

KIDDERMINSTER Standard

Including BEWDLEY & STOURPORT

Friday, April 25th 2025 Week 17

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Can you help give Dottie her voice?

by Tristan Harris
tristan.harris@bullivantmedia.com

A RALLYING call has been issued for the community to get behind a fundraiser for specialist equipment to help a two-year-old non-verbal girl find her voice.

Dottie Loveridge from Stourport was born with a genetic neurological condition, cysts on the brain and autism which means she is unable to understand or communicate with the world around her.

Despite her daily challenges, her mum Gemma said she was still the happiest, funny, cutest and most loving little girl many people would meet.

Now she, her family and friends are trying to raise £8,000 to fund a communication tablet device and assistant eye tracker which would enable Dottie to communicate and understand those closest to her. It will also provide ongoing help with her developmental delays and disabilities.

Gemma has also been informed of specialist treatment that is available for her in the US which could potentially transform her life and quality of living.

The start of the fundraising journey will begin with a special 'Give Dottie Her Voice' event at the Severns Club in Stourport from 3pm to 7pm next Saturday, May 3.

The event will feature local DJ SoulCarrot and other live music acts, along with games, raffles, a tombola, bottle raffle, cake sale, face painting and ponies.



Gemma said: "We'd like to thank everyone who has agreed to help so far and ask others who feel they can help - whether through donating money or raffle prizes or by giving their time to help ensure the event runs smoothly - to get in touch."

"Any help is so much appreciated and every little goes a long way to reaching our target."

Family friend Lois Maguire added: "It has been so lovely already how much the Stourport community has

come together, donating their time, unwanted gifts and more."

"Support has been given by the Severns Club, the White Hart, Hartlebury Castle, Cath's Cafe and people locally are digging deep to donate money too."

Among other items needed are unopened bottles for a bottle raffle, raffle and auction prizes and helpers on the day.

"Most of all we are asking for people to come along on the day - have a

dance and enjoy themselves."

A fundraising page has been set up at: gofundme.com/f/dotties-voice/ where people can donate and updates will be provided.

The charity event next Saturday, May 3, will raise funds towards getting Dottie Loveridge equipment to help her communicate with the world around her. s



AFTER a fruitful Easter bank holiday weekend, picking up six points from two matches, Kidderminster Harriers are just one game away from becoming league champions.

On Good Friday, Harriers beat Rushall Olympic 2-1, thanks to goals from Ashley Hemmings and David Davis. That result saw Kidderminster go top of the table.

That was followed up in emphatic fashion on Easter Monday with a 5-1 thrashing of Hereford at Aggborough in front of 5,341 fans.

The goals came from David Worrall, Amari Morgan-Smith, Omari Sterling-James and a brace from Maz Kouhyar against his former club.

Those two wins put Harriers in the driving seat heading into the last day.

Victory tomorrow against Southport will see them guaranteed promotion to the National League at the first attempt after their relegation last season.

Turn to the back page for more on their Easter Monday win against Hereford, their quest to become champions and manager Phil Brown speaking about the 'biggest match of his career'.



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For all the latest news and features: kiddminsterstandard.co.uk

Council sets out events to celebrate VE Day 80

STOURPORT Town Council has revealed further details regarding the area's VE Day 80 celebrations.

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

'A shared moment of celebration' to mark the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe – the end of the Second World War in our continent – will take place on May 8.

VE Day 80 is not only a tribute to those who fought for freedom but also a powerful reminder of the resilience and unity that have defined our country ever since.

Stourport's celebrations and commemorations will begin at 9am on May 8 with the Town Crier reading a proclamation for peace at the War Memorial Gardens on Vale Road. As the proclamation is read out the Mayor of Stourport will raise the 'Flag of Peace' – both will be streamed live on the Stourport

Town Council Facebook page.

From 3.30pm, Eat Street Repeat will bring a food court to War Memorial Park on Lickhill Road. Among the vendors will be The Beefy Boys, BMK Stourport, Aurorabella's Bakes, Hobsons Brewery, Stuffed Any Way You Like, Flats Doughnuts and Quads N Castles.

Among the entertainment will be DJ Stretch who will be joined in the lead up to the beacon lighting ceremony by The Swingettes and more. There will also be a number of military vehicles on display.

From 4pm to 4.45pm, people can join local historian and expert Geoff Shaw, in Stourport Community Centre, for a free talk on Stourport's contribution to VE Day and its role



The Swingettes will be performing live in the VE Day 80 event. There will also be an beacon lighting ceremony as part of the celebrations. s

in the Second World War.

And from 6.30pm to 8.30pm, the bell ringers of the Parish Church of St Bartholomew (Areley Kings) will be joining in with 'Together We Chime – Let the Nation's Bells Ring Loud'. Part of this will also be broadcast by Stourport Town Council for those gathered in War Memorial Park.

The Beacon Lighting Ceremony will take place from 9.15pm to 9.30pm and it will start with a welcome by Rev Carey Saleh. It

will culminate with the Stourport Carnival Queen lighting the 'Lamp of Peace' at 9.30pm.

The Mayor of Stourport, Coun John Thomas, has invited all town centre shops and businesses to join a best-dressed window display competition. It will be themed on 'A Shared Moment of Celebration' to reflect VE Day 80 and Stourport.

Judging of the windows will be done via a residents' vote on the Facebook group 'We Love Stourport Past and Present'.



The 6880 'Betton Grange' during the SVR's recent Spring Steam Gala. Picture by Kieran Hardy. s

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Full steam ahead...

FOLLOWING its popular appearance at the Severn Valley Railway's Spring Steam Gala over the Easter bank holiday weekend, the GWR 6880 'Betton Grange' has been continuing to haul services along the heritage line.

Its final days in service will be tomorrow (Saturday) and Sunday, April 27, giving those who were unable to

make the Steam Gala the chance to see the new-build steam locomotive in action.

Services are currently operating between Kidderminster and Hampton Loade only following the embankment failure at Mor Brook bridge.

Visit the website at svr.co.uk for times, tickets and more information.

Family Nature Days

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Coast Express on track to stop off

A RAILTOUR which is set to travel through the scenic mountains of mid-Wales and the Cambrian Coast will be calling at Worcester Shrub Hill and Kidderminster next month.

Pathfinder Tours 'Cambrian Coast Express' will be visiting Barmouth, Porthmadog, Crickieth and Pwllheli on Friday, May 16 providing passengers with the opportunity to visit popular resorts and historic seaside towns.

The train is expected to be hauled by a class 47 or class 57 locomotive



The Cambrian Coast Express railtour is set to feature a class 37 diesel locomotive. Picture by Neil Gordon Media. s

between Bristol and Shrewsbury and back, while a class 37

and a Network Rail class 97/3 (former class 37) will work the train between Shrewsbury and Pwllheli, and the return journey back to Shrewsbury.

Provisional times are Worcester Shrub Hill station 7.30am pick-up and 11.35pm set-down, with the train also calling at Kidderminster.

Visit pathfinder-tours.co.uk for more information and details of Premier Dining options.

PUBLIC NOTICES



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Concerns over new incinerator

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

A COUNCILLOR has hit out at the building of an incinerator on Stourport Road in Kidderminster.

Coun Vicky Caulfield, who represents the Green Party in Blakebrook and Habberley South, expressed concerns amidst work starting on the access road to the site and vegetation being cut back.

Power Generation Midlands (PGM) was granted planning permission by Worcestershire County Council back in 2021 for an 'energy and resource park' on land next to Liberty Aluminium foundry off Stourport Road.

On its website, PGM claims the energy centre would take around 75,000 tonnes a year of commercial and industrial waste left after recycling from the local area.

The waste would be used as a fuel to generate low carbon

electricity and heat which could be used to power local businesses including the nextdoor Liberty Aluminium foundry. Some of the electricity and heat would also be used to power the Plastics Recovery Plant.

PGM also claims it could enable the foundry to expand, creating 100 jobs at the plant and during the construction process.

Coun Caulfield said - after long periods of inaction and towards the end of the three-year expiration date of the planning permission - she was angry work had now started.

"Waste incineration facilities bring traffic, smell, noise and air pollution.

"The air pollution includes particulates and dioxins which stay in the soil and food chain and can even cause genetic harm to humans and wildlife in future generations."

She questioned how environmentally friendly the scheme was, saying burning materials and increasing CO2 would add to global warming.

And she questioned whether the incinerator project will ever be completed as some - in other parts of the country - had been cancelled mid-build.

She said the country needed to produce less waste and focus more on renewable forms of energy, with a strong emphasis of source-separated recycling and composting.

"What's needed is a policy of 'zero waste' plus a 'circular economy' where materials circulate at their highest value for as long as possible, for example through repair and reuse."

"After that, there can be higher resource recovery rates through a strong emphasis on source-separated recycling and composting."

"Instead, incineration is a linear process where materials are lost forever, and the ash remains as hazardous waste."

The Standard contacted Power Generation Midlands for a response but it has declined to comment at this time.



Coun Vicky Caulfield has expressed concerns over potential pollution from the new incinerator. s



Sisters, two-year-old Nelly and four-year-old Scarlett Ward, with their St George's crowns, swords, shields and decorated cups. s

YOUNGSTERS from Country Pumpkins Nursery in Beckford got to meet officers from their local Evesham Police Safer Neighbourhood Team.

During their visit, PC Bourne and PCSO Harris spoke about their roles as a police officer and a police community support officer.

The children had lots of questions to ask and were more than keen to see the police car, turn the sirens and lights on and try on some of the uniform.

The officers also told them what they should do in an emergency and how to contact the police if the need arose.



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Parade to mark St George's Day

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

THE ANNUAL St George's Day Parade by the Wyre Forest Scouts will take place this Sunday, April 27.

The group will meet at New Road before moving off at 10.30am and journeying to Kidderminster Harriers' Aggborough stadium where a celebration service will be held.

The parade will then head back to the town centre.

Road closures

While the procession is going on, there will be a 'rolling road closures' so those parading can progress

safely.

A number of roads will be shut during this time, including New Road from its junction with Pump Street to Marlborough Street in both directions.

Oxford Street will be closed from its junction with New Road to Comberton Hill.

Comberton Hill will close from the junction with Oxford Street to Hoo Road (this includes the ring road in both directions).

Hoo Road will close in both directions from its junction with Comberton Hill to Oakhill Avenue and Marlborough Street will shut from its junction with New Road to Prospect Hill.

Worcester Street will close from its junction with Prospect Hill to the junction with Coventry Street (both

directions).

Likewise, the High Street from its junction with Worcester Street to the junction with Vicar Street will also shut in both directions.

Oxford Street will close from its junction with Vicar Street and Exchange Street to Bridge Street in both directions.

And Bridge Street will be shut in both directions from its junction with Oxford Street to the junction with New Road.

A spokesperson for Wyre Forest Scouts said everyone was looking forward to the annual event.

"We usually have between 600 and 700 people taking part and we always get a good turn-out and response from the public."



Stourport-on-Severn Brass Band is looking for a Bb bass player to complete its bass section. s

Does this role strike a chord with you?

A BRASS band bass player is being sought to join the ranks of a popular local group.

Stourport-on-Severn Brass Band is a friendly, fun-loving Second Section band which is recruiting for a Bb bass player to complete its bass section.

The band rehearses from 7.45pm to 9.45pm on Tuesday evenings at The Severn's Club in Stourport.

Players who do not have their own instrument do not need to worry as they have a Sovereign Bb bass which can be borrowed free of charge.

A Stourport-on-Severn Brass Band spokesperson said: "We have some exciting engagements coming up this summer, including our own concerts in and around Stourport, Pershore Midsummer Festival of Brass, Wychavon Entertainment contest and performing at the Black Dyke Festival at Huddersfield Town Hall in June."

"If you are interested, we look forward to hearing from you."

They urged anyone interested in joining the band's ranks to email: secretary@stourportband.co.uk for more information.

People urged to report off-road bikes

POLICE in Cookley have urged residents to let them know about anti-social behaviour in the area after reports of off-road bikes being ridden illegally in the area.

The vehicles are causing a nuisance to local residents and walkers in the area's woodland.

Now officers want people to report incidents of anti-social behaviour to them by calling 101 or 999 if it is an emergency, a crime is taking place or there is a danger to life.

Alternatively, call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

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Bag it and bin it, dog owners urged

WYRE Forest District Council has been out and about, highlighting the importance of responsible dog ownership and people picking up after their four-legged friends.

The team kicked off the week at Habberley Valley Nature Reserve, teaming up with the Wyre Forest Rangers and the district council's Street Scene team to tackle the mess left behind by careless dog owners.

The team thanked everyone who spoke to them at the reserve.

They added: "It was great to hear

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

your views – and it's clear these dog walkers care about the environment."

But they also said dozens of discarded dog bags were found in bushes and on paths and more than 70 were picked up.

Wyre Forest District Council is urging dog owners to clean up after their pets and 'bag it and bin it' or take it home. "Please don't litter the nature reserves," they said.

And dog owners are being warned

that if they get caught failing to pick up after their pets, they could face a £100 on-the-spot fine or a larger fine of up to £1,000 if the matter goes to court.

People are also being reminded that they can report owners whose dogs foul and it is not picked up.

The council's street scene team will clean up the area and incidents will be investigated.

Visit the website at wyreforestdc.gov.uk/streets-and-parking/street-care-and-cleaning/dog-fouling for more information on dog fouling and to report incidents.



Wyre Forest District Council's team have been out and about at Habberley Valley Nature Reserve to promote responsible dog ownership. s

New play area to be installed

KIDDERMINSTER Town Council has announced 'exciting' improvements to Broadwaters Mill Park.

Enhancement works beginning next week will focus on the restoration of the Senses Garden and new play equipment will be installed.

The Senses Garden will be refreshed with new planting and general restoration.

A council spokesper-

son said: "The special place for visitors of all ages will be brought back to life.

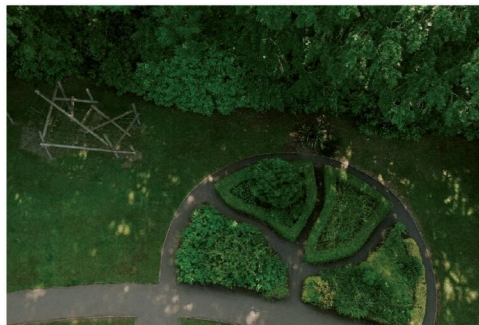
"And, in the same area, we'll be adding brand new play equipment, including more interactive features for children to enjoy."

The works are being funded through Section 106 contributions – paid for by developers building properties in the town – and grant funding which means there

will be no increase in council tax for residents.

The council added that during the works, which are expected to run through to late May, the area will be temporarily closed, including access from both pedestrian footbridges.

The council spokesperson added: "Thanks for your patience and support – we can't wait to see this area transformed."



Work starts next week to restore the Senses Garden and install new play equipment. s

Park yoga starts

PARK YOGA is returning to Kidderminster from next Sunday, May 4.

The sessions will run from 9.30am to 10.30am every Sunday from next weekend in Springfield Park until September 14.

People are being urged to go along, breathe, stretch and flow into nature.

The sessions are inclusive, welcoming and relaxing, and are known to boost wellbeing. All ability levels are welcome.

All people have to do to take part is take along their mat or towel to the park, look for the large 'Park Yoga' flag and join in.



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Postie Shaun aims to deliver for epic test

A MUCH-LOVED Kidderminster postman and dedicated fundraiser is set to take on one of his most grueling challenges yet – A Brutal Events Extreme Triathlon – to support Wyre Forest and South Worcestershire Nightstop's 20th anniversary.

Shaun Marshall aims to raise at least £2,500 for this incredible feat which starts on the September 20 2025. He will embark on a five-mile open water swim, a 232-mile bike ride, a run up Wales' highest mountain – Snowdon – and finish with an additional 45 miles on the finish line.

Shaun said: "I'm taking it on not just to push my own limits but to

make a real difference for local young people who need support.

"Nightstop provides vital services, and I'm proud to do my part to help them continue their important work and celebrate their 20th anniversary."

The Wyre Forest and South Worcestershire service offers safe emergency accommodation for young people aged 16 to 25 who are facing housing instability and homelessness. This short-term alternative to sofa-surfing provides a lifeline for vulnerable youth, offering security and strength as a stepping stone allowing them to rebuild their lives with dignity.

In their preventative work, they help families resolve conflicts, prevent family breakdown, and prevent further homelessness.

Additionally, they raise awareness of youth homelessness in the region by delivering educational programmes in schools to improve communication skills.

Coralie Hudson, fundraising manager at Nightstop said: "We are incredibly grateful to Shaun for supporting Nightstop with his incredible challenge – and also rather in awe.

"We cannot thank him enough for putting our young people at the heart of his fundraising efforts."

In 2024 the Wyre Forest Nightstop provided 303 nights of accommodation, 452 mediation sessions and 128 crisis support sessions.

Every pound raised through Shaun's efforts will directly benefit the charity's vital work.

So far, Shaun has raised £665 and



is calling out to the local community to stand behind him and help him reach his target of £2,500.

Go online to justgiving.com/page/shaun-marshall-18 to donate to the fundraiser.

Cricket club festival all set to be a big hit for food and music

AN EXCITING array of activities are planned for this year's Stourport Cricket Club Food and Music Festival which takes place on the late May bank holiday.

After attracting sell-out crowds for that last two years, organisers have added a second stage for the event which runs from 12pm to 10pm on Sunday,



Blind Lemon, the headline band at last year's festival, will be returning for this year's event. s

May 25, at the club's Walshes Farm Meadow ground, off Dudley Road.

Admission to the event will cost just £5, with profits going to help fund the club's men's, women's, and junior teams.

Top class music and street food will be showcased, with headliners including favourites such as Blind Lemon and James

Baker. Organisers say there will be even more entertainment than ever before.

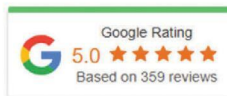
Charlie Foley, first team captain, said: "We are looking forward to our third festival and are expecting even bigger crowds, following the success of previous years and I think it's now firmly entrenched in the town's social calendar.

"With a second stage this

year, we will be able to add a Silent Disco Party where local DJs will have the chance to perform in front of large crowds."

Gastronomic delights will be dished up by seven local food vendors, as well as craft stalls and cocktail, gin and ale bars.

Visit facebook.com/stourportcricketclub for more on the event.



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All Areas Covered



Candidates line up to battle for your votes

RESIDENTS across Kidderminster, Stourport and Bewdley, along with those in the rest of Worcestershire will be heading to the polls on Thursday, May 1.

There will be 57 Worcestershire County Council seats contested across 53 divisions, including 10 in the Wyre Forest area.

Polls will be open from 7am to 10pm when all the ballot boxes across the Wyre Forest and the rest of the county will be collected.

The count will be held at the Wyre Forest Leisure Centre from 10am on Friday, May 2, and we at the Kidderminster Standard will be there to bring you all the results live.

The current make-up of Worcestershire County Council – as determined by the 2021 vote and any subsequent by-elections – is 45 Conservative, 3 Labour, 4 Liberal Democrat and 5 others.

Here are the candidates for the Wyre Forest.

The **Bewdley** seat will be contested by Corinne Bailey (Green Party), Lisa Hyde (Reform UK), Dan Morehead (Conservative)



Ingrid Schmeising-Barnes (Liberal Democrats) and Rod Stanczyzyn (Labour).

Among the **Chaddesley** candidates will be Helen Dyke (Independent), Linda Hardwick (Liberal Democrats), Marcus Hart (The Conservative Party), Philip Hingley (Reform UK), Stuart Holmes (Labour) and Wren Nicholson (Green Party).

Cookley, Wolverley and Wribbenhall will be contested by Ben Brookes (Conservative), Philip Edmundson (Labour), Cloud Gollop (Liberal Democrats), Jenny Shaw (Reform UK) and Kate Spohrer (Green Party).

In **St Barnabas**, Bernadette Connor (Labour

and Co-operative Party), Dave Finch (Green Party), David Ross (Conservative), Anthony Upton (Reform UK) and Oliver Walker (Liberal Democrats) will contest the seat.

Standing in **St Chad's** will be Brett Caulfield (Green Party), Nigel Grace (Liberal Democrats), Steven Hollands (Conservative), Marie Holmes (Labour and Co-operative Party), Bill Hopkins (Reform UK) and Fran Oborski (Liberal Party - Keep It Local).

Among the candidates for **St George's** will be Mark Crosby (Reform UK), Kevin Gale (The Conservative Party), Mark Heafield (Liberal

Democrats), Oskar Hyams (Green Party), Shazu Miah (Liberal Party - Keep It Local), Tony Andrew Muir (Independent) and Di Smith (Labour and Co-operative Party).

In **St John's**, there will be John Beckingham (Labour and Co-operative Party), John Campion (Conservative), John Davis (Green Party), Matthew Jones (Reform UK), Suzanne Elizabeth Nicholl (Liberal Democrats) and Leigh Whitehouse (Independent).

Standing in **St Peters** are Keith Budden (Labour), Clare Cassidy (Liberal Democrats), Nathan Desmond (Conservative), Peter Dyke (Independent), Doug Hine (Green Party) and Rob Wharton (Reform UK).

Among those standing in **Stourport – Arley Kings and Riverside** are William Moule (Labour), Karl Perks (Reform UK), Timothy Schmeising-Barnes (Liberal Democrats), Alan Sutton (Conservative), John Thomas (Independent) and Clive Wood (Green Party).

And in **Stourport – Mitton**, will be John Caldwell (Liberal Democrats), Ian Robert Cresswell (Reform UK), Gilda Davis (Green

Reports prompt call to parents

PARENTS in Stourport are being urged to know where their children are after reports of youths climbing buildings during the Easter holidays.

The advice comes from Stourport Police Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) which has received reports of youths climbing on top of old buildings and buildings under construction in the town.

Officers said: "If your children are out and about please remind them that this kind of activity is extremely dangerous not only for them but also for the emergency services if they are required to attend these buildings."

"The buildings in question are privately owned and therefore this may result in a crime being committed."

Anyone who sees incidents happening should call 999 and report it as soon as possible.



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Old Court helps new beginnings

A WORCESTERSHIRE technology company is expanding its operations with a new base at the newly renovated Old Court in Kidderminster.

BetaDen provides support programmes for technology businesses and entrepreneurs, with its new Intakes 5.0 and 6.0 of its 'Incubate' programme for early-stage innovators being delivered at its new location.

The programme has now supported over 40 local businesses and this expansion is part of a broader strategy to strengthen Worcestershire's reputation as a hub for innovation and emerging technologies.

An official public launch event will take place at the Old Court on Wednesday, April 30, when further details about the firm's expansion, workshops, programmes and partnerships will be unveiled.

Donston Powell, BetaDen's external affairs director at BetaDen, said: "Expanding into Kidderminster's Old Court allows us to extend our reach and offer even more opportunities for businesses in the region."



"The investment in this historic site aligns with our mission to provide cutting-edge support to technology-led startups and scale-ups, giving them the resources, mentorship, and network they need to thrive."

The new base will also provide access to a range of on-site services designed to support innovation and product development. These will include 3D printing facilities, a fully-equipped podcasting studio and additional co-working and collaboration spaces.

The company's national award-winning Accelerate

programme will continue to operate from the Malvern Hills Science Park.

The incubator was previously hosted at The Kiln co-working space in Worcester.

BetaDen will continue its relationship with The Kiln through future event collaborations to support the local tech ecosystem.

Registration is now open for the Incubate scheme with further details at: beta-den.com/incubate - the BetaDen website.

The BetaDen team outside its new base at Kidderminster's Old Court. s



Around 50 Italian supercars will be heading to the Severn Valley Railway. Picture by Tony Carwithen. s

SPEEDING ABOUT TOWN: AROUND 50 Italian vehicles spanning several decades are heading to the Severn Valley Railway on Sunday, April 27, for a spectacular motor-ing event.

The 'Italian Autorail' has been organised in conjunction with the Italian AutoMoto Club, and will include multiple models of Ferrari, the latest Lamborghinis, and numerous vintage models from both companies.

The event will run between 10am and 4pm, with tickets being available to buy on

the day or to pre-book online.

The day out comes just in time for SVR's 60th Anniversary this year.

The King and Castle pub at the station will offer a selection of real ales and food, such as beer-battered fish and chips, sausage and mash and an all-day breakfast. And the SVR will provide plenty of parking.

SVR welcomes around 250,000-visitors-a-year and is among the UK's most popular and much-loved historical attractions.

Visit: svr.co.uk to pre-book tickets.

THIEVES tried to steal a Fiat 500 while it was parked in Kidderminster.

The raiders struck between 7.30pm on Monday and 9.30am on Tuesday at an address on Chester Road South.

They smashed windows to gain access to the vehicle and broke off the door handles before ripping out the casing.

They were unsuccessful in their attempt to steal the car due to the owner having a Ghost immobiliser installed.

The thieves then stole some of the

owner's personal possessions from the vehicle.

Kidderminster Police Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) are investigating the incident and have urged any witnesses or anyone with information to call officers on 101 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Officers are also interested in hearing from anyone with doorbell camera footage of the area.

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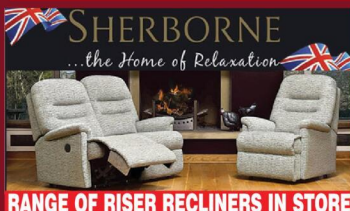
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Funeral firm MD elected president of trade group

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

THE MANAGING director of Hickton Family Funeral Directors has been elected president of the SAIF, the UK's largest trade association for independent funeral businesses and their suppliers.

Ross Hickton runs the company which has been caring for bereaved people since 1909 and has a Kidderminster funeral home based on Lisle Avenue.

It serves people and families in Kidderminster, Stourport and Bewdley.

Ross is passionate about promoting the benefits offered by traditional funeral directing firms in an age where 'no-frills send-offs' are being heavily marketed



Ross Hickton will serve in the role as president of the SAIF for a year.

He will serve in the role for one year.

Whitley Bay funeral director Gary Staker was elected SAIF first vice president and Paul Sillett, of Bury, became second vice president.

The event attracted hundreds of funeral directors from across the UK.

Ross has pledged to focus on three themes during his presidency - direct cremation, regulation and future-proofing family-run funeral companies.

He said these were the biggest challenges facing SAIF members today - but they also present opportunities to innovate and modernise.

"On direct cremation, I want to see some stand-



Ross addressed hundreds of funeral directors at the AGM in Glasgow.

ardisation across our membership and a real effort to educate the public about what an unattended funeral means in terms of grief journeys and family conflicts," he explained.

"Like many independent funeral directors, we offer direct cremation but our trained staff are there to ensure families understand exactly what it entails.

"I'm concerned that this guidance and advice isn't available with predominantly online providers and this is something I'm keen to address."

On regulation, he said SAIF would be looking to work with the government to support members' journeys to achieving compli-

ance and consistently high standards.

"In becoming a regulated profession, funeral directors will have a golden opportunity to strengthen public trust and secure their future."

And he said, in the coming year, he would be pushing for more partnerships with innovative suppliers and schemes to help family-run funeral firms remain in private hands and to make education more accessible.

SAIF CEO Terry Tennens said Ross' presidency represented a continuation of the association's modernisation trend in recent years.

Hickton Family Funeral Directors was founded by

Joe Hickton, a carpenter, builder and one-time mayor of Rowley Regis.

The business now has seven funeral home branches across the West Midlands and Worcestershire, along with a thriving stone masonry business based in Dudley.

Ross will be supported by his brother and sister, who are also heavily involved with the business, while he is president.

Ross' charity of choice for his presidential year is Prostate Cancer UK, a cause close to the heart of the family after they lost their dad, and third generation of the funeral business, Trevor Hickton, to cancer in September 2024.

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Four-day canal festival offers plenty to do over bank holiday

by Mia Whitehouse

THE St Richard's Canal Festival in Droitwich will take place this May bank holiday weekend and is completely free for everyone to attend.

The extravaganza runs from Friday, May 2, to the bank holiday Monday, May 5, featuring multiple events and activities, including boating, duck racing, community stalls, live entertainment and a real ale bar.

Among the activities will be a boat trip on the new Pamela May II from Vines Park and along the canal.

And there will be narrowboats and trading boats moored up for the weekend, along with model boats on display for demonstrations.

The annual Great Droitwich Duck Race, which takes place at 4.30pm on the bank holiday Monday on the River Salwarpe, is always among the highlights. Tickets to have a duck in the race are £1 with cash prizes for the winners.

Other events include a Fun Dog Show on bank holiday Monday at 11am, and the annual Blessing of the Upwich Brine Pit and procession on the Saturday morning.

The festival started with Richard de Wyche, who was said to bless



Droitwich Spa with brine in the 1240s. He was canonised in 1262 and St Richard's Day has been celebrated in the town ever since.

The Droitwich Barge Canal was built to carry salt from Droitwich down to the Severn and was completed in 1771. The Junction Canal

was constructed in 1853/4 to try to revive the canal trade which had been eroded by the development of the railways. Both canals were abandoned in 1939.

A campaign to restore the canals was initiated by the late Max Sinclair in the late 1960s and soon the

Droitwich Canal Trust was formed. In 1973 work began on restoring the canals.

In 2001, as part of the trust's fund-raising campaign, annual summer water festivals in Vines Park were arranged on the already restored canal in Vines Park, and in

There will be plenty of activities to suit all tastes at the St Richard's Canal Festival over the May bank holiday weekend. s

2006 there was also a revival of the celebration of St Richard's Day with a well dressing.

From 2008, the two events were combined and held on the first Saturday in May.

The canals were fully restored in 2011 (all the way from Hanbury Wharf down to the River Severn).

In 2013 the festival was extended to become St Richard's Festival, extending over the whole weekend with events in the town centre as well as in Vines Park.

Over the years that followed, Wychavon District Council became one of the main organisers of the event with more and more input from, amongst others, the Worcester to Birmingham and Droitwich Canals Society.

In 2016 a decision was made by the council to re-focus the festival back into Vines Park for 2017 and to step back from its involvement. The Worcester to Birmingham and Droitwich Canals Society successfully took it over as the main organisers with help from the district and town councils and others.

Visit strichardsfestival.co.uk or facebook.com/srctdroitwich for more on the festival, including the full programme of events.

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Air Ambulance garden to reflect lifesaving work of vital charity

MIDLANDS AIR Ambulance Charity (MAAC) is set to debut a medicinal show garden at BBC Gardeners' World Live, which takes place between June 15 and 17.

The deeply moving plot has been conceived with the help of designers, Helen Swan and Lucy Chapman, and landscaper Rupert Keys, to act as a living tribute to the charity's lifesaving work and the positive impact it has on patients' recovery.

Emma Gray, MAAC's Chief Operating Officer, said: "Our organisation is best known for delivering advanced treatment via our rapid response helicopters and critical care cars, which is why our Medical Garden places emotional recovery at its heart, acknowledging that for many patients, survivors, families, and crew, the impact trauma and medical emergencies have on patients."

"We are exceptionally proud to be part of BBC Gardeners' World Live this year and look forward to welcoming visitors and supporters in June."

Creator Helen, who has created award-winning installations for places such as Leeds and Glastonbury Festival, said: "The garden was never about beauty."

"It's about honesty, we have created a space that acknowledges patients' trauma, yet also reflects the strength that can be drawn from life-changing experiences and the role nature can



play in rebuilding lives."

Lucy, a fellow designer who is currently completing her Garden Design Diploma at KLC School of Design, said: "For us, the garden reflects not just MAAC's emergency response, but our understanding of the emotional recovery that follows."

"The feedback we hear from those the service has helped is often about small things, being able to walk again, hearing birdsong, and feeling rooted in life once more."

"The garden embodies this."

Every detail in the garden reflects the designers' core sustainable principles - permeable paths, locally sourced soil, stone and clay, reclaimed materials, and resilient planting suited to changing climates.

Rupert has previously been on the BBC Gardeners' World Live in 2023 for another best show garden.

Following its appearance on the BBC, elements of the garden will be relocated to the Midlands Air Ambulance Charity airbase and charity headquarters in Shifnal, Shropshire.

How the Midlands Air Ambulance Charity's medicinal show garden will look. s

To support the charity's lifesaving work visit: midlandsairambulance.com or follow the charity on social media to join the conversation.

The Midlands Air Ambulance

The Midlands Air Ambulance, which serves the largest air ambulance region in the UK, has a new airbase and headquarters in Shropshire, on the border of Staffordshire and the West Midlands.

It also has other bases at Strensham Services on the M5 in Worcestershire and Tatenall, near Burton-on-Trent.

The MAA delivers advanced patient care on the scene across six counties, including the West Midlands and Worcestershire.

The new building will help future-proof the service to ensure it continues to meet the rising demand for its specialist skills.

It includes offices for the charity's support staff and enhanced services for its pre-hospital emergency medicine doctors and critical care paramedics. This includes a clinical training and development simulation suite.

The helicopter-led service responds to an average of 4,300 missions each year - 2,000 of the deployments are air missions.

The charity also has a fleet of rapid response vehicles and three critical care cars.

The charity's three aircraft each carry a crew comprising a pilot, two paramedics or flight doctors plus full life-support medical equipment.

The fleet of critical care cars each have critical care paramedics on-board with full life-support medical equipment.

Each year it costs £16million just to keep the three charity helicopters and fleet of critical care cars operational.

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Cable stolen

AN EV cable was stolen from Trimpley Drive in Kidderminster. The cable was taken between 4.30pm and 7pm on April 14. Officers are investigating and have appealed for the public's help to catch the culprits.

PC Kevin Walsh from Kidderminster Police said: "Cable theft impacts negatively on businesses and inconveniences the public for very little criminal gain.

"Electrical charging is a relatively new technology and therefore this a new and emerging crime type which we are working to prevent.

"We are acting proactively to identify offenders."

Police urged witnesses or anyone with information on this type of crime to email PC Walsh at kevin.walsh@westmercia.police.uk or call him on 07811 762123.

Alternatively, call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Warm welcome

AN UNFORGETTABLE experience is on offer in Kidderminster which will give people an insight into life as a firefighter.

The Fire Fighters Charity is holding a fun challenge for teams of up to six at the Wyre Forest Fire Station from 9am to 1pm on Wednesday, April 30.

During the day, participants will learn the insights to being a firefighter and take part in different drills led by qualified instructors with all the equipment needed being provided.

The cost per group is \$1,500.

Visit: this story on our website for more information and to book places.



Beavers have been introduced into the Wyre Forest and are thriving. A large pool has been created with lodges made from sticks and branches, all held together with mud. Pictures by Forestry England/Crown copyright.

Hopes grow as family of beavers enjoy new home

A FAMILY of beavers which were introduced into the Wyre Forest a year ago are thriving and there are now hopes the group will grow over the summer.

The two adult beavers and their four kits were relocated to the secure five-hectare enclosure from Scotland and have since settled well, making a positive impact on their local environment.

The most noticeable change - following the project by Forestry

England, which worked with Natural England and the Beaver Trust, is the creation of a 30-metre dam they have build. The family has created a large pool with lodges made from sticks and branches, all held together with mud.

Richard Boles, Wyre Beat Forester for Forestry England said: "It has been incredibly special to watch the beaver family adapt and thrive here in Wyre Forest. "Witnessing the changes they've made to the landscape through their natural behaviours has been truly remarkable."

Stewart Carter, work supervisor for Forestry England said: "We're all hopeful that the family will grow this summer with the arrival of new kits.

"It would be wonderful to see beavers born right here in the forest."

By 2026 Forestry England aim to create thousands more hectares to integrate wildlife to forests, as well as increasing the diversity of forest visitors and planting 2,000 hectares of new woodlands.

Forestry England manages and cares for the nation's 1,500 woods and forest. It hopes to create at least 6,000 more hectares where wilding activities are integrated and the diversity of visitors in the nation's forests is increased.

Forestry England also hopes to plant at least 2,000 hectares of new, high quality, predominantly broadleafwoodlands

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Farage: It's Reform v Tories to win council



Nigel Farage met the Worcestershire candidates ahead of the county council elections on May 1. Picture by Ashleigh Osborne. © Bullivant Media Group Ltd.

"THEY'RE the most optimistic group of people I have met" – that was the view of Reform UK leader Nigel Farage as he met the party's Worcestershire election candidates.

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

Mr Farage, on a whistle-stop tour of the country, chose the Oast House pub in Redditch on Tuesday evening for the meet-and-greet.

For the first time in a local election, Reform UK is fielding a candidate in every division for the county council – 53 in total – and they all gathered in the pub waiting for Mr Farage's arrival.

There were loud cheers as he entered and he addressed the waiting crowd.

After his speech, it was out into the beer garden for group shots and photographs with Mr Farage and each of the candidates.

Speaking to the Standard afterwards, he said: "This is the most optimistic and bullish group I have met.

"If you weren't optimistic, you wouldn't do this but they clearly believe they can win Worcestershire County Council."

Mr Farage praised the candidates' efforts and endeavours adding: "Many have knocked on more than 400 doors – they're really trying."

On the battle for the county he added: "Looking at the numbers, this will be a straightforward fist fight between us and the Tories."

"This is one of their long-term strongholds and a bookmaker would probably make them marginal favourites, given the history."

"But you never know."

"They are not going to turn out for Labour in Worcestershire, it's not a Lib Dem area, the Greens will focus on a few seats and will win a few seats – I'm sure of it – but apart from that, it's us versus the Tories."

He did say Worcestershire would

not be in Reform UK's 'top bracket' of target councils but added statistics showed that around 40 per cent of people had considered voting Reform. Many had chosen not to because they did not believe we could win.

"But if there is a belief we can win – as there is among our candidates – it will increase voter turn-out and more people will vote for us," he added.

On the message he wanted to get across locally Mr Farage said: "On a local level, it is not Worcestershire County Council's job to spend £500,000 on decarbonisation – that's not their job."

"Their job is to represent council taxpayers and spend money on local services – for SEND kids, roads and other services."

He described the council's decision to spend £16million on the Kepax bridge which he referred to as the 'bridge to nowhere' as the

'most ridiculous thing he had ever heard'.

Mr Farage said local government had 'become too complacent' and 'we need to send the auditors in'.

"It needs a big shake-up and we're the only ones who can do it," he added.

He said with the way central government had vastly reduced the amount of cash it had given to local councils, they had to cut the cloth accordingly.

"My criticism of Worcestershire County Council is it hasn't done that – until now, because they're panicking," he explained. "We need a leaner, more efficient local government with higher productivity levels."

One of the candidates expressed concerns about the message being sent out by Reform UK with regard to the NHS and how it was funded and delivered.

Mr Farage denied he wanted to privatise the NHS. He added: "It's not about privatisation, it's about whether you have to pay to use it."

"A lot of lies have been put out about what we have said."

"I have always said the funding model is broken – the bigger percentage of our GDP we put in, the less return we get out."

"I want the NHS to be free – as it was designed to be in the late 1940s – and how we get to that point needs a radical rethink. Whether it means using healthcare insurance companies, I don't care – as long as we get more bang for our buck and we're not getting it now."

Mr Farage pointed to healthcare systems in 'our neighbours across the Channel' which were doing a lot better than the UK. "France and Germany are organising healthcare better than we are, so let's learn from them," he added.



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Home & Garden Ideas

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

Whether you're hosting a family get-together or just want to embrace the joys of spring, we've gathered the best tips to help you.



Bring the Outdoors In

Think of spring and think of 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 a seasonal twist.*



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HOME & GARDEN

A Touch of Pastel

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. Crafty types can get the whole family involved with DIY decorations.

Set the Perfect Table

Planning a special 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.

Garden Glory: Ready for Guests

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.

Spring Clean with Purpose

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.

In Bloom and In Style

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 the better weather with warmth, colour, and a touch of spring magic.



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Fire service delivers life-saving equipment to Ukraine frontline

WORCESTERSHIRE's fire and rescue service has joined a convoy of national colleagues to deliver thousands of pieces of life-saving firefighting equipment to Ukrainian firefighters.

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) is supporting the convoy which includes 30 vehicles, including 26 fire engines and various equipment such as hoses, PPE, road traffic collision equipment and more.

A total of 18 fire and rescue services from across the UK are participating in the convoy, organised by FIRE AID, National Resilience and International Search and Rescue, HM Government, National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and the Fire Industry Association (FIA).

The convoy, which is the eighth and largest of its kind, is sponsored by the UK government. It will add to the 119 fire and rescue vehicles and 200,000 pieces of firefighting equipment already donated since the invasion began.

HWFRS Area Commander Lee Watson said: "HWFRS has been part of multiple convoys in an effort to support our Ukrainian colleagues.

"Ukrainian firefighters display incredible bravery daily, risking their lives to protect their communities despite limited resources and immense danger.

"We recognise the ongoing challenge and are privileged to be able to support their efforts.

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Fire Authority



for supporting these donations, all the staff that have made this possible and the volunteers who have selflessly given up their own time to participate in the delivery of this essential equipment."

The war in Ukraine has had a devastating impact on Ukrainian

firefighters.

The latest figures from the State Emergency Services of Ukraine show, since the start of the full-scale invasion in 2022, 100 firefighters have been killed and a further 431 injured, while four are currently in captivity and one is missing.

Meanwhile, 411 firehouses and 1,700 fire vehicles have been destroyed and 95 firehouses are now in occupied territories.

Despite these challenges, Ukrainian firefighters continue to operate in the war zone to save lives and protect property, often at great personal risk.

About 100 volunteers, drawn from fire and rescue services and FIRE AID, are participating in the convoy.

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service is supporting the convoy to get fire engines and equipment to Ukraine. s

Victims of stalking urged to speak out during national awareness week

WEST Mercia Police has pledged to do everything possible to bring stalkers to justice.

The vow comes during National Stalking Awareness Week which highlights the seriousness of the crime and the devastating effect on the lives of victims and their friends and family.

The awareness week is led by Suzy Lamplugh Trust - it began on Monday and runs until today (April 21 to 25).

West Mercia Police said

remained committed to doing everything possible to combat the crime.

Det Supt Leanne Lowe, said: "As a force we remain committed to protecting victims of this crime and to bring those committing such offences to justice.

"We continue to support National Stalking Awareness Week, which gives us an opportunity to talk about how we tackle stalking and support victims.

"Victims of stalking can feel

very alone and unsettled, and the experience can be extremely distressing not only for them but for their family and friends.

"This is why it is important that we get the message out that help and support is always available.

"If you are a victim of stalking, please do not feel that you are alone.

"Any kind of persistent, unwanted contact that causes distress is stalking and is unacceptable.

"We know it can sometimes take

great courage to report stalking to the police, but rest assured we take all reports very seriously and our trained officers will offer you full support and reassurance.

"They will also be on hand to work with partners to provide safeguarding."

Anyone who feels like they are a victim of stalking are urged to contact West Mercia Police.

The force said it took the crime very seriously.

Incidents of stalking can be

reported by calling West Mercia Police on 101 or by going to: westmerciapolice.uk and heading to the 'report a crime' section.

Anyone who does not feel comfortable speaking to the police can visit: suzylamplugh.org/Pages/Category/national-stalking-helpline to contact the National Stalking Helpline.

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Health chiefs prescribe a six-week course on best use of antibiotics

A DIGITAL campaign to help keep antibiotics working for all and tackle the threat of antibiotic resistance has been launched.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has introduced 'Andi Biotic' who is set to embark on a six-week long mission to answer people's uncertainties about when and how to take antibiotics to help preserve their effectiveness for us today and future generations.

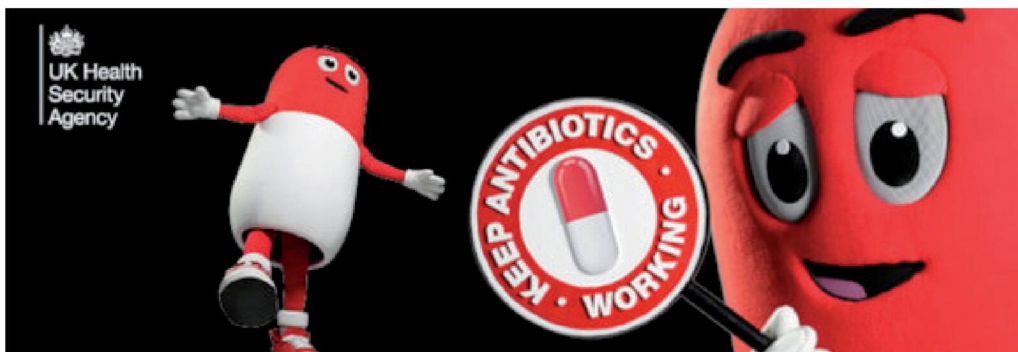
Andi is said to come to the rescue in a variety of scenarios to make sure people are taking antibiotics in the right way, including not taking them for colds and flu, only taking antibiotics when they have been prescribed and not saving antibiotics for future use.

Antibiotic resistance is a major public health threat, and new research by UKHSA highlights that almost half of the UK population are concerned about how the issue affects them personally.

Yet, over half are either unsure if there is anything they can individually do to prevent antibiotics becoming less effective at treating infections or incorrectly believe there's nothing they can personally do.

Dispelling myths

Aiming to bust these misconceptions among young adults aged 18 to 34, the digital campaign will be led by a new comedic mascot char-



Andi Biotic will challenge misconceptions about antibiotics and tackle the threat of antimicrobial resistance.

acter, Andi Biotic.

Andi was developed by UKHSA to take the success of the Keep Antibiotics Working Campaign from 2018 to a new generation.

This first stage is a pilot which will test the potential to capture people's attention and imagination through digital channels.

UKHSA regional deputy director – West Midlands, Katie Spence, said: "Antibiotic resistance is one of the biggest global health threats that exists.

"Each time antibiotics are not used correctly, it increases the chance that microbes will evolved to resist the medicine designed to kill them, leading to more and more

resistant strains of infections, aka 'super bugs', that become increasingly harder to treat.

"This puts you and your family at risk of more severe or longer illness, and means in the future, antibiotics might not work when you really need them.

"That's why we're asking everyone in the West Midlands to support us in the fight against AMR (antimicrobial resistance), by doing a few very simple things."

The campaign launched on UKHSA's social media channels and will be at participating GP surgeries and pharmacies throughout April and May.

'Future threat to health'

Prof Dame Jenny Harries, Chief Executive of UKHSA, said: "Antibiotic resistance is impacting people every day in this country and is one of the biggest threats to our future health. But we can all help tackle the problem. Everyone, especially young people, has the power to help change this by following simple steps to take antibiotics correctly and only when they have been prescribed by a healthcare professional.

"This isn't just for our own health – it's about helping protect everyone in our communities and future generations."

Antibiotic-resistant bacteria of any kind are less likely to respond to some treatments, which can cause serious complications, including bloodstream infections, sepsis and hospitalisation.

People who get a bacterial infection that is resistant to one or more antibiotics are more likely to die from their infection compared to those who have an antibiotic sensitive infection.

Antibiotic resistance occurs naturally but misuse, including underuse, overuse, and inappropriate use, of antimicrobial medicines is one of the major drivers of drug-resistant infections.



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RSPCA sets target to recruit more Wildlife Friends

NATURE lovers are being urged to embrace the call of the spring and sign up to be Wildlife Friends with the RSPCA.

Last year more than 2,000 people signed up for Wildlife Friends and completed a range of seasonal tasks aimed at helping wildlife to thrive in their own gardens and community green spaces. These included building bug hotels and cleaning bird feeders.

The RSPCA has relaunched Wildlife Friends and hopes even more animal lovers can enjoy fun activities that will help protect and nurture wildlife.

By volunteering and taking action for animals in their communities, those taking part will not only be helping wildlife but will be ensuring that the animal charity's highly-skilled frontline staff have more time to focus on tackling cruelty and neglect.

Wildlife Friends 2025 enjoyed an inspiring start when social media influencer Esme Higgs visited RSPCA Mallydam Wood Wildlife Centre in East Sussex to learn about the work staff do rehabilitating wild

by Sarah Mason
sarah.mason@bullivantmedia.com

animals so they can be released back into the wild.

Esme has generated a huge social media following promoting horse welfare, best practice in equestrianism and her own experiences of countryside life.

Her commitment to nature was enhanced further by a tour of the Hastings centre, which included feeding seals their lunch, meeting two fox cubs that had recently been rescued from a building site and filling up the bird feeders in the woods as part of her Wildlife Friends tasks.

Esme said: "We all know our natural world is facing huge challenges but the great news is that everyone can do something to help. We need everyone for every animal."

"If you want to get involved, become a RSPCA Wildlife Friend to find lots of simple ways you can make life better for wildlife in your community."

"All these small acts of kindness don't take long, but they'll make a huge difference for animals, so

join thousands of other people who care, and sign up today."

For their first task of spring, Wildlife Friends have been making a simple apple and seed bird feeder.

Other tasks to complete during spring include building a nest box for all kinds of wildlife in your garden, including bats, as well as creating neighbourhood corridors for wildlife such as hedgehogs.

Building bug hotels and planting wildlife-friendly plants to support the local ecosystem are other tasks for later in the season.

The RSPCA's lead wildlife officer Inspector Geoff Edmond has some invaluable tips about what kind of wildlife-friendly plants to sow.

He said: "There are many species you can plant that are beneficial for wildlife and can be enjoyed during the year. They include native shrubs such as Hawthorn and Bramble as well as Berberis, which flower in the spring to provide insect nectar, and produce berries in the autumn which the birds will enjoy."

"Some shrubs like these do have thorns and are prickly but this provides extra safe nesting sites for



birds. Something everyone can do easily is to sow wildflower seeds in containers, plant pots and gardens between April and May. They will add colour and beauty to your outdoor environment and provide nectar rich sources for bees, butterflies and other insects.

"It's great fun seeing lovely flowers buzzing with activity on a late spring or summer's day when you see beautiful butterflies feeding on your plants. Whatever you plant it will make a difference, and is the

start of a journey with nature which you are taking to safeguard our wildlife."

Last year RSPCA Wildlife Friends completed 1,653 tasks, the most popular of which were providing food for hedgehogs, taking part in a butterfly count and putting out a bird feeder.

This year the charity wants to recruit at least 2,500 new Wildlife Friends.

To become a RSPCA Wildlife Friend, visit the charity's website.

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

Beginning with the top highlighted letter, follow a continuous path of words associated with the given subject. The trail goes through each letter once, twisting up, down and sideways, but never diagonally.

Puddings

R R B E C U A R E D C K Q U E
H A C L B S T D T D I D D U E
U B R U M L E B T S S I N P N
E I P A T L W A O P E S G F O
T R E R T B E K P P L T U T T
A E E F F A E D A F I R B R E
C T A R O N K A B L E N D P U
L E J T O L O L Y R B A I D D
F F A M R Y P I R E A D N O L
E O T C I T S N E M L E G M I
E P Y K E P E G U N E G S E N
D U N G L I P E O M B N A B A
D I N A L P E C S S B L C M A K
S S M E L O H E O T A N A L E
E U O T A C O M N E A K S A D

Solutions opposite

[illegible]

DOWN

1. Sleight of hand (11)
2. Sheep (3)
9. Employ (3)
3. Sea-eagles (5)
10. Transact (9)
4. Summary (6)
11. Takes off (5)
5. Sailor (7)
13. Tarnished (7)
6. Fancied (9)
14. Scream (6)
7. Get far ahead of (11)
16. Stress (6)
8. Starring part (7,4)
18. Performer (7)
12. Anticipation (9)
19. Purchaser (5)
15. Rapture (7)
20. Abandon (4,5)
17. Part of the eye (6)
21. Fish (3)
19. Consecrate (5)
22. January 1st (3,5,3)
21. Epoch (3)

Scribble pad

LADDER

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

Tidy
Bird shelter
In case
Inventory
Light fog

NEAR

MISS

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.

57581377 gives a bird;
2691 gives a second bird;
8439 gives a bird of prey.

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

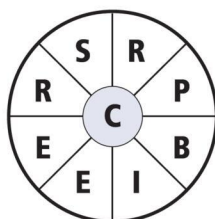
CODEWORD

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.

A		18		10			10		22	23	19	4	6
B	15	25	24	7	6	4	23		1			11	
C		16		25			3		7	4	3	24	5
D	12	22	21	8	22	25	9	24	22				4
E		21				26			12		14		18
F	22	23	5	13	25	8	22		18	11	26	23	22
G			25				14				11		
H	12	26	20	20	25		22	10	2	3	26	21	22
I	3		22		21			15				25	
J	10				21	22	18	22	23		18	26	16
K	10	18	26	24	22		4			15		25	
L		25			10		17	4	21	22	26	13	23
M	13	21	26	R	I	10	18		17		23	22	

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.

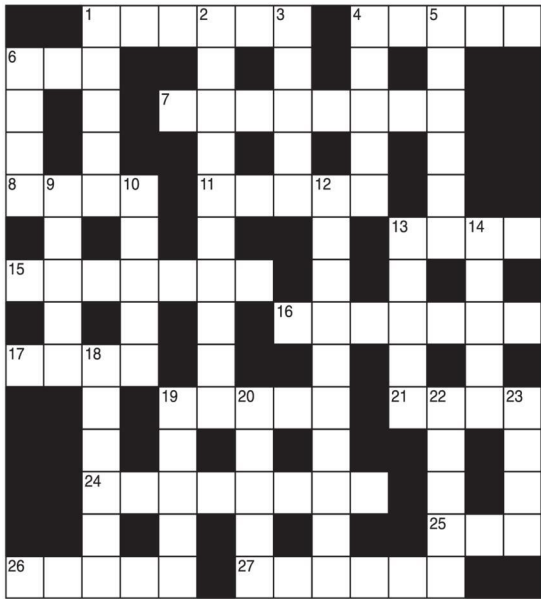


How you rate

10 words: average	20 words: very good
15 words: good	25 or more: excellent.

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE CROSSWORD

- ACROSS**
- 1 Breed of long-bodied, short-legged hunting hound, with long ears and head (6)
- 4 See 6 Across
- 6,4 Across & 14 Down Artist, yachtsman and naturalist who founded the World Wide Fund for Nature (3,5,5)
- 7 Palace of the Moorish kings of Granada, Spain (8)
- 8 King of Mercia from 757 to 796, successor of Aethelbald (4)
- 11 Tropical, evergreen tree yielding a fleshy fruit eaten ripe or used green for pickles, etc. (5)
- 13 The monetary unit of Mexico (4)
- 15 Volatile colourless liquid valuable as a solvent of organic compounds (7)
- 16 Surname of the dramatist, poet and essayist famous for his tragedy Cato (7)
- 17 Piece of glass, etc., with one or both sides curved for concentrating or dispersing light rays (4)
- 19 Spotted flatfish resembling the turbot (5)
- 21 Distinct, main sections of a play or plays (4)
- 24 Unbroken rows of attached houses (8)
- 25 & 12 Down Gilbert and Sullivan operetta also called The King of Barataria (3,10)
- 26 Hastings, president of Malawi from 1966-94 (5)
- 27 See 4 Down



- DOWN**
- 1 A summary of a client's case for the instruction of counsel (5)
- 2 Tailed amphibian once supposed to live in fire (10)
- 3 Pen surname of Samuel Langhorne Clemens (5)
- 4 & 27 Across Spanish cellist, conductor, pianist and composer whose works include The Manger (5,6)
- 5 One of the British species of shad (6)
- 6 Airtight chamber for storing grain (4)
- 9 See 13 Down
- 10 In music, another name for counter-tenors (5)
- 12 See 25 Across
- 13 & 9 Down Latin phrase meaning 'at first appearance', used chiefly in law (5,5)
- 14 See 6 Across
- 18 See 20 Down
- 19 Island in the Outer Hebrides, chief town Castlebay (5)
- 20 & 18 Down English mathematician, physicist and philosopher noted for his law of gravitation (5,6)
- 22 Short-tailed water fowls belonging to the rail family and resembling moorhens (5)
- 23 The fruit of the blackthorn (4)

SOLUTIONS

General Knowledge Crossword

ACROSS: 1 Bassett; 4 Peter; 6 Sir; 7 Alhambra; 8 Offa; 11 Mango; 13 Peso; 15 Acetone; 16 Addison; 17 Lens; 21 Briel; 24 Salomander; 25 The; 26 Banda; 27 Casals.

DOWN: 1 Briel; 2 Salamander; 3 Twain; 4 Pablo; 5 Twaite; 6 Silo; 9 Fader; 10 Altos; 12 Foretaste; 13 Prima; 14 Scott; 18 Newton; 19 Barra; 20 Isaac; 22 Coots; 23 Sloe.

Crossword

ACROSS: 1 Legenderman; 9 Use; 10 Negotiate; 11 Doffs; 13 Sullied; 14 Shrek; 16 Strain; 18 Artist; 19 Buyer; 20 East aside; 21 Feb; 22 New Year's Day; Down: 2 Ewe; 3 Ernes; 4 Digest; 5 Maledot; 6 Imaginary; 7 Outdistance; 8 Leading role; 12 Foretaste; 15 Ecstasy; 17 Netina; 19 Bless; 21 Era.

Wordwheel Pathfinder

Rhubarb cunibie, Custard, Bakewell tart, Banoffee pie, Treadle tart, Jam roly-poly, Baked apples, Spotted dick, Queen of puddings, Trifle, Bread and butter pudding, Semolina, Baked Alaska, Eton mess, Blancmange, Lemon meringue pie, Sticky toffee pudding, Apple pie, Chocolate mousse.

Niner

ARTICHOKE

Prescribe

Rhubarb cunibie, Custard, Bakewell tart, Banoffee pie, Treadle tart, Jam roly-poly, Baked apples, Spotted dick, Queen of puddings, Trifle, Bread and butter pudding, Semolina, Baked Alaska, Eton mess, Blancmange, Lemon meringue pie, Sticky toffee pudding, Apple pie, Chocolate mousse.

Codeword

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

Ladder

Miss, Miss.

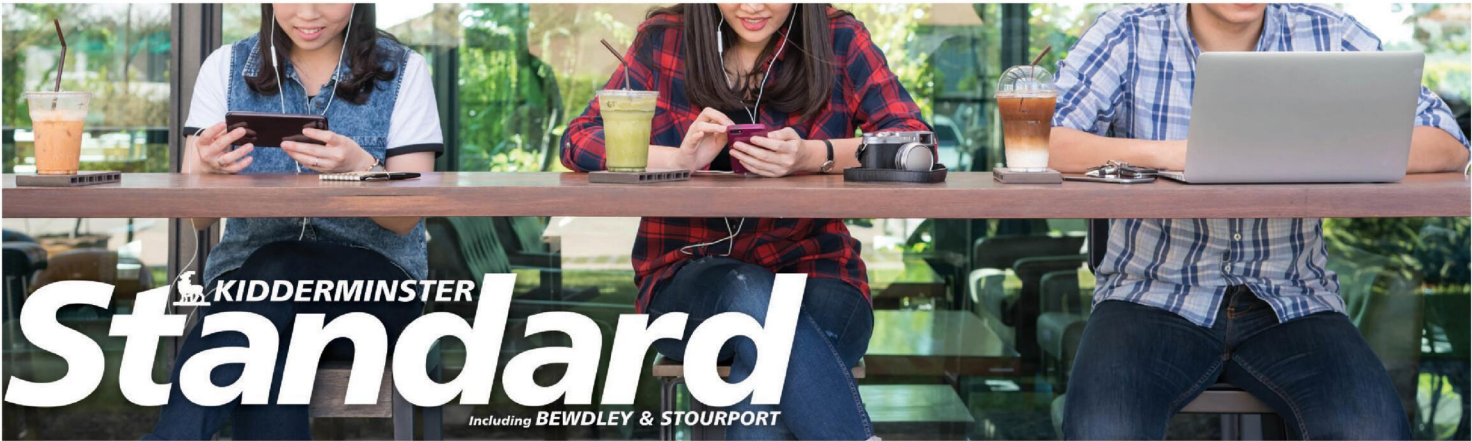
Neat, Neat, Nest, Nest, List, List.

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

Easy

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

Hard



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Renault to launch mini supercar

FOLLOWING the reveal and official announcement of the reboot on March 17, Renault is opening reservations for the Renault 5 Turbo 3E 'mini-supercar'.

A modern, electric reboot of the legendary Renault 5 Turbo and Turbo 2 of the 1980s, the new vehicle will be available from £135,000 including VAT as an introductory price, excluding options, accessories and personalisation choices.

It will be sold in Europe, including the UK, the Middle East, Japan and Australia.

From Tuesday (April 22), customers wishing to place a secure order for one of the 1,980 numbered examples of Renault 5 Turbo 3E could complete the form on the dedicated page of the Renault website in their country. They will select a dealer who will contact them to make an appointment at the showroom. Here, they will sign a reservation form. They will then have priority when Renault 5 Turbo 3E becomes available to buy. Customers can choose the number of their future car if they so wish.

In line with the principle of upfront funding, any dealers placing a reservation for a car – in their capacity as key partners – will contribute to its pre-financing, just like the customers. This collective effort will contribute to financing the development of Renault 5 Turbo 3E.

The next phase will start in early 2026, when customers will be contacted by their selected dealer in to specify their personalisation choices. They will then be first in line to order Renault 5 Turbo 3E when it becomes available.

Alongside the historic colours of Renault 5 Turbo and Turbo 2, such as the Rouge Grenade of production models, or the black, yellow and white racing livery of the

Renault 5 Turbo that won the 1982 Tour de Corse rally, customers will be able to choose from a range of new 'gentleman driver' options.

They will have the opportunity to meet Renault designers in order to create their own exterior and interior livery, selecting the colours and materials for a wide range of features – seats, door panels, dashboard and more – allowing them to create a truly unique car.

Finally, in first half 2027, customers will be able to finalise the configuration and order their car from the dealer. The first vehicles configured and ordered will be delivered in 2027.

Ivan Segal, Renault's global sales and operations director, said: "We are proud to have succeeded in involving our dealers, as well as the first customers, in the pre-financing process of the Renault 5 Turbo 3E."

"To achieve this, we have implemented an innovative reservation scheme, befitting this exceptional vehicle, an major image vector for the Renault brand."

"On one hand, it allows customers to secure a priority order reservation within the network from today."

"On the other hand, it helps us finalise the development of the Renault 5 Turbo 3E and launch the first units in 2027."

"The Renault 5 Turbo 3E could not have come to life without this entirely new process, which demonstrates Renault Group's ability to innovate in the marketing schemes of extraordinary projects."

Built on a custom-designed aluminium platform tailored to its performance and ambitions, Renault 5 Turbo 3E is a vehicle of spectacular dimensions – 4.08m long, 2.03m wide and 1.38m tall. Combining supercar-width with city-car length and impressive levels of performance, it can claim to create a new class of vehicles – 'mini-supercars'.

Renault 5 Turbo 3E has two innovative in-wheel motors at the rear, making it a rear-wheel drive.

Developing the equivalent of 540hp, it boasts a massive 4,800Nm of torque that is available even faster than with a conventional electric motor.

With its all-carbon superstructure, it weighs under 1,450kg and can sprint from 0-100km/h in under 3.5seconds.

With a 70kWh battery and onboard DC charger able to support up to 350kW with its 800-volt architecture, it charges from 15 to 80 per cent in just 15 minutes.

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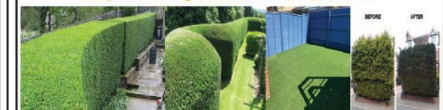
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Harriers ready for final day showdown with title on the line

by Aaron Sutcliffe
aaron.sutcliffe@bullivantmedia.com

FOOTBALL: PHIL Brown admits Kidderminster Harriers final game of the season will be one of the biggest matches he has ever been involved in.

Harriers know victory against Southport on the final day will secure the National League North title. Kidderminster hammered local rivals Hereford 5-1 on Easter Monday (read right) to remain top of the table and set up a title showdown on the final day.

Brown's side sit above Brackley Town on goal difference while Scunthorpe United sit two points further back.

Only a win would guarantee Harriers the title, a draw would allow either Brackley or Scunthorpe to snatch top spot if they win elsewhere.

Harriers hold a significant goal difference advantage over Brackley and are five goals clear of Scunthorpe meaning a draw could open the door for the latter side to pounce.

Kidderminster play a Southport side who sit down in 19th place and have failed to win any of their last six league matches while Harriers enter the fixture on a 13-game unbeaten run.

Brackley host already-relegated Farsley Celtic who are guaranteed to finish bottom of the table.

And Scunthorpe travel to Hereford with the latter side still chasing a play-off spot.

Brown admits the club's most recent league defeat against Spennymoor Town back in late February proved a turning point in the club's season.

And Brown is looking forward to the occasion with Harriers aiming to return to the National League at the first attempt.

Brown said: "It's one of the biggest games I've been involved in, we've got to go to Southport and win."

"We haven't looked back since being comprehensively beaten by Spennymoor."

Race for the title

	P	W	D	L	GD	PTS
1 Kidderminster	45	27	8	10	50	89
2 Brackley Town	45	28	5	12	28	89
3 Scunthorpe United	45	25	12	8	45	87
4 Chester	45	24	12	9	25	84
5 King's Lynn Town	45	23	10	12	10	79
6 Chorley	45	21	13	11	23	76
7 Hereford	45	22	10	13	18	76
8 Curzon Ashton	45	22	10	13	18	76
9 Buxton	45	23	5	17	22	74
10 Spennymoor Town	45	20	13	12	25	73

Final day fixtures

Brackley Town vs Farsley Celtic
Buxton vs Warrington Town
Curzon Ashton vs Leamington
Darlington vs Needham Market
Hereford vs Scunthorpe United
King's Lynn Town vs Chester
Marine vs South Shields
Peterborough Sports vs Scarborough
Radcliffe vs Alfreton Town
Rushall Olympic vs Chorley
Southport vs Kidderminster Harriers
Spennymoor Town vs Oxford City

"A few home truths were fired at us the following day and they've stuck. The response is there for everybody to see."

"We're looking forward to it, all we've got to do now is focus on one game."

Kidderminster make the trip to Southport on Saturday, April 26 with kick-off at 3pm at the Big Help Stadium.

Kiddy hammer Hereford to stay top of the pile in promotion race

KIDDERMINSTER Harriers are just one game away from claiming the National League North title after comprehensively beating Hereford 5-1 in their penultimate fixture, writes Neil Gordon.

The Reds will be crowned champions and gain promotion back to the National League at the first attempt, if they can better the results of Brackley Town and Scunthorpe United, when they face Southport at The Big Help Stadium this weekend.

David Worrall gave Harriers the perfect start with his early strike and Amari Morgan-Smith doubled their advantage at Aggborough, before Omari Sterling-James's individual brilliance grabbed a first-half life-line for Hereford.

However, a second-half double from Maz Kouhyar against his former club put Harriers in command, before Morgan-Smith grabbed his second and Kidderminster's fifth at the death.

Kidderminster remain top of the National League North table on 89 points, joint with Brackley Town, but ahead of their title rivals by a superior goal difference of plus 22.

A sell-out season-high

attendance of 5,341 watched on at Aggborough as Kidderminster completed a double over their Edgar Street rivals and secured a 11th win in 13 unbeaten games.

No sooner had the Harriers supporters taken their seats they were back on their feet when Worrall curled home a glorious shot after just 95 seconds to send Aggborough wild.

Morgan-Smith then doubled Harriers lead on 18 minutes after linking up superbly with Ashley Hemmings.

The move started deep in the home half with a throw-in to Hereford which the visitors cleared up to Hemmings. He flicked the ball on to Morgan-Smith who played a one-two with Hemmings. Morgan-Smith ploughed forwards and dispatched a firm shot past advancing Hereford goalkeeper Theo Richardson to get the Harriers supporters celebrating again.

Reece Devine then whipped a low ball across the Hereford goal and Zak Brown forced a save with the visitors unable to clear their lines.

Hereford responded after winning a free-kick on the right which Sterling-James

brilliantly dispatched home from fully 35 yards to ignite a huge roar from the 1,083 travelling Bulls supporters in the South Stand.

As the interval approached Matt Preston headed wide at the back post from a free-kick for Hereford and Hemmings shot over the bar for Kidderminster.

The Reds went 3-1 ahead early in the second-half when Maz Kouhyar finished off a sweeping move with aplomb in front of an ecstatic North Stand to put Harriers further in front.

Kouhyar struck again 10 minutes later to make it 4-1 with a header at the back post from a deep cross after numerous stoppages, substitutions and yellow cards.

On the hour mark the flood-lights came on ahead of a heavy downpour which left the pitch sodden for the remainder of the game.

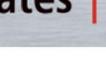
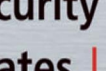
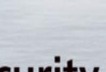
And deep into eight minutes of stoppage time the tireless Morgan-Smith grabbed his second goal to seal a comprehensive 5-1 victory and secure another vital three points in Harriers quest to claim the National League North title.

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