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UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 00:01AM ON 18th DECEMBER 2015

Change of Hart? – not this year

Hampshire district tops Quality of Life Survey for the fifth year in a row

Hart, in north east Hampshire, tops the 2015 Halifax Quality of Life Survey for best places to live for the fifth year in succession.

Hart remains at the top of the Quality of Life Survey by scoring consistently highly across a range of categories covering residents' health and life expectancy, personal well-being, employment, a low crime rate and good weather.

However, elsewhere in the top 10 there has been a significant shake-up, with South Oxfordshire climbing 19 places to take second place, Mole Valley in Surrey moving up 12 spots to seventh, and Guildford, also in Surrey, up 15 to eighth. In fact the South East dominates the table in 2015, securing seven of the top 10 places.

Healthy Hart makes all the difference

On average, inhabitants of Hart are the healthiest in the UK, with over 97% reporting themselves to be in good health. Women can claim a high average life expectancy of 86.6 years and for men it is 82.4 years – both among the longest.

In addition, adults in Hart, according to the latest ONS survey on personal well-being, rate themselves to be among the happiest, most satisfied, believe what they do is worthwhile, and the least anxious in the country.

The other factors keeping it ahead of the chasing pack are: a high employment rate, with 84.5% having jobs compared to the national average of 72.9%; well above average earnings, with full-time gross weekly earnings of £865 – 37% above the national average of £630; a relatively low crime rate (9.5 burglaries per 10,000 people – considerably lower than the 29.6 national average); and even the weather is agreeable, with 32.5 sunshine hours per week (compared to 29.5 for UK), and an annual rainfall of 738mm (879 mm for UK).

All this comes at a cost however, and in terms of housing the cost of living in Hart is high with an average house price that is 8.0 times the average annual pre-tax local income, compared to the national average of 6.8. Nevertheless, this measure is still lower than in over half of the other areas in the top 50 best places to live.

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Martin Ellis, housing economist at Halifax, comments:

"A mixture of good health, high wealth and a generally happy life continues to cement Hart's place as the best place to live in the UK. Low crime rates, good weather, and a long life expectancy all play an important part in keeping this Hampshire district at the top of the pile.

"Many areas in south eastern England also perform well in terms of average earnings, employment rates, health and the weather. But the South doesn't have it all its own way, and there are areas in the North which score highly on school exam results, and physical environment characteristics such as low population densities and low traffic flows."

South Oxfordshire second most desirable place to live

South Oxfordshire has risen nineteen places from 21st in the 2014 survey. Residents of South Oxfordshire tend to be in good health, with 97% reporting good health, and a high average female life expectancy of 84.7 years, a full three years longer than males (81.7 years). The employment rate is 81% and those in full time occupation typically enjoy high incomes with weekly average earnings of £863. Residents rate themselves as happy and content with a high level of life satisfaction and not a great deal of anxiety.

Residents in the South East tend to enjoy the best quality of life with over half (27) of the top rated 50 local authorities being here. The East of England rates well with close to a fifth (9) of the local authorities placed in the top 50. The remainder is split between three in West Midlands, three in the South West, six in East Midlands and one each in London and Yorkshire and the Humber (see Table 1).

Northern areas tend to receive high ratings on school exam results and environmental measures such as low population densities and low traffic flows. Areas in the south of England typically perform better than elsewhere on average earnings, employment, health and weather. Northerners believe themselves to be less anxious and happier than in those living in the south; southerners, on the other hand, are more satisfied and content in life.

Key facts

Labour Market

- **Employment** is highest in Winchester in Hampshire at 87.4%, ahead of the Orkneys Isles (86.3%) and Eastleigh in Hampshire (85.3%). The UK average is 72.9%.
- **The highest weekly average earnings** are in Kensington & Chelsea at £1,238 per week, followed by City of London (£1,023 p/w) and Richmond upon Thames (£979 p/w). The UK average is £630 per week.
- **The proportion of adults (16 years and over) with the highest level of qualification gained** (such as a degree, NVQ level 4 and above or professional qualification) is the highest in the City of London (94.8%), followed by Richmond upon Thames (70.4%), and Wandsworth (69.6%) – all significantly above the national average of 34.8%.

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Housing

- **The biggest homes** are in Uttlesford in Essex, Chiltern, South Buckinghamshire and Rutland, which all have an average of 6.4 habitable rooms. The smallest homes are in the City of London, Tower Hamlets, and Westminster (all below 4.0 habitable rooms). The average number of habitable rooms in the UK is 5.5.
- **80% of local area districts households have access to superfast broadband**, i.e. where download speed is greater than 2 megabits per second (Mbps). They include several areas in Greater Manchester (such as Manchester and Trafford), York, and Ards in Northern Ireland. Across all areas of the UK the majority of households have a good level of broadband access (i.e. a download speed of 2Mbps is regarded as the minimum for good broadband service).
- Only five areas in the top 250 in the country have an **average house price to earnings ratio** which is below the UK historical long-term average of 4.0; Copeland (3.7), Blaenau Gwent, West Dunbartonshire (both 3.8), Merthyr Tydfil and East Ayrshire (both 3.9). The highest ratios are all in London boroughs: Hammersmith and Fulham (13.5), Brent (13.4). Hackney and Ealing (both 12.7). The national average is 6.8.

Urban Environment

- The four most sparsely populated areas are all in Scotland: the Western Isles and Highlands take the top spot for lowest **population density**, with just nine people per square kilometre (pp/ km). Followed by Argyle & Bute (13 pp/Sq. km), Shetland Islands (16 pp/ km) and the Orkney Islands (22 pp/ km). At the other end of the scale, the most populated areas per square kilometre are all in London: Islington (14,735 pp/ km), Tower Hamlets (14,201 pp/ km), Hackney (13,850 pp/ km) and Kensington and Chelsea (13,016 pp/ km). The UK average is 266 pp/ km.
- The emptiest roads are mostly in Scotland. The lowest **traffic levels** are found in the Western Isles with just 69 vehicles per square kilometre, Highland (102 vehicles/km), Argyll & Bute (130 vehicles/km) and Orkney Islands (139 vehicles/km). The UK average is 9,268 vehicles/km.
- Orkney Islands has **the lowest burglary rate per 10,000 people (5.1)** followed by West Oxfordshire (5.3), Ceredigion (6.7) and Western Isles (7.0). The national average is 29.6 per/10,000.
- Five of the 10 areas with **the lowest CO₂ emissions** are in London. The lowest emissions are found in Newham and Tower Hamlets (1.3 tonnes of CO₂ per household), followed by Southwark, Barking & Dagenham, and Hackney (all 1.5 tonnes CO₂ per household). The national average is 2.1 tonnes of CO₂ per capita.

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Physical Environment

- **The lowest average annual rainfall** (525 mm) is in Castle Point in Essex. Nine of the ten driest districts in the UK are in the East of England. The UK average annual rainfall is 878.8 mm.
- **The sunniest place in the UK** is the Isle of Wight where residents enjoy an average of 36.9 hours of sunshine a week. The national average is 29.5 hours.

Health

- **The healthiest districts** are all in the South, with Hart, Wokingham and Isles of Scilly all having 97% or more households rating themselves in good or fairly good health. Six of the top ten areas are found in the South East, with the remaining found in the East of England (2), South West (1) and Scotland (1). In the UK as a whole, 94.6% of households rate themselves as in good or fairly good health.
- **Life expectancy for males at birth** is highest in Kensington and Chelsea (83.3 years). The UK average is 79.5 years.
- **Life expectancy for females at birth** is highest in Chiltern and Camden (both 86.7 years). The UK average is 83.2 years.

Education

- **Primary school class sizes** are smallest in Scotland, with nine of the 10 local authority districts with the smallest primary school classes here. The Western Isles has the lowest in the UK with 17.4 compared to a national average of 26.7.
- **All ten of the lowest secondary school pupil teacher ratio areas are in Scotland.** The Shetland Islands has the lowest secondary school pupil teacher ratio of 8.6 compared to 15.5 across the UK.
- **The best GCSE results** in England are in Sutton (80.1), Trafford (79.2) and Kensington and Chelsea (78.5%). All are above the UK average of 68.6%.
- **The highest average school (both secondary and primary) spend per pupil** is in the Shetlands (£10,821) – more than twice UK average of £4,564.

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Personal Well-Being

- **Personal well-being is based on four categories – life satisfaction, worthwhile, happiness and anxiety:**
 - Adults (16 and over) in Fermanagh and Omagh in Northern Ireland and the Western Isles have the highest average rating for **life satisfaction** in the UK. Based on a score out of 10, the adults in both areas had an average rating of 8.4. The UK average is 7.7.
 - With a rating of 8.6 (out of ten) adults in West Somerset and Staffordshire Moorlands believe what they do in life is **worthwhile**, the highest average rating in the UK. The national average is 7.9.
 - The **happiest** adults are in Fermanagh and Antrim, also in Northern Ireland, with all having an average rating of 8.4 – significantly higher than the UK average of 7.5.
 - Adults in Nuneaton and Bedworth trim are the least **anxious** with an average rating of just 1.8. The average for the UK is 2.8.

Table 1: 2015 Halifax Quality of Life Rankings – the top 50 Local Authority Districts in the UK

| Local Authority | Region | 2015 Rank | 2014 Rank |
|------------------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------|
| Hart | South East | 1 | 1 |
| South Oxfordshire | South East | 2 | 21 |
| Chiltern | South East | 3 | 5 |
| Winchester | South East | 4 | 3 |
| Rutland | East Midlands | 5 | 4 |
| Waverley | South East | 6 | 10 |
| Mole Valley | South East | 7 | 19 |
| Guildford | South East | 8 | 23 |
| South Cambridgeshire | East of England | 9 | 13 |
| Rushcliffe | East Midlands | 10 | 8 |
| Wokingham | South East | 11 | 9 |
| East Cambridgeshire | East of England | 12 | 39 |
| St Albans | East of England | 13 | 12 |
| South Northamptonshire | East Midlands | 14 | 7 |
| Horsham | South East | 15 | 64 |
| Mid Sussex | South East | 16 | 17 |
| St Edmundsbury | East of England | 17 | 68 |
| Eastleigh | South East | 18 | 53 |
| Epsom and Ewell | South East | 19 | 48 |
| Surrey Heath | South East | 20 | 20 |
| Stratford-on-Avon | West Midlands | 21 | 22 |

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| Richmond upon Thames | London | 22 | 15 |
| Uttlesford | East of England | 23 | 6 |
| Vale of White Horse | South East | 24 | 62 |
| Chelmsford | East of England | 25 | 25 |
| Sevenoaks | South East | 26 | 14 |
| Tunbridge Wells | South East | 27 | 31 |
| South Bucks | South East | 28 | 76 |
| Tonbridge and Malling | South East | 29 | 42 |
| North Kesteven | East Midlands | 30 | 40 |
| New Forest | South East | 31 | 59 |
| Chichester | South East | 32 | 109 |
| East Hampshire | South East | 33 | 110 |
| West Dorset | South West | 34 | 134 |
| Hambleton | Yorkshire and The Humber | 35 | 50 |
| West Oxfordshire | South East | 36 | 30 |
| East Dorset | South West | 37 | 102 |
| North Dorset | South West | 38 | 95 |
| Harborough | East Midlands | 39 | 57 |
| Warwick | West Midlands | 40 | 11 |
| West Berkshire | South East | 41 | 85 |
| Wychavon | West Midlands | 42 | 63 |
| Windsor and Maidenhead | South East | 43 | 26 |
| Blaby | East Midlands | 44 | 89 |
| Mid Suffolk | East of England | 45 | 45 |
| South Norfolk | East of England | 46 | 78 |
| Basingstoke and Deane | South East | 47 | 29 |
| Wealden | South East | 48 | 43 |
| Test Valley | South East | 49 | 82 |
| East Hertfordshire | East of England | 50 | 28 |

Source: Halifax December 2015

Table 2: Local Authority District with the Best Quality of Life in each region in 2015

| Local Authority | Region | 2015 Rank |
|----------------------|--------------------------|-----------|
| Hart | South East | 1 |
| Rutland | East Midlands | 5 |
| South Cambridgeshire | East of England | 9 |
| Stratford-on-Avon | West Midlands | 21 |
| Richmond upon Thames | London | 22 |
| West Dorset | South West | 34 |
| Hambleton | Yorkshire and The Humber | 35 |
| Monmouthshire | Wales | 61 |

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| Orkney Islands | Scotland | 83 |
| Ribble Valley | North West | 91 |
| Mid Ulster | Northern Ireland | 168 |
| Northumberland | North East | 190 |

Source: Halifax December 2015

Table 3: Local Authority District with the Best Quality of Life in each category in 2015

| Group | Variable | Local Authority District | Region |
|---|--|--|---|
| Labour (UK average is 72.9%) | Highest employment rate: 87.4% | Winchester | South East |
| (UK- £630 per week) | Highest gross weekly Earnings: £1,238 | Kensington and Chelsea | London |
| (UK – 34.8%) | % of adults (16+) with highest qualification gained: 94.8%. This includes graduate and post graduate degrees, NVQ level 4 and above, and professional qualifications. | City of London | London |
| | | | |
| Housing (UK – 5.5) | Highest average number of rooms in house: 6.4 | Uttlesford Chiltern South Buckinghamshire Rutland | East of England South East South East East Midlands |
| (UK – 96.0%) | Largest % of houses with central heating: 100% | East Ayrshire | Scotland |
| (UK – 6.8) | Lowest House price to earnings ratio: 3.7 | Copeland | North West |
| (UK – 87.0%) | % of households with more than 2Mbps – and where more than half of household have chance of having superfast broadband: 100% | Manchester York Southend-on-Sea Brent Woking Ards | North West Yorkshire and the Humber East of England London South East Northern Ireland |
| | | | |
| Urban environment (UK- 266 per sq/km) | Lowest Population density per sqr km: 9 | Western Isles Highland | Both Scotland |
| (UK- 9,268 cars/km) | Lowest traffic flows per square km: 69cars /km | Western Isles | Scotland |
| (UK-29.6 per 10,000 people) | Lowest burglary rate per 10,000 population: 5.1 per 10,000 people | Orkney Isles | Scotland |

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| (UK – 2.1 tonnes CO ₂ emissions per household) | Lowest Total Consumer CO₂ Emissions: 1.3 tonnes per household | Newham Tower Hamlets | London |
| | | | |
| Physical environment (UK – 878.8 mm per year) | Lowest average annual rainfall: 525mm | Castle Point | East of England |
| (UK- 29.5 hours per week) | Highest average weekly sunshine hours: 36.9 hours | Isle of Wight | South East |
| Health (UK – 94.6%) | Highest % of residents in good health: 97.4% | Hart | South East |
| Male life expectancy (UK -79.5 years) | Longest male life expectancy at birth: 83.3 years | Kensington and Chelsea | London |
| Female life expectancy (UK -83.2 years) | Longest female life expectancy at birth: 86.7 years | Chiltern Camden | South East London |
| | | | |
| Education (UK-26.7 pupils per class) | Lowest average number of pupils in primary school class: 17.4 | Western Isles | Scotland |
| Secondary Education (UK – 15.5 pupil to teacher) | Lowest secondary school pupil – teacher ratio: 8.6 | Shetland Islands | Scotland |
| Secondary Education Exams (UK- 68.6%) | Highest % of 15yr olds with 5 or more GCSEs A-C grade: 94.3 | Shetland Islands | Scotland |
| Per pupil spending (primary and secondary) – (UK – £4,564 per pupil) | Highest per pupil spend: £10,821 | Shetland Islands | Scotland |
| Personal Well Being | Highest Life Satisfaction rating out of 10: 8.4 | Fermanagh & Omagh Western Isles | Northern Ireland Scotland |

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| (UK- 7.7 from 10) | | | |
| (UK- 7.9 from 10) | Highest Worthwhile rating out of 10: 8.6 | West Somerset Staffordshire Moorlands | South West West Midlands |
| (UK- 7.5 from 10) | Highest Happiness rating out of 10: 8.3 | Fermanagh & Omagh Antrim | Northern Ireland |
| (UK- 2.8 from 10) | Lowest levels of Anxiety rating out of 10: 1.8 | Nuneaton & Bedworth | West Midlands |

Source: Halifax December 2015

Ends

Notes to editors:

The Quality of Life index aims to quantify where living standards are highest in the United Kingdom by ranking local performance across a range of indicators covering the labour market, the housing market, the environment, education, health and personal well-being. The index has been produced at a local authority district level for all 390 Local Authority Districts in the UK.

The quality of life reading for each local authority has been created by summing scores across 24 variables within 7 broad groups.

Each local authority district is given a score out of 10 for each variable contained in the index. Scores within each of the broad groups are averaged and then the seven group scores are summed to create an overall quality of life score.

See separate technical note for more information on methodology of index and data sources.

| Group | Variable | Period covered |
|----------------|---|---|
| Labour | Employment rate % | Jul 2014-Jun 2015 |
| | Gross weekly Earnings £s | April 2014 Northern Ireland (NI) – April 2013, NISRA (both up rated by average weekly earnings index to September 2014) |
| | % of adults(16+) with highest qualification gained | 2011 Census data |
| Housing | Number of rooms in house | England & Wales 2011 ONS Census Data Scotland – Housing Conditions Survey 2009/11 Northern Ireland November 2014 Halifax data |
| | % of houses with central heating and sole use of bathroom | England & Wales 2011 ONS Census Data Scotland – housing Conditions Survey 2009/11 NI – Halifax Data to November 2014. |
| | House prices to Earnings ratio | 12 months to November 2014 |
| | Households with a good level of broadband access (i.e. a download speed of at least 2Mbps): | Point Topic June 2014 |

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|-----------------------------|---|---|
| Urban environment | Population density per square km | 2013 – ONS |
| | Traffic flows per square km | 2013 |
| | Burglary rate per 10,000 population | British Crime Survey 2011/12 Scotland 2011/12; Northern Ireland 2011/12 |
| | CO ₂ Emissions per tonne per capita | 2012 Department of Energy and Climate Change (covers period 2005-2012) |
| Physical environment | Average annual rainfall mm | Met Office Average 2009/2013 |
| | Annual sunshine hours | Met Office Average 2009/2013 |
| Health | % in good or fairly good health | 2011 Census |
| | Life expectancy at birth for males | England, Wales & Scotland 2013/14; Northern Ireland 2011/13 |
| | Life expectancy at birth for females | England, Wales & Scotland 2013/14; Northern Ireland 2011/13 |
| Education | Number of pupils in primary school class | England and Wales 2015, and Northern Ireland 2014/15; Scotland 2014 |
| | % of 15yr+ olds with 5 or more GCSEs A-C grade or Scottish equivalent | 2013/2014 England; 2013/14 Wales; Scotland 2013; Northern Ireland 2012/13 |
| | Average state school (primary and secondary) spending per pupil | England 2014/15, Scotland 2013 and Wales 2015/16 |
| | Secondary school pupil teacher ratio | England 2015 (adjusted class size data), Wales 2014 and Scotland 2014 |
| Personal Well-Being | Life Satisfaction | April 2014-March 2015 ONS |
| | Worthwhile | April 2014-March 2015 ONS |
| | Happiness | April 2014-March 2015 ONS |
| | Anxiety | April 2014-March 2015 ONS |

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This report is prepared from information that we believe is collated with care, however, it is only intended to highlight issues and it is not intended to be comprehensive. We reserve the right to vary our methodology and to edit or discontinue/withdraw this, or any other report. Any use of this report for an individual's own or third party commercial purposes is done entirely at the risk of the person making such use and solely the responsibility of the person or persons making such reliance.

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