

Hartshill International was launched in 2014 when residents in Hartshill and Harpfields brought the world to Stoke on Trent on Saturday, 3 May at the [North Staffordshire Medical Institute, Hartshill Road, Hartshill, Stoke on Trent](#), using both the inside rooms and facilities and the extensive outside space. The guest of honour was the Lord Mayor of Stoke on Trent, Councillor Sheila Pitt, who officially opened the event. We also welcomed other local politicians, business people, community and faith leaders, and others with an interest in positive international relationships, community-building and the celebration of cultural diversity.

Hartshill International is intended to recognise and celebrate the diverse population of Hartshill and Harpfields, to welcome new residents and businesses to the neighbourhood, and to strengthen community spirit. Although the great majority of Hartshill residents were born in Britain, people from around 40 other countries of the world from Afghanistan to Vietnam currently live, work or study here, and over 40 languages are spoken, from Albanian to Yoruba.

The exciting line-up included the following. There were about 50 stalls which included displays illustrating a variety of cultures, including Bengali, Gujarati, Russian and Turkish, as well as others offering all kinds of information. There was the chance to have a language 'taster' in about 20 languages, including Italian, Swahili, Ibo, and British Sign Language. There was music and dancing from around the world, including the Penkhull Ukulele Band, dances from Hawaii, Poland and Egypt, a Gospel Choir, and local musician, Samantha Archer, playing the Handpan.

There were decorative international flags, banners and bunting to advertise the event, with colourful stalls on the car parks and inside. Some were country-specific (for example Italy, Turkey, Russia) with displays of flags, maps, national costumes, typical goods and foods, dictionaries etc. Other stalls had information related to organisations or services with an international dimension, including language learning, travel and tourism, geography, health and housing, refugee support etc. There was a varied programme of live entertainment throughout the day, with music and dancing by performers from around the world, and also a range of speakers on subjects from international friendship and cultural history to how to get settled in a new country.

Around 500 people attended the day, including people who live and work in and around Hartshill, people who are attending a school, college or university in the local area, as well as people from across the City who are involved in international issues.

**The next running of this event is on Saturday 2 May 2015, from 10.30 am - 4.30 pm, again at the North Staffs Conference Centre.**