

KIDDERMINSTER **Standard**

Including **BEWDLEY & STOURPORT**

Friday, June 13th 2025 Week 24

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Your **FREE** edition - just pick one up and keep up with the news



Your councils are changing

Major changes are planned to councils across Worcestershire as part of the biggest shake-up of local government in more than 50 years.

The Government is requiring 21 areas of England to restructure their system of local government before 2029.

There are two parts to the Government's proposed changes:

Local government reorganisation

Where the Government is looking to replace borough/district/city and county councils with fewer councils.

Devolution

Where the Government is looking to transfer powers and funding to new Strategic Authorities (also called Combined Authorities) that cover a number of new council areas and are responsible for large projects such as transport, infrastructure and economic development. You can find out more about devolution at www.shapeworcestershire.org

Help us piece it together

The six borough, city and district councils across Worcestershire are now asking for your help to piece together how councils should be organised in future to continue to deliver the services you rely on every day. Our public engagement on local government reorganisation runs from **1 to 29 June 2025**.

Look inside to learn more and fill in our survey, or scan the QR code or visit www.shapeworcestershire.org to fill in the survey online.

If you need the survey in a different format please call 01386 565000.



Why is reorganisation happening?

The Government requires all 21 two-tier areas of local government in England to reorganise by 1 April, 2028 into one or more unitary authorities (single councils that provide all services).

Not reorganising is not an option. Our job is to recommend to the Government what should replace your current councils in the future. That's why your views are so important.

Aims of reorganisation

In its English Devolution White Paper and guidance to councils, the Government set out some key points it wants councils to take into account in their reorganisation proposals. A simple summary of these is below.

- A single tier of local government that relates to a sensible economic area and allows a smaller number of councils to work better together on large scale projects, like increasing housing supply and meeting local needs.
- Improve local services to make life easier and better for local people.
- Save money and deliver better value by cutting costs.
- Make local government simpler and less confusing for residents.
- Support local identity by creating a new local government structure that makes sense to local communities and what makes them special.
- Strengthen community engagement and empowerment.
- Larger more robust councils, but not so big they lose their local feel. The white paper suggests councils should aim to cover a population of at least 500,000 people but ministers have since confirmed this is a guide and not a target. Some councils may be smaller and some larger than this figure.

You can find links to the full guidance at www.shapeworcestershire.org

Councils in Worcestershire now

Currently in Worcestershire there are two, and in some areas three, tiers or layers of councils:

- **Worcestershire County Council** covers the whole county and provides large strategic services like adult social care, education, children's services, road and pavement maintenance, public health, libraries and waste disposal.
- **Six city, borough or district councils** each provide localised services across district areas like waste and recycling collections, deciding planning applications, access to social housing, monitoring air quality, parks and leisure centres.
- **Town and parish councils** aren't part of the reorganisation process but may need to play a greater role in future in delivering services and representing communities.

All these councils have their own elected group of councillors who represent the views of people living in their area.

Future options for Worcestershire

In March 2025, all seven councils in Worcestershire submitted an interim plan to the Government. This set out proposals to replace the county and six borough, city and district councils with one of the two options shown below.

- **One unitary council** - this would provide all services from collecting bins to school admissions across the geographic area currently covered by Worcestershire County Council.
- **Two unitary councils** - this would split the county into two new councils with one for the north of the county and one for the south of the county, as shown in the map below. Each one would be responsible for all services in their part of the county.



Both options will be simpler for residents to understand, reduce staff and councillor numbers and save money compared to the current structure. Exactly how much is not currently known, so work is underway to provide detailed information around both options to help us understand the potential savings and other benefits involved.

Other parts of the country that have already reorganised their councils have chosen to create one, two or more unitary councils depending on their local circumstances. When filling in our survey, your response should be based on what you believe will be best for Worcestershire. There is no right or wrong answer.

SCAN ME



Time to have your say

- Either scan the QR code or visit www.shapeworcestershire.org to learn more and fill in our survey.
- Or fill in the survey on the next two pages, cut it out and post it back to us at Shape Worcestershire, Malvern Hills District Council, Council House, Avenue Road, Malvern, WR14 3AF or hand it in to your district council's offices before 29 June.

Your feedback, along with other information, will be used to help work up detailed proposals on the two options to be presented to councillors in Worcestershire in autumn 2025. They will see your feedback as part of these discussions, but no other information that would allow you to be identified. Councillors will then confirm their choices before submission to the Government by 28 November 2025.

SHAPE
WORCESTERSHIRE:

Reorganising *your councils* together

Gearing up to celebrate one hundred years of Carnival fun

by **Tristan Harris**
philippa.mingins@bullivantmedia.com

THE ORGANISERS of Stourport Carnival are gearing up to celebrate the event's centenary this year.

The carnival, which is free to attend and takes place on Saturday, September 6, features a land parade through the town, two river parades and boasts a host of live entertainment throughout the day and evening, along with a variety of stalls at Riverside Meadows.

And, as this year's Carnival Queen and other roles were chosen, the organisers are hoping previous Stourport Carnival Queens will come forward to be part of the parade.

Janet Allen, Stourport Carnival treasurer and Queen's Court Organiser, told the Standard: "The carnival started in 1925 and has been going for 100 years this year."

"The only time carnivals were not held were during some of the war years and throughout Covid."

"There used to be a Carnival King and Queen and for the first three years, these were both men."

"It has developed into a Carnival Queen, Princess, Rosebud and Junior Prince and Senior Prince."

"Numbers of entrants had dwindled for some of the years but we had an excellent

response this year."

There were five vying to be Queen, 15 for Rosebud, 11 for the Princess role and two each for the Junior and Senior Prince positions.

This year's Carnival Queen is Daisy Innes-Davies, 15, with Ani Hudson, 13, as the Princess and Morgan Lander, eight, as Rosebud.

The Senior Prince is Joshua Weaver, aged 11, and Riley Lander will be the Junior Prince, five.

Janet added: "We have all those roles filled now and what we would really love is for some of the previous Carnival Queens to line up in the parades."

"We had one who held the role in 1953 get in touch but the more the merrier - we will provide sashes for them to wear on the day which will be a nostalgic look back at 100 years of Stourport Carnival."

Previous Carnival Queens should email Janet at: janetallen161@btinternet.com or Laura Minor at: stourportcarnival@gmail.com to register their interest about being involved.

100 years of memories

The organisers would also love to hear people's memories of previous Stourport Carnivals and see their photographs.

These can also be emailed to Janet and Laura at the above addresses.



ABOVE: This year's Stourport Carnival Princess Ani Hudson and Queen Daisy Innes-Davies with Junior Prince Riley Lander, five, Rosebud Morgan Lander, eight, and Senior Prince Joshua Weaver. Pictures by Colin Hill. s



LEFT: Daisy Innes-Davies has been chosen as the Stourport Carnival Queen. s



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Mayor of Kidderminster, Coun George Connolly, presented a cheque for £4,828.33 to representatives of the Motor Neurone Disease Association following his year of office.



Mayor charity events raise £4,800

THE OUTGOING Mayor of Kidderminster, Coun George Connolly, raised nearly £5,000 for his chosen charity during his year of office. Between May 2024 and May this year, Coun Connolly raised £4,828.33 for the Motor Neurone Disease Association (MNDA) from a number of events.

And this week, he presented a cheque for that amount to MNDA representatives. Coun Connolly expressed a heartfelt thank you to all the people and local businesses who supported the fundraising efforts for the cause. He said: "Whether you attended events or donated generously, your support has helped raise

a significant amount for this vital cause. Motor neurone disease is a rapidly progressing and fatal condition that affects the brain and spinal cord, leading to muscle weakness, paralysis, and loss of speech. "The MND Association provides essential support to affected families and funds life-changing research."

Group needs more volunteers

KIDDERMINSTER-BASED charity Simply Limitless Wellbeing has launched an appeal for more volunteers. The health and wellbeing charity said it already had an amazing group but really needs new volunteers who can spare an hour or two a week to visit someone who is lonely and isolated in their home or their community. The Simply Limitless Wellbeing Centre provides support for the local community across all age groups and runs a project called MOJO which is support for adults who are struggling with loneliness and isolation. The charity receives referrals who meet with a

caseworker and they make a support plan together before being matched with a volunteer who can provide support. It receives referrals from across the Wyre Forest from a range of ages. Simply Limitless is in need of volunteers who can support these referrals through a variety of support such as telephone calls, visiting them at home or in the community to build confidence and encouragement to attend activities to widen their social circle. There are also other roles which involve volunteering to support within group activities if this is preferred and volunteer coordinator Laura would

be happy to talk to anyone interested about them. Asked what they get from volunteering, a current volunteer said: "Seeing people benefit from services offered, the enjoyment they get, making new friends makes it worthwhile. "Also, I have made new friends, learnt a lot about how important it is to look after ourselves mentally and physically." Anyone who has an hour or two each week to offer is urged to email volunteer@simply-limitless.org or call 01562 751144 for more information on how you can help. Alternatively, get in touch at facebook.com/SimplyLimitless

Variety of ways to help make a big difference

THE STANDARD has been contacted by a number of organisations about volunteering opportunities across Kidderminster, Stourport and Bewdley. We put out an appeal to ask groups to get in touch to celebrate their volunteers and appeal for new ones where needed as part of National Volunteering Week. Here are a few of the roles available across Wyre Forest:

by Tristan Harris
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shared, similar to a job share and people do not have to volunteer every week. "We are grateful for whatever time you are able to spare," say the Scouts. "If you do not wish to volunteer directly with young people we also have roles as charity trustees, supporters and volunteer managers." Visit scoutshw.org.uk/join/adult-volunteers-18 or email heretohelp@scoutshw.org.uk and Scouts Hereford and Worcester will find you a suitable role for you and provide free training too.

The League of Friends of Kidderminster Hospital

The group wants to thank its 'lovely group of fantastic volunteers' but is always looking for more volunteers to join the team.

Its aim is to provide funds to support services at Kidderminster Hospital and to provide extra amenities for both patients and staff where they are not available from the NHS. Among the volunteer roles are staffing the popular coffee shop. Message on Facebook messenger by searching for 'The League of Friends of Kidderminster Hospital' or email info.khlof@btconnect.com for more information and to register an interest.

The Civic, Stourport

The Civic in Stourport has volunteering roles ranging from anything from bar work and maintenance to general office tasks, in the box office, art and front of house. The registered charity provides a venue for the whole town. Call 01299 823 339 or visit thecivicstourport.co.uk for more information.

Go wild every day and enjoy nature

WYRE Forest residents are being urged to join the 30 Days Wild challenge this month. Run by The Wildlife Trusts, the challenge asks people to do one wild thing each day for the 30 days. They could include watching bees in the garden, going for a nature walk, planting birdsong or

listening to birdsong. Nature is everywhere across Wyre Forest – in parks, gardens, school playgrounds, and streets. Small moments can make a big difference; both to people's wellbeing and for wildlife. Wyre Forest District Council posted about the '30 Days Wild' challenge on its social media and

said: "We'd love to see what you get up to." People are being urged to share their photographs on their social media changes by using the #30DaysWild #WyreForestWild and #GetOutside hashtags. Visit orlo.uk/g2BC0 to sign up and celebrate nature in Wyre Forest this month.

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Illegal gun found where drug dealer was selling heroin

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

A COUNTY lines drug dealer from Kidderminster who kept an illegal gun at an address from where he was selling crack cocaine and heroin has been jailed for eight years.

Zach Pearson, 19, formerly of Washington Street, was found guilty of possession with intent to supply a Class A drug – crack cocaine, possession with intent to supply a class A drug – heroin, possession of an illegal firearm and possession of prohibited ammunition. He was jailed at Worcester Crown Court.

Pearson was involved in the EMZ county line, later known as the MJ line, which was advertising crack cocaine and heroin for sale. County lines are telephone numbers or 'deal lines' used to run an organised drug-dealing network.

Police said Pearson was first arrested in the early hours of September 12 last year, at an address in Cranham Drive, Warndon, Worcester, after reports he was suspected of supplying class A drugs



from the property. On September 13, 2024, a police search advisor (PoISA) led search was carried out at the same address.

During a search of the kitchen, a handgun was found, wrapped in a plastic bag. This was confirmed to be a viable firearm with a magazine containing live ammunition and was forensically linked to Pearson and he was later charged with the illegal weapons offences.

Around a week later, on Thursday September 19, a safeguarding check was carried out at an address on Crickley Drive, Worcester, relating to a local class A drug user.

As police conducted the check,

a balaclava-wearing Pearson tried to escape through a living room window but was detained by officers a short distance away following a foot chase.

Police seized £1,470 cash from his trouser pocket and drugs paraphernalia, including a burner phone which contained text messages sent out by him offering crack cocaine and heroin for sale.

Intelligence gained led to officers executing a drugs warrant an address on Brookthorpe Close, Worcester, on October 3 last year.

Pearson was found in the toilet, with the light off, potentially attempting to dispose of drugs



Zach Pearson has been jailed for 12 years and, inset, the viable firearm that was found.

down the toilet. He was caught wearing a black bag over his shoulder that contained crack cocaine and heroin with a street value estimated around £6,000.

Pearson was later charged with the two drugs offences and two firearms offences. He was further charged with the acquisition or use of criminal property during the investigation. For that he was sentenced to a total of 12 months to run concurrently.

Investigating officer DC Paul Modley, of South Worcestershire Proactive CID, said: "We are pleased to get this lengthy custodial sentence for Pearson who was operating a county line drug-dealing network."

"His arrest and conviction not

only mean the line is terminated, but also a viable firearm has been taken off the streets further protecting the public from potential danger.

"Criminals like Pearson are rightly pursued and brought to justice by West Mercia Police as the illegal drugs they sell heap misery and harm on the communities we are here to protect and serve."

"We will not cease in our efforts to hunt his kind down, bring them before the courts and disrupt and close their county lines."

West Mercia Police have urged people to report any signs of criminal activity in their area either via the website at westmercia.police.uk or by calling 101 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Police appeal over bike riders

POLICE are trying to track down these illegal motorbike riders making residents' lives a misery in Kidderminster.

Oldington, Foley and Sutton Park Safer Neighbourhood Team are appealing for information regarding the riders who were seen mounting pavements on Severn Grove around 7.40pm last Friday.

The rider was wearing a black balaclava, black jacket and tracksuit bottoms and the passenger was a white man, wearing a black North Face coat and grey jogging bottoms.

The bike is black with no registration plate.

Police said: "The riders are posing a risk to members of the public, committing traffic offences and causing anti-social behaviour."



Police have appealed for help in tracing this rider and the passenger.

"Anti-social vehicle use has an impact on the local community. It can lead to damage to green spaces, noise nuisance and riders risk injuring themselves and others."

Officers have urged any-

one who knows who they are or anyone with information on the incident to email details to ofsp.snt@westmercia.police.uk

Alternatively, call police on 101 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Cops find 300 cannabis plants

MORE THAN 300 cannabis plants were seized by police in Kidderminster.

Officers attended the property in Lower Mill Street around 10.30pm last Thursday after reports of a door being smashed and lights on inside the building.

When they arrived and entered, they found 200 cannabis plants and another 100 which had been cultivated.

No one was inside the

building and no one was arrested.

An investigation has been launched into the grow.

A scene guard was put in place while National Grid made the property safe.

West Mercia Police's Crime Scene Investigation team carried out its enquiries.

The plants and cultivated products were removed and are set to be destroyed.

A GREY VW Golf was sto-

len from Kidderminster just after midnight last Thursday.

The vehicle was locked and parked outside the owner's property in Eastwood Drive.

Police said it is not known how entry was gained at this time.

Witnesses or anyone with information or doorbell camera footage should contact police on 101 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

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Picnic in the gardens. Refreshments at Garden Kitchen Café.

CARP

Former Harrier jailed for £600k drugs smuggling

A PROFESSIONAL footballer who played for Kidderminster Harriers last year has been jailed for trying to import £600,000 worth of cannabis into the UK.

Jay Emmanuel Thomas, 34, who turned out nine times for Harriers and also made five appearances for Arsenal between 2008 and 2011, was sentenced to four years behind bars following a National Crime Agency (NCA) investigation.

Thomas was jailed at Chelmsford Crown Court after the smuggling incident recruiting two women to travel to Thailand. There, the cannabis was collected and smuggled to the UK.

On September 2, 2024, Thomas' girlfriend Yasmin Piotrowska, 33, and her friend Rosie Rowland, 29, were stopped by Border Force officers at Stansted Airport after landing on a flight from Bangkok.

They had two suitcases each, which were searched, and a total of 60kg of canna-



Jay Emmanuel Thomas has been jailed for four years. Picture courtesy of the National Crime Agency. s

bis – 15kg in each bag – was recovered.

Piotrowska, of Kensal Green, London, and Rowland, of Chelmsford, Essex, were charged with smuggling cannabis.

But the Crown dropped the case against the pair who said they believed they were transporting gold.

It is believed Thomas, who also played for Queens Park Rangers, Ipswich Town and PTT Rayong in Thailand

in 2019, was the intermediary between suppliers in Thailand and drug pushers in the UK.

The investigation revealed, with Thomas' encouragement, the women had made a near identical trip – which was all-expenses paid and included a promise of a £2,500 payment – a few months earlier in July.

Thomas, now of Gourcock, near Glasgow, was arrested on September 18 last year after he had signed for Greenock Morton in Scotland.

On his way to custody after being arrested, he said unprompted: "I just feel sorry for the girls."

David Phillips, NCA senior investigating officer, said: "We urge anyone asked to bring something into the UK that they're unsure of to simply say no."

"Organised criminals like Thomas are invariably very persuasive with promises of payments and other enticements to couriers."

"But the risk of getting caught is very high and it simply isn't worth the risk."



Louise Draper, Andrew Hipkiss, James Lilwall and Tony Roden from SARA with Kidderminster and District Lions president Ron Cross. Picture by Colin Hill. s

Lions say thank-you SARA with life jackets

SPECIALIST life jackets have been bought for the Kidderminster-based Severn Area Rescue Association (SARA), thanks to a local group. Kidderminster and District Lions funded the equipment and presented it to the SARA

team to thank it for the safety cover provided for the duck race in Bewdley on Easter Monday.

Lions president Ron Cross said it would be impossible to hold events similar to the duck race without the

support of volunteers from groups, such as SARA.

SARA has response teams ready to assist the police with search and rescue operations and teams are deployed to help with flooding emergencies.

Power tools taken from van after break-in

A NUMBER of tools were stolen when thieves broke into a vehicle in Kidderminster.

Police say thieves targeted the van on Tennyson Way between 9pm last Thursday and 5am last Friday. DeWalt and Makita power tools were taken.

Police want to hear from anyone who may have any information relating to the theft or anyone who may have been in the area around the time of the incident and heard or saw anything suspicious.

Drivers, where possible, are urged to remove all

tools or valuable items from their vehicle before leaving it unattended.

Witnesses or anyone with information should call police on 101 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111. Anyone who sees a crime in progress should call 999.

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Support grows for Maypole bid

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

THE FRIENDS of the Maypole Group has submitted its bid for the much-loved land in Bewdley which it is trying to safeguard for future generations.

We reported on last week's front page that Maypole Piece in Wribbenhall was up for sale and there were fears it could be developed for housing.

The group was in a race against time to raise as much money as possible to put a bid in for the land before the deadline.

Over the weekend, there was a flurry of activity with numerous pledges coming in and the group's available funds were at just over £129,000 when the bid was submitted on Tuesday morning. It has since risen to £131,000.

The Friends of the Maypole group wants to buy the land and place it in public trust ownership so it can be enjoyed by generations of people in Wribbenhall, Bewdley and the wider area

for many years to come.

There is no named designated as to how long the process will take.

Committee member Denise Eaton told the Standard: "The bid has gone in now and it is a waiting game to see if we have been successful."

"We want to say a big thank you to all the community for their support in trying to secure Maypole Piece."

Plenty of support

A drop-in session at the Wribbenhall Parish Rooms on Saturday for the less tech savvy and those with no Internet access was also well attended.

A representative from the group gave a three-minute presentation to Bewdley Town Council at a meeting on Monday to inform councillors about its plans to buy the land for the community.

And over the weekend, lead singer of Led Zeppelin, Robert Plant, formally supported the Friends group's campaign.

He said: "I fully support the mission for The Maypole to remain a green space for the local people and beyond, now and for the future."

The group said: "We are

so thankful for Robert's support, just as we are thankful to every single one of our supporters."

"Together we can do this."

People of all ages have fond memories of the area - from the bonfire to celebrate the end of the Second World War and Major Webb riding his horse there on a Sunday to fetes and football matches on the hill. It also provides habitats for a wealth of local wildlife.

As well as donations, Friends of the Maypole need help in other ways - from people experienced in land purchasing to the community spreading word of the campaign in a bid to get as many people as possible to get involved and support the cause.

Anyone wanting to find out more about the campaign can visit: friendsofthemaypole.co.uk or search for 'Friends of the Maypole' on Facebook.

**Do you have a story?
Get in touch by
emailing editor@kidderminsterstandard.co.uk**



Children at Little Trinity Nursery, Mila Moran, two, Joshua Harris and Eloise Janes, three, ready to celebrate Father's Day this Sunday, June 15. s

THE CHILDREN from Little Trinity Nursery in Kidderminster have been busy making personalised gifts for their dads and other male role models in their lives ahead of Father's Day on Sunday, June 15.

From the youngest at two years old and upwards, every child created their very own Father's Day works of art.

They crafted word art frames and cards, while some expressed their creativity through vibrant keychains and paintings.

Encouraging the children to plan and initiate their own activities helps to support and

promote their natural development through play.

Nursery Manager Gaynor Carter said: "The children loved making their special presents, and Father's Day is a wonderful opportunity for them to just enjoy being creative and having fun."

"Using a selection of materials, they created an assortment of individual gifts ready to celebrate with their special dads, granddads, and special men in their lives."

"We send all our 'dads' our very best wishes for Father's Day."

TWO people were taken to hospital after a serious crash on the Bewdley Bypass on Tuesday night.

The incident, which happened around 11.20pm, involved a collision between a Citroen Berlingo and a Mercedes C class.

Both drivers were taken to the New Cross Hospital with injuries.

West Mercia Police are investigating and have urged witnesses or anyone with information or dash cam footage of the crash or the vehicles before the crash to get in touch.

Anyone with information should email PC Karl Lacey at karl.lacey@westmercia.police.uk with the details.



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LEFT: The fashion show concept showed what could be done with recycled materials and reusing garments. s

RIGHT: Irene Winzer with her outfit made entirely from crisp packets. s

FAR RIGHT: Amy Greening from High Hopes Dog Rescue. s



A variety of outfits were created from recycled materials. Pictures by Wyre Forest District Council. s

New uses for old items

MORE THAN 200 people attended the SustFest Wyre Forest Eco Family Fun Day at The Old Court in Kidderminster on Saturday.

Wyre Forest District Council thanked everyone for their support, saying the event was 'filled with creativity, fun and green inspiration'.

Among the highlights were a sustainable fashion show by Arts Etc which featured outfits from recycled materials, such as wool, garden waste and even bin liners.

Irene Winzer wowed the crowd with an outfit made entirely from crisp packets which are notoriously rec-

by Tristan Harris
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@bullivantmedia.com

ognised for not decomposing for years.

High Hopes Dog Rescue raised awareness and funds by selling second-hand clothes and accessories, while young entrepreneur Luna Newton showcased her handmade bows and cuddly toys – all made from reused materials.

Crafty by Miles, one of the attendees, said: "We thoroughly enjoyed the day and felt it was a fantastic event."

"We particularly enjoyed the fashion parade – it was a really creative and inspiring addition to the day."

"It was a pleasure to be

part of an event focused on sustainability and community, and we appreciated the opportunity to showcase our craft items alongside other local businesses.

"Thank you once again for a well-organised and enjoyable day."

"We look forward to future opportunities to collaborate."

The district council added: "We're proud to have hosted such a positive day as part of SustFest Wyre Forest."

The Eco Family Fun Day was the headline SustFest event for Kidderminster.

Bewdley's Positive Futures for our Towns takes place tomorrow.

The event, which is free

and runs from 10.30am to 3pm at Bewdley Youth Centre, Stourport Road, will be a day of stimulating talks, presentations and activity workshops.

Richard Priestley will encourage people to think about 'System Change' globally and locally and Art to Imagine will engage attendees in 'A Better Future Workshop'. The aim is for people to use their imaginations to think of ways of achieving a better future for our towns.

Light refreshments will be provided

Visit: sustfestwyreforest.org/events for more on SustFest and the upcoming events.



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Lengthy jail term for dealer despite attempts to delay trial

A DRUG-DEALER supplying class A drugs - namely cocaine - across Worcestershire and beyond has been jailed for 22 years and eight months.

Michael Morris, 58, of Maple Road, Rubery was found guilty in October 2023 of the offences and his drug-dealing extended throughout the county, including Kidderminster and Wychbold with some spanning from the West Midlands afar afield as Ilfracombe in Devon.

Police said Morris manipulated the court system into multiple delays to evade prosecution and parted company with several barristers, before he represented himself throughout the trial.

In further efforts to evade prosecution for his involvement, he attempted to hide behind a defence suggesting in his opening address that his son was responsible.

He provided no evidence of this, and the jury found him guilty - agreeing with the prosecution evidence that

it was indeed Michael Morris who was making the drug supply arrangements. Morris should have appeared before the court on November 21, 2023, with others including Gareth Pegler, Sinead Lavelle and Mighela Massey - now already convicted for their part in the conspiracy. But, instead, he delayed proceedings and did not face trial until nearly two years after his arrest.

Then, in a last-ditch attempt to evade justice, he absconded and failed to attend court to hear his conviction or to be sentenced.

Just over 12 months later he was recaptured and was yesterday sentenced for his part in the conspiracy and further offences relating to his disappearance.

His Honour Judge Jonathan Salmon said in his summing up: "Within this conspiracy to supply a large and established county line into large parts of Devon, you are clearly at the top of the tree.

"You supplied a criminal group running that substantial county lines operation. You were the wholesale supplier of cocaine to those lower down.

"I'm clear you were not operating as a broker or agent but you yourself were profiting to the full extent of this supply.

"After you went on the run you had sufficient resources and contacts to evade capture for 15 months.

"This was a concerted attempt to evade justice over a lengthy period.

"You are someone the text messag-

es demonstrate was part of a serious organised crime.

"You were able to live at large and hide and spend monies from your criminal activities."

HHJ Salmon commended West Mercia Police and the investigation team for their efforts which insured all involved were brought to face justice.

Det Insp Gareth Evans said: "I have had the fortune to work with some outstanding and diligent detectives during my career in West Mercia Police and in this case, many had moved on or retired due to the delays and time taken to reach trial.

"One ex-officer returned post to ensure his evidence was heard to support the prosecution.

"Despite the best efforts of offenders like Morris to thwart the system, rest assured West Mercia Police will pursue those guilty of offences.

"Justice has been done and, because of the hard work and commitment of West Mercia officers, Morris has received the sanction deserved."

Morris will now be pursued through the Proceeds of Crime Act to recoup cash and belongings acquired through his criminal exploits.

Anyone with any information around drug dealing can report it online at: westmercia.police.uk/ro/report/ocr/af/how-to-report-a-crime/ or by calling 101.

Alternatively, call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111. Always dial 999 in an emergency.



Michael Morris from Rubery has been jailed for 22 years and eight months after dealing cocaine in Kidderminster, Wychbold and other parts of Worcestershire and the West Midlands. s



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Caterers required for reserve

WYRE Forest District Council is looking for mobile caterers interested in setting up in the summer at Habberley Valley Nature Reserve.

The authority wants to hear from people with a mobile catering unit, converted horsebox or trailer.

The area is popular with walkers, families, and dog owners, so being dog-friendly is a big plus.

The council is especially interested in those selling hot drinks and cakes, but if retailers offer something a bit different, the authority also wants to hear from them.

"Think seasonal treats, healthy snacks, or even pup-friendly goodies," they say.

The opportunity gives welcoming and creative caterers the chance to draw visitors in and get their name and offerings out there.

"Let's bring great food to our open spaces this summer," says the council.

Anyone interested should visit: orlo.uk/vfg7F for more information and to apply.

Chance to see revamp of listed Old Court building

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

VISITORS can get the chance to see The Old Court – from the inside out – following its transformation earlier this year.

The open day, from 2.30pm to 5.30pm on June 26, is being held by Wyre Forest District Council's facilities team who will be on hand to provide walk-around tours of the building at half-hourly intervals.

Coun Dan Morehead, Wyre Forest District Council's Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and the Green Agenda, said: "We know there are people who've been interested in the transformation of the building which was the former Magistrates' Court.

"We're inviting these people to come and see what has been achieved and how the building is starting its new life.

"It now provides 1,800sq m of high-quality office and event space available to rent alongside county-wide innovation projects newly installed and already flourishing in the space."

The Old Court is a Grade II listed building designed in the Queen Anne Revival style by the architect JG Bland of Birmingham. It was



built between 1878 and 1879 for RJ Willis, a company known for making Brussels carpets.

In 1883, the premises was sold to Woodward, Grosvenor and Company and used as its main offices and showroom.

The adjacent weaving sheds appear to have been extended at this time – according to Historic England.

In 1971 the building and weaving sheds were sold to the borough council and part of the main build-

ing was converted to become the Magistrates' Court with the remaining premises used as office accommodation for various council departments. The weaving sheds at the back became a covered market until the mid-1990s.

The Magistrates' Court moved to new premises in mid-2000s.

A small public landscape area opposite the southwest frontage of the main building – Coronation Gardens – was created in 1952.

The open day will be held at The Old Court on June 26. Picture courtesy of Wyre Forest District Council. s

The building boasts three floors accessed by a lift which offer individual workspaces, shared kitchen, event spaces, meeting rooms, shower and toilets.

The former court chamber itself is now a large light, bright conference and meeting room with seating capacity for 120 people.

Thanks to the restoration project, the outside public space has also been enhanced, providing a pedestrian route through town and offering a small children's play area.

The transformation of The Old Court has been possible, thanks to funding through the Future High Streets Fund (FHSP) – the former government's funding scheme to transform struggling high streets.

Go to eventbrite.co.uk and search for 'The Old Court Open Day' for more and to book. Places are limited so book now to avoid disappointment.

Anyone interested in letting a space in The Old Court should email Roy Wilkes at roywilkes@gjsdillon.co.uk or Jorge Bray at jorgebray@gjsdillon.co.uk – both from letting agent GJS Dillon.



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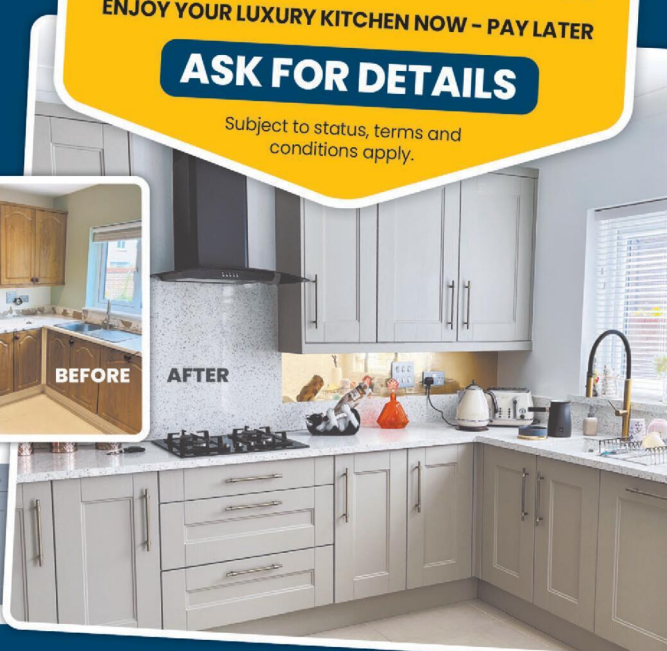
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Police salute work of vital volunteers

VOLUNTEERS with the police across West Mercia were celebrated as part of National Volunteers' Week which ran from June 2 to 8.

Across Herefordshire, Shropshire and Worcestershire, there are more than 70 volunteers who all play crucial roles in supporting various teams across the force area.

There are volunteers working alongside police staff in the cyber-crime team whilst some provide support and guidance as a force chaplain.

One is delivering expertise knowledge as a historian at the force museum and some are caring for the force's puppies to ensure they grow into crime-fighting police dogs.

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

West Mercia Police says its volunteers offer 'endless skills' and provide 'invaluable enthusiasm and expertise' to the roles they do.

The Special Constabulary is made up of 81 volunteer police officers who work alongside and uphold the same policing powers as regular officers.

They work across a variety of policing teams and carry out duties such as responding to 999 calls, patrolling on foot and in vehicles and investigating crimes and arresting suspects. They also help police major events such as festivals and football matches.

In 2024, Special Constables con-

tributed a staggering 24,000 hours in unpaid work. They attended 115 pre-planned operations, 243 shifts with Safer Neighbourhood Teams and worked 1,478 shifts on response.

Their commitment has been described as 'remarkable', with the volunteers branded as 'valued assets' across the force.

Police and Crime Commissioner John Campion said: "Volunteers are a key part of the policing family, whether they are a Special, Independent Custody Visitor, involved with their local Community Speed Watch or help services deliver support to victims.

"Every single person who gives up some of their own time to make a difference in their community



West Mercia Police celebrated its volunteers last week. s

deserves to be celebrated and I know the public share my admiration for the often unseen but yet incredible contributions they each make in West Mercia."

Visit this story on our website and click through the link for more information on the role of a special

constable. People can also watch a video from the force, showcasing the shift of special constable, Sarah Severn, who operates with the force's roads policing team in Bromsgrove.

Visit youtu.be/SUQT4iqA-jw to view the piece.

Police cadets from Wyre Forest, Bromsgrove and Redditch helped out at the Race For Life. s



Cadets step up for Race For Life

YOUNG PEOPLE from across Wyre Forest, Bromsgrove and Redditch represented North Worcestershire Police Cadets at the Race For Life event in Redditch on Sunday.

Cadets helped out with marshalling, manning water stations and distributing medals

and some of them also participated in the 10k race at Arrow Valley Park.

North Worcestershire Police said: "This fantastic event helped to raise tens of thousands of pounds for Cancer Research - massive well done to all who took part and helped to

organise it."

Any young people from across Wyre Forest, Bromsgrove or Redditch wanting to find out more about becoming a West Mercia Police Cadet should visit westmercia.police.uk and search for 'Police Cadets'.

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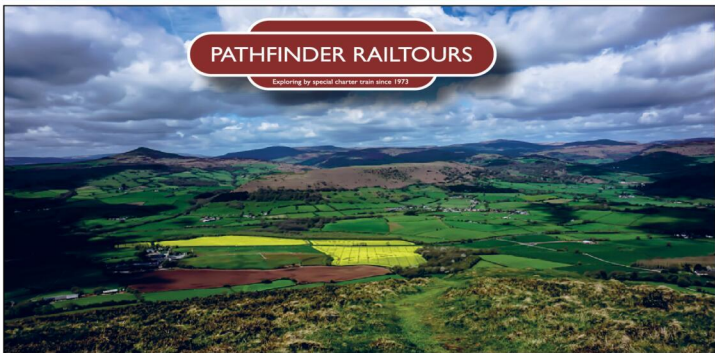
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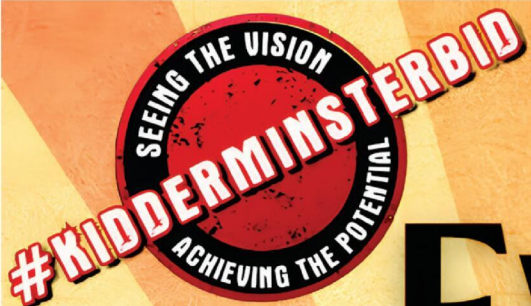
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Our destination for the day will be the county market town of Shrewsbury. Here there will be around 90 minutes* to enjoy the town set in the loop of the River Severn.

A pair of English Electric Class 37 locomotives, courtesy of West Coast Railway Company, are expected to haul this train throughout.

*Subject to change once confirmed timings are received

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LOVE KIDDERMINSTER FUNDAY

Love Kidderminster Funday is back, bigger, better, and packed with fun! Enjoy jaw-dropping walkabout acts, interactive activities, street food, free face painting, a thrilling Dino Experience, a show-stopping performance by Britain's Got Talent stars Boogie Storm, and so much more!

**JULY
26TH**



**SEPT
26,27,
28TH**

MUSIC FEST 2025

Kidderminster Music Festival returns with a weekend of incredible live music across town! Don't miss Friday's main stage with Tinchy Stryder, Sweet Female Attitude, and Michelle Platnum, and 20+ acts in local venues, including top local talent like Tanya Tanya, The Dogs, Cantaloup, Chloe Mogg, Tin Drum, and Cheated England. It's set to be the town's biggest music weekend yet!



Stay tuned for updates on the events, which will be unveiled on our event tabs!



LOCATION:

KIDDERMINSTER T/C



Gary Barnes, head of retail at KEMP Hospice, gets ready to open The Boutique by KEMP Hospice in Hagley. s

Looking good for new shop

THE KEMP Hospice is set to open a new charity shop with a boutique feel in Hagley.

'The Boutique by KEMP Hospice' will sell pre-loved women's clothing, formal wear and accessories.

Proceeds from sales of items donated to the hospice will all go to the charity.

KEMP Hospice's head of retail, Gary Barnes, said: "Hagley has a bustling high street and a wonderful community."

"We hope the new store can become a part of that community, adding another quality shopping location for everyone to enjoy."

"This is an exciting project for KEMP."

"The Boutique is a new style of shopping experience for KEMP and we cannot wait to

open the doors this summer.

"KEMP shoppers show incredible generosity and loyalty to our charity shops, and we look forward to welcoming them to our new Hagley store, along with greeting new customers who might not be familiar with our existing shops across the Wyre Forest."

Although there is no confirmed date for the opening, it is anticipated it will take place towards the end of this month or at the beginning of July.

Kemp Hospice is always looking for volunteers.

Visit: kempshospice.org.uk/support-us/volunteer-with-us for more on volunteer positions available.

Car parks get a charging boost

WYRE FOREST District Council has confirmed 62 electric vehicle chargers will be installed across 17 of the car parks the authority owns in Kidderminster, Stourport and Bewdley.

The district council has teamed up with contractor Otaski and the new installations will provide 124 sockets.

They will be put in over the summer, starting with Kidderminster.

The installation will come at no cost to the council and will also generate a new stream of income through the revenue sharing from charging infrastructure.

This announcement follows the council's reaffirmed commitment to EV infrastructure earlier this year, after a previous contractor withdrew from the project.

Coun Dan Morehead, Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and the Green Agenda, said: "We're delighted to be moving forward with Otaski to deliver this vital infrastructure."

"This project supports our climate goals, provides a valuable service to residents and visitors, and does so at no cost to the tax-

payer. We will of course be ensuring that we get the infrastructure right for both today's and future needs."

Stephen Lawrence, Otaski's head of business development at Otaski added: "We're proud to partner with Wyre Forest District Council on this ambitious roll-out. "Our goal is to make EV charging accessible, reliable, and future-ready for communities across the UK."

Chargers will be installed at the following Kidderminster car parks: Batemans Yard, Brinton Park, Bull Ring, Comberton Place, Market Street, Pike Mills and St Mary's Church.

In Bewdley, the following car parks will be having chargers installed: Dog Lane, Gardners Meadow and Load Street.

And, in Stourport-on-Severn, the car parks at Raven Street, Severn Meadows (one and two) and Vale Road will all be getting chargers.

There will also be EV chargers at Wyre Forest House and the Green Street Depot.

Visit: wyreforestdc.gov.uk and Wyre Forest District Council's social media channels for further updates, including a timeline of which ones are being installed when.

STARRING ROLLS: TWO KIDDERMINSTER players have made it through to the semi-finals of the Worcestershire Under 25 lawn bowls championship.

Will Johnson from Chester Road Bowling Club, Kidderminster, will play Harvey Griffiths of St Dunstan's club, Worcester, and Alfie Griffiths of St Dunstan's who meets Harry Boulton of Chester Road, in the matches at Inkberrow Bowls Club at 6.15pm on Monday, June 16.

Alan Slater, Inkberrow Bowls Club President, said: "We are extremely pleased to be contributing to this important event."

"Events like this are vital in developing the next generation of players."

"Major work has been undertaken to bring our green into top condition. We look forward to further opportunities to host county events."

Visit: [inkberrow-bowls-club-19833/home/](http://inkberrowbowls.club/community/inkberrow-bowls-club-19833/home/) for more information.

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Outgoing mayor's thanks as good local causes benefit from fundraising efforts

AFTER a successful 12 months of fundraising during his year of office, outgoing Mayor of Bewdley, Coun Ian Latimer, has handed over £6,335.55 to good causes.

Coun Latimer selected Bewdley Dementia Support Group, KEMP Hospice and the local Scouts and Guides as his chosen charities and they have each received their share of the total.

Coun Latimer wants to thank everyone who supported his events throughout the year for their incredible generosity.



Scout and Guide leaders Andy Smart and Brenda Goode were also presented with the funding.



Past Bewdley Mayoress Cat Banks with Coun Sharon Harvey, Chairman of Bewdley Dementia Support Group, and past Mayor, Coun Ian Latimer.

Fears for the future

KIDDERMINSTER-based Forest Dog Rescue has launched a fundraising appeal to keep the charity running.

The current overheads for the charity are £35,000-per-month, which includes electricity, vet bills, dog food, insurance, rates, the 'Pupmobile', maintenance, laundry, cleaning products, heating for kennels, waste disposal and

dog carers.

Brynn Hazelwood, one of the charity's trustees, said the future of Forest Dog Rescue was beginning to look pretty bleak.

"We are having to dip into our emergency fund every month just to cover the basic costs of running the rescue and this is just not sustainable in the long term."

"This is due to ever increasing costs across

the board, but predominantly it is the massive increase in dogs needing medical treatment, rehabilitation and those requiring behavioural support.

"We therefore find ourselves in the difficult position of having to ask for help in the form of people each providing a monthly donation."

"There is a massive need for rescue places for dogs in the area and we

want to be in a position to help as many as we can and ensure the future of the rescue is secure and stable for our residents, giving as many as we can a brighter future for the years to come."

Anyone who can help should visit: forestdog-rescue.enthuse.com/donate#!/ and click the donate button.

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Charity appeals for volunteers

by **Ashleigh Osborne**
ashleigh.osborne@bullivant-media.com

A HOSPICE is hosting a volunteer drop-in event at its soon-to-open store in Stourport.

St Richard's Hospice is looking for volunteers to support its newest and biggest store, which is due to open in Tannery Retail Park, Lombard Street, on Saturday, July 5.

Anyone interested in volunteering at the superstore can drop-in to the event at the store between 10am and 1pm next Friday, June 20.

There will be the chance to meet the team, look around the store as it prepares to open and find out what's involved in volunteering.

Gemma Timmis, volunteer engagement officer at St Richard's, said: "As our first ever superstore, this will be such an exciting and varied place for volunteers to get stuck in and support our care."

"A range of tasks and hours are available to suit each volunteer's schedules and interests - we are grateful for any support."



"Volunteering is not only a great way to meet new people, make friends and learn skills - it makes a real difference to St Richard's, helping us continue our free care for patients and their loved ones."

The charity's retail income is in the region of \$3million each year, with the profits helping fund its care and support of patients, their families and bereaved people.

St Richard's Hospice is an independent charity offering free, expert care for adults with an illness that cannot be cured, and support for their loved ones and carers.

Each year the hospice team supports more than 3,100 patients, family members and bereaved people in Worcestershire.

It will cost in the region of \$12million to run the hospice this year, which includes patient care and all the necessary support services.

Visit: strichards.org.uk/latest-volunteering-vacancies/volunteer-at-stourport-superstore for more information.

Hospice staff Simon Jasper, Multi-site Manager Wyre Forest, Michelle Chance, Regional Manager, and Dan Corns, Associate Director of Retail Operations. s



There will be something for everyone at the annual Summer Fayre at Holy Trinity School in Kidderminster. s

Fun for all at school's summer fayre

THE ANNUAL Summer Fayre at Kidderminster's Holy Trinity School and Sixth Form takes place next Saturday, June 21.

The vibrant festival of family fun runs at the school in Birmingham Road from 12.30pm to 3pm and boasts a variety of attractions with something for everyone.

Among them are thrilling games, mouth-watering barbecue, cakes, drinks, adorable animals, pony rides, a bouncy castle, ice creams, and much more.

The school's headmaster Ian Williams said: "The Holy Trinity community eagerly anticipates this event every year, and we're delighted to open our doors to friends and

neighbours from across the Wyre Forest.

"Over the years, the Summer Fayre has raised vital funds which have enriched our students' school experience, supported the purchase of new play equipment, outdoor canopies for learning, minibuses, and a variety of student enrichment opportunities."

"We can't wait to welcome families, friends, and the wider community for an unforgettable afternoon."

Admission to this quintessentially British summer event is £1 per person with under 16s going free.

Email: htf@holytrinity.co.uk for more information on the event.

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10 Reasons to support Local Shops and Businesses

It's now more and more important that we support local shops and businesses because of the threat they face from multi nationals and from on line sales - they offer so much not only to their Customers, but also to the local community as a whole.

1. Local Shops and Businesses create and sustain more jobs locally and together they are the largest employer nationally. They provide jobs to the residents of our communities and in many cases, they provide better working conditions and benefits than the big chains do.

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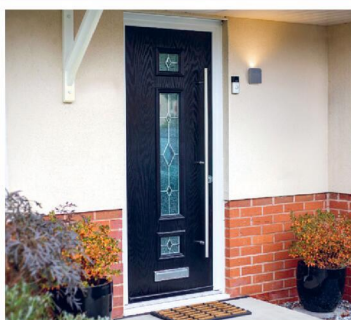
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2. Local Shops and Businesses

are at the centre of our local economy, and shopping locally is better for the local communities as research has shown that money spent locally stays within the community and helps our local community to thrive - unlike spending with the multi nationals or online agencies based far from our community or even far from our shores.

3. A Better Shopping Experience

Local Shops and Businesses offer a Better Quality of Service. Local Business Owners and their Staff offer much better service because they really care about what they do. They are far more likely to offer better, honest and realistic advice about the choice of products and services they provide – they are often far more likely to go over and above the call of duty to ensure your satisfaction.

4. After Sales Service and Attention – Local Businesses are always there to call upon if you do need them after you've made your purchase for advice and attention if required.



SUPPORT LOCAL

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1 Lupin Works, Worcester Road, Kidderminster, DY10 1JR. T: 01562 541062
E: info@gauntsofkidderminster.co.uk W: www.gauntsofkidderminster.co.uk



SUPPORT LOCAL



5. Creative, and Diverse – Local Shops and Businesses provide so much more choice in terms of uniqueness – so you can in turn, develop your own style and even when you are searching for that personal gift with a difference, you are much more likely to find it in a local shop rather than the same as everyone else, in a multi-national.

6. Competition – A local marketplace of hundreds of small businesses is the best place to ensure low prices and competition.

7. More Environmentally Friendly – Small Independent Businesses usually source locally and they use less packaging than the bigger retailers. This in turn reduces the global footprint as they inevitably need less transportation thereby reducing 'pollution' for us all – and of course it means less waste and less goes into fill up landfills.

8. Local Shops and Businesses help build local communities and community identity. Communities are defined by their local distinctive shops and Businesses and the personalities of the Owners of these shops shines through – a Local Shopping Centre with vibrant shop fronts is a perfect place to meet and shop and interact with other members of your community – it's informative as well as the displays and services on offer, keep us all up to date with not only the tried and tested products but all the new innovations too.

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9. Supporting local enterprising entrepreneurs – people like Sir Alan Sugar – love him or not, you have to admire the man who started selling car aerials from the back of a van, bought with his modest savings – he relied on the support of his local community to kick start his business during his early and difficult years – so why not support your local businesses too – who knows you may be giving other budding local entrepreneur the little nudge and help they need to succeed and create more jobs locally and even more choice within our own vibrant community.

10. It's fun to shop locally on your local High Street, your local neighbourhood Shopping Centre or Town Centre – its much more fun that looking round a large superstore. You can interact with the helpful staff as well as having the opportunity of bumping into family and friends who are also 'doing their bit' in supporting their/our local community.



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Charity calls for police dogs to have pensions

A CHARITY which supports police dogs when they retire has launched a campaign calling for pensions for all police service animals when they hang up their badges.

The Thin Blue Paw Foundation has launched a petition calling for the Government to introduce mandatory financial assistance for police dogs once they retire – or police dog pensions.

This will mean new owners are not left to face hefty vet bills for dogs who often come with health and medical conditions due to their strenuous working lives.

The Foundation supports retired police dogs across the UK and has, since launching in August 2020, provided grants totaling more than £380,000 for life-saving surgeries, vital medication, and regular therapy to ensure these canine heroes live long, happy and healthy retirements and receive the treatment they need for any medical conditions they suffer. There are around 1,700 serving police dogs operating across the UK's 45 police forces, and an estimated 100, on average, retire every year.

Future planning

While the Thin Blue Paw

Foundation will continue to support retired police dogs across the UK – the charity's trustees want to see policy change to secure the futures of these dogs and guarantee they can access the best in veterinary treatment, therapy and medication once they retire.

The charity has launched a petition and is urging the public to get behind the campaign, which would see the Government ring-fencing a budget to ensure a basic level of support to the retired dogs' new owners to ensure they are not left with the significant financial pressures themselves.

Around £5,000 of those funds have paid for Captain, who served with West Midlands Police as a general purpose dog for three years before retiring, in 2022, when he ruptured his cruciate ligament and being declared unfit for service.

The strenuous working life had taken its toll on the seven-year-old's spine and the German Shepherd now needs major spinal surgery to repair the damage his physical career had on his body.

The Thin Blue Paw has already paid for diagnostic tests, scans and treatment to find the extent of the damage to his spine and veterinary experts have suggested he needs rehabilitative therapy to strengthen him before they can operate.

And the charity is paying for him

to have regular hydrotherapy, physiotherapy and medication, and the surgery is expected to cost a further £5,000.

The charity's chairman, Kieran Stanbridge, said: "Unfortunately, the wear and tear from Captain's working life has left its mark on his body, and he's been struggling on his rear legs for some time. Tests have shown that he's got severe damage to his spine which needs surgery so he can continue to have a quality of life.

"Captain gave years of his life to working as a police dog and now he deserves to have a long and happy, comfortable retirement, so we want to give him the very best chance at that."

Captain, who was partnered with PC Marcus Cottrell, during his career was a 'fearsome' police dog who was excellent at his job and won the Police Chief's Certificate of Achievement.

'Physical demands'

Mr Stanbridge added: "Police dogs lead physically demanding lives and, when they retire – whether due to injury or age – they often have health problems as a result of their career, which can require expensive medication, therapy and management throughout their retirement.

"Although we've worked with insur-



The Thin Blue Paw wants police dogs, like Captain, to have a pension to help cover medical costs when they retire.

ance companies over the last few years to help them launch special policies open to retired police dogs making it easier for owners to get insurance cover, it's the Government's responsibility to offer some ongoing support to these canine heroes once they hang up their harness."

The Foundation says arthritis is the most common condition it helps

owners treat and, based on an average of £200-a-month for pain-relief medication, estimates it costs around £2,400 a year more to care for a retired police dog than a normal pet dog of a similar age and breed.

Visit: thinbluepaw.org.uk/pensions-for-police-dogs for more or to sign the petition.

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SO MUCH INCLUDED...

- ✓ Return coach travel from Kidderminster, Stourport
- ✓ Overnight stay at a selected hotel outside London (JG3 or JG4 rating) with breakfast
- ✓ Grand Circle ticket (evening performance)
- ✓ Free time in London for shopping & sightseeing



TORQUAY WEEKEND

Departing Fri 5 Sep '25

Take in a weekend of picturesque south-west scenery in Torquay, where the gorgeous sea views and beaches make it the perfect place to escape for a few days of rest and relaxation. We include excursions to the inspiring destinations of Dawlish and Teignmouth.

SO MUCH INCLUDED...

- ✓ Return coach travel from Kidderminster, Stourport
- ✓ 3 nights at the Burlington Hotel, Torquay (JG2 rating) with dinner & breakfast
- ✓ Entertainment every evening
- ✓ Excursion to Dawlish & Teignmouth

Optional excursion to Dartmouth (£11pp)



FOLKESTONE WEEKEND

Departing Fri 12 Sep '25

Enjoy a great-value break to discover Folkestone and the stunning scenery of South East England. With a day in Canterbury included and the chance to visit pretty Broadstairs and Whitstable, beloved for their sandy beaches, this weekend is not to be missed!

SO MUCH INCLUDED...

- ✓ Return coach travel from Kidderminster, Stourport
- ✓ 3 nights at the Grand Burstin Hotel, Folkestone (JG2 rating) with dinner & breakfast
- ✓ Light entertainment every evening
- ✓ Excursion to Canterbury

Optional excursion to Broadstairs & Whitstable (£15pp)



WEST WALES COASTLINE TENBY & THE VALE OF RHEIDOL RAILWAY

Departing Thu 7 Aug '25

The west coast of Wales is renowned for its grand hills, dramatic coastline and purple-heather moors. On this break we visit ancient sites of natural beauty, elegant seaside resorts and journey through the Vale of Rheidol on a preserved narrow-gauge railway.

SO MUCH INCLUDED...

- ✓ Return coach travel from Kidderminster, Stourport
- ✓ 4 nights at the Ivy Bush Hotel, Carmarthen (JG3 rating) with dinner & breakfast
- ✓ Entertainment some evenings
- ✓ Heritage train journey on the Vale of Rheidol Railway
- ✓ Excursions to Abergystwyth, Tenby & Saundersfoot

Optional excursion to Cardigan & St Davids (£14pp)

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SUDOKU

Complete the grid so that every row, every column and every 3 x 3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9.

EASY

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

HARD

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

PATHFINDER

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.

Glastonbury headliners

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

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											

ACROSS

7. Great Britain and Northern Ireland (6,7)
8. Taciturn (8)
9. Competent (4)
10. Mild (6)
12. Deed (6)
14. Roadway (6)
16. Tried (6)
18. Urge forward (4)
20. Way in (8)
22. Religious organisation (9,4)

DOWN

1. Concern (8)
2. Severe (6)
3. Lazy (4)
4. Divert (8)
5. Horrified (6)
6. Labour (4)
11. Petition (8)
13. Conquer (8)
15. Salad plant (6)
17. Sailor (6)
19. Spoken (4)
21. Jog (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.

- Ale
- Wild animal
- Droplet
- Take charge
- Burden

PEER

LORD

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.

- 83412 gives a Swedish actress;
- 5249 gives a British actress;
- 42167927 gives a Romanian-born American actor.

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

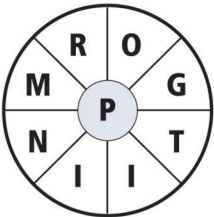
CODEWORD

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.

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

WORDWHEEL

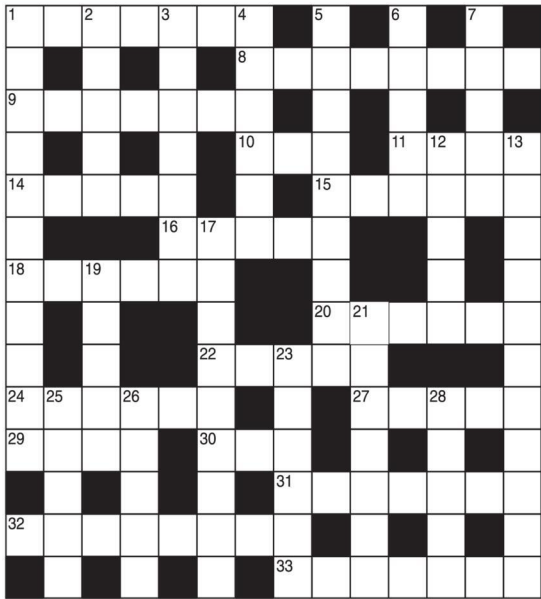
You have 10 mins to find as many words as possible using the letters in the wheel. Each must use the hub letter and at least 3 others. Letters may be used only once. You cannot use plurals, foreign words or proper nouns. There is at least one 9-letter word to be found.



How you rate
8 words: average
12 words: good
16 words: very good
20 or more: excellent.

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE CROSSWORD

- ACROSS**
- 1 Cattle-breeding establishments (7)
8 An amulet or charm (8)
9 Buddhist beatitude (7)
10 Surname of an American general born in 1807 (3)
11 City famous for the Taj Mahal (4)
14 A geological or historical age (5)
15 See 18 Across
16 Large bird of prey (5)
18 & 15 Across Songwriter famous for White Christmas (6,9)
20 Kind of four-wheeled carriage (6)
22 Snooker or billiards stroke (5)
24 Salad plant (6)
27 Stocking thread (5)
29 Bird such as the corncrake (4)
30 & 13 Down Play by GB Shaw (3,3,8)
31 Former spelling of the South American republic of which the capital is Paramaribo (7)
32 HMS ---, comic opera by Gilbert and Sullivan (8)
33 Subdivision of a company, platoon, etc. (7)



- DOWN**
- 1 Instrument for estimating the distance of an object (11)
2 --- and Knox, 'Crazy Gang' comedians (5)
3 Pagan (7)
4 German POW camp for NCOs and men (6)
5 In southern England, wood hyacinths (9)
6 Annual cinema award in various fields (5)
7 A people of New Zealand (5)
12 Organ of the body (5)
13 See 30 Across
17 Leader of the Greeks at the siege of Troy (9)
19 Composer of operas including Don Carlos and Aida (5)
21 Old-English prose writer called Grammaticus (7)
23 Sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch are the five --- (6)
25 Lowest point of anything (5)
26 Work attributed to Homer (5)
28 Mount where Moses received the tables of the Law (5)

SOLUTIONS

General Knowledge Crossword

ACROSS: 1 Ranches; 8 Talsiman; 9 Nirvana; 10 Lee; 11 Agra; 14 Epoch; 15 Berlin; 16 Eagle; 18 Irving; 20 Landau; 22 Masse; 24 Endive; 27 Rail; 30 Man; 31 Surinam; 32 Pinatubo; 33 Section. DOWN: 1 Range-finder; 2 Nervo; 3 Heathen; 4 Stalag; 5 Bluebell; 6 Oscar; 7 Maori; 12 Gland; 13 And Superman; 17 Agamemnon; 19 Verdi; 21 Aetlic; 23 Senses; 25 Nader; 26 Iliad; 28 Sinal.

Crossword

ACROSS: 7 United Kingdom; 8 Retiree; 9 Able; 10 Gentle; 12 Action; 14 Street; 16 Testes; 18 Goad; 20 Entrance; 22 Salvation Army; Down: 1 Interest; 2 Strict; 3 Idle; 4 Distract; 5 Aghast; 6 Toll; 11 Entreaty; 13 Overcome; 15 Endive; 17 Seaman; 19 Oral; 21 Trot.

WORDMINE

WORDMINE: 1 REX, 2 ELVIS, 3 COSTELLO, 4 LENNY, 5 KRAVITZ, 6 THE WHITE STRIPES, 7 OASIS, 8 ARCTIC MONKEYS, 9 JAY Z, 10 THE LURE, 11 VAN MORRISON, 12 DAVID BOWIE, 13 KINGS OF LEON, 14 KASABIAN, 15 FLORENCE AND THE MACHINE, 16 BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN, 17 ADELE, 18 RADIODHEAD, 19 PAUL MCCARTNEY, 20 METALLICA.

WORDWHEEL

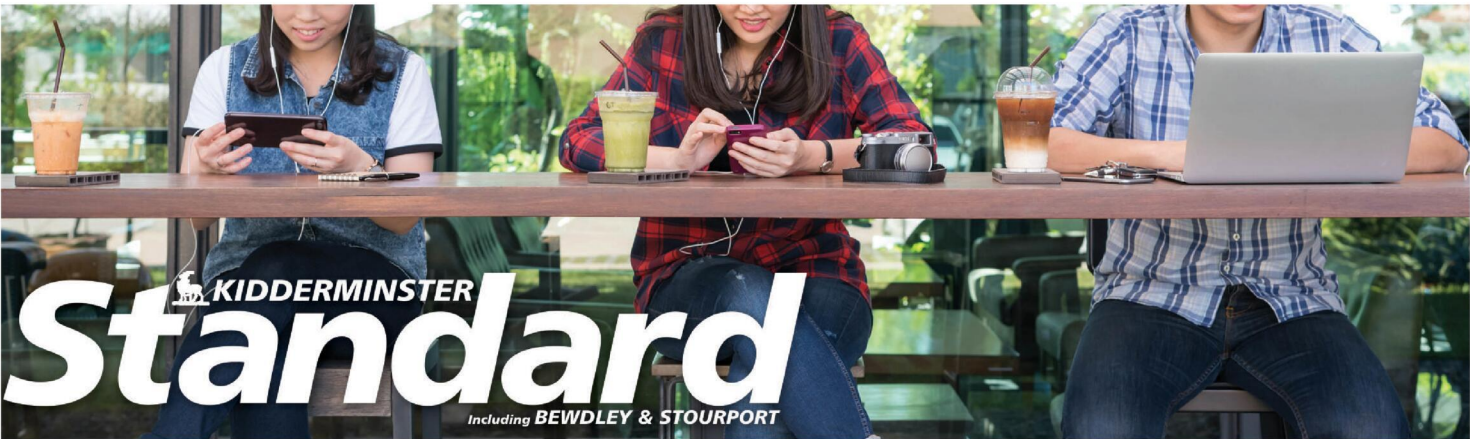
WORDWHEEL: 1 N, 2 U, 3 M, 4 Q, 5 S, 6 W, 7 K, 8 P, 9 V, 10 R, 11 T, 12 D, 13 X, 14 L, 15 G, 16 L, 17 O, 18 E, 19 A, 20 C, 21 J, 22 B, 23 F, 24 Z, 25 H, 26 Y.

WORDLADDER

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

WORDCUBE

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



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Kia set to launch new Sportage

THE NEW Kia Sportage has been revealed in Europe in its latest iteration.

The new model features extensive enhancements in design, innovation, technology and convenience, and sets new standards in the competitive compact SUV segment.

The new Sportage offers both petrol and hybrid (HEV) powertrains from launch. The shortened wheelbase has been developed to meet the preferences of European SUV customers without compromising on interior space.

Sjoerd Knipping, COO at Kia Europe, said: "With a fully upgraded package, ready for every adventure, the most refined Sportage ever appeals to a wide variety of consumers, including our legacy customers, as it offers new levels of versatility, convenience and comfort."

Kia's 'Opposites United' design philosophy gives the Sportage a striking new look. Smooth, soft surfaces are combined with rugged forms and a powerful stance. The new front and rear bumpers

create a strong silhouette, with eye-catching LED Star Map lighting and Kia's distinctive tiger nose grille. The new wheel design is available as 17-inch, 18-inch, and 19-inch, with exclusive 18-inch and 19-inch versions for 'GT-Line' and 'GT-Line S' models.

The interior offers ample room for everyone on board. The steering wheel features a new two-spoke design, while the updated crash pad and hidden air vents create a sleek, minimalist finish. New seat covers add further comfort, with 'GT-Line' and 'GT-Line S' variants offering a stylish black and white interior in artificial leather and suede.

Together with Dinamica®, Kia has integrated a responsible fabric in the interior of the Sportage. Dinamica's premium non-woven microfibre suede is featured in the door and seat insert in the 'GT-Line' as standard and in the door inserts and seat boosters as an option.

The Sportage continues to offer a spacious interior and flexible cargo room, with more than one metre of rear legroom for passengers in the second row. Rear cargo capacity up to 587 litres, and up to 1,776 litres

with the second-row seats folded, enable customers to take everything they need for day trips and longer journeys. The dual-level cargo floor available on the HEV provides flexible cargo carrying capabilities.

Central to the enhanced driving experience in the Sportage is the Connected Car Navigation Cockpit (CCnC), featuring dual 12.3-inch curved panoramic displays and a new 10-inch head-up display (HUD). All functions and information are placed within easy access and viewing for the driver, including driver assistance systems, infotainment and turn-by-turn directions.

Connectivity and in-car options are further enhanced with wireless Apple CarPlay™ and Android Auto™. Kia Connect and OTA updates can access specific features and services, check the vehicle lock status, plan routes and more. The Sportage's Feature-on-Demand (FOD) platform allows drivers to add arcade games, YouTube, other video streaming services via the WebOS, as well as new display themes to the infotainment system.

Through Kia In-Car Payment, drivers can conveniently pay for

on-street parking directly from their car, while the available Wi-Fi Hotspot connects up to five devices to 4G LTE-based internet. Connected Routing calculates the optimal route using live and predicted traffic based on historical information to learn the preferred routes of customers. The available Digital Key 2.0 offers the ability to access the vehicle using smart devices without needing to carry a physical key, while it's also possible to share the digital key with family and friends. In addition, the vehicle features a Harman Kardon premium audio system.

The enhanced Sportage offers a choice of petrol and hybrid (HEV) powertrains from launch, giving customers a choice of hybrid powertrains that best suits their needs. Sportage offers more dynamic driving thanks to a powerful turbo hybrid powertrain, a new generation transmission, the vehicle's aerodynamic design and a low centre of gravity.

The new Sportage is expected to arrive in Kia showrooms in the third quarter of 2025. Full UK pricing and specifications will be announced

closer to its on-sale date.

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Published by Bullivant Media Group Ltd, Webb House,
Church Green East, Redditch, Worcestershire B98 8BP
Printed by Newsquest, Newspaper House, Osney Mead,
Oxford, Oxfordshire OX2 0EJ

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Rowbottom in title contention after victory at Thruxton

by Aaron Sutcliffe
aaron.sutcliffe@bullivantmedia.com

BTCC: DAN Rowbottom showcased his title credentials with a race win and podium finish in the British Touring Car Championship (BTCC) at Thruxton.

Rowbottom won the final race of the weekend after a third-place finish in race two.

He also finished fifth in race one.

The Kidderminster driver sits third in the drivers' standings on 132 points, 49 points behind leader and teammate Ash Sutton.

Rowbottom said: "It was a great way to end the weekend.

"We've had a good points haul this weekend, I'm really pleased and we've just got to try and keep eeking the points out of Ash (Sutton), he's got a bit of a head start but we'll do our best.

"We've got a long way to go, we're trying to show that we are here and that we mean business.

"I don't care if I win this championship with one win or no wins, ultimately that's the goal and we'll keep pushing for it."

Rowbottom secured his second race win of the season at Thruxton in the final race of the weekend.



The NAPA Racing UK driver overtook pole-sitter James Dorlin on the first lap.

And he then snatched the lead from Josh Cook with a trademark move down the inside at Segrave corner.

Rowbottom comfortably secured the race win as teammate Dan Cammish finished third while title rival Tom Ingram denied NAPA Racing a one-two.

And Rowbottom also finished on the podium in race two following some post-race drama.

Rowbottom initially crossed the line in fourth place behind Sutton, Ingram and Cook.

However, a post-race inspection saw Cook's car excluded

from the final result for failing ride height checks.

Rowbottom swapped positions with Jake Hill on a number of occasions in the closing laps.

And Rowbottom even ventured across the grass after fluid dropped on to the circuit from Mikey Doble's Vauxhall.

However, the Kidderminster driver eventually secured a podium finish owing to Cook's post-race disqualification.

The BTCC season continues at Oulton Park on the weekend of June 21 and 22.

Dan Rowbottom celebrates on top of the podium. Picture by Darren Price.

Emeka Obi has joined Kidderminster Harriers ahead of the 2025/26 season. Picture courtesy of Kidderminster Harriers FC.



Harriers sign defender Obi as Kandola agrees new deal

FOOTBALL: KIDDERMINSTER Harriers have signed towering defender and former National League North winner Emeka Obi from AFC Fylde.

The 24-year-old played a key role in Fylde's title win under current Harriers boss Adam Murray in the 2022/23 campaign.

Obi stands at 6ft 5in tall and has made more than 100 appearances for Fylde over the last four seasons.

Murray said: "We know that this league is about, you have to be very good in both boxes and, at six foot five, Meeks brings that as a basic.

"He's very quick. For the way we would like to play, you need pace, and he'll bring that.

"He's only 24 years of age so he comes to us with a really hungry attitude after probably not playing as much as he would've liked at Fylde in the National League.

"He's come with a point to prove and, like Pierce [Bird], when we won the league, he was a mainstay in it for us.

"He knows what it takes to get out of this division, and you can't put a price on that."

The centre-back spent time in Liverpool's academy after making his senior debut for Bury in the EFL Trophy as a 15-year-old.

He later moved to Wigan Athletic where he made nine appearances in all competitions.

Following his departure from the Latics, Obi joined Fylde in February 2021 and helped the Lancashire club win the National League North title.

The club have also confirmed young player of the year Kam Kandola will remain with Harriers next season.

Kandola made 35 appearances for Harriers in all competitions last term.

And the 21-year-old impressed in defence and midfield, winning the club's young player of the season award.

The youngster joined Kidderminster ahead of the 2024/25 campaign after spending 13 years with Wolverhampton Wanderers.

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Council Changes Survey

Deadline 29 June 2025

1. What capacity are you responding in?

(If you would like to respond in more than one capacity, please complete a separate survey for each)

- ☐ Resident
- ☐ Business
- ☐ Parish/town council
- ☐ Voluntary or community sector organisation
- ☐ Other type of stakeholder – (please specify) _____

2. Which district/borough/city do you live in?

(for businesses, parish/town councils, voluntary or community sector organisations and other stakeholders please select the district your organisation is based in or does most of its work in)

- ☐ Bromsgrove District
- ☐ Malvern Hills District
- ☐ Redditch Borough
- ☐ Worcester City
- ☐ Wychavon District
- ☐ Wyre Forest District

3. How aware are you of plans for reorganising local councils in Worcestershire?

- ☐ Very aware
- ☐ Somewhat aware
- ☐ Not aware

4. How well do you understand each of the two proposed options for Worcestershire?

- One unitary council covering all of Worcestershire

☐ Very well

☐ Somewhat

☐ Not well
- Two unitary councils – one for North Worcestershire and one for South Worcestershire

☐ Very well

☐ Somewhat

☐ Not well

5. Based on the information provided, which option do you currently prefer?

- ☐ One unitary council covering all of Worcestershire

☐ I don't have a preference
- ☐ Two unitary councils – one for North Worcestershire and one for South Worcestershire

☐ I don't support reorganisation of local councils in Worcestershire
- ☐ I'm not interested

6. Please tell us the main reason/s for your choice

7. Thinking of the outcomes the Government expects us to consider when deciding how we restructure councils in Worcestershire, which of the potential options do you think would best deliver each?

Tick **one** option for each of the outcomes

	One unitary authority	Two unitary authorities	Both options	Neither option	Don't know
Improving local services					
Saving money and delivering value					
Making local government simpler					
Supporting local identity					
Stronger community engagement					

8. Thinking about how your current local councils are organised, which three things from the list below matter most to you?

Tick up to **three**.

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Access to local representation/
councillors to get my voice heard | <input type="checkbox"/> Impact on the local community
and local identity | <input type="checkbox"/> Maintaining or improving local services
and council owned facilities, such as
community centres, sports grounds,
arts centres, museums etc |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Availability of business support | <input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure planning (e.g. roads,
schools, health) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other – please specify |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Funding and other support for voluntary
and community organisations | <input type="checkbox"/> Knowing who to contact when I
have a query or complaint | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> How much Council Tax I pay | | |

9. County and district councils are responsible for a number of services. Which, if any, local services are you concerned about being affected by reorganisation?

Tick up to **five**.

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adult social care such as support for people
with disabilities, or care for the elderly | <input type="checkbox"/> Parks and other green spaces | <input type="checkbox"/> Social / council housing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community safety and CCTV | <input type="checkbox"/> Planning and related services | <input type="checkbox"/> Street cleaning and prevention of fly-tipping |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Council-managed car parking /
parking enforcement | <input type="checkbox"/> Public toilets | <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting local businesses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Customer services / contact with council staff | <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental health and licensing of taxis,
pubs, restaurants and other facilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth facilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education and children's services such
as looked after children, those with
special educational needs or disability
(SEND), fostering and adoption | <input type="checkbox"/> Highways (potholes, footpaths,
drainage, street lighting) | <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Homelessness support | <input type="checkbox"/> Waste and recycling collection and disposal | <input type="checkbox"/> Other - please specify |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Libraries | <input type="checkbox"/> Sports, leisure and cultural facilities
(leisure centres, community
centres, theatres, museums) | |

10. Do you have any other comments, suggestions, or concerns about the proposed reorganisation?

11. Are you interested in taking part in a focus group about the issues covered in this survey?

☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, please provide an email address: _____

This information will only be used to invite you to a focus group session. By providing your email address, you are consenting to us contacting you for the purpose of taking part in a focus group. Spaces in focus groups will be limited, but we will do our best to accommodate all interested respondents.

About you

These questions are optional.

The information you provide to us will only be analysed and used by the Worcestershire councils. It will only be used for the purposes of this engagement exercise and to help inform formal proposals to be put to Government. Please see our privacy policy at <https://shapeworcestershire.org/privacy-policy>.

How old are you?

☐ 16-18 ☐ 19-24 ☐ 25-34 ☐ 35-44 ☐ 45-54 ☐ 55-64 ☐ 64+

Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting, or expecting to last, 12 months or more?

☐ Yes ☐ No

What is your gender?

☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Other

What is your ethnicity?

☐ White ☐ Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups ☐ Asian or Asian British
☐ Black, Black British, Caribbean or African ☐ Other ethnic group

Your postcode

Follow the instructions at the bottom of page 2 on how to return your completed survey. **The deadline is 29 June.**

