

Paddling pool will stay shut this summer

THE POPULAR paddling pool at Riverside Meadows will not be opening this year, Stourport-on-Severn Town Council has revealed.

Repairs have been identified which need to be undertaken on the pipework underneath the summer season attraction and a plan is currently being developed by the authority.

But, the council conceded, there would not be time to complete the work that is needed in time for this

by **Tristan Harris**
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year's season. Instead, the council is aiming to have the pool open, ready for the start of summer in 2026.

A spokesperson for Stourport-on-Severn Town Council said the authority recognised the Riverside Paddling Pool was a valuable asset to the town that was both cherished by both residents and visitors.

They added the council had been

working closely with contractors to develop a plan for the pool's reopening.

"However, after careful consideration, we regret to announce that the Riverside Paddling Pool will not open this year," they said.

"The required repairs must be carried out by specialist contractors, whose availability means the work cannot be completed before the end of summer.

"The paddling pool will re-open at the start of summer 2026.

"Our contractors have advised



The popular Riverside Paddling Pool will not be opening for this year's summer season due to the amount of time needed for repairs. Picture courtesy of Stourport Town Council. s

that a sustained period of clear, dry weather will be necessary to re-lay the pool's surface."

They added that – given its location near the River Severn – there was a possibility that flooding may further impact the timeline.

"Stourport-on-Severn Town Council would like to reassure residents and visitors that we take our responsibilities seriously.

"This decision was not made lightly and has undergone full and careful consideration."

Children from Kiddermminster's Little Trinity Nursery have been enjoying a multitude of Easter activities. s



Nursery tots loving lots of Easter egg-citement

CHILDREN at Little Trinity Nursery in Kiddermminster, dived into a host of Easter-themed activities as they got closer to the holidays.

The youngsters created painted Easter eggs, crafted Easter cone baskets to hold chocolates and made nests and cards for their families.

Gaynor Carter, the nursery's manager, said: "The children are having an absolute blast.

"They've been exploring our Easter-themed tuff tray, discovering various objects, and using words to express what they can see and touch.

"They've also participated in our number eggs activity, which involved counting and matching patterns with eggs.

"With the warm weather and spring in the air, the children are loving being outside and just having fun."



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Adele Salmon from NFJ raises a toast with some tropical drinks. Pictures by Marcus Mingins 1725004MMR9



Chelsea Price, Cassie and Georgina Hardy have a go on a lucky dip game. 1725004MMR8



Julie and Andy Painter enjoy some of the delicious food on offer. 1725004MMR4



The crowds relaxed as the sun shone down. 1725004MMR5

Centre's spring event is truly Spectacular

ALMOST 1,000 people flocked to Jelleymans Heritage Arts Charity in Kidderminster on Saturday for the annual Spring Spectacular.

A variety of activities were on offer at the event, which aimed to raise vital funds to support the charity's ongoing efforts for enriching art classes, workshops, and community projects, as well as preserving and restoring the beautiful Victorian industrial mill.

Among the activities for all ages were live music performances from the Rub-A-Dub Pub Club, more than 50 indoor craft stalls, a dedicated children's craft area and the grand opening of the new community cafe.

Visitors viewed plans for the mill's new garden project, witnessed open craft workshops at the 'Craft Jelley', enjoyed delicious hot food stalls and visited the two



Margaret Bradley undertaking some knitting. 1725004MMR7



Cat Illingworth with her willow weaving. 1725004MMR6

fully-stocked bars. They also directly contributed to the preservation of the historical landmark – a key part of Kidderminster's industrial, carpet manufacturing heritage.

Samuel Davis, CEO of Jelleymans Heritage Arts Charity, was delighted with how it went.

He said: "It was phenom-

enal. We had some really great feedback and most of the stallholders, the bands and the studio which provided the stage all said they could not wait to come back to the next one in August."

This was the third festival after events last August and December.

Samuel added: "It has gone from strength-to-strength

and has been getting bigger and better – this one was the best so far.

"None of us get paid. It's all done with volunteers and when you get a response like this it makes it all worthwhile."

For more pictures of the day, visit our website at kidderminsterstandard.co.uk.

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Officer hands in resignation over cover-up

by **Tristan Harris**
tristan.harris@bullivantmedia.com

A POLICE officer based at Kidderminster Police Station would have been dismissed had he not already resigned, it was revealed at a misconduct hearing.

Sgt Harjit Singh, aged 48, and former PC Samuel Mitchell, 28, were found to seriously breach the honesty and integrity standards set out in the Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020, amounting to gross misconduct.

The officers were based in a response team at Kidderminster Police Station.

On July 4, 2022, PC Mitchell was driving a marked police vehicle, above the speed limit. He activated a speed camera and was issued with a speeding ticket.

The Road Traffic Act exempts emergency vehicles from observing speed limits to lawfully undertake their duties.

PC Mitchell submitted and signed an exemption request on the basis that he has been trying to stop a vehicle which had been involved in an incident. This was not the case,

he had no lawful exemption from speeding.

Sgt Singh signed to support the exemption form knowing it contained false information. A third officer was found to have no case to answer.

Det Ch Con Rachel Jones said "We expect our police officers to act honestly and with integrity."

"These officers, collectively, behaved in a way that was dishonest and abused their position."

"PC Mitchell, supported by his sergeant, knowingly submitted false information, in order to cover up a speeding fine."

"Behaviour like this undermines public confidence in policing and we make no apology for rooting out individuals who did meet the standards the public rightly expect."

Sgt Singh has been dismissed with immediate effect and will be added to the College of Policing Barred List.

Former PC Mitchell resigned from his role in January 2024 and will be added to the College of Policing Barred List. The Barred List prevents those added to it from ever working for a UK police service.

The outcome of the hearing is subject to the normal appeals process.



Bob Eaton is hoping to row 87km ahead of his 87th birthday in June to raise funds for the MND Association. s

A MEMBER of Bewdley Rotary Club and Stourport Boat Club Member is fundraising for Motor Neurone Disease Association and is looking for support.

Bob Eaton turns 87 in June and is vying to row 87km during April.

He is undertaking the feat to raise cash for the MND Association and to thank Bewdley Medical Centre, Worcestershire Royal and Princess Alexandra Hospitals, and the NHS, for his cancer treatment and other ailments over the last couple of years.

Stourport Boat Club loaned him a rowing machine and he has already completed 48km by April 10, confident he will make it to 87km.

The MND Association focuses on improving access to care, research and campaigning for those affected by MND.

By donating through JustGiving, the cash will go straight to MND Association, so is the most efficient way to give.

Visit: <https://www.justgiving.com/page/bob-eaton-3/> to donate.

News in brief

POLICE are investigating two vehicle thefts in Stourport.

At 2pm on Monday, a red Fiat 500 with a white roof, with the partial registration 'FOK', was taken from Baldwin Road.

Then, between 10.10pm on Saturday and 6.30am on Sunday, a black Vauxhall Vivaro with partial registration 'HCA', was stolen from Kingsway.

The vehicle, which was stolen without keys, was out of fuel so the person stealing it would have had to refuel before driving it away.

Witnesses or anyone with information on any of these crimes should call police on 101 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.



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Doctor steps up for marathon challenge

A DEDICATED Worcester doctor is swapping her scrubs for running shoes as she takes on the 2025 London Marathon to raise funds for vital equipment at Kidderminster Hospital.

Dr Jo Marriott, who lives just outside Bromsgrove, will take on the 45th London Marathon on Sunday April 27, tackling the 26.2 miles from Greenwich to Westminster, to help enhance care for Worcestershire's youngest patients.

Dr Marriott, a consultant anaesthetist at Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust, aims to raise the cash for a child-friendly MRI service that she has been working tirelessly towards for the past two years.

by Mia Whitehouse

She said: "Running the London Marathon has always been on my bucket list, and after securing a ballot place, I want to make every mile count by raising funds for this much-needed MRI-compatible trolley."

The service is set to open this summer, and additional equipment such as the £8,160 MRI-compatible trolley will be essential to making it as comfortable and efficient as possible.

By Dr Marriott running in support of the Worcestershire Acute Hospital Charity, a difference can be made for the patients, families, and staff at the county's three hospitals, the Alexandra Hospital in

Redditch, Kidderminster Hospital and Treatment Centre and the Worcestershire Royal Hospital.

Laura Gregory, the community and events fundraising officer at Worcestershire Acute Hospitals Charity, said: "We are absolutely delighted that Jo has chosen to take on the incredible challenge of the London Marathon in support of Worcestershire Acute Hospital Charity."

"Her dedication to improving care for young patients perfectly reflects our mission to enhance hospital experiences for patients, their families, and NHS staff."

"Every step she takes will bring us closer to providing the very best acute hospital care for our community and we're proud to support her fundraising efforts."



Dr Jo Marriott will take on the London Marathon to fund vital equipment at Kidderminster Hospital. s

Every donation will help to make this vital service a reality and to ensure we go the extra mile for young patients in Worcestershire.

Visit Jo's JustGiving page at justgiving.com/page/lauren-dolan-1737986260040 to support and donate.



The Acting Bishop of Worcester, Martin Gorick. s

How I followed in the footsteps of Mary Magdalene

AN EASTER Message from the Bishop of Dudley and Acting Bishop of Worcester, Martin Gorick:

A FEW years ago, I went on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. It was my first time in Galilee and Jerusalem, and I shall never forget it.

Visiting holy sites, seeing the mountains that Jesus knew.

Praying with Palestinian Christians and staying with Christians from around the world.

And on the Sunday, very early in the morning, I went to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Priests were chanting in Aramaic, the ancient language of Jesus.

I was longing to go into the sepulchre itself, a tiny chapel built over the site where Jesus

had been buried after his death on the cross.

Even at that time I had to queue, and it was touch and go whether I would get in at all with services about to start.

But then it was my turn, and I stooped to go inside, through the tiny entrance door.

Just as Mary Magdalene and the others had done that first Easter Day.

I had a few seconds only, to take in the stone slab, and the icons and flickering candles inside.

And then I heard the words sound clearly in my mind, 'He is not here. He is Risen!'

Risen to reign as Lord and King. Risen to go before those first disciples to Galilee. Risen to go before us into every situation.

Happy Easter! Jesus Christ is Risen today. Alleluia!

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Funding will help work on town's war memorial

by **Tristan Harris**
tristan.harris@bullivantmedia.com

BEWDLEY'S war memorial is benefiting from £1,750 worth of funding so repairs and conservation work can be carried out to the monument.

The cash is a 2024/25 award from the Grants for War Memorial scheme, which is supported by Historic England.

The work carried out has included the cleaning of the stone, careful removal of any defective and loose mortar and re-pointing with an appropriate lime mortar.

Work to replace the stone panel with a newly carved hand cut lower section inscribed 'Pro Patria' has also been undertaken.

Worcestershire County Council Divisional funds have helped with the contribution towards the repair and conservation of the magnificent War Memorial.

The Mayor of Bewdley, Coun Ian Latimer JP, said: "Bewdley Town Council is proud to be associated with the repair and conservation of the war memorial, which now shines in splendour in the town centre."

The project involved a partnership between Bewdley Town Council, Worcestershire County Council and contractor Steve Allard and Son.

Frances Moreton, director of the



War Memorials Trust, said: "War memorials remind us all of the millions of lives ended, or impacted, by conflict.

"Preserving them not only

ensures we continue to commemorate them but also shows future generations the consequences of war and encourages them to avoid such suffering."

She added the War Memorials Trust was delighted to award this project a grant.

"The charity hopes the work will help ensure its future as a focal point for commemoration."

And she urged anyone concerned about other war memorials they feel might need help should contact the charity, along with anyone who wants to donate to help the trust preserve the country's war memorial heritage for many years to come.

Click here for more on the War Memorials Trust or to make a donation.

Bewdley VE80 Day Celebrations

BEWDLEY Town Council has announced there will be a short service from 8.45pm to 9pm on Thursday, May 8, to mark the 80th anniversary of VE Day.

The event, to commemorate 'Victory in Europe' during the Second World War, will take place outside St Anne's Church, Load Street, and will be followed by a beacon lighting.

It has been organised by Bewdley Town Council and supported by Wyre Forest District Council.

The Mayor of Bewdley, Coun Ian Latimer JP, at the town's war memorial. s

Anniversary

AN AFTERNOON and evening of Remembrance, commemoration and celebration will be held in Stourport to mark the 80th anniversary of VE Day.

The VE80 event will take place at Lickhill Memorial Park, Lickhill Road, from 3.30pm on May 8.

As well as local food vendors and bouncy castles, there will be live performances, including The Swingettes at 9.30pm.

And there will be a special lighting of the beacon in the park to mark the milestone occasion.

The event is organised by Stourport Town Council and supported by Wyre Forest District Council.

Grants

COMMUNITY groups and local organisations in Bewdley are being urged to apply for grants being offered by the town council.

The community grants programme has been launched and groups and charities are being urged to get in touch.

Further details are available at: bewdleytowncouncil.gov.uk/council-services/grant-applications - the Bewdley Town Council website.

The deadline for all applications is 5pm on June 19.

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Ofsted rate school 'Good' in all areas

STAFF and students at Hartlebury CE Primary School are celebrating after receiving 'Good' gradings in all areas from Ofsted.

Inspectors praised the school for its high inclusivity and strong sense of community following the assessment.

Hartlebury CE Primary School sustained the mark for its quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal developments, leadership and management and early years provision.

The Ofsted inspector assured the Severn Academies Education Trust school it was a place where children felt safe, happy and secure, and that expectations of them remained high.

Sophie Bartlett, who has been the school's headteacher for three years, said: "I am incredibly pleased for our team that Ofsted recognised our many strengths.



Hartlebury CE Primary School has been rated 'Good' by Ofsted after its latest inspection. s

"Having worked here for 22 years, I know what a special place this is, how we are at the heart of the community and go the extra mile for all our children."

It was found by Ofsted that effective action had been taken to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

Staff were praised for quickly

and accurately identifying pupils with special needs, with individual plans ensuring them access to the same learning as their classmates at an appropriate level of challenge.

The inspectors report said: "The trust works hand-in-hand with the school and governors to provide the best for every pupil.

"Many students reach standards above those expected for their age by the time they leave

in year six."

She highlighted how the school worked with other trust schools to refine and develop its curriculum and, how in a few subjects where there had been recent changes, the impact this had had on its achievement now needed assessing.



Goncalo Anacleto, Maddy Andrews, Summer Mound and Imogen Austin were among the award winners. s

Exemplary students praised

STAND-OUT students at Stourport High School and Sixth Form College were rewarded for their hard work at their annual key stage 4 celebration evening.

Awards were presented to students in years 10 and 11 for a variety of achievements, including academic performance, effort, improvement and for those exemplary champions of the school's values.

In front of a packed audience of parents, staff, and fellow students, citations for each winner were displayed and read out as each accolade was presented.

Dr Lizzy Ford, the headteacher, said: "Behind each award is a story of diligence, desire and effort leading to excellent achievement and success, which we are delighted to recognise

and honour. I am, personally, incredibly proud of each one of them and their teachers and pastoral staff, who help and guide them and I am grateful to their parents and families for their support."

Student of the Year went to Goncalo Anacleto from year 10, for integrating seamlessly into the school community, and Maddy Andrews from year 11, for being an exemplary student and 'whose infectious ambition to succeed was infectious'.

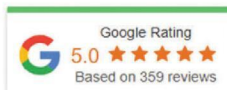
Head of Year Awards went to Imogen Austin from year 10, and Summer Mound from year 11. Imogen was described as a 'an exemplary student in every way' and Summer's accolade was for demonstrating remarkable tenacity, determination and grit.

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SVR to press ahead with plan

THE SEVERN Valley Railway has confirmed its intention to progress with 'One Railway', the radical organisational restructure it announced in December 2024.

This follows intensive consultations with shareholders Severn Valley Railways (Holdings) Plc and members of the SVR Company Limited.

The restructure will see the conversion of SVRH into a Charitable Community Benefit Society (CCBS), followed by an amalgamation with the separate Company Limited organisation.

Jonathon 'Gus' Dunster, Managing Director of SVR (Holdings), said: "We've answered many detailed queries from shareholders and members about the changes and the overall message we received about our proposals was extremely supportive."

"This is an ambitious time scale and there are challenges, however it is the clear route to take."

"We hope to be able to action the changes by the autumn, with the aim of completing these by the end of 2025."

Shareholders will vote on the conversion at the Annual General Meeting of SVRH in June, and then members will vote on their organisation's amalgamation with the new entity at the SVR Company Limited's AGM in August.

Charlie Wright, director of the SVR Company Limited, said: "Converting to a CCBS will unlock huge benefits for the SVR."

"We will be able to access new funding streams and make significant cost savings as a result."

The third member of the SVR, the charitable trust, is wholly supportive, but cannot currently participate.



The model railway of Illie Town will be one of 25 on display. Picture by A Smith. s

Smaller versions set to make big impact

AROUND 25 model railway displays will be heading to the Severn Valley Railway during the May bank holiday weekend.

The miniature set-ups will take over The Engine House at Highley on May 3 and 4.

Entry to the event is included in the price of travel along the heritage line, which is currently operating between Kidderminster and Hampton Loade.

The northernmost section between Hampton Loade and Bridgnorth remains closed, pending repairs to the serious landslip that occurred earlier in the year.

Exhibitors will travel from across the country and layouts on display will include Illie Town, Memory Lane, New Abberley and Quarry End.

The displays will be set out amongst the full-size locomotives and carriages on display in The Engine House, including 'Gordon' the blue engine and 7819 'Hinton Manor'.

Entry to The Engine House will be from 10.45am to 4.30pm, with last entry at 4pm.

Meanwhile, despite Bridgnorth station being cut off from the rest of the line, visitors will be able to take part in short footplate rides on a steam locomotive throughout the weekend, including the bank holiday Monday on May 5.

These are payable on the day, subject to availability, or can be pre-booked on the svr.co.uk website where there are timetables and further information on the Model Railway Weekend.



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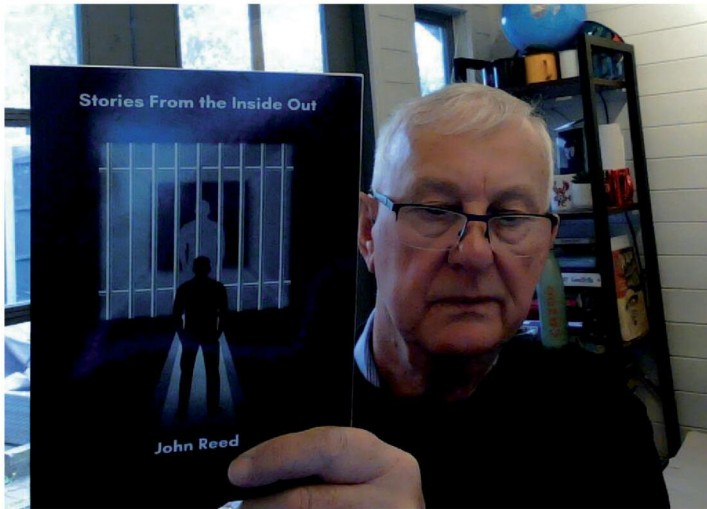
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John Reed with his book 'Stories From the Inside Out'. s

John's first book gives prison insight

AN AUTHOR from Kidderminster has had his first book published. John Reed's 'Stories From the Inside Out' tells the personal experience of men who have been incarcerated and of those who worked inside a local prison. The book aims to shine a light on exactly how the system works, or what failings it has. It allows the reader to gain an insight into the situation as it is today. Before writing the book, John taught poetry and storytelling inside a number of prisons, for the purpose of helping improve inmates' mental health. He said loneliness, anxiety and depres-

sion were common in the population, but were accentuated in prison. The book is perfect for people with an interest in real crime and the perpetrators of it and the book explores the background to those subjects in a very unique way. John hopes to hold a formal launch of the book in the county. Anyone with ideas of a good venue or wanting a copy of the book should email: john-the-poet@theoldfella.co.uk to contact John and let him know. People can also visit amazon.co.uk and search for 'Stories From the Inside Out by John Reed' to buy the book.

Easter holiday healthcare guide

RESIDENTS are being reminded to make sure they choose the best-placed healthcare option for them this Easter bank holiday weekends.

For cuts, grazes, wounds, sprains, minor eye injuries and minor burns, people can attend their local Minor Injuries Units (MIUs). Unfortunately, the units cannot treat illnesses. People needing treatment are advised to contact NHS111 either via the website - 111.nhs.uk - or by calling 111. Trained advisers will assess symptoms and then recommend the most suitable course of action which could include a visit to an MIU. Alternatively, people can walk into their local MIU which are open during usual

opening hours over bank holiday weekends.

In North Worcestershire, Kidderminster Hospital's MIU opens between 8am and 10pm and the MIU at Bromsgrove's Princess of Wales Community Hospital is open from 8am to 8pm everyday (last admission at 7.30pm).

Other Worcestershire MIUs include Evesham, Tenbury Wells and Malvern.

Patients often get seen quicker at MIUs than they would at A&E.

Accident and Emergency departments - like those at the Alexandra Hospital and Worcestershire Royal - should only be used in absolute emergencies.

Pharmacy times

Local pharmacists can also give expert confiden-

tial advice, as well as medicines for a range of minor ailments.

No appointment is necessary, people should just check which branches are open before travelling.

On Good Friday (April 18), the pharmacy at Boots, Weavers Wharf, Kidderminster, is open from 10.30am to 4.30pm and the Tesco superstore, Castle Road, from 10am to 4pm.

On Easter Sunday (April 20), the Crest Pharmacy, Linden Avenue, Kidderminster, is open from 10am to 1pm and the Crest Pharmacy, Franche Road, Kidderminster, from 1pm to 4pm.

And on Easter Monday (April 21), the pharmacy at Boots, Weavers Wharf, Kidderminster, is open from 10.30am to 4.30pm and the Tesco superstore, Castle Road, from 10am to 4pm.

A FAMILY fun day out with free entertainment and live music will take place at St George's Park, Radford Avenue, Kidderminster.

The event will take place from 12pm to 4pm next Saturday, April 26, along with a Children's Disco afterwards from 4pm at St George's Club.

The free entertainment includes child-

friendly activities such as a bouncy castle, circus skills, and face-painting.

Music will take place on the bandstand, with Paul G Severn Valley Soul Train and West Mercia Police Band among the performers.

Refreshments, such as drinks and ice cream, will be on offer and there will be stalls and tombola prizes also available.

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LEFT: The students from Bewdley High School were shown safely around the site. RIGHT: A variety of construction-based activities were on offer. s

Constructing an education

SCHOOL pupils have joined the Environment Agency and its project partners on the Bewdley Flood Risk Management Scheme in Worcestershire.

This day was part of the new 'Constructing Change' social scheme which has been encouraging young people, especially girls, to consider careers in the construction industry. The students from Bewdley High School spent the day being safely escorted around the site while joining in on construction activities such as bricklaying and surveying.

Founded last year by Elizabeth Griffin-Bennett and supported by the

EA, Constructing Change is working to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion within the construction industry.

David McKnight, the Environment Agency's area flood and coastal risk manager, said: "Constructing Change seeks to improve the diversity of the construction industry by bringing young people safely into construction sites."

"The Environment Agency fully supports this initiative and the opportunity to provide valuable insights into the construction methods we have employed in the Bewdley flood scheme."

Constructing Change was found-

ed last year by Elizabeth Griffin-Bennett and has been supported by the Environment Agency in a bid to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion in the construction industry.

As part of the day, the group was safely escorted around the site and joined in with construction activities, such as bricklaying and surveying.

Bewdley pupils also received career advice from the Environment Agency project designers ARUP and site contractors Jackson Civil Engineering and NuWeld.

The regional director for Jackson Civil Engineering, Ravi Darigala, said: "Jackson are committed to investing in the next generation,

challenging stereotypes and promoting an inclusive and diverse culture.

"We are delighted to be among the first to host a Constructing Change event, and welcome the opportunity to showcase the exciting and varied opportunities within the construction industry."

"The Bewdley Flood Risk Management Scheme aims to improve flood protection for the community, and we hope that it can also help to inspire industry professionals of the future."

Visit: consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/west-midlands/bealesfrms/ for more information on the Bewdley Flood Risk Management Scheme.

THIEVES STRIKE:

SEVERAL items were stolen from the glovebox of a car while it was parked in Kidderminster.

Thieves struck overnight between Sunday night and Monday morning while the vehicle was in Broadwaters Drive.

Police say there were more attempts in the Waterside Grange area overnight.

Officers have appealed for witnesses or anyone with information on the theft to call them on 101 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Always call 999 if a crime is in progress.

Email the Broadwaters Safer Neighbourhood Team - broadwaters.snt@west-midlands.police.uk - for more information on the theft and crime prevention thefts.

METAL TAKEN: A

QUANTITY of metal was stolen from Bewdley on April 8.

Thieves struck in Orchard Close, Bliss Gate.

The raiders - thought to be looking for scrap metal - also stole a wheelbarrow and a saw which were on the front drive / garden of a property.

Following the incident, police have urged people with valuable items, especially metal, to keep them out of sight or locked away.

Witnesses or anyone with information should call police on 101 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.



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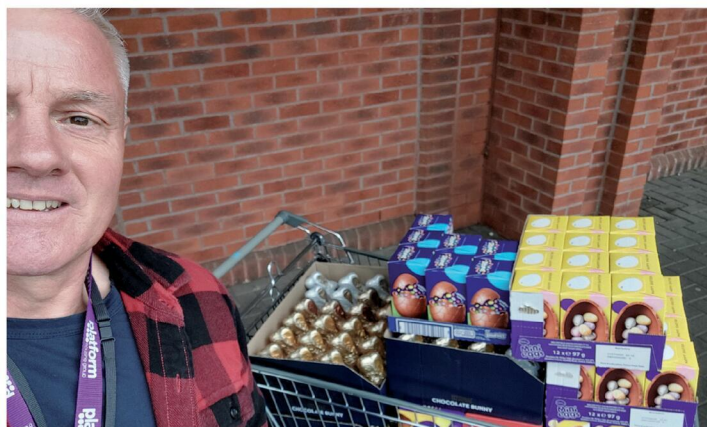
by **Sonny Rackham**
sonny.rackham@bullivantme-
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"We know that \$1,000 can make a huge difference to the incredible work that charities do and we're looking forward to seeing how this financial boost will change lives for the better."



Beneficiaries are nominated by the public and movement for good is funded by EJO plc.

Adrian Heath from the Benefact Group with Sam Davies, the CEO Jelleymans' Heritage Arts Charity. Picture by Marcus Mingins 1725004MMR1



These events are a celebration of community spirit, with Platforms Easter egg donations being possible thanks to support and collaboration of local partners who help to strengthen community ties.

Pippa Ashmore, events and visitor

Visit hartleburycastle.com for more information.

MP

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PCC backs action on laughing gas

WEST Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) John Campion has welcomed the Government's announcement to make the possession of laughing gas a criminal offence.

Mr Campion has repeatedly called for tougher legislation to combat the damage nitrous oxide was causing in our communities.

"As a recreational drug mostly used by young people, I welcome this clamp down by the Government to make possession of laughing gas a criminal offence," he said.

"Locally, I have seen first-hand how easy it is to purchase nitrous oxide, the damage it causes to communities and its impact on public spaces with places often littered with canisters."

Mr Campion led the 'Combating Drugs Partnership' to tackle the impact substance use had on communities.

"So I understand the importance of educating our young people about drug use, intervening with support when substance misuse happens and having strong enforcement in place to give the police the powers they need to take drugs off our streets," he added.

Mr Campion thanked Mark Garnier, the MP for the Wyre Forest, who worked closely with the PCC on toughening legislation, adding: "He has been a loud and prominent voice on this issue in Parliament and his constituency of Wyre Forest."

Marathon effort to help find a cure for diabetes

A BROMSGROVE mum whose daughter has Type 1 Diabetes is running the London Marathon to raise money for a charity that is trying to find a breakthrough cure.

Anne-Louise Pridden will take on the 26.2mile course on Sunday, April 27 for Breakthrough T1D.

Her daughter, Caitlin, was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes at just nine years old after contracting Covid in 2020.

After spending a week in hospital following her daughter's diagnosis, they met the Breakthrough T1D bear Rufus who helped to give them support and introduced them to the charity.

There has been a huge increase in the number of children being left Type 1 diabetic after contracting Covid and Caitlin was devastated at potentially not being able to compete in her triathlons with her brother and friends.

Anne-Louise said: "I ran my first Marathon in 2023 in London to

by Mia Whitehouse

put all my anger, sadness and efforts into finding a cure to keep doing something positive and raise awareness.

"This will be my last marathon because of time and being a carer for Caitlin.

"We now want to share our story to give other families hope, encouragement and the most important message that we understand just what life is like and we all have to move forward."

With hard work and determination, Caitlin is now a national triathlete for the Midlands Academy Triathlon team. She runs for Bromsgrove and Redditch Athletics Club, swims at Worcester swimming club and cycles for Wyre Forest Cycle Club.

She has also become a Breakthrough T1D Ambassador.

Anne-Louise said there are a lot of people to thank for Caitlin's care, her assistance dog Molly being especially important, provid-



ing love and care when her bloods have been too high or too low.

Caitlin has a parent-managed Instagram account, @caitlin_athletic_diabetic for promoting Type 1 in sport.

Go online to 2025tcslondonmarathon.enthusie.com/pf/anne-louise-pridden to donate to her fundraising.

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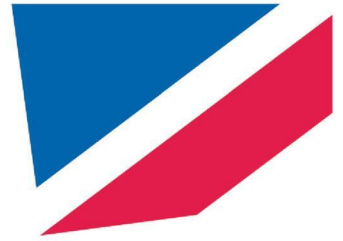
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Cllr. Rod Stanczysyn for **Bewdley**

Will Moule for **Stourport - Areley Kings and Riverside**

Cllr. Jackie Griffiths for **Stourport - Mitton**

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- Invest in children's services, education, SEND services, and youth programmes to build a brighter future
- Establish a development agency to attract investment and create jobs
- Develop a publicly owned bus service and fix our roads
- Support green energy generation to help tackle climate change
- Improve social care and help reduce bed blocking at Worcestershire Royal Hospital

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Head down to Safari Park for some egg-cellent entertainment

by **Tristan Harris**
tristan.harris@bullivantmedia.com

WEST Midlands Safari Park's 'Easter Eggstravaganza' runs until next Sunday, April 27.

The event will feature fun-fuelled family activity and a brand new character.

Guests are invited to take part in celebrations which include an interactive trail, competitions, a new show and the chance to be creative with Easter arts and crafts.

A new character - Chirpy Chick - has 'hatched' and will be roaming the park to meet guests and take pictures.

Along with this new character comes the Chirpy Chick Cracking Quest. This involves guests following the clues posted on the park's Instagram story to find the golden egg with the chance to win prizes such as retail vouchers, VIP experiences and annual passes.



Bethan Davis, West Midlands Safari Park's PR and events executive, said: "We're delighted to be hosting our Easter Eggstravaganza event once again this year."

"Last year's event was a huge success and with even more 'egg-citing' activities this year, it's the perfect opportunity for families to enjoy a great day out, full of seasonal fun, while discovering everything else that the park has to offer."

"We are also giving away more prizes than ever before, with four different competitions on offer."

Children will be able to win chocolate or sweets by taking part in the Eggsplorers' Trail and following clues and answering questions.

And there is a photo competition where guest can win a VIP rhino feed experience if they find the missing egg and take a picture with it to post of the park's Facebook page.

New for 2025 is a live, interactive performance called 'Bramble Bunny's Hoppy Easter Show' with

games magic and dancing.

As well as all the fun, the park's conservation team will be championing penguins and raising cash for the Global Penguin Society, an international organisation committed to the conservation of these marine birds and their ecosystems.

And there is a chance to see the park's newest arrivals, the Sumatran tiger cubs, through viewing 'peepholes'.

Guests are encouraged to book online, with all activities included in the admission price.

Admission is free to children under three and Adventure Theme Park rides are charged extra.

Visit: wmssp.co.uk for more information on the event.

There will be plenty of fun for all the family at the 'Easter Eggstravaganza' at the West Midlands Safari Park in Bewdley. Picture by Matthew Lissimore. s

MORE than 70 chocolate eggs were hand-delivered to Areley House Care Home in Stourport by Moo and Goo's Easter Bunny.

The Bewdley events company provided the treats for the residents and the devoted team which cares for them.

Moo and Goo said it prided itself on creating joy, whether at shop-

ping centres or care homes.

"We believe in bringing unexpected magic to places that deserve to feel special."

"For care homes like Areley House, budgets often don't stretch to cover the 'extras' so that's where we like to help and hop in."

The company's founder Kelly Reed has a personal link to the act



of kindness - her nana lived in a care home after being diagnosed with dementia."

Kelly said: "She was lucky to have regular visits, cheeky pub lunches, and her favourite - a half pint of Guinness."

"But sadly, many residents don't receive that same level of attention or company, which makes these

small gestures even more meaningful."

"This wasn't just a chocolate delivery."

"It's a relationship of the work we do with Areley House all year round."

Moo and Goo's Easter Bunny at Areley House Care Home in Stourport. s

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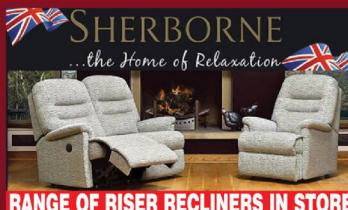
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Significant finds as police raid barbershops across the county

by **Sonny Rackham**
sonny.rackham@bullivantmedia.com

MORE THAN £500,000 has been seized by police in West Mercia as dozens of barbershops were raided as part of a national crackdown on criminal gangs using the businesses as fronts for fraudulent activities.

The campaign, known as Operation Machinize, saw efforts from forces across the nation to

tackle criminals using barbershops as fronts for fraud, money laundering, and the sale of illicit goods.

As part of the operation, 33 warrants were executed across West Mercia, focusing on gangs exploiting barbershops to conceal illegal cash flow. While these businesses appeared legitimate, they were, in reality, tools for financial crime.

Working alongside Trading Standards, West Midlands Fire and Rescue, Home Office Immigration, and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, the force seized over £500,000 in illegal funds and £16,000 in cash and arrested four

individuals.

Additionally, Trading Standards carried out three warrants, and Home Office Immigration questioned three individuals about their immigration status.

Proceeds of crime

West Mercia Police's Economic Crime Unit is leading the force's efforts nationally in tackling financial crime. Since April 2024, more than \$6million in criminal assets have been seized, disrupting the financial networks that support organised crime.

Det Insp Dan Fenn, from our Economic Crime team, said: "Organised crime groups are opportunistic and exploit legitimate businesses, such as barbershops, to hide their illegal cash flow.

"The high cash turnover of these businesses makes them ideal for disguising illicit activities.

"Our work during Operation Machinize sends a clear message to these crime networks - we will not tolerate criminal activity in our communities.

"Following these warrants, 34 intelligence reports have been submitted, helping to build a stronger intelligence picture and supporting future operations.

"Community intelligence played a key role in this operation.

"Some of the information used to plan these raids came from public



Premises were searched for signs of fraudulent activity. s



More than £500,000 was seized across the West Mercia Police force area. s

tip-offs.

"That local support is invaluable, and we encourage anyone with information about businesses involved in money laundering to report it."

Visit: westmercia.police.uk/ro/

report/fo/v2/report-fraud-bribery-corruption/ to report information regarding fraudulent businesses.

Alternatively, contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.



Raids were carried out on dozens of barbershops as part of the national crackdown. s

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On Thursday 1st May from 5pm – 8pm, prospective students can visit the Colleges Worcester or Redditch campuses to get a deeper understanding of the adult and higher education courses on offer at HoW College.

The departments will be on hand throughout the evening to provide comprehensive information and guidance about the courses on offer and how they can kickstart your future. Whether you're looking to advance in your career, change your career path, gain important skills, or pursue a passion, the teams will be on hand to help navigate your future.

At the Worcester campus, you'll have the opportunity to explore a diverse selection of higher education and adult courses, including ESOL, Access to HE, Human Resources, Cyber Skills, and more. Meanwhile, at the Redditch campus, you can delve into courses such as Business, Accounting, Functional Skills/GCSEs, and additional exciting offerings.

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RESIDENTS across Worcestershire are being reminded to 'lead with love' and take good care of themselves during this (April) Stress Awareness Month.

NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire is reminding people self-care is an essential part of dealing with stress.

Stress is the body's reaction to feeling threatened or under pressure - something everyone feels at times, especially when dealing with change or life challenges, such as money worries, work issues or relationship problems.

A little stress can be good as it can help people focus on something in need of attention and get things done.

But experiencing long-term or severe stress is unlike a normal level of stress and can instead cause feelings of physical and mental exhaustion, often called 'burnout'.

People who are anxious might start to show signs short temper, have a change in eating or sleeping habits or have a sudden inability to make a decisions.

Dr Will Taylor, NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire medical director, said: "Health professionals aren't just here to help with physical ailments, we're here for your mental wellbeing too."

"It's important to speak to someone if you are feeling anxious and there are plenty of things you can do to relieve tension such as getting more exercise, planning ahead, or trying self-help techniques."

"If you find that you are having prolonged feelings of stress and anxiety, more than five days, then talk to your GP."

Physical symptoms of stress include dizziness, stomach problems, headaches, hives or rashes, while mental indicators are feeling angry, worried or overwhelmed.

People can speak to friends and family about how they are feeling.

If the advice given does not help, as well as breathing exercises and breaking up tasks into smaller chunks, people should contact the NHS on 111 or talk to their GP.

In Herefordshire and Worcestershire people can refer themselves to NHS Talking Therapies for free without talking to a GP.

The Samaritans can also offer further advice.

'Art for Health' to help brighten up hospitals

by Mia Whitehouse
@bullivantmedia.com

PEOPLE across Worcestershire are being urged to get creative and help brighten up their local hospital by taking part in the new 'Art for Health' campaign.

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust has launched the drive in a bid to improve the wellbeing of patients, staff and visitors by encouraging people to contribute artwork that celebrates the beauty of the local landscapes.

Anyone is welcome to submit a high quality picture of their artwork, whether it be painting, drawing, photography, or crafts, of landscapes from both counties.

The chosen artworks will be placed across the Trust's sites, in areas such as hospitals, waiting areas and staff rooms, with some even making it to specialised areas such as dementia wards.

Kate Wood, the trust's community engagement manager and project lead, said: "For patients, especially those experiencing mental health issues or conditions such as dementia, art can be a great tool to stimulate memory, reduce anxiety and promote calmness."

"We also recognise that visiting unfamiliar environments or new people can be overwhelming for some, so the aim to brighten up our spaces makes them more welcoming for all."

"Another benefit of this project is



helping enhance our work environments for staff, as a more inviting and positive workspace supports staff wellbeing, leading to better patient care.

"We are excited to see as many people as possible getting involved in this campaign - your contributions can really help enhance our hospitals and wards for anyone who walks through our doors."

A total of 400 trust staff have already

taken part by painting rocks and pebbles with small messages of joy, spreading positivity around the trust sites and building colourful outdoor art galleries.

Now the trust is asking the community to join in too by painting on rocks and sending them in.

People can email their pictures, along with their name and the title/location of the piece, to: whcnhs.communityengagement@nhs.net to take part.

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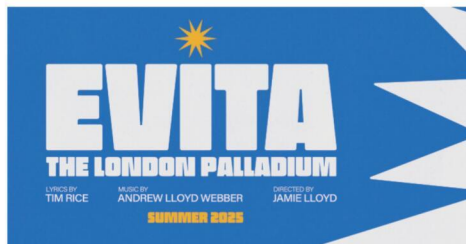
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HOP INTO SPRING:

Easter Home & Garden Ideas to Brighten the Bank Holiday Weekend

Spring has officially sprung, and with Easter upon us, there's no better time to freshen up your home and garden with a seasonal touch.

Whether you're hosting family for an Easter Sunday roast, planning a garden egg hunt for the little ones, or simply want to embrace the joys of spring, we've gathered the best tips to help you celebrate Easter in style – without breaking the bank.

Bring the Outdoors In

Easter and spring go hand in hand with fresh blooms and greenery. Now is the perfect time to liven up your interiors with floral arrangements – think tulips, daffodils, hyacinths, and narcissus. A

simple jug of yellow daffodils on the kitchen table is instantly uplifting and costs less than a fancy takeaway coffee. If you're after something longer-lasting, potted primroses or violas make charming indoor centrepieces and can be planted outside later.

Top Tip: Add a sprig of rosemary or thyme to your arrangements for a subtle scent and an Easter twist.

A Touch of Pastel

Easter décor doesn't need to be fussy. Soft pastels like duck egg blue, blush pink and mint green can freshen up your space. Try swapping out cushion covers or adding a pastel runner to your dining table. Even a few painted eggs in a basket can add an easy seasonal touch. Crafty types can get the whole family involved with DIY decorations. Blow out

hen eggs, paint them in soft tones, and hang them from willow branches for a stunning Easter tree.

Set the Perfect Table

Planning your Easter meal: Whether it's roast lamb with all the trimmings or a veggie tart with spring greens, a beautifully set table makes everything feel that little bit more special.

Layer white crockery with a pastel-coloured tablecloth or runner. Napkins tied with raffia and a sprig of lavender or rosemary are an effortless but classy touch. Scatter chocolate mini eggs or foil-wrapped treats across the table for a fun, edible flourish.

For an extra bit of fun, write guests' names on hollowed eggs and use them as place settings.



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Easter HOME & GARDEN

Garden Glory: Ready for Guests (or the Easter Bunny!)

After months of rain and frost, your garden might be in need of a little TLC. Start by clearing leaves and debris from beds and borders. A quick trim of the lawn and a sweep of the patio can make a huge difference. Now's the time to plant hardy spring flowers like pansies, primulas, and marigolds – ideal for instant colour. You can also sow wildflower

seeds in sunny spots to attract bees and butterflies later in the season.

If you're hosting an Easter egg hunt, create zones in the garden using bunting or plant pots. Hide eggs in flowerbeds, behind trees, and among the shrubs for a fun challenge. For a magical touch, hang ribbon-tied eggs from branches to guide younger children on the hunt.

Top Tip: If the weather isn't playing ball, move the egg hunt indoors! Use post-it clues and hide treats around the house for a rainy-day version.

Spring Clean with Purpose

Easter is a natural time to tackle a bit of spring cleaning. Open windows wide to air out rooms, and don't forget neglected spots like skirting boards, behind furniture, and window sills. Natural cleaning solutions using vinegar, lemon and bicarbonate of soda work wonders – and leave a fresh scent behind. Decluttering is key: clear out winter bits, pack away heavy throws and make space for lighter, brighter spring vibes. If you're switching to summer duvets, pop a lavender sachet into your linen cupboard to keep everything smelling fresh.

Sustainable and Stylish

Easter doesn't have to mean piles of plastic and waste. Choose foil-wrapped or cardboard-packaged eggs and avoid single-use decorations. Craft your own bunting from fabric scraps, or decorate reusable jars with ribbon to use for treats or table settings. Plantable seed cards or eco-friendly wooden



decorations make thoughtful, low-waste gifts, and can be reused year after year.

In Bloom and In Style

Easter is a season of renewal – not just in nature, but in our homes too. Whether you're adding a few daffodils to a windowsill or

throwing a full-blown garden party, a little creativity goes a long way.

Celebrate this long weekend with warmth, colour, and a touch of spring magic and don't forget to save a chocolate egg for yourself.

Happy Easter!

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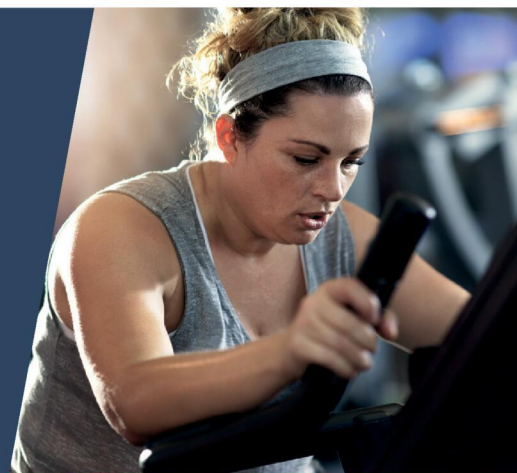
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Remember ID to vote

RESIDENTS voting in the Worcestershire County Council elections are being reminded to take their ID when they head to the polls on May 1.

Voters will need to show photo ID at polling stations before they can receive their ballot paper.

Accepted forms of ID include: a UK, European Economic Area (EEA) or Commonwealth passport, a UK or EEA drivers' licence, some concessionary travel passes, such as an older person's bus pass or an Oyster 60+ card or the free Voter Authority Certificate.

Voters will be able to use expired ID if they are still recognisable from the photo.

Anyone who does not have one of the accepted forms of ID can get free voter ID - the Voter Authority Certificate - by visiting: voter-authority-certificate.service.gov.uk or by completing a paper form and sending it to their local district council's electoral services team.

Applications need to be made by 5pm on April 23.

Visit the Electoral Commission website at: electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID for the full list of accepted ID and more information about the requirement and details of how to apply for the free ID.

Mentoring provides help to students with autism

WORCESTERSHIRE AUTISM MENTOR (WAM) training is transforming the lives of autistic young people by providing tailored mentoring support in schools just in time for World Autism Acceptance Month.

Since being structured into a training programme in 2020 and its first members completing training in January 2021, WAM has trained 119 mentors across Worcestershire schools, helping to create more inclusive and supportive learning

by Mia Whitehouse
news@bullivantmedia.com

environments.

The training is delivered by specialist practitioners at Worcestershire County Council's Autism and Complex Communication Needs (CCN) team.

One of the programme's success stories comes from Ethan, a pupil at The Chase High School in Malvern, who benefited from the support of his mentor Mr Griffin.

He said: "It's just been a good

time, when I've had stress with various things, to just tell Mr Griffin and share what was bothering me and come up with ideas to solve whatever the issue is."

The training empowers school staff with a special interest in autism to become mentors, equipping them with the knowledge and skills to support pupils in understanding their diagnosis through a personalised and supportive approach.

Dawn, Ethan's mother, highlights the programme's value in reducing anxiety.

She said: "For a lot of autistic children and adults, anxiety plays a huge part in our lives, and it can be quite a barrier to learning."

"Having that mentor to help reduce that anxiety puts those barriers to learning down and I think allows them to really thrive."

Worcestershire County Council is highlighting the impact these autism mentors have on autistic children and young people.

April's World Autism Awareness provides an opportunity for everyone to raise awareness, foster acceptance and create a society where autistic people are supported.

The Team Lead for the Specialist Teaching Service at Worcestershire County Council, said: "We're really pleased to be able to offer the WAM training to schools in Worcestershire and it is fantastic to see the mentors transforming the way we support autistic children



and young people.

"By equipping mentors with the right training and resources, we are fostering environments where pupils feel heard, understood, and empowered to navigate their diagnosis with confidence."

Visit: worcestershire.gov.uk/neurodivergent_education Support to find out more about WAM training on the Neurodivergence Zone.

ABOVE - Ethan has found his time with his mentor has helped him reduce his feelings of anxiety. s

LEFT - Ethan with his mentor, Mr Griffin at The Chase High School in Malvern. s



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Starling's decline is startling as Birdwatch results are revealed

by **Sonny Rackham**
sonny.rackham@bullivantmedia.com

STARLINGS have dropped out of the list of the UK's top three garden birds after a national spotting scheme saw the lowest number of the species ever recorded.

The species has fallen from number three to four in the RSPB's latest UK-wide Big Garden Birdwatch results after 600,000 people took part in the wildlife survey across the UK.

House Sparrow held onto the UK top spot once again and the Blue Tit remains at number two, with Woodpigeon in third.

More than 9million birds and over 80 species were spotted during this year's Big Garden Birdwatch between January 24 and 26.

Valuable insight

The scheme is a citizen science survey founded in 1979, providing an annual snapshot of garden birds in the UK.

Participants are asked to count the maximum number of each species recorded at their chosen location - gardens or parks or other green spaces - during a one-hour period.

Teachers and pupils can also take

part in Big Schools' Birdwatch, which reached more than 100,000 participants this year for the first time ever.

Locally, over 9,500 Worcestershire residents and more than 4,700 people from Warwickshire took part.

Worcestershire and Warwickshire's top three were the same as the UK's.

In the West Midlands, the Woodpigeon was the most popular with House Sparrow in second and Blue Tit in third.

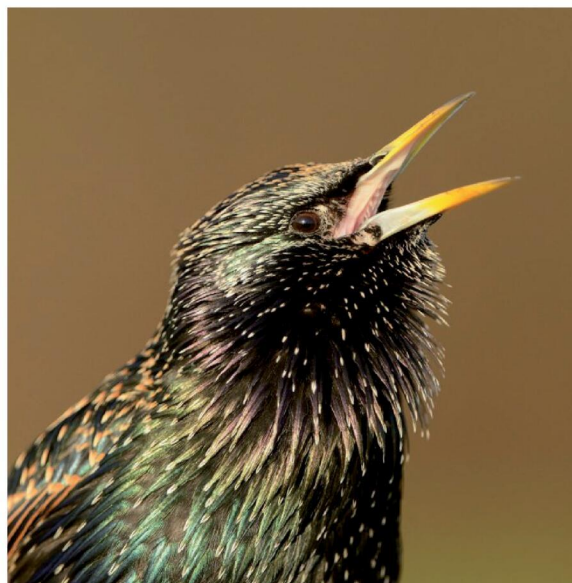
Starlings ranked as the eighth most commonly spotted bird in Worcestershire, it was fifth in Warwickshire and seventh in the West Midlands.

Massive decline

Starlings are medium-sized birds with glossy plumage that has a purple and green sheen, often with white spots during winter. They are also excellent mimics and can make a huge variety of tweets, cheeps and clicks.

They can be found across the UK with their numbers swelling during winter when birds arrive from northern Europe, gathering together to perform spectacular murmurations.

Despite these displays sometimes reaching hundreds of thousands of individuals, Starlings are a red listed species in the UK and considered a high conservation concern due to



their declining numbers.

Although there is not currently enough evidence to confirm what is causing these decreases, the UK breeding population declined by 82

per cent between 1970 and 2022.

Prior to 2000, the Starling was regularly the most numerous species recorded in the Big Garden Birdwatch.

Overall, the survey provides a valuable snapshot of how our most common garden birds are faring and taking part is one important way to help birds and nature.

The RSPB's chief executive, Becky Speight said: "Starlings are one of our most charismatic garden birds, but this year's Big Garden Birdwatch results is a reason for concern."

"With one in six species at risk of extinction from Great Britain, we've done more damage to our natural UK than we realise."

"However, we can all do our bit to support these threatened birds by taking small actions that can not only benefit Starlings, but a wealth of other garden wildlife."

"Our countryside, our farms and our towns all need support to encourage nature, and while our homes and gardens often provide the perfect place for individual people to help, we also urgently need governments and businesses to join us in the wider fight to restore our natural UK."

Visit: [rspb.org.uk/whats-happening/big-garden-birdwatch](https://www.rspb.org.uk/whats-happening/big-garden-birdwatch) for more information on the RSPB Bird Watch.

The Starling is in decline across the UK - a fact evidenced in this year's RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch results. Picture by Ben Andrew, RSPB.

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Warning to dog owners about the dangers of Easter chocolate

by Sarah Mason
sarah.mason@bullivantmedia.com

AS THE Easter break and festivities get under way pet owners are being warned to keep traditional goodies - such as chocolate eggs and hot cross buns - out of reach of their animals to avoid emergency vet visits.

The British Veterinary Association has issued the warning which comes as statistics from the Veterinary Poisons Information Service (VPIS), which provides emergency advice to veterinary professionals about poisoning cases and runs Animal PoisonLine for owners, reveals it received over 100 enquiries about animals eating chocolate last Easter.

It added that half of the enquiries it received were about pets ingesting hot cross buns, which contain vine fruits that are poisonous to many animals, also unsurprisingly come at Easter.

Although 80 per cent of enquiries related to chocolate ingestion involved dogs, it was not just cheeky canines who bit off more than they could chew - the VPIS reports 15 per cent of enquiries about chocolate ingestion related to cats and three per cent to rabbits.

'Serious danger'



Chocolate, especially dark chocolate, can be dangerous for all pets.

Dogs, however, are particularly susceptible to poisoning due to a chemical called theobromine, which is found naturally in cocoa beans.

Theobromine takes a long time to be broken down inside a dog's digestive system, which means that even small amounts of chocolate can potentially result in toxic levels, especially for smaller dogs and puppies.

Although white chocolate is usually safer for dogs if ingested accidentally, milk and dark chocolate can cause poisoning, so it's better to err on the side of caution and keep all types of chocolate away.

Raisins and sultanas, found in hot cross buns and simnel cakes, and xylitol (found in sugar-free treats) can also be dangerous for dogs if ingested.

British Veterinary Association junior vice president Rob Williams said: "Chocolate eggs and hot cross buns are just a few of the treats which spring onto the shelves at this time of year.

"While they are delicious for us, the VPIS statistics show they are also tempting - but toxic - to our pets.

"Many of us will know the dangers that chocolate presents to dogs, but other pets such as cats and rabbits can also become seriously unwell if they eat it, while hot cross buns

also contain vine fruits which is particularly toxic too.

"It's best to make sure that all sweet treats and tempting tidbits are kept out of reach of your pets to avoid emergency vet visits, but if you think your pet has eaten something they shouldn't, it's really important that you speak to your vet - it could save their life."

Recognise the signs

The British Veterinary Association said symptoms of chocolate poisoning usually appear within 12 hours of ingestion and can last for up to three days.

Initially, pets are likely to experience excessive thirst, vomiting, diarrhoea and restlessness.

These can develop into symptoms of hyperactivity, tremors, increased heart rate, hyperthermia and rapid breathing.

Severe cases may result in fits and heartbeat irregularities, and even coma and death. If you notice these symptoms in your dog and suspect chocolate ingestion, seek veterinary advice as soon as possible.

Visit: animalpoisonline.co.uk for more information on pets and toxic substances and the free downloadable Animal Welfare Foundation Pets and Poisons leaflet.

Pet owners are being warned to keep Easter goodies away from pets.

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M	U	O	F	O	U	G	E	C	N	E	O	R	Y	E
E	R	E	R	E	L	A	L	A	S	P	W	B	E	H
A	M	N	I	R	E	E	C	N	H	C	A	L	A	S
S	R	A	L	E	Y	N	E	O	R	U	F	S	L	E
C	A	L	I	P	L	I	R	C	L	E	R	E	E	Y

Solutions opposite

CROSSWORD

1	2			3	4		5		6		7
				8							
9							10				
11											
											12
13		14					15				
						16					
	17									18	
19											
20						21					
22										23	

ACROSS

1. Quote (4)
3. Crusade (8)
9. Harmful (7)
10. Morning reception (5)
11. Ingrained habit (6,6)
13. Foreign (6)
15. Anew (6)
17. Irrational belief (12)
20. Distort (5)
21. Raise (7)
22. Maim (8)
23. Exceedingly (4)

DOWN

1. Box (8)
2. Poisonous (5)
4. Agree (6)
5. Lowest RAF commission (5-7)
6. Upside down (7)
7. Requirement (4)
8. Agreeing by chance (12)
12. Stormy (8)
14. Eye-specialist (7)
16. Declare (6)
18. Angry (5)
19. Separate particular (4)

Scribble pad

LADDER

Using the clues provided, fill in each step of the ladder with a new word, changing one letter at a time.

- Terrible
- Goad
- Time period
- Moderate
- Chew

DIRT

BIKE

NINER

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

- 6347 gives a bird;
- 9728 gives a second bird;
- 651172 gives a third bird.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

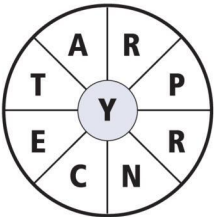
CODEWORD

This puzzle has no clues. Instead, every number printed in the grid represents a letter, with the same number always representing the same letter. For example, if 8 turns out to be a V, you can write in V wherever a square contains 8. Using your knowledge of words, complete the puzzle.

		23		26		11			16		10			
A	20	25	16	14		20	12	24	20	15	23		15	
B														
C		25		8	23	3			22		24	18	18	
D														
E		18		23		19	21	20	15		24		6	
F														
G	13	11	18	5	11		14						25	
H														
I		23			6	11	7	6	1	11	23	11	19	
J						I	N							
K		11			12		22		23			23		
L	25	19	18	12	13	22	18	18	15			17		
M														
N	5						9		20	2	9	6	16	
O														
P	6			21		12	18	25	21		9		1	
Q														
R	25	16	14			22			20	22	23		23	
S														
T	21													
U			16	8	9	22	23	8			4	6	19	25
V														
W														
X														
Y														
Z														

WORDWHEEL

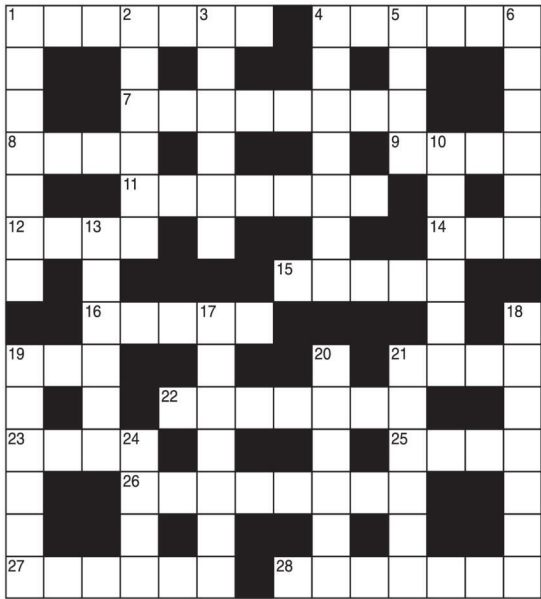
You have 10 mins to find as many words as possible using the letters in the wheel. Each must use the hub letter and at least 3 others. Letters may be used only once. You cannot use plurals, foreign words or proper nouns. There is at least one 9-letter word to be found.



How you rate
15 words: average
20 words: good
25 words: very good
30 or more: excellent.

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE CROSSWORD

- ACROSS**
- 1 JRR ---, philologist and novelist whose works include The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings (7)
- 4, 19 & 8 Across Howard Spring novel published in 1940 (4,2,3,4)
- 7 Fee paid to a barrister, etc., for a right to their services if required (8)
- 8 See 4 Across
- 9 & 20 Down Author of the Famous Five and Secret Seven series (4,6)
- 11 Of Spain and Portugal as one country (7)
- 12 & 16 Across Constellation also known as the Great Bear (4,5)
- 14, 19 & 5 Down British statesman who refused to take the oath of supremacy to Henry VIII as head of the Church and was executed for high treason in 1535 (3,6,4)
- 15 Surname of the second president of the US (5)
- 16 See 12 Across
- 19 See 4 Across
- 21 In the Bible, the twin brother of Jacob (4)
- 22 Angela ---, Irish television presenter (7)
- 23 Inland departement in Normandy, noted for the powerful Percheron horses bred there (4)
- 25 King of the Greek gods (4)
- 26 An ornamental textile fabric made by passing coloured threads among fixed warp threads (8)
- 27 Short lyrical poem (6)
- 28 Short, devotional exercise in honour of the Incarnation, repeated three times daily (7)



- DOWN**
- 1 The duke of Athens in A Midsummer-Night's Dream (7)
- 2 Hardy shrub, with bright yellow flowers in spring (6)
- 3 Dish served at dinner between the chief courses, or as a substitute (6)
- 4 Republic in north-eastern Europe whose capital is Helsinki (7)
- 5 See 14 Across
- 6 In snooker, a rest with long legs, used to raise the cue above a ball (6)
- 10 In Greek mythology, a centaur who carried travellers across the Euenus for a small fee (6)
- 13 In Acts 13, a Christian teacher at Antioch 'called Niger' (6)
- 17 The back of the head or skull (7)
- 18 Edible bivalve molluscs found in clusters attached to rocks (7)

- 19 See 14 Across
- 20 See 9 Across
- 21 Any one of a large class of protein substances produced by living cells, which act as catalysts in chemical changes (6)
- 24 Town opposite Windsor, with an old public school (4)

SOLUTIONS

General Knowledge Crossword

ACROSS: 1 Tolkien; 4 Fame; 7 Retainer; 8 Spur; 9 Enid; 11 Iberian; 12 Ursa; 14 Sir; 15 Adams; 16 Major; 19 The; 21 Esau; 22 Scanlon; 23 Orme; 25 Zeus; 26 Tapestry; 27 Sonnet; 28 Angelus. DOWN: 1 Theses; 2 Kerra; 3 Enree; 4 Finland; 5 More; 6 Spider; 10 Nessus; 13 Simeon; 17 Occiput; 18 Mussels; 19 Thomas; 20 Blyton; 21 Enzyme; 24 Eton.

Crossword

ACROSS: 1 Cite; 3 Campaign; 9 Noxious; 10 Leave; 11 Second nature; 13 Exotic; 15 Aftersh; 17 Suppression; 20 Twist; 21 Elevate; 22 Mutilate; 23 Very. DOWN: 1 Canister; 2 Toxic; 4 Assent; 5 Pilot-officer; 6 Inverse; 7 Need; 8 Coincidental; 12 Thunder; 14 Oculist; 16 Assent; 18 Irate; 19 Item.

Wordwheel Pathfinder

Lipstick, powder, tissues, cotton buds, blusher, eyeshadow, Kohl, primer, mascara, lip liner, concealer, eye liner, foundation, rouge, bronzer, eyelash curler, false eyelashes, eyebrow pencil, lip gloss, cream, eyelash glue.

Niner

PROVIDENT

mail polish, brushes, emery board, cleanser, tweezers, contour

Ladder

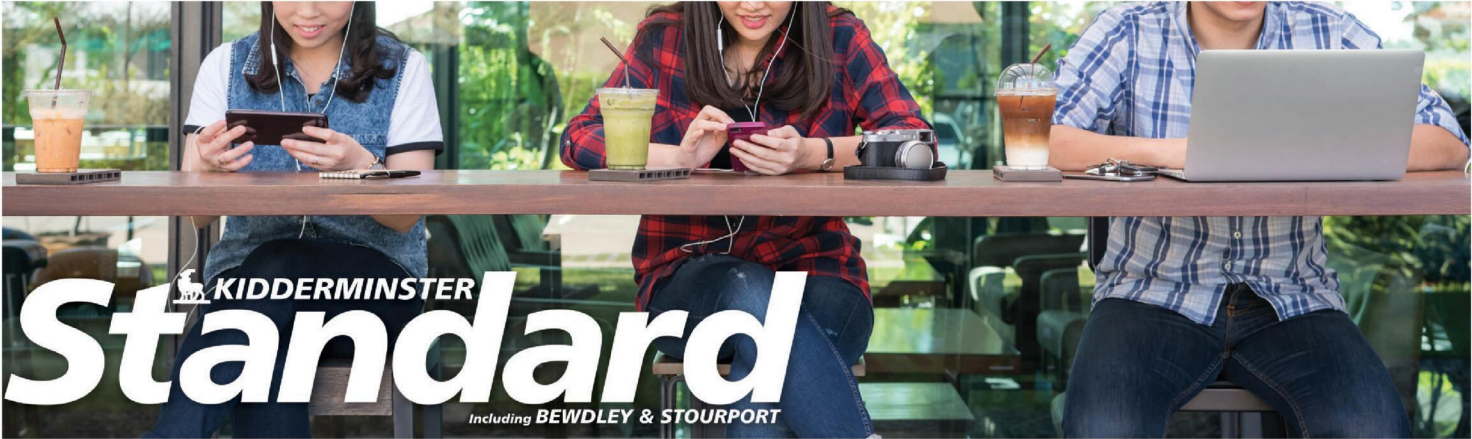
1=6, 2=Q, 3=X, 4=F, 5=W, 6=L, 7=D, 8=L, 9=U, 10=J, 11=N, 12=C, 13=K, 14=Y, 15=M, 16=P, 17=Y, 18=O, 19=T, 20=E, 21=H, 22=R, 23=A, 24=Z, 25=S, 26=B

Codeword

Hard

Sudoku

Easy



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KIA drives to the top at awards

THE KIA EV3 has been hailed the outright winner at the 2025 World Car Awards. Revealed during a live announcement at the World Car Awards ceremony at the 2025 New York International Auto Show, the Kia EV3

secured the prestigious title of 2025 World Car of the Year.

Ho Sung Song, President and CEO at Kia, said: "It is an immense honor for everyone at Kia that the EV3 has been awarded the 2025 World Car of Year title.

"This award highlights Kia's global leadership in providing design-led, technologically advanced, sustainable mobility solutions and how the EV3's class-leading attributes redefine the user experience for customers worldwide."

The 2025 World Car Awards were judged by a panel of 96 highly respected international automotive journalists from 30 countries. The EV3's victory brings Kia's total of wins at the World Car Awards to six since 2020.

The EV3 brings the cutting-edge innovation of Kia's flagship EV9 to a wider audience than ever before, setting new standards in the compact electric vehicle (EV) SUV segment. The EV3 boasts a bold, progressive exterior and an innovative, practical interior that maximises space, functionality, and comfort.

The EV3 has a segment-leading range

of up to 375 miles and can charge from 10-to-80 per cent in 31 minutes, delivering impressive usability. The vehicle's innovative interior design optimises space, comfort, and accessibility, while Kia's AI Assistant, advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS), and Over-the-Air (OTA) updates enhance the ownership experience with cutting-edge technology.

* THE HYUNDAI INSTER has been honored with the title of 2025 World Electric Vehicle at the 2025 World Car Awards ceremony.

This momentous achievement marks the fourth consecutive year that a model from Hyundai Motor Company has led one or more categories in the World Car Awards.

Jose Munoz, President and CEO of Hyundai Motor Company, said: "The Hyundai INSTER has been a winner with customers since we introduced it. It's very gratifying that the experts on the prestigious World Car Awards jurors feel the same way.

"The combination of compelling design,

range, enjoyable driving characteristics, intuitive infotainment and technology that customers appreciate is emblematic of Hyundai's approach of delivering exceptional value to our customers. The fact that our global portfolio is successful both commercially and critically speaks to the hard-working people throughout the Hyundai value chain who are delivering some of the best vehicles on the road today.

"Thank you to all the jurors for your service to this great industry."

The 2025 World Electric Vehicle award recognises INSTER's extraordinary value in the EV segment and underscores Hyundai Motor's dedication to advancing EV technology and sustainability.

As a sub-compact EV, INSTER leads its segment with a distinctive design, impressive driving range and cutting-edge technology. INSTER's rapid charging capability enables a 10-to-80-percent charge in around 30 minutes, with the 49-kWh long-range model providing a range of up to 370 km.

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Harriers step up title challenge

FOOTBALL: UPBEAT Kidderminster Harriers go into an Easter bank holiday double-header which will go a long way to determining how their season finishes.

Phil Brown's men will face Rushall Olympic at 3pm today (Friday, April 18) at Dales Lane and then take on Hereford at Aggborough at 3pm on Easter Monday (April 21).

Harriers go into the matches in second place in the Vanarama National League North, just one point off the leaders Scunthorpe.

Last weekend, Ashley Hemmings hit another superb hat-trick as Harriers beat Curzon Ashton 3-0 to keep up the pressure on The Iron.

Hemmings' first came inside the opening minute when he headed in Reece Devine's cross from the left, sending those in the North Stand wild.

Kidderminster kept up the pressure and Amari Morgan-Smith and Hemmings both went close.

Lively Harriers made it 2-0 when Hemming unleashed a glorious curling left-foot shot from outside of the box to beat Bobby Jones in the Curzon goal.

Kidderminster made a number of substitutions while Curzon plugged away and created some half-chances without causing any real danger to Harriers.

Hemmings completed his hat-trick from the penalty spot on 78 minutes after Joe Foulkes had his feet taken from underneath him as he powered into the penalty box on the right. The trio of goals take the



Harriers' Kyle Morrison creates a threat as they dispatched Curzon 3-0 last Saturday. Picture by Marcus Mingins 1725005MMR3

prolific hitman past the 30-goals mark for the season.

The tireless Morgan-Smith was substituted to a deserved standing ovation as Harriers ran out worthy 3-0 winners to claim three more vital points.

A crowd of 3,028 watched Brown's men return to winning ways and secure their ninth win and eighth clean sheet in 11 games, while also completing a double over the visitors.

In his post-match interview, Brown praised his players after what he said was a tough encounter.

On Hemmings' hat-trick he said: "That's his fourth match ball of the season and he's only got five in his career so that tells you where he's at."

"He's had a fantastic season but it's not finished. We've got three more matches and I need three more hat-tricks if I can get them."

On this weekend's matches Brown added: "We've got to take them one game at a time but if we can get six points, we'll give ourselves a chance (of promotion)."

Go to this story at kidderminsterstandard.co.uk for more pictures of last Saturday's game.

Five-star show for champs



HOCKEY: THIS was the moment when Stourport Hockey Club's Under 14s Girls side celebrated being crowned U14 Tier 1 National Plate winners at the Junior National Championship. Their reward came after the team beat Sevenoaks 5-1 on Saturday.

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celebrated being crowned U14 Tier 1 National Plate winners at the Junior National Championship. Their reward came after the team beat Sevenoaks 5-1 on Saturday.

Late goal sinks Bewdley

FOOTBALL: BEWDLEY Town finished 10th in the UHlsport Hellenic League Division One after a 2-1 home defeat to Abingdon United in their final game of the season.

The result, played out in front of 75 fans, meant the visitors qualified for the play-offs.

The match was pretty even to start with as both teams created chances, although no clear-cut ones.

But Bewdley broke the deadlock when Ben Espley found himself in space, rounded the keeper and slid the ball home from a tight angle.

Abingdon pushed for the equaliser and Bewdley keeper Kai

Lloyd was in fine form, keeping them out.

Both teams battled in the second half and it was 1-1 in the 79th minute. A long ball caught out the Bewdley defence and Nat Robinson slotted home.

Both Bewdley and Abingdon searched for the winner and United found it in the sixth minute of injury time when the ball was cut back for Freddy Duhnam to finish and give United the win they needed to earn a play-off semi-final against Clanfield.

The Bewdley fans were epic throughout to game and gave a players a rousing ovation as they left pitch.

Coming soon...



SIXTEEN 1 & 2 BED RETIREMENT* APARTMENTS

We are excited to announce that Albion Meadows, a new retirement development, will be available in the Autumn 2024. Albion Meadows is situated in the delightful village of Hanley Swan, Worcestershire and comprises of one and two bedroomed apartments offering independence with the added comfort of 24hour support in a beautiful countryside setting.

At Albion Meadows we aim to create homes that have strong links with the surrounding community

and a real sense of belonging. The development itself is nestled in Hanley Swan, a quintessentially English village, with a duck pond, well stocked shop, and thriving pub. The village itself located near to the historic Malvern Hills, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, as well as the excellent Three Counties Show Ground. Nearby is also the delightful riverside town of Upton-Upon-Severn with the M5 close at hand.

The aim of this community is to provide well-

appointed homes rooted in the surrounding countryside with spacious balconies, an allotment style garden, and easily accessible walks in the meadows. The apartments themselves have practical living at their heart, with easy access shower rooms, a separate utility, ample storage space and flexible rooms. All appliances come as standard and are from high end brands. There will also be an owner's lounge, hairdressers, restaurant, and gym on site.

To register early interest please contact us at enquires@albionmeadows.co.uk or 01684 312140 or visit our website at www.albionmeadows.co.uk.