festive season approaching, making venues accessible can help businesses welcome more shoppers and boost sales in the run-up to Christmas. The Town Council's **Disability Welcome Scheme** recognises businesses creating more inclusive experiences for all. Read the guide here: www.congleton-tc.gov.uk/equal-access-congleton

The purple pound is worth **£274 billion** in the UK

Cheshire East Council's Financial Challenge and What It Means for Congleton

Local authorities across the country are facing growing financial strain — and **Cheshire East Council (CEC)** is no exception. Although CEC manages an annual budget of **£427 million**, almost **70%** is spent on adult and children's social care, leaving limited funds for other essential services.

Following £25.3 million of exceptional financial support from the Government to help balance their budgets, CEC still faces a **loss of £3.1 million by March 2026** (less than 1% of total budget), increasing to **£33 million** in 2026/27. These pressures will inevitably affect services across Congleton.

Budget Consultation

CEC recently ran a **Budget Prioritisation Consultation** to identify which services residents value most. Although CEC must legally provide certain services, it has limited control over their quality or scope. Reduced funding has already led to fewer road and pavement repairs, less highway weeding, and the closure or transfer of **public toilets** to town and parish councils without maintenance funding. These cuts have raised local concerns, echoed in the town council's own consultations.

Devolution of Services

CEC is undertaking a major exercise to devolve some services to town and parish councils. However, there is **no guarantee that funding will follow**, meaning local councils may have to cover costs themselves — as seen with public toilets.

What Congleton Town Council Already Does

Congleton Town Council (CTC) is one of the largest in Cheshire East and already provides many valued services.

The **Streetscape Service** – unique to Congleton, was transferred to CTC with partial funding support from CEC, covering around 50% of its costs.

Streetscape maintains many of Congleton's **green and public spaces**, including:

- Grass, hedge, and minor tree work
- Seasonal planting across the town
- Emptying 200+ litter and dog bins and removing fly-tips



Supporting a Vibrant Community

CTC runs or supports:

- The town's paddling pool (only one of two left in Cheshire)
- Major community events and festivals
- Congleton in Bloom
- Management of the Town Hall and Congleton Information Centre.



How the Town Is Funded

CTC's income comes mainly from two sources:

Precept – This forms part of residents' Council Tax, collected by CEC. The average **Band D household pays £117.41 per year** (2025/26). In total this amounts to £1,333,233.

Service Level Agreement (SLA) – CEC contributes about **50% of the Streetscape Service costs**.

Given the current financial pressures faced by CEC, the town council will need to take on more responsibility and deliver a greater range of local services.

To maintain its current level of services, CTC will need to increase its **Precept** in line with inflation and rising costs. This would represent an increase of approximately **£1 per month (£12 per annum)** for a **Band D household**, generating around **£136,260 in total**.

However, if CTC is to take on additional responsibilities and services, the Precept would need to rise more significantly:

£3 per month (£36 per annum) = £408,700

£5 per month (£60 per annum) = £681,300

Have Your Say

CTC wants **your views** on which services should be prioritised if more responsibilities are devolved.

Possible areas include:

- Public toilets (at the Bus Station, Market Area & Park)
- Highway verges and green space maintenance
- Town centre lighting and public realm
- Extra bus services to new estates, railway station, and hospital
- More youth amenities
- Better Paddling Pool facilities

Share your views in a short survey by **6 December:**

www.surveymonkey.com/r/CTCServices
or scan the QR code.





Christmas in Congleton

With the festive season approaching, Congleton is buzzing with seasonal activities. Here are some of the Christmas highlights you can join in...

NSPCC Toy Appeal for Congleton

Boots (Barn Road), Congleton Chronicle, Congleton Town Council, and Plus Dane Housing are once again joining forces to bring festive cheer through the NSPCC Congleton Toy Appeal. Last year, local generosity saw around 500 toys donated to Congleton families in need.

This year, new toys and gifts for all ages, from babies to teens can be donated from **Monday 10 November to Friday 5 December** at any of the partner collection points.

Please do NOT wrap the presents.

Make Your Own Lantern

Lantern-making workshops, hosted by Congleton Community Projects, will take place at the Electric Picture House, Spindle Mill (near Beartown Brewery) on **Saturdays 8, 15, and 22 November** from **10.30am-3.30pm**. Drop in at any time; it takes around 1.5-2 hours to make a basic lantern, or you can stay longer to get creative! The workshops are free, but a £1.50 donation for materials is welcome. **An accessible workshop** will also be held at St Mary's Church Hall, West Road, on **Tuesday 18 November from 5pm-7pm**. This session is free but must be booked in advance on the town council's TicketSource. Everyone is invited to carry their lantern in the parade at the lights switch-on.

Rotary Tree of Light

The light up ceremony will take place in the Community Garden, Lawton Street, on **Saturday 29 November at 4pm**. Festive shapes to write personalised messages can be purchased from Congleton Information Centre for a minimum donation of £1. The tree will stay lit until the 12th Night. All proceeds will go towards supporting Rotary's charitable work and local good causes.

Sparkle, Shop and Celebrate in the town centre

Local shops will be dazzling with **festive window displays** once again this year. Take a stroll through the town centre, spot your favourite designs, and support Congleton's brilliant independent traders. The town will twinkle with 100 Christmas trees and magical lights **every day from 3pm-11pm**, creating a magical atmosphere right through to the New Year.

Congleton Makers Market

The Makers Market will bring a festive buzz to the town packed full of local gifts and goodies. Don't miss the chance to shop on **Saturday 29 November and Saturday 20 December**.

Meet Santa with Congleton Lions

Join Congleton Lions for a festive "Meet & Greet" with Santa Claus at Astbury Garden Centre. Starting **Saturday 22 November from 11am-4pm** and continuing every weekend until 21 December. Children and families can enjoy a magical meeting with the jolly man himself. This delightful event is free, and donations are warmly welcomed to help raise funds for local charities.

Congleton Santa

Congleton Santa tours the town every Christmas, spreading festive cheer and raising funds for local charities. This year's tour begins on **Sunday 23 November**. All routes, dates and the many ways to donate can be found on Santa's website and social media: **www.congletonsanta.org.uk**





Step into the Magic of Christmas at Congleton Museum

The museum transforms into a festive wonderland on **Saturday 6 and Sunday 7 December!**

Meet Santa in his cosy grotto, enjoy sustainable Christmas crafts, storytelling, and a fun festive trail.

Children £7 (includes gift). Bookings only: <https://www.tickettailor.com/events/congletonmuseum/1862564>

Breakfast with Santa at Congleton Town Hall

On **Saturday 13, Sunday 14, Saturday 20, and Sunday 21 December** from **11am-1pm** (breakfast served at 11.15am). A Full English Breakfast is £12 per person, with the option to receive a selection box from Santa for £3 or a selection box and present for £10. Hosted by Mark's Events, the Town Hall's commercial partner, to book, call Lynn on: **07758 090322**.

Festive Line-Up at Daneside Theatre

An independent 300-seat venue in the heart of Congleton, presents a festive programme of top-class shows and local talent. **Elf – The Musical** runs **Sunday 16 to Saturday 22 November**, followed by **Flint Street Nativity** from **Wednesday 26 to Saturday 29 November**. The **Rotary Christmas Concert** is back on **Saturday 13 December**, an evening with **Harry Jones** takes place on **Sunday 14 December**. Congleton Pantomime presents **Dick Whittington** from **Saturday 10 to Saturday 17 January 2026**.

Daneside Theatre is an accessible venue. Tickets are available from the Congleton Information Centre box office.

Congleton Choral Society Concerts

Congleton Choral Society will perform at Congleton Town Hall on **Saturday 15 November** for their Autumn concert and on **Saturday 20 December** for their popular Christmas concert.

Tickets available from Congleton Information Centre.



Buglawton Jingle and Mingle

Buglawton in Bloom, in collaboration with the Church House Pub, is hosting a "Jingle and Mingle" community carol singing event in the pub grounds on **Thursday 11 December** from **6.30pm-7.30pm**, with the Rode Hall Silver Band. Join in a festive sing-along, with mince pies and mulled wine available.

New Life Church Carol Service

Wrap up warm and join the Christmas cheer at an outdoor carol service on **Saturday 13 December**, from **11am-12noon** at the Bridestones Shopping Centre, near Specsavers. Donations to the Town Mayor's Charities.

Community Carol Service

The annual Community Carol Service will be held at St. Peter's Church, Chapel Street, on **Thursday 18 December at 7.30pm**. Traditional carols, warm atmosphere, and festive refreshments.

Christmas Day Lunch

Mark's Events and The Old Saw Mill are bringing the community together by hosting a free Christmas Day lunch at Congleton Town Hall. The three-course festive meal will be served at 12 noon, offering warmth, company, and Christmas cheer to anyone who might otherwise be spending the day alone or struggling with the cost of the season. Places are free but must be reserved in advance.

To book contact **Congleton Information Centre**.

East Cheshire Hospice Christmas Tree Collection

On **Saturday 10 and Sunday 11 January**, the dedicated team of volunteers will be out across the community, collecting and recycling Christmas trees to raise essential funds for East Cheshire Hospice. To receive the latest information, visit: www.eastcheshirehospice.org.uk

2026



Increased Police Patrols

Congleton town centre will see increased police patrols to improve safety and reduce anti-social behaviour. As part of Operation Sidelines, Cheshire Constabulary is deploying **additional officers** on foot, particularly during busy weekend periods. The initiative strengthens the visible police presence, deters crime, and offers reassurance to residents, visitors, and businesses. By focusing on hotspot areas and community engagement, Cheshire Police aim to make the town centre **a safer, more welcoming place for everyone**. Residents are encouraged to share any concerns or issues by completing the Residents' Voice Survey, feedback will help shape policing priorities in Congleton: www.cheshire.police.uk



New Bus Links Viking Park and Town Centre

A new bus service will soon connect Viking Park with Congleton Town Centre. D&G's 93 service, funded through the Government's Bus Service Improvement Plan and Section 106 contributions, launches on **Monday 10 November** (at the time of going to print). The **93A (anti-clockwise)** and **93C (clockwise)** routes will link Congleton Fairground, Viking Park, West Heath Shopping Centre, and key streets, with buses running every 30 minutes, Monday to Saturday. The town council has worked with Cheshire East Council to bring forward this new route, with ongoing discussions about expanding services and boosting bus use across Congleton.



Rising Rat Numbers

Since COVID-19, rat sightings have increased across the UK, and Congleton has seen its share of reports. Some experts have even dubbed the surge a **"ratmageddon"**. Milder winters, reduced waste collections, home composting, and leftover food have all contributed, while lockdowns pushed rats to seek food in residential areas. Residents are urged to seal gaps, store food securely, and keep gardens and bins tidy to help tackle the issue.

Same Day Access Service (SDAS) for Local Patients

The new **SDAS**, which went live on 5 November, provides same-day appointments for patients with acute, non-life-threatening illnesses who need urgent care but do not require A&E. Based at **Readesmoor GP Practice, Congleton, and Holmes Chapel Health Centre**, the service is staffed by advanced clinicians. Residents should request an appointment via their usual GP Practice, where a Care Navigator will assess suitability. The SDAS team has full access to patient records to ensure continuity of care.

News in Brief

Boost Your Skills

Free online courses are now available through Springboard's adult learning programme. Sessions take place at Congleton Riverside on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, or study from home. Courses are fully funded for adults aged 19+ on benefits or earning under £27,750. **Call: 01260 290 682 or email: info@springboard.me.uk to register.**

Discover Congleton from Your Door

Congleton Town Council has launched a new leaflet and map featuring eight circular walks from 1.5 to 9 miles, including two step-free routes. All walks start near local housing or public transport links. Pick up a free copy at Congleton Information Centre or download it from the town council website.

Tree-mendous news!

Trees For Congleton won the BBC Radio Stoke Make a Difference Green Award! An incredible recognition of six years of dedication, teamwork, and volunteer effort, planting over 30,000 trees. Bringing lasting benefits for people, wildlife, and the environment. An amazing community achievement!

In Bloom Results

At the time of going to print, Congleton eagerly awaits the RHS Britain in Bloom and North West in Bloom results. This year, the town aims for its fifth Large Town Gold and has 12 In Your Neighbourhood entries and 2 small accommodations. A special thank you evening will be held at the Town Hall on 13 November to celebrate the amazing volunteers.

Live Shows at the Town Hall

Perfect Christmas present idea! Ashleigh as Taylor Swift on Saturday 22 November and Medium Steve Holbrook on Tuesday 24 February 2026 at Congleton Town Hall. Tickets from the Information Centre or online at TicketSource.

Help Serve Your Community

The Old Saw Mill, now operating from the Town Hall, provides over 100 two-course meals each week, delivering to local residents in need. Volunteers are needed to help with meal prep and packing on Tuesdays and Thursdays—just a couple of hours can make a big difference. For more details, contact Sharon on: **07810 241399**.

Know Your Local Councillors

The public elected 22 councillors to serve on the town council until May 2027. They have been elected into five wards. Here are the pictures and names of your councillors. More details can be found on the town council website.

West Ward West Heath	North East Ward Bromley, Buglawton	North Ward
 I	 C	 C
 C	 EP	 C
 LD	 I	
 LD DER. MAYOR	 I	
	 C	
Suzie Akers Smith	Charles Booth	Dawn Allen
Robert Brittain	Susan Mead	Russell Chadwick
Robert Douglas	Rob Moreton	
Suzy Firkin	Shaun Radcliffe	
	Glen Williams	

Community Clean-Ups Growing

A big thank you to Congleton residents who are helping to keep local streets and green spaces looking their best. Volunteers on the Henshall Hall Estate, supported by the Town Council's Streetscape team, have transformed overgrown paths and verges, inspiring neighbourhood clean-up days. The initiative is now spreading to Avon Drive, where residents plan to plant wildflowers and maintain verges.

The town council plans to roll out the **"Love Your Street"** scheme more widely, encouraging community pride and shared care for local areas. Volunteers are also welcome to join the Congleton in Bloom **town tidies**, held on the first Saturday of each month.



Chess Comes to Congleton

Congleton Chess Club has officially launched, offering an inclusive space for players of all levels to enjoy the game, improve their skills, and represent Congleton in local matches.

Meetings take place on **Thursdays from 7pm–8.30pm** in the Academy Suite at Congleton Leisure Centre.

Beginners and experienced players are welcome. To join the WhatsApp group, email your phone number to: **mscholes73@gmail.com**. The club is seeking sponsorship and hopes to partner with local schools to inspire young players.

Supporting Mental Health

In the run-up to Christmas, the town council is supporting the **Samaritans** to promote open conversations about mental health and suicide prevention. Look out for social media posts.

1 in 4 of us have experienced suicidal thoughts. If you need someone to talk to, call **Samaritans free on 116 123** - any time, from any phone.



You're Not Alone This Christmas

During this festive season, it's important to remember you don't have to face things alone.

Local groups are here to **listen, support, and connect**:

SheTalk – Women's Mental Health Peer Support

Every other Monday, 12.30pm–2pm

Bromley Farm Wellbeing Hub, Parnell Square

Phone: 07473 737475, Email: shetalkcongleton@gmail.com

Mentell – Men's Mental Health Support Group

Every Thursday, 7pm–9pm, Congleton Town Hall

Register via: **www.mentell.org.uk/signup**

Cheshire East Mental Health Crisis Line

0800 145 6485

Rory Bremner Is Coming to Town

See Britain's foremost impressionist, live on stage at Clonter Opera on **Friday 30 January 2026**. Blending stand-up comedy, and sharp conversation, Rory is generously donating his talents to help raise funds for Macclesfield Ukrainian Aid (ukrainianaid.org.uk). A limited number of tickets (£35, no concessions) will be released in December. To join the priority list, email: **enjoyrory@fastmail.co.uk** with the subject line "I want to hear Rory", including your name, number, and seat quantity.

The Darji Expression Gallery Presents: Ramesh Darji – A Life in Colour

Discover the extraordinary work of world-renowned artist **Ramesh Darji**, now based in Congleton. From Bollywood art design to exhibitions at The Taj Mahal Palace in Mumbai and across Europe, Ramesh's art bridges Eastern and Western traditions through vibrant colour and form. At Riverside, Mountbatten Way, Congleton on **Friday 21 - Sunday 23 November, 10am–5pm**. Free entry. Visit: **www.thedarjiexpression.com**

Councillor emails are
cllrfirstname.surname@congleton-tc.gov.uk

C = Conservative
L = Labour

I = Independent
LD = Liberal Democrat

EP = Equality Party

Lower Heath

South East Ward

Mossley, High Town, Timbersbrook

Central Ward

Town Centre, Newcastle Rd



Emma Hall



Amanda Martin



David Brown



Arabella Holland



Sally Ann Holland



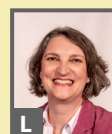
Heather Pearce



Kay Wesley



Mark Edwardson



Heather Seddon



Richard Walton



Liz Wardlaw

Rotary Congleton



A Force for Good in Our Local Community



Tree of Light

Saturday November 29th, Community Gardens,
Lawton Street - from 4pm. Decorative shapes
from Congleton Information Centre.



Christmas Concert

Saturday December 13th, Daneside Theatre.
Tickets from Congleton Information Centre.



Swimathon

Wednesday March 18th & Saturday March 21st.
Congleton Leisure Centre. Details on the web.

More information at www.congletonrotary.co.uk