

# £7m council tax debt leads to calls for help

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

**WYRE Forest District Council is owed £6.99million in unpaid council tax bills, according to the latest figures from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government.**

The amount of debt accrued by residents across Kidderminster, Stouport and Bewdley forms part of a national total now at £6.6billion.

Charity National Debtline suggests, as council budgets have become more stretched, local authorities are increasingly reliant on council tax revenue to fund essential services.

But, it believes this has also led to higher bills overall, creating a vicious circle for many people already struggling to pay.

Recent research from the Money Advice Trust, which runs the National Debtline, reveals as of March 2025, 2.2million people in England (five per cent) were behind on their council tax bill, suggesting many more be struggling with council tax arrears and had not yet sought help.

National Debtline is now calling for improved collection practices and greater investment in council tax support schemes to prevent people falling behind to begin with.

Steve Vaid, chief executive at Money Advice Trust, said: "Unless changes are made at a policy level, arrears are likely to keep climbing."

A quarter of people who call National Debtline for advice have council tax debt, averaging £1,958 per person, making it one of the top three most common debts its advisers hear about.

Mr Vlad added councils had a vital role in helping residents with unmanageable bills to ensure council tax was collected in a way that is fair and affordable.

Current rules mean households can become liable for their full annual council tax bill if they

miss one payment, which often results in a quick escalation to bailiff action.

Last week, the Government set out proposals to extend this period, so people had more time to engage and seek support and the Ministry of Justice has announced plans to consult on giving the Enforcement Conduct Board legal powers to regulate the bailiff industry.

National Debtline welcomed both these moves after a decade of campaigning.

## Council's response

Coun David Ross, Wyre Forest District Council's Cabinet member for Finance and Capital Portfolio, said council tax had always been a vital source of funding and, as part of its corporate plan, the authority was committed to 'securing financial sustainability for services local communities valued and was increasing net income from its commercial activities to reduce reliance on council tax income'.

He added the council consistently collected an average of 97.3 per cent of the council tax owed within the year.

He also said the debt figure included that owed to other organisations - not just Wyre Forest District Council - including Worcestershire County Council, the Office of the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner, Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority and town and parish councils.

The council has a debt recovery policy to make sure council tax is collected from all those liable to pay.

Coun Ross added: "We are committed to balancing the need for effective council tax collection with compassion and support for those in financial difficulty."

He added help was available for anyone struggling to pay their council tax and urged people in that situation to visit: wyreforestdc.gov.uk to find out more.



The parade will take place tomorrow as part of this year's Bewdley Carnival. s

THERE will be plenty of fun for all the family when the popular Bewdley Carnival returns this weekend.

It all begins with a fireworks show tonight at Bewdley Rowing Club.

And then tomorrow, there will be host

of activities, including the annual carnival parade which will journey through the town.

Turn to page two for all you need to know about the event.

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# Carnival is guaranteed to get Bewdley buzzing

by Lola Griffin  
news@bullivantmedia.com

**BEWDLEY** Carnival makes its grand return this weekend with most of the activities tomorrow (Saturday) in the town centre providing entertainment, trader markets and support for local community groups and non-profit organisations.

Tonight (Friday) before the anticipated carnival, there will be a firework show, sponsored by Light Ideas Ltd - it is due to start at approximately 10pm, taking place at the Bewdley Rowing Club Riverside N, Bewdley.

## The Carnival Parade

Starting at 12pm, the parade will leave from Habberley Road, turn right through Catchem's End, go along Kidderminster Road and into the town centre.

From here the Carnival will run until 8pm with a wide range of activities to enjoy.

On Load Street there will be live



music, a food court, local and town traders, and a fun fair.

On Severnside South there will be the Riverside Stage with live music and in the Jubilee Gardens, there will be a family area with live entertainment, traders and garden games.

Bewdley Carnival also prides itself on supporting non-profit organisations and this year the event is supporting Friends of the Maypole, a community group working to secure and protect the Maypole Piece.

The Carnival has pledged £2,000 towards the Friends of the Maypole

bidding total, as well as donating £2,150 to the local community.

There are multiple parking options this year, including Blackstone, The Bewdley School (until 4pm), Dog Lane, Gardener's Meadow, and roadside parking along Stourport Road.

## Road Closures

Tomorrow - the day of the Carnival - there will be road closures on Beale's Corner, Habberley Road and Kidderminster Road (from approximately 11.45am until the

parade has passed).

A spokesperson for Bewdley Carnival said: "The event is always a fantastic occasion that yields a great turn-out - as well as people who live here, we get lots of visitors coming which helps the local economy."

"It's a wonderful day with fun for all the family and it really does bring Bewdley alive and get it thriving."

This picture and the one on the front page were from last year's carnival - the 2024 Bewdley Carnival pictures were taken by Sara Jennings, Andrey Zhukov and Steve Scott.

For more information, check the Bewdley Carnival Facebook group [bewdleycarnival.co.uk](https://www.facebook.com/bewdleycarnival.co.uk) - the Bewdley Carnival website.

And don't forget to send us your Bewdley Carnival pictures - you can email them, along with who is in the photographs, to: [editor@kidderminsterstandard.co.uk](mailto:editor@kidderminsterstandard.co.uk) or by sending them via messenger to our Kidderminster Standard Facebook page.

**The popular Bewdley Carnival Parade takes place tomorrow.**

## News in brief

AN ECO family fun day will take place at Stourport Community Centre from 11am to 3pm tomorrow (Saturday).

The event, which is being held as part of SustFest Wyre Forest, will feature an exciting eco treasure hunt and other engaging activities for children and adults.

These include a plant sale, the chance to speak to environmental charities and the opportunity to learn how to make gardens more wildlife friendly.

The event is free to attend and dogs are welcome.

A HOUSE fire was put out in Cobden Street, Kidderminster, around 1am on Sunday.

The blaze broke out in a window box and two crews from Wyre Forest Fire Station attended.

After using water jets to put out the fire, they used positive pressure ventilation to clear the smoke.

Luckily the flames did not spread to neighbouring properties.

West Mercia Police were informed due to the suspected suspicious nature of what caused it.

But, the force said, no evidence was found to indicate the fire was started deliberately.

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Pupils got creative with 'crazy hair' in return for a donation. s

## It was a real hair-raising experience

A WOLVERLEY school has raised more than £600 for Simply Limitless, a wellbeing charity based in Kidderminster.

The charity day was the first to be led by the Heathfield Knoll School's Pupil Parliament and was a huge success.

A variety of activities took place on the day, including pupils having 'crazy hair' in return for a small donation.

The children also enjoyed breaktime stalls on the playground which sold tuck treats and handmade bracelets.

At lunchtime, the pupils were given the chance to 'soak the teacher', which was a particularly popular activity.

The school wants to say a huge thank you to the staff who allowed themselves to be pumelled with wet sponges.

The day culminated in movie night at the 'school cinema'.

A Heathfield Knoll School spokesperson said: "It was a lovely way to end such a positive day for our school community."

Simply Limitless, which helps people of all ages with both their physical and mental health, was thrilled to find out about the fundraising and all support received will help pay for the vital work the charity does for the community of Wyre Forest.

The charity would love to hear from other people or groups interested in fundraising for it.

Email: [laura.wisdom@simply-limitless.org](mailto:laura.wisdom@simply-limitless.org) or [info@simply-limitless.org](mailto:info@simply-limitless.org) or call 01562 751144.

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# New centre to transform lives

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

**A FORMER residential care home in Kidderminster has been transformed into a centre for supporting people with learning disabilities and complex needs.**

Foley House has been taken over by Salutem Care and Education and will help adults facing these challenges to live fulfilling, independent lives within their community.

The premises, previously also operated by Salutem when it was a care home, was originally closed as part of Worcestershire County Council's wider strategy to increase opportunities for individuals to live in their own homes with tailored support.

The people who previously lived at Foley were successfully supported to move into a purpose-built supported living environment nearby.

Following its closure, Foley House was sold to Warwick Investments, which has since completed an extensive refurbishment project.

The redesigned property now features five accessible bedrooms, each with en-suite facilities, along with spacious communal areas, a landscaped garden, and a dedicated parking area.

The service is commissioned by Worcestershire County Council, with Inclusion Housing as the landlord and Warwick Investments as the developer.

Salutem will provide on-site support to enable the new tenants to live as independently as possible in a safe and enabling environment.

Three people have already been identified to move in, with assessments ongoing to



find people who would benefit from the remaining two spaces.

It is anticipated that tenants will begin moving into their new home later this month.

Sally Jobling, divisional director for Supported Living at Salutem, said: "We are delighted to be returning to Foley House in a new capacity, supporting people to live more independently in a beautiful and thoughtfully redeveloped setting."

"We are proud to work alongside Worcestershire County Council, Inclusion and Warwick Investments to deliver modern housing solutions that reflect the individual needs and aspirations of the people we support."

Alexandra Smith, operations manager at Inclusion Housing, said: "This develop-

ment is another great example of partnership working between our organisations to deliver great quality accommodation, we look forward to welcoming our new tenants to their home."

The reopening of Foley House follows the successful launch of Columbia, a new supported living service in Lower Wick in Worcestershire, which opened last year. Columbia supports four young adults and is located close to Salutem's existing Primrose and Henwick services.

**Foley House, a former residential care home in Kidderminster, has been transformed and will now be used to support people with learning difficulties and complex needs. s**



**QUICK RESPONSE:** FIREFIGHTERS from Wyre Forests Station put out a potentially devastating blaze at Kidderminster's Brinton Park on Saturday morning (pictured).

It is believed to have been caused by a discarded cigarette.

Wyre Forest District Council has thanked the firefighters for their prompt response.

In a statement it said: "A huge thank you to our local fire service for their swift response this morning to a fire at Brinton Park."

"Thankfully, the fire was brought under control quickly thanks to their incredible work."

The council warned fires and barbecues were not permitted in any of its parks or nature reserves.

And it added: "Cigarettes must be fully extinguished and placed in a bin, not dropped on the ground."

"Not only is this littering, but it can easily cause dangerous fires, especially in dry hot weather."

"Let's all do our part to protect our green spaces."



Kidderminster United under nines won the Worcester Raiders' tournament. s

## Trophy rounds off a great season

THIS was the moment that Kidderminster United under nines won its latest competition over the weekend.

Having already won their league, the team entered the Worcester Raiders' tournament on Saturday.

It was the team's first pre-season tournament and they only conceded one goal in the contest, going on to take the title, winning 1-0 in the final.

The club said: "We are proud of each and everyone of these boys."



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Next year will celebrate the 60th anniversary of the formal link-up between Kidderminster and twin town Husum in northern Germany. s

## Twinning visit was real highlight

THANK you to the Kidderminster Standard for the opportunity to publish a monthly column.

This June, the lady Mayoress and I have had the great honour and pleasure of joining with the Twinning Association on their visit to Kidderminster's twin town — Husum, which is a beautiful fishing and former shipbuilding port located in North Friesland, on the North Sea in Germany.

The weekend of our visit was their 'Ringrinder Festival', where horse riders in ceremonial dress parade through the streets of the town, before competing to find the most accomplished rider who is recognised



### Mayor's Diary

Kidderminster Mayor Doug Hines writes for The Standard

as the 'King'.

Also visiting during the weekend was a delegation from another of Husum's twin towns — Trzcianka near Poznan in Poland. Husum takes their twinning, or 'town partnership' programme, seriously, and has five partner towns.

Listening to the speeches at the civic reception, it became clear to me how important the town twinning movement was, and is, in building and maintaining friendships, peace and understanding between people at a personal and

community level between communities that were driven apart by war and hatred.

Next year is the 60th anniversary of the formal Kidderminster-Husum Twinning Association (although links between our two towns go back to the 1950s).

One way we will celebrate next year is with a civic visit from Husum to Kidderminster.

Kidderminster Town Council and the Twinning Association will be looking forward to ensuring that their visit is as enjoyable and enriching as our 2025 visit has been.

Coun Doug Hines,  
Mayor of  
Kidderminster

# Mayor sets out dates for key charity events

by Jeanna Karcz

THE MAYOR OF Bewdley, Coun Nicole Harper, has announced the dates for a series of events to support her chosen charities.

There are a variety of activities to generate cash for three good causes — the William Mills Foundation, Emily Jordan Foundation and Rob Poyson Fund for Cardiac Risk in the Young (CRY).

The William Mills Foundation, formed in 2018, supports young people across Worcestershire, focused on positively influencing their lives and breaking down barriers which prevent them from reaching their potential.

The Emily Jordan Foundation runs projects, teaching people with learning disabilities practical work-based skills with an aim of



helping them find and remain in employment.

The Rob Poyson Fund for Cardiac Risk in the Young

The Mayor of Bewdley, Coun Nicole Harper, has announced a series of events for her chosen charities. s

(CRY) aims to reduce the frequency of young cardiac deaths through supporting CRY's screening programme within local communities.

The first event organised will be a quiz night at 7pm on September 26 at St George's Hall.

Then, on February 14 next year, there will be a Valentine's Day dinner at the Pines Golf Club at 7pm.

On March 13 next year, a fashion show will be held at St George's Hall at 7pm.

And at 2pm on April 25, a concert will be held at St Anne's Church.

Visit bewdleytowncouncil.gov.uk for more information on the events and the mayor's latest activities.

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# Stepping up campaign to save Maypole Piece

**THE FRIENDS of Maypole Piece have provided an update on the campaign to save the historic green space in Wribbenhall which has been put up for sale.**

The land has been at the centre of the community for generations but there are fears - depending on who buys it - that it could be developed.

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.

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.

As part of the campaign, representatives of the Friends of Maypole Piece were able to speak at a Bewdley Town Council meeting on June 9 to ask for formal support and calling on the authority to give serious consideration to designating Maypole Piece as an official Green Space to preserve it for future generations.

## Campaign latest

The Friends group has been informed that no decision has yet been made on Lot 1 (which contains the Maypole).

The group has been told it is seen as a credible group.

A spokesperson for the Friends of Maypole Piece said: "It is thanks to you all, we have



**Members of the Friends of the Maypole group outside Bewdley Town Council where they addressed councillors at a meeting. s**

shown we have huge support and can raise funds quickly, and in significant amounts.

"We remain hopeful that we can buy the Maypole element of Lot 1 and have asked the agent to speak to those who have made an offer on the lot, explain our vision and willingness to work together."

The charity application is nearly ready for submission - the current timescale for the process is 28 days to six weeks.

Once the group has its charity number, it will have access to apply for a significant amount of funds.

## Can you help?

The group still needs pledges from people and will be putting more about that on its

Facebook page.

It also wants to be able to supply as much detail and interesting facts about the wildlife, flora and fauna on the Maypole and why it needs protecting.

Anyone with knowledge on the wildlife, flora and fauna is urged to email: friendsofmaypole@gmail.com by the end of today (Friday, June 27).

This will help the group with its submission to the Charity Commission.

A Friends spokesperson added: "Thanks as always for your amazing support we simply could not do this without you."

Visit: friendsofmaypole.co.uk or the 'Friends of the Maypole' Facebook page for more information and the latest updates.

POLICE have launched an investigation after a woman fell into the River Severn between Trimley and Arley last Friday.

Officers from West Mercia Police are appealing for two 'good Samaritans' who helped her to get in touch with them.

The time of the incident is unknown but it is believed a couple who were walking along the river path helped her out of the water.

The woman suffered facial injuries and the pair may be vital witness in helping ascertain how her injuries were sustained.

PC Annabel Bloomer from Wyre Forest Police said: "We'd like to hear from the couple who helped her, or anyone else who may have been in the area at the time and witnessed the incident."

She urged anyone with information to email her at: Annabel.bloomer@westmercia.police.uk or call her on 07773 043041.

FIREFIGHTERS extinguished a blaze on a railway embankment in Bewdley just before 6pm on Saturday.

The fire involved around 50m by 50m of grass and shrubland and was extinguished with water jets.

There were no casualties and no other emergency services needed.

A BAG was stolen from a car while it was parked on Weavers Wharf Car Park in Kidderminster.

The theft occurred around 1pm on Monday when two men approached a woman at her car.

They distracted her and then took her bag - which was white and triangular shaped - from the vehicle.

The two men were of medium build and in their late 40s.

One was wearing a green gilet and a cap. Officers from Wyre Forest Police want witnesses or anyone with information to email PC Ryan Bridgewood at: ryan.bridgewood@westmercia.police.uk or call him on 101.

Alternatively, call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

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# Flying Scotsman's SVR visit a sell-out

**IT'S full steam ahead for the Flying Scotsman's visit to the Severn Valley Railway (SVR) after all seats were snapped up within three minutes of going on sale.**

The 60103, 'Flying Scotsman', will trail the first service when the SVR reopens its full line on July 25 following repairs to the damage caused by a landslip at Mor Brook bridge between Hampton Loade and Bridgnorth stations in Shropshire in January.

So far this year, the railway has

by **Lola Griffin**

only been able to operate between Kidderminster and Hampton Loade, with its Northern section cut off.

Jonathan 'Gus' Dunster, the SVR's managing director, said: "We simply couldn't have wished for a better result than this."

"It's amazing and a real vote of confidence in the Severn Valley Railway and the fact that we've been able to secure 'Flying Scotsman' for this very significant milestone in our history."

The SVR is looking into adding on extra tickets for the 'Flying Scotsman', with a potential opportunity for an on-train dining experience.

For anyone who has missed out on the opportunity to travel on board the 'Flying Scotsman', the SVR will host their Swinging Sixties weekend on July 26 and 27, where it will haul three return services each day to celebrate 60 years of the SVR in preservation.

With steam and heritage locomotives, live music, a Ferris wheel, vintage cars and a real ale festival,



**The 60103 'Flying Scotsman' on the SVR's Oldbury viaduct in 2016. Picture by Alan Corfield. s**

Mr Dunster said the SVR was going to celebrate in true style.

Visit the website at [svr.co.uk](http://svr.co.uk) for

full information on the timetable and tickets for the Swinging Sixties weekend.

## The CAB is here to help you through life's many challenges

CITIZEN'S Advice Wyre Forest is happy to be link up with the Kidderminster Standard and we look forward to using this opportunity to keep people up to date with what we are doing and how we're helping people.

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staff and volunteers is here to help free of charge, confidentially and without judgment.

We believe everyone should have access to advice they can trust. That's why we work tirelessly to ensure people across the Wyre Forest district can

access support and advice helping them to find a way forward. From helping someone claim the benefits they are entitled to or challenging homelessness we offer a wide range of services tailored to local needs.

In the past year alone, Citizens Advice Wyre Forest has supported more than 5,000 clients across the district, dealing with more than 11,000 issues. The most common concerns locally being around benefits, tax credits, Universal Credit, debt management, charitable support and food banks, all reflecting the financial strain

many families are still feeling.

Our support extends beyond crisis – we use clients' stories anonymously to advocate and campaign for positive change that benefits everyone, so our work not only improves lives, it strengthens the wider community.

In many cases, we have been able to help people maximise their income, access emergency support or avoid legal action.

Last year alone, we helped clients secure more than £2million in income gains and write off £541,768 in unmanageable debt.

As a registered charity we rely on a combination of government funding, local partnerships, and community donations to keep our services running.

Whether you need advice, want to volunteer, or are interested in supporting us, we would love to hear from you.

Visit [citizensadvicewyreforest.org.uk](http://citizensadvicewyreforest.org.uk) or email [info@wyreforestcab.org.uk](mailto:info@wyreforestcab.org.uk) for more information. Alternatively, call us on 0808 278 7891 or visit the Citizen's Advice national website at [citizensadvice.org.uk](http://citizensadvice.org.uk) for more details.



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# Virtual cycle will support Civic Hall

**A CHARITY event is being held next weekend to raise funds for The Civic Hall in Stourport.**

The event was the brainchild of a group of local businesses, Wyre Forest BNI, which has arranged a BIG fundraiser. It will see them cycle virtually, on the Civic stage, from Lands End to John O Groats.

The event will start at midnight on June 27 and run until June 28 so the distance can be completed.

From 11am to 11pm on the Saturday (June 28), there will also be a free family fun day with magic,

music, face painting /glitter and a bouncy castle. There will be food vendors, sweet stands, donuts and a bar.

There will be affordable table games and stalls including 'human fruit machine', palm/holistic reading, air golf, silent auctions, a 'win every time' tombola for adults and children and Bulgarian dancing.

And there is a huge raffle at the event with all proceeds for the day going towards refilling the pot.

The Civic Hall – a charity – is the hub of the town and is run by a band of volunteer trustees and volunteer workers, along with two

employed staff who strive to put on varied and accessible live entertainment and theatre.

They ensure the venue is accessible to all and extend this welcome by hiring the venue privately for all events from weddings to wakes, plus training and conferencing events for businesses large and small.

The charity says the cost of living is affecting everyone and, as a result, the Civic is feeling the strain and the financial pot is running low.

Anyone wanting to support the Civic Group in its endeavours to



The Land's End to John O'Groats virtual cycle and family fun day will be held to raise funds for The Civic Hall in Stourport. s

maintain the venue is welcome to go along or visit <https://www.gofundme.com/f/virtual-lands-end-to-john-ogroats-in-24-hours/>

to pledge cash. Go online to [thecivicstourport.co.uk](http://thecivicstourport.co.uk) or search for Stourport Civic Hall for more information on the venue.

## Quintessential summer fete

THE HISTORIC St Mary's Church in Harvington Hall Lane, near Kidderminster, will hold its annual summer fete from 1pm to 5pm next Saturday, July 5.

The event, which will provide the ambiance of a quintessentially English summer fete with activities for the entire family, is one of many fundraisers to ensure the historic building is maintained.

The fete will feature a variety of games, such as a bottle tombola, a raffle draw and numerous activities for children, along with stalls offering cakes, plants, books, children's toys and general bric-a-brac.

The 'Whisky Galore' stall will provide visitors with the opportunity to win bottles of spirits.

Held in the church's private priest's garden, visitors will be able to enjoy scones, tea, coffee and a variety of soft drinks from the lawn. Burgers and hot dogs will also be available from the barbecue and there will be a brass band to entertain attendees.

The entry fee is just £1 for adults and 50p for children under the age of 11. Dogs are unable to attend.

For more information, email [stmary.harvington@rcaob.org.uk](mailto:stmary.harvington@rcaob.org.uk) or call 01562 777319.



There will be plenty of traditional fun for all the family at the St Mary's Church summer fete next Saturday. Picture by Mike Jones. s

## Audi estate is stolen

A GREY Audi Quattro A4 Estate was stolen from Kidderminster without keys around 3pm last Friday.

The car, which had the partial registration 'GV\*9 HSX' was taken from a driveway in Hurcott Rise, off Albrighton Drive.

The suspects were seen arriving in an Audi convertible registration ending 'FBW'. Two men were seen

getting out of this vehicle and then proceeded to steal the Audi A4.

They wore shorts, hoodies and balaclavas.

Anyone with CCTV footage that could assist with police enquiries should call the Kidderminster Safer Neighbourhood Team on 101 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.



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# Volunteers needed for Speed Watch

by Lola Griffin

**BEWDLEY** Town Council is in the process of reintroducing a Community Speed Watch (CSW) programme but is in need of more volunteers for the scheme.

The CSW is aimed at encouraging motorists to drive at a safe and appropriate speed and prevent drivers travelling too fast in the town's hotspots.

The group will also strive to re-educate drivers about the dangers of speeding and address concerns from local residents regarding cars speeding through their neighborhood.

From April to November 2024, Bewdley Town Council members co-ordinated a group of volunteers, vetted by police and trained to engage in the Community Speed Watch.

The project was set up with the help of West Mercia Police and now more people are needed.

Anyone able to dedicate a couple hours a week should contact Bewdley Town Council at 01299 400157, by email at email@bewdleytowncouncil.org or by complet-



Could you be part of the Bewdley Community Speed Watch? s

ing an application form which can be collected from the town council office at 6 Load Street.

The council also has '20 is plenty' wheelie bin stickers available at their office for collection.

These are also aimed at encouraging drivers to think about the speed they are travelling at.

Anyone wanting one should visit the town council offices between 10am and 3pm, Monday to Friday.



**RIGHT:** Holy Trinity School students Sam Persich, Jorja Wright, Charlotte Rayner-Hall and Lottie Bates, all aged 12. s

**BELOW:** The students after their swim. s

## Making a splash in national finals

**TALENTED** Year Six swimmers from Holy Trinity School and Sixth Form in Kidderminster made their mark at the esteemed ESSA Primary School National Finals held at Ponds Forge in Sheffield.

Of the astounding 72 schools competing in the National Finals, Holy Trinity School students Sam Persich, Jorja Wright, Charlotte Rayner-Hall and Lottie Bates took an impressive 14th place in their category, as well as acquiring the renowned President's Trophy 2025. This is presented to the fastest state school in the 4x25 freestyle relay in the medium school category.

The school said these incredible achievements were a testament to the determination and



hard work of these striving athletes, as well as their admirable perseverance.

The students' swimming teacher, Paula Crocker, said: "I am immensely proud of Sam, Jorja, Charlotte, and Lottie who represented Holy Trinity School

with outstanding dedication and sportsmanship. Every member of the team gave their all, and I am extremely proud of what they have accomplished.

"Their success is a true reflection of teamwork and determination. I could not be prouder."

# Re@d @ll @bout it!



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# New group aims to offer vital support to others

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

A WOMAN who lost her leg is setting up a support group for fellow amputees after finding there was not much help across Worcestershire for people in a similar position to her.

It began when Kate Andrews, a Type 1 diabetic from Bromsgrove, was on holiday in Gran Canaria and had a blister on her foot.

Within 24 hours it had become bright red and, as she was due to return to the UK, she flew home.

Gangrene set in and she had to have her leg amputated below the knee.

She told the Standard: "Within two months, I had to change my life completely - I lost my car as I could not drive and that meant I lost my job."

"I worked in care, helping young people with challenging behaviour, autism and special needs."

"It was the best job in the world."

She needed to make big changes to her life and it was then she realised there really was no help across the county.

The group she is setting up will meet from 1pm to 3pm on the first Friday of the month at the Golden Cross Hotel (Wetherspoons) in Bromsgrove High Street and be a welcoming space where Worcestershire's amputees can connect, share and support one another. The first meeting is next Friday, July 4.

She said: "The staff at the hospital were great and did all they could for me but they are nurses at the end of the day and not specialists in the kind of care amputees need."

She has been well-supported by her husband Tony and her son but said there would be others who had no-one to turn to.

Kate has since become a Befriender with Age UK Bromsgrove, Redditch and Wyre Forest (BRWF) which sees her call elderly residents and visit them to help combat loneliness.



Kate Andrews is launching a group for amputees after finding a lack of help in the county. Picture by Marcus Mingins 2625012MMR

She also wants to raise awareness of foot health.

She said: "People do not check their feet enough - I didn't before this."

"It is especially important for those with underlying conditions, like diabetes, but this could happen to anyone."

Kate hopes to bring about further real change for amputees in Worcestershire so there is more help for them.

And her calls are backed by Wyre Forest District Councillor Fran Oborski who, herself an amputee, agrees there is not much help for amputees in Worcestershire.

She said: "There is some initial support but after that, you are left to your own devices."

She added, being a councillor, she was in a fortunate position as she knew who to contact for items, such as disabilities facilities grants for home modifications, wet rooms

and specialist equipment.

"With the trauma of an amputation, you are not in the best frame of mind and need some help - at least in the first few weeks."

"There needs to be more collaboration - at least a list detailing who amputees can contact for what."

Anyone wanting to find out more about the amputee group can email Kate at: kate16372@gmail.com or call her on 07841 679465.



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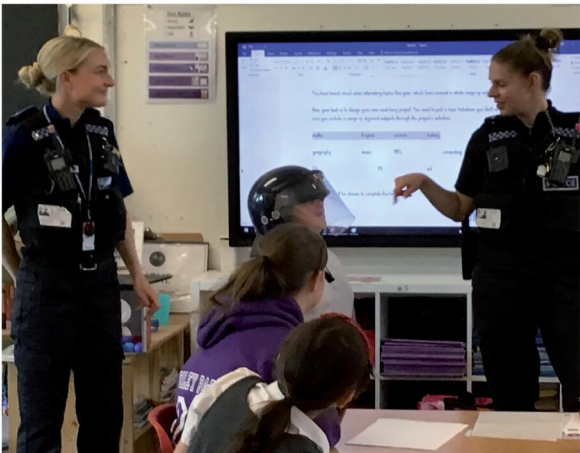




At St Catherine's CofE Primary School, officers met The Young Leaders Group to discuss ideas for making parking safer. s



Police patrols have been carried out in numerous areas. s



At Foley Park Primary School, officers spoke about their roles. s

# Focusing on community policing

**OFFICERS from Wyre Forest Police have been out and about engaging with the community as part of Neighbourhood Policing Week which began on Monday.**

Foot patrols were carried out in several areas, including Burlish Top, Birchen Coppice, and Brinton Park, ensuring visibility and providing reassurance to local residents.

Members of the public and community were also welcomed to a police drop-in surgery held at Starbucks where several concerns were raised and advice and reassurance was provided. Officers contacted relevant partner agencies to help address and prevent the issues brought to their attention.

As part of their continued outreach, two police officers visited Foley Park Primary School in Kidderminster, where they spoke to year six students about their roles in Neighbourhood Policing.

They also gave helpful advice on the safe and legal use of e-scooters.

The force said: "A big thank you to the students and staff for the warm welcome - we were impressed by the thoughtful and engaging questions from the children."

Another school visited was St Catherine's CofE Primary in Kidderminster where officers met with The Young Leaders Group to discuss their latest ideas for their safer parking project.

The pupils were praised for their enthusiasm and coming up with some very innovative ideas to address irresponsible, dangerous and illegal parking outside schools.

There was a letter drop to local residents and the forming a high visibility line at the end of the school day.

Other activities included officers seizing a badly damaged vehicle which was found to be untaxed to ensure roads were kept safe and lawful and patrols were carried out around the Offmore and Comberton estate. There, stop searches were conducted and two vehicles were seized - one for having no tax and the other because the driver had no insurance and was driving without a licence.

And a machete was also seized from a property.

Neighbourhood Policing Week runs until Sunday, June 29, and officers will be continue to be out and about across Kidderminster, Stourport, Bewdley and the surrounding areas.

People can raise any concerns with officers they have about their local area or call the Wyre Forest Police Safer Neighbourhood Team on 101.

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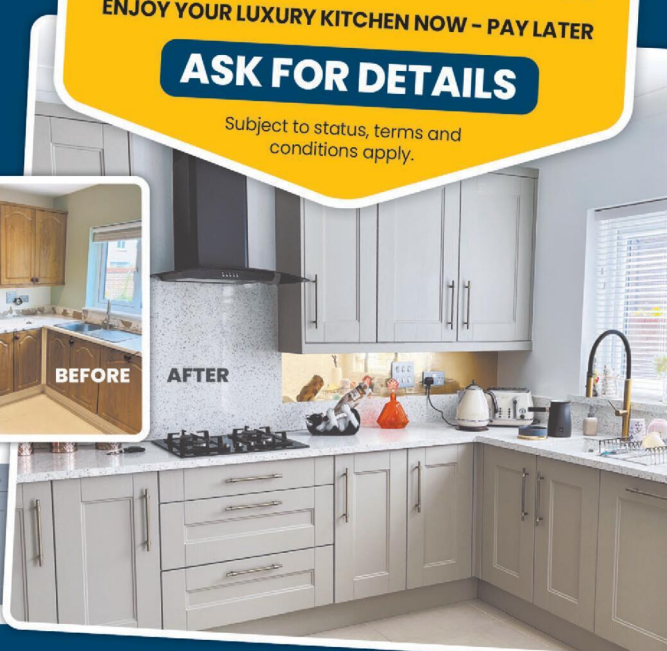
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LEFT: The group from the SVR outside the tunnels. Pictures by Mike Scott/Drakelow Tunnels Museum. s

RIGHT: They were shown around by tour guide Julian Small. s



ABOVE: The Drakelow Tunnels have been transformed to give an intriguing insight into the area's Second World War history. BELOW: The group was fascinated by the visit and their tour guide's presentation. s



# Tunnel vision for visitors

**MEMBERS of the Severn Valley Railway donned their best 1940s attire and headed underground to see how a Wyre Forest hillside had been turned into an important Second World War feature.**

The group, which included members young and old, were transported back in time inside Drakelow Tunnels in Kidderminster by tour guide Julian Small.

The Drakelow Tunnels make up a former top secret underground military complex in the hillside beneath Kingsford Country Park.

Julian explained the employees at the Rover factory in south Birmingham had done to manufacture aircraft components dur-

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

ing the Second World War. He also described how the factory was transformed into a nuclear fall-out bunker during the Cold War.

After the guided tour, a spokesperson for the group said: "The 1940s group enjoyed the tour ever so much and learnt a lot about local history, the vintage bus looked really great outside the tunnels and we look forward to being able to visit again."

Any person or group wanting to find out more about the Drakelow Tunnels and similar tours should visit [drakelowtunnels.co.uk](http://drakelowtunnels.co.uk) or email [info@drakelowtunnels.co.uk](mailto:info@drakelowtunnels.co.uk) for further details.



How the tunnels would have looked more than 80 years ago. s

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## A taste of America

THERE will be live music and Southern style food at an American themed event organised by the Mayor of Stourport.

Coun John Thomas is inviting the public to the bash at Stourport Civic Hall next Friday, July 4, which is also American Independence Day.

The event will feature live music provided by Rosie Kirby and the Civic Encore, as well as the Southern style food provided by Siobhan's Kitchen for £25 extra and there will also be line dancing.

The Mayor's chosen charities which will benefit from the event include Margaret Westwood Memorial Charity which makes grants to support the physical, educational and moral welfare of children and young people up to the age of 25, living in Worcestershire.

Visit: [thecivicstourport.co.uk](http://thecivicstourport.co.uk) for more details.

The Civic's box office is open on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays between the hours of 10am and 2pm or call 01299 823339 to get in touch.

Email: [enquiries@stourportcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@stourportcouncil.gov.uk) or call 01562 732551 for more on this event and the mayor's activities.

# Karen cleans up, landing BEM in King's Honours

**AN INSPIRATIONAL anti-litter campaigner who runs activities across the county said she was 'truly blown away' to receive a British Empire Medal in the King's Birthday Honours for the work she does.**

Karen Blanchfield, from Stourport, is a Keep Britain Tidy ambassador, a Wyre Forest Scout Leader and founder of the Droitwich-based Little Litter Warriors.

She told the Standard she was absolutely delighted when she found out about her award.

"A letter arrived from the Cabinet

Office stating that I had been recommended to His Majesty The King for the honour of the BEM for services to environmental education and that the Prime Minister had endorsed the award.

"I had to read it a few times and, when the news finally sank in, I was truly blown away and honoured."

### How it began

Karen said it all started for her when she and her daughter Chloe - who was ten at the time - first participated in the Great British Spring Clean in 2019.

"Chloe was very concerned about the impact of litter on animals and, as a mother, I felt compelled to address her anxiety positively.

"I realised that littering behaviours were not improving despite clean-up efforts, so I started volunteering in schools and community groups."

Karen conducted engaging litter workshops to show children how people could work together to 'love where they lived' and 'look after communities'.

"During the lockdown, I developed an educational resource for schools called the Little Litter Warriors programme, which was commissioned by Wyche District Council for their 63 schools."

The programme includes litter workshops, classroom activities, and educational materials, focusing on litter management and plastic pollution, with an aim to expand the Adopt a Street scheme.

The workshops are designed for children to collect litter, examine each material and observe how long it has been in the environment. They are also tasked with looking into the harm it may have caused to the wildlife and learning how to integrate their daily waste packaging materials into the circular waste movement.

Karen said: "I have delivered assembly presentations across numerous schools, classroom activities and hundreds of litter work-



**Anti-litter campaigner Karen Blanchfield has received a British Empire Medal (BEM) in the King's Birthday Honours list.**

shops educating more than 24,000 children about caring for their local environment in our wonderful Worcestershire communities.

"This grassroots programme empowers young people to become environmental stewards in their communities."

Since February this year, Malvern District Council is now on board, enabling another 42 schools to join the anti-litter campaign free of charge.



**Karen, as part of her work, has given presentations in schools.**

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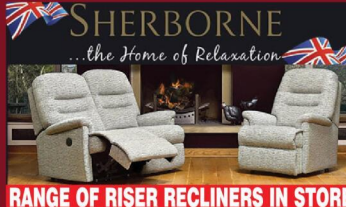
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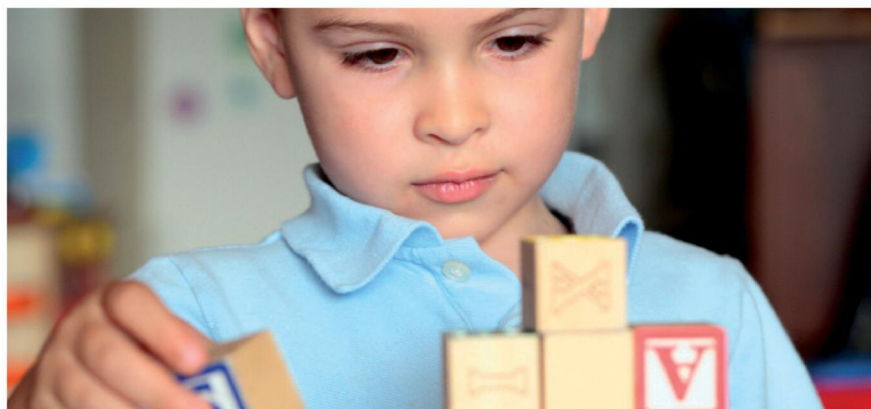
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# Changes in structure should help boost SEND services for youngsters



The Council has been making changes throughout June and July, with the new structure fully in place from September 1 2025.

WORCESTERSHIRE County Council is implementing a new structure for its Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Services, designed to improve the experience of children, young people and their families as they navigate the Education, Health and Care (EHC) process.

Recent feedback from parent carers has highlighted several areas where change was needed.

Common concerns include difficulties contacting casework officers – EHC Needs Assessments and Annual Reviews not being completed

by **Ashleigh Osborne**  
ashleigh.osborne@bullivantmedia.com

quickly enough and concerns about the overall quality of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) not being good enough.

## 'Improving access'

In response, the council is making several structural changes, aimed at delivering more timely, accessible, and effective support. These changes are not about cutting costs – they are focused on service improvement.

Key changes include an increase

in staff recruited, with four additional EHCP co-ordinators, one team manager, one senior EHCP co-ordinator, two initial screening and contact officers (ISCs) and a second complaints officer.

The creation of new Pre-14 and Post-14 teams in different areas of the county – so children and young people will be allocated to a team and EHCP co-ordinator based on how old they are and where they live.

This means EHCP co-ordinators can focus on the specific needs of these educational phases and make sure EHCPs, and Annual Reviews include the right support for that stage of life.

The introduction of a Postcode Finder Tool, helping families identify their allocated team. Each team will have its own phone number and email address to make contact

easier, even when individual EHCP Co-ordinators are unavailable.

Casework officers are now going to be called 'EHCP co-ordinators' as families reported that they did not like children being referred to as a 'case'.

## Timeframe

The council has been making changes throughout June and July, with the new structure fully in place from September 1, 2025, in time for the next academic year.

Worcestershire County Council has advised families could continue to contact their current EHCP co-ordinator and the SEND Services Team via the usual channels and will be updated as and when things change.

The number of children and young people with EHCPs con-

tinues to rise – from 6,530 in September 2024 to 7,339 in April 2025.

Coun Dr Stephen Foster, cabinet member with responsibility for education and SEND, said: "We know that families have not always had the experience they should expect when it comes to EHCPs and SEND support.

"These changes reflect a first step to doing better.

"We've made sure that teams are properly resourced, more accessible, and better structured to meet rising demand.

"The progress made in timeliness is encouraging - however, there is much more to do.

"We are fully committed to engaging with families and listening to their experiences as further improvements are developed in the months ahead."

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# Drive to help smokers to kick habit is hailed as a big success

by **Ashleigh Osborne**  
ashleigh.osborne@bullivantmedia.com

A PROGRAMME offering support for hospital patients in Worcestershire to stop smoking has proved a huge success helping to save lives, free up hospital bed spaces, and save the NHS hundreds of thousands of pounds in treatment.

The NHS-funded programme at Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust is offered to all adult inpatients and pregnant women who smoke.

The first year of the programme has seen successful results with 57 per cent of those accepting the offer saying they have quit smoking after just four weeks.

Since launching in 2024, the Tobacco Dependency Prevention Programme has delivered significant outcomes.

The data from the Inpatient Tobacco Dependency Service Calculator reveals the programme has freed up the equivalent of 1.4 hospital bed spaces per day, saved 52 lives, and reduced hospital readmissions resulting in a cost saving of £253,196.

Around 40 per cent of hospital inpatients who smoked accepted support and set a quit date, making a significant step towards a long-term health improvement.

A dedicated maternity tobacco dependency service is also on offer, supporting all pregnant women who smoke at the time of their first appointment, as well as household members who smoke.



Among pregnant women referred to the programme, 56% took up the offer of support, with 87 per cent of those setting a quit date and half of them remaining smoke free at the time of their delivery.

Support is delivered through face to face appointments – either at home or at hospital locations – ensuring services are accessible to individual needs.

In recognition of the success of the programme at the Trust, NHS England gave the service a Grade A rating after achieving its Level One Service Quality for demonstrating a commitment to best practice,

reducing health inequalities, and involving patients in the design and delivery of care.

Clare Rochelle, Lead Tobacco Dependency Nurse at Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust said: "Smoking tobacco is the leading modifiable risk factor for health inequalities. Treating tobacco dependence when someone is admitted to hospital, regardless of their intention to stop smoking, enables a faster recovery and earlier discharge, reduces their risk of readmission and death from their acute illness."

"We now have a funded 12-week

programme of support for any adult inpatient who has been admitted to hospital overnight wishing to make a quit attempt."

Lead Midwife for the 'Saving Babies Lives' service, Linda Haynes, said: "The dedicated maternity service has recently expanded and now has five Tobacco Dependency Advisors who are all extremely passionate about helping our service users quit smoking to safeguard their own health, that of their new baby and the rest of the family."

"It is a service we are very proud of."



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# Festival continues to offer wide range of concerts and events

THIS YEAR'S Bromsgrove Festival is now in full swing and the next week has lots of events and activities for all tastes.

## Music

On Tuesday, July 1, at 6pm, Ahoy! Sing for the Mary Rose will be performed at Artrix. The production will feature pupils from local first and middle schools coming together for a day of singing and renowned animator before this early evening performance. Tickets are £4, available from [artrixbromsgrove.co.uk](http://artrixbromsgrove.co.uk) or by calling 01527 361324.

The next in the series of Festive Classics comes to Avoncroft Museum's New Geusten Hall on Wednesday, July 2. Julia Aberg and Jackie Tyler will perform A Kaleidoscope of Music at midday with lunch at 1pm. Julia (violin) and Jackie (cello) are from the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and will guide the audience through a kaleidoscope selection of music from over the centuries. Tickets can be bought for just the concert or for lunch as well. Visit: [festiveclassics.co.uk](http://festiveclassics.co.uk) or call 01527 832492 for more information or tickets.

The Bromsgrove Ukulele Open Event takes place from 2pm to 4pm next Friday, July 4, at Stoke Prior Village Hall, Hanbury Road. The session, suitable for people of all ages



and musical tastes, is for those interested in learning to play the ukulele or those just wanting to enjoy an afternoon of musical entertainment.

Birmingham-based Cantoras Upper Voices Chamber Choir presents 'All Together We Are Love' at St John's Church, Kidderminster Road, at 7.30pm next Friday, July 4. The concert features a capella choral pieces written for the choir and musical director Mariana Rosas. Visit: [cantoraschoir.co.uk](http://cantoraschoir.co.uk) or call 07815 071179 for more information and for tickets.

Artrix plays host to Paul Hopkins' Roy Orbison and the Travelling Wilburys' Experience at 7.30pm next Friday, July 4. The musical journey spreads several decades and celebrates the supergroup which featured Roy Orbison, ELO's Jeff Lynne, former Beatle George Harrison, Bob Dylan and Tom Petty. Visit: [artrixbromsgrove.co.uk](http://artrixbromsgrove.co.uk) or call 01527 361324 for tickets and more information.

The Core Reggae Band will perform live at The New Inn, Doctors Hill, Bournheath, at 8pm next Friday, July 5. The event is free and there is no need to book - just turn up on the night. There will also be Jamaican food for sale. Call 01527 577555 for more information.

## Comedy

Tiny Tim's Biggest Adventure takes place at Artrix at 6pm on Wednesday, July 2, with a meet and greet beforehand at 5.30pm. The show centres on Tiny Tim who, seven years ago, decided to go on his own adventure, navigating adult life and posting about his prank calls on social media. Tiny Tim's adventures has more than 120million views on YouTube and 10million views on social media - this event gives those who go along the chance to see the man behind the voice. Visit: [artrixbromsgrove.co.uk](http://artrixbromsgrove.co.uk) for more and to buy tickets.

## WORDS

The first of two Bromsgrove WORDS events at this year's Bromsgrove Festival sees a presentation from Lord Brady of Altrincham at Avoncroft Museum's New Geusten Hall at 7.30pm next Friday, July 4. The former chairman of the Conservative 1922 Committee in the House of Commons will be in conversation with Patrick Burns, the former Political Editor of BBC West Midlands, about



LEFT: Lord Brady of Altrincham will talk about his role as the former chairman of the Conservative 1922 Committee, during which there was a Coalition government, Brexit, Covid and five Prime Ministers. s

his book 'Kingmaker'. Lord Brady was Chairman during the most turbulent times in modern political history, and had a ringside seat throughout the Coalition government, Brexit, Covid and the election and removal of five Prime Ministers. Search for 'Kingmaker' at [ticketsource.co.uk](http://ticketsource.co.uk) for more information and tickets. Go to: [bromsgroverords.com](http://bromsgroverords.com) for more on Bromsgrove WORDS.

## Art

The Creative Arts Showcase has a stall at Hanbury Countryside Show from 9am to 6pm next Saturday, July 5. The showcase, which promotes

art for everyone in the Bromsgrove community, will offer fun, free interactive activities for all the family. There will also be a handmade artisan goods from across the region. Visit: [hanburyshow.co.uk](http://hanburyshow.co.uk) for more information on the Hanbury Show and tickets.

## Other events

Bromsgrove Beer Festival takes place from Thursday to Saturday (July 3 of 5). The first session runs from 1pm to 5pm on the Thursday (for CAMRA members and trade only). It opens to the public from 5pm that day and runs from 11am to 11pm on Friday and between 11am to 9pm on Saturday. The event at the Bromsgrove Rugby Club boasts more than 100 real ales and 40 ciders and perries. Visit: [bromsgrovebeerfestival.org.uk](http://bromsgrovebeerfestival.org.uk) for more or tickets. Tickets are available on the door and this year's chosen charity is the Primrose Hospice.

Visit [bromsgrovefestival.co.uk](http://bromsgrovefestival.co.uk) for more on these and future events.



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Victoria Carman visitor economy and towns manager at Malvern Hills District Council, Coun Beverley Nielsen portfolio holder for Economy and Tourism, at Malvern Hills District Council, Coun Cynthia Palmer, ward member for Great Malvern. s

THE longstanding Great Malvern Food Festival is all set to return for its 15th year.

The free, two-day festival takes place on Saturday, July 5 and Sunday, July 6, from 10am to 5pm, in Priory Park, Great Malvern.

The festival has been organised by Boffy Events in partnership with Malvern Hills District Council.

More than 40 food and drink stalls will be offering a wide selection of locally sourced produce when the festival returns to the town.

Hot food vendors will also be offering delicious food to suit all tastes, such as Greek street food, Indian curries, pizza, gourmet mac and cheese, hot pulled meats and more.

Live music and street performers will also be entertaining throughout the weekend.

Coun Beverley Nielsen, Portfolio Holder for Economy and Tourism, at Malvern Hills District Council said: "We are really looking forward to the return of this great family friendly event.

"We encourage people to come along and support our wonderful local food producers."

Visit [www.visitthemaalverns.org/foodfest](http://www.visitthemaalverns.org/foodfest) for more information.

# Festival to dig deep into a key time in UK history

THE FIRST ever Stuart History Festival is to be hosted in Worcester.

It will take place at the historic Old Palace on July 5 and July 6 and will be the first history event focussing exclusively on the dramatic and often overlooked Stuart period from 1603 to 1714 - a century that revolutionised the British Isles politically, religiously, and culturally.

Sponsored by the Battle of Worcester Society and Orland Media, the festival will bring together ten expert historians to explore the lives, conflicts, and ideas that shaped this turbulent era. From the accession of James I to the Glorious Revolution, the Stuart age encompassed the union of crowns, civil war, regicide, republic, restoration, and revolution, a cycle that forged the modern British state.

Festival co-founders Mark Turnbull, Andrea Zuvich, and Dr Erica Canela are united by a deep commitment to promoting the legacy of the Stuart period.

Mark said: "Lasting just over a century, this era completely changed the political path of Britain's three kingdoms and defined who they became. From the union of three crowns, then civil war, regicide, republic, restoration of the monarchy, and finally revolution once more. This cycle, nevertheless, delivered the Stuart dream; a political union of their kingdoms."

Erica continued: "Worcester is such a fitting city to stage and host the Stuart Festival. The layers of the 17th century here are remarkable and it's a city that leans into its history. I'm so glad we were able to find such a historically-important venue in the city."

Chairman of the Battle of Worcester Society Daniel Daniels added: "The society is delighted to support the first ever Stuart History Festival. Worcester played a truly crucial role in the events of the 17th century, from being the scene of the first clash of the English Civil War to the site of its final and decisive battle. The city stood at the heart of the nation's great upheavals, and it's only fitting that Worcester should now take a leading role in telling the story of the Stuart age."

Visit [buytickets.at/thestuarthistoryfestival](http://buytickets.at/thestuarthistoryfestival) for tickets.





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# Warning issued over measles resurgence as cases start to rise

**HEALTH chiefs have issued a warning to parents after an increase in measles cases across the West Midlands and the UK.**

And, as many people get ready for summer travel, there are fears over further outbreaks.

According to the UK Health Security Agency, measles outbreaks will continue across the UK, with 109 confirmed cases in April and

86 in May.

The cases were predominantly found in unvaccinated children aged 10 years or under.

Of these, there have been seven confirmed cases within the West Midlands and almost half of all cases occurring in London.

This increase coincides with an increasing number of measles cases within Europe as a whole.

## 'Serious illness'

UK Health Security Agency Regional Deputy Director in the West Midlands, Katie Spence, said: "Measles can cause serious illness and while most people will recover completely within a couple of weeks, the virus can sometimes leave permanent disability and can even be fatal.

"Measles is very infectious and can spread rapidly among communities, if people have not had at least one dose of the MMR vaccine."

Since January 1, there have been 420 laboratory confirmed measles cases reported in England, with a number of regions reporting outbreaks.

A total of 25 per cent of cases appeared within the North West and 11 per cent in the West Midlands.

People are urged to receive vaccinations, which have prevented at least 20million cases and 4,500 deaths in the UK since its

introduction in 1968.

The UK Health Security Agency fears cases may increase as UK citizens, specifically those with young children, travel for the summer.

## Those most at risk

Infants aged under one year and people with weakened immune systems are at a larger risk of serious illness and complications upon contracting the disease, though there are also many reported cases among healthy young people and adults.

Consultant Epidemiologist at the UK Health Security Agency, Dr Vanessa Saliba, said: "It's essential everyone, particularly parents of young children, check all family members are up-to-date with two MMR doses, especially if you are travelling this summer holidays or visiting family.

"Measles spreads very easily and can be a nasty disease, leading to complications like ear and chest infections and inflammation of the brain with some children tragically ending up in hospital and suffering life-long consequences."

People are urged to contact their GP surgery if they believe they have not received two doses of the vaccine.

This is especially important if they are about to start college or university, are travelling overseas, are planning a pregnancy, are a

frontline health or social care worker or if they work with young children.

National Director for Primary Care and Community Services at NHS England, Dr. Amanda Doyle, said: "The first MMR vaccine is offered to infants when they turn one and the second dose to pre-school children when they are around three years and four months old.

"Around 99 per cent of those who have two doses will be protected against measles and rubella."

## Symptoms

People should be aware of measles' symptoms.

They usually start with cold-like symptoms, such as a high temperature, a runny or blocked nose, sneezing, a cough and red, sore, watery eyes.

These are followed by a rash a few days later which starts on the face and behind the ears before spreading to the rest of the body.

Some people may also get small spots in their mouth.

Anyone who suspects they or their child has measles should call NHS 111 or their GP to get an appointment.

**People are being urged to be aware of measles symptoms, which include a rash that spreads to the whole body. s**



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# Animal charities urge cat owners to ensure pets are microchipped

by Jeanna Karcz  
news@bullivantmedia.com

**CAT OWNERS are being urged to ensure they get their pets microchipped as figures reveal some over a fifth of the country's feline friends do not comply with the law.**

June 10 marked the first anniversary of the law which made it a legal requirement in England for owned cats over 20 weeks old to be microchipped.

Despite this, the latest figures from PDSA found 22 per cent of cats in the UK were unchipped.

Similar figures were released by the RSPCA which said only 27 per cent of the cats coming into its care were microchipped\*.

The PDSA runs 49 pet hospitals across the UK and having carried out nearly 20,000 microchippings in the past year, over 12,600 of which were on cats.

PDSA vet nurse, Nina Downing, said: "We've seen many cat owners get on board and get their cat chipped.

"Since June 10, 2024, when the cat microchipping law came into force in England, up to May 30 this year, we microchipped almost 15,200 cats across our Pet Hospitals.

"This marks an increase of over 1.5 times compared to the same

period in the previous year, when we microchipped almost 9,400 cats.

"On average, we've seen more kitten and young cat owners come for microchipping appointments, which could mean those with older cats who have never been microchipped, have not yet complied with the new law."

She added 63 per cent of appointments were for cats aged one year old and under.

"Regardless of your cats age, we'd urge all cat owners to get their cats microchipped."

Nina added if owners had a cat which liked to explore the great outdoors, they may roam too far, or end up hurt or injured and unable to return home.

"A microchip may be the only way your cat can be easily reunited with you.

"Even if your cat prefers the indoor life, microchipping is just as important, and legally required.

"You may not be too worried if you have an indoor cat, but there's plenty of ways cats can sneak outside, or nip out through an open door or window."

## Concerning numbers

Alice Potter, RSPCA cat welfare expert, added: "It's concerning that one year on since this law came into effect and so many cats are still not being microchipped and ending up



in RSPCA care.

"It's possible many of these cats could have ended up back with their owners had they been chipped.

"It's important all cat owners in England understand the law and their responsibilities when it comes to their pets."

Figures from the PDSA show 91 per cent of pet owners say their

contact details are up-to-date which meant nine per cent were potentially incorrect and outdated. Thus, the charity added, would be a real issue if the pet was lost or stolen.

It stressed that it was important for owners to be aware of which database their pet's microchip was registered to and to keep the details up-to-date.

Ms Potter added: "We'd urge owners to ensure their cats are microchipped from 20 weeks of age and the details on the chip are always kept up-to-date."

## Barriers

A poll carried out on RSPCA supporters at the start of the year found that over a third (36 per cent) said one of the most common challenges to microchipping their cat was the cost.

A total of 21 per cent wrongly believed having an indoor cat meant they did not need to be chipped and a lack of vets or struggling to get a vet appointment (17 per cent) were other reasons given for not getting cats chipped.

Meanwhile, 11 per cent of respondents said they were unaware of the law change making it compulsory in England.

The RSPCA is also campaigning and lobbying the Welsh Government for cat microchipping to become compulsory in Wales.

Visit [www.pdsa.org.uk/microchipping-cats](http://www.pdsa.org.uk/microchipping-cats) for more about getting your cat microchipped.

**Cat owners are being reminded to get their pets microchipped as statistics show a fifth are breaking the law. s**

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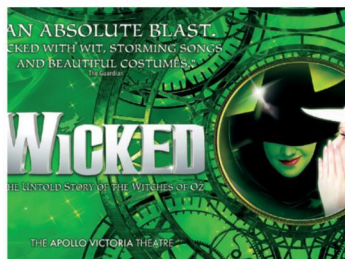
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SUDOKU

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

EASY

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

HARD

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

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.

Wimbledon singles champions

R	N	E	M	O	N	G	F	A	N	A	N	G	E	D
O	I	B	U	G	A	R	A	E	I	H	I	I	N	B
G	E	R	G	U	L	O	N	L	T	R	S	S	A	E
F	R	A	G	R	U	O	A	L	M	A	T	E	F	R
E	D	E	R	A	Z	G	D	A	B	N	O	A	M	G
T	R	R	E	B	J	E	N	N	A	R	I	R	R	R
R	E	S	I	R	O	R	V	O	O	T	Y	M	U	A
O	V	E	C	H	B	N	E	C	L	I	N	D	E	V
D	V	E	G	R	O	E	V	I	A	N	A	M		
L	A	R	S	N	I	S	A	R	L	L	S	L	I	S
T	E	P	T	A	V	I	N	O	I	I	W	L	A	P
E	S	F	E	F	O	R	T	G	A	M	W	I	T	C
M	A	A	R	F	P	N	E	O	J	S	A	R	E	A
P	S	L	G	I	A	Y	V	H	C	E	N	E	S	S
R	A	I	N	D	S	D	A	N	M	N	R	O	E	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				
	23											

ACROSS

1. Choice (10)
7. Oust (5)
8. Clearer (7)
10. Outside (8)
11. Minus (4)
13. Struggle (6)
15. Doorway (6)
17. Ale (4)
18. Outlook (8)
21. Directly stated (7)
22. Well done! (5)
23. Dejected (10)

DOWN

1. Flattened fold (5)
2. Completely (8)
3. Use (6)
4. Vivacity (4)
5. Agree (7)
6. Hateful (10)
9. Determination (10)
12. Practicable (8)
14. Spire (7)
16. Jail (6)
19. Precise (5)
20. Profound (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.

Hand out cards

- Twin
- Uninspiring
- Wrench
- Survey

DEAD

POOL

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.

- 15338174 gives a flower;
- 926642 gives a plant;
- 159124789 gives a weed.

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

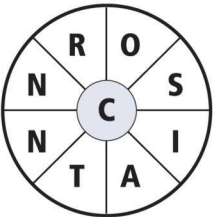
CODEWORD

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.

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

WORDWHEEL

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

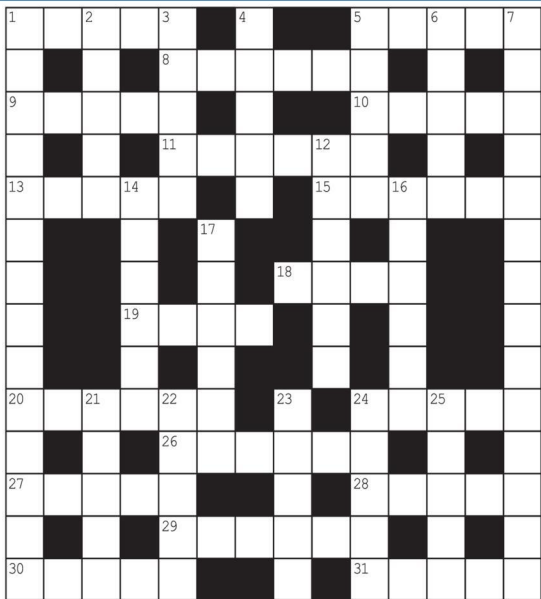


How you rate  
15 words: average  
25 words: good  
35 words: very good  
40 or more: excellent.



GENERAL KNOWLEDGE CROSSWORD

- ACROSS**
- 1, 18 Across & 23 Down Famous book by Nevil Shute (1,4,4,5)
- 5 American carnivore related to the racoons (5)
- 8 --- Arnaud, comedy actress after whom a theatre is named (6)
- 9 Surname of the inventor of dynamite (5)
- 10 Type of light boat (5)
- 11 Canadian capital, once known as Bytown (6)
- 13 Closely woven, lustrous, silk fabric (5)
- 15 Covered passageway with shops (6)
- 18 See 1 Across
- 19 An insignificant part, a jot (4)
- 20 See 5 Down
- 24 See 14 Down
- 26 God of the winds in Greek myths (6)
- 27 A young eel (5)
- 28 Yachting centre on the Isle of Wight (5)
- 29 Genus that includes the wattles (6)
- 30 Kind of Dutch blue and white pottery (5)
- 31 Letters or characters of the earliest Teutonic alphabet (5)



- DOWN**
- 1 In Dickens's novel, the second wife of David Copperfield (5,9)
- 2 Path in space round a heavenly body (5)
- 3 Synthetic textile fabric (5)
- 4 General and founder of the Salvation Army (5)
- 5 & 20 Across Belgian composer known for his religious works (5,6)
- 6 Tropical genus that includes the custard apple and sweet-sop (5)
- 7 Painters such as Manet, Monet, Degas and Renoir (14)
- 12 Large North American deer (6)
- 14 & 24 Across Large expanse of water lying between Africa and Australia (6,5)
- 16 A clergyman (5)
- 17 Body of people entering into an organisation, new recruits (6)
- 21 Locus of the ear (5)
- 22 Measure of weight for precious stones (5)
- 23 See 1 Across
- 24 Annual cinema award, in various fields (5)
- 25 King of Northumbria from 617-633 (5)

SOLUTIONS

**General Knowledge Crossword**

ACROSS: 1 A Town; 5 Coat; 8 Yvonne; 9 Nobel; 10 Sloop; 11 Ottawa; 13 Satin; 15 Arcade; 18 Like; 19 Iota; 20 Frank; 24 Ocean; 26 Aedius; 27 Elver; 28 Cowes; 29 Acadia; 30 Delft; 31 Runes. DOWN: 1 Agnes Wickfield; 2 Orbis; 3 Nylon; 4 Booth; 5 Cesar; 6 Anona; 7 Impressionists; 12 Wapiti; 14 Indian; 16 Cleric; 17 Intake; 21 Anvil; 22 Carat; 23 Alice; 24 Oscar; 25 Edwin.

**Crossword**

ACROSS: 1 Preference; 7 Eject; 8 Plainer; 10 Exterior; 11 Less; 13 Tussle; 15 Portal; 17 Beer; 18 Prospect; 21 Express; 22 Bravo; 23 Despondent; Down: 1 Pleat; 2 Entirely; 3 Employ; 4 Elan; 5 Consent; 6 Detestable; 9 Resolution; 12 Possible; 14 Steeple; 16 Prison; 19 Exact; 20 Deep.

**Wordwheel Pathfinder**

McEnroe, Serena Williams, Pat Cash  
Stefan Edberg, Marlon Baroli, Andy Murray, Venus Williams, John  
Ivanisevic, Evonne Goolagong, Rafael Nadal, Martina Hingis,  
Laver, Steffi Graf, Pete Sampras, Lindsay Davenport, Goran  
Roger Federer, Garbine Muguruma, Bjorn Borg, Chris Evert, Rod  
CONSTRAIN

**Niner**

DEFIATION

**Ladder**

Dead, Deal, Dual, Dull, Pull,  
Poll, Pool.

**Codeword**

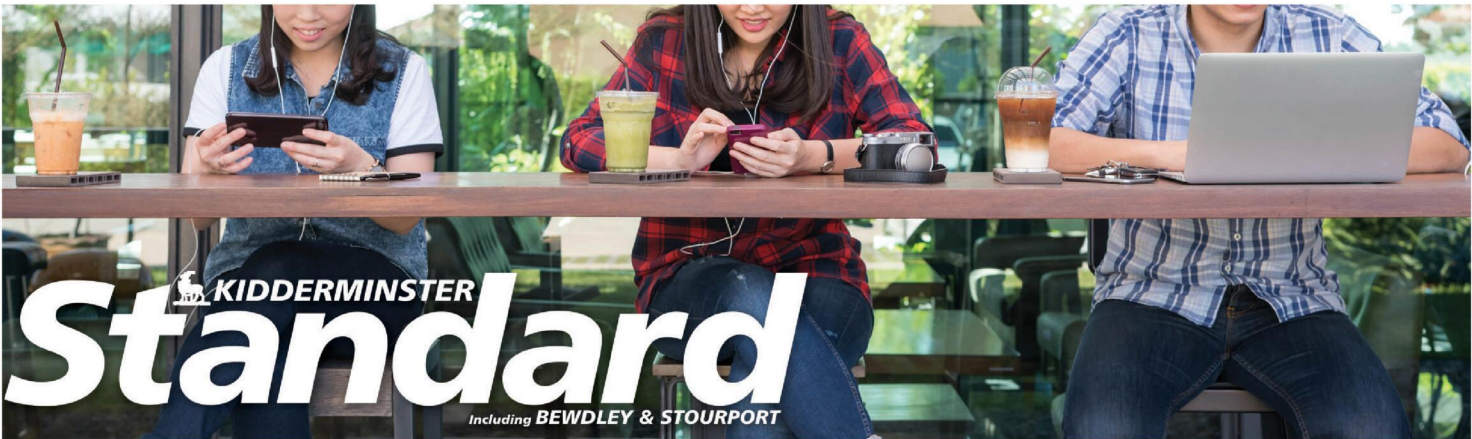
1=N, 2=Z, 3=C, 4=M, 5=S, 6=E, 7=G, 8=K, 9=Y,  
10=D, 11=B, 12=P, 13=A, 14=F, 15=V, 16=R,  
17=X, 18=L, 19=O, 20=W, 21=L, 22=L, 23=H,  
24=Q, 25=L, 26=U

**Easy**

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

**Hard**

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



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**TRAVEL** Holdall, new "Constellation" 20" wide. Burgundy. £10. Tel: 0121 445 2293

**DECIMAL** Day February 1971 set - first decimal coins in presentation case £5 each (2 sets). Tel: 0121 445 2293

**CARPET** Offcut - brand new, berber, hard wearing, felt backed, mid brown / cream mixture, no matching pattern so could cut & piece together, size 6 foot 8 inches long x 2 foot 1 inch wide. £4.00. Tel: 07934132759

**LADIES** M & S Classic Fully Lined Lightweight Jacket With Optional Hood. Light Turquoise. Hardly worn. Size 12. £4.00. (1 Can Forward Photos If Interested). Tel: 07934132759

**ROUND** wooden table, two matching chairs £30 ono Tel: 01527 523559

### MISCELLANEOUS

**LOG** Splitter, Electric 150w 4T Triton. Good Condition. Split log 370 mm length £80 Tel: 07973 725985

**TWO** G Plan leather sofas (violet colour, reddish) vgc condition. £60 ono. photo available. 01299 407393

**WELL SLEEP** Hybrid single mattress. Good clean condition £40. Contact 01299 823622

**CYCLE** Ladies Apollo Comfort 18in frame, very good condition, stored in garage. £25. Tel: 07759 848880

**ZERO** Gravity Garden Folding Recliner, steel frame £10. Little use (Kidderminster) Tel: 07929 785253

**GREY** 3 piece suite and foot stool made by next £350 phone number 01905863132

**ROBUST** Sovereign Shop Rider Scooter. Good Condition £350 ono 01527 832003

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**LOST** Golf Balls - No Problem! 60 balls, £16. Good names and condition. Tel: 01564 784171

**HEADBOARD** for 3' single bed, Stuart Jones, upholstered cream fabric. New. £20. Tel: 01217441003

**RAFFIA** for craft. Unused. 600g. £4. Tel: 01217441003

**FERGUSON** TX 14" TV Silver, Excellent condition, just needs top box. Suit collector of Vintage TVs £30. Tel: 077510 25730

**CORDOBA** Meshbely Chumena & B / B / Q with accessories. Still in box. Never used £40 01527 521363

**DESK**, teak effect. Free to collect 103cm wide. Very good condition Tel: 01527 66380

### MISCELLANEOUS

**FREE** to Collector, Bed, 4 drawer, double divan, airprung, no marks, very clean Tel: 01527 550342

**FOUR** Tier Glass Stand, Gamr Console Stand Tel: 0788 2124182

**19** CDs - sealed for sale. Tel: 0788 2124182

**CRAVEN** Carrier Top Box Bracket - suit large classic motorcycle. VGC £100 Tel: 07974 822880

**THE** Waltons complete first season dvd box set. £10. Tel: 07813 706 158 (Shirley area)

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Paul (Albatross & Doomed Records)

### MISCELLANEOUS

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**RUNNER** BEAN Plants, £1.75 a tray of 12 plants Phone 01905 778926

**ROYAL** Albert tea service, 8 cups, saucers, plates, sugar bowl, milk jug, large classic. VGC 763306

**TWO** Daily Telegraph Zero Gravity Garden Recliner Chairs (including carry bags). 1 Navy, 1 Stone (Grey), £40.00 each. - 01905 769944

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## New green scheme for BYD

**BYD, the world's leading manufacturer of new energy vehicles, has joined forces with Octopus Energy, the UK's largest energy supplier, to announce the launch of the Power Pack Bundle – the UK's first vehicle-to-grid (V2G) bundle – and it's a gamechanger for EV drivers.**

Announced at Octopus Energy's Energy Tech Summit, the Power Pack Bundle will include a leased V2G-ready BYD Dolphin, a V2G Zaptac Pro charger and access to a smart tariff that offers completely free charging at home.

This means typical EV drivers can slash their bills by £620 a year compared to charging on a standard variable tariff – and save almost £1,000 compared to fuelling up a gas-guzzler.

V2G makes EVs work as a battery on wheels – both charging and sending power back to the grid at peak times, reducing the need for having to turn on dirty fossil fuel plants.

The Power Pack Bundle uses Octopus Energy Group's tech platform, Kraken, to unlock these savings for customers and make things as simple as possible.

All drivers need to do is plug in their car most nights and let the tech do the rest. The fully automated process leaves drivers with guaranteed free charging at home for all the miles in their lease.

This is the first time V2G tech has gone commercial in the UK, thanks to the BYD Dolphin's market-leading technology. With more V2G-ready cars coming soon, hundreds of thousands of EVs could soon act as mini power stations.

Octopus and BYD have also part-

nered with Motability Operations to make the V2G technology available to disabled people across the UK – ensuring low-cost electric driving is accessible to all.

Stella Li, Executive Vice President of BYD, said: "We're thrilled to officially launch our V2G project with Octopus Energy and Kraken."

"BYD is fully committed to making intelligent, innovative, sustainable technologies available to our customers, and this project will allow them to unlock the full potential of electric vehicles – not just as transport but as dynamic assets that can play a key role in supporting the grid."

"Together with Octopus Energy, we're enabling EV owners to play an active role in the energy ecosystem, reducing costs and increasing the resilience of renewable power systems."

Greg Jackson, Founder of Octopus Energy Group, said: "V2G is the game-changer for drivers and the grid. For the first time ever, drivers can effortlessly power their homes and help the grid – and drive for free in return. V2G is here, available at scale, and ready to revolutionise our entire energy system."

Andrew Miller, Chief Executive of Motability Operations, said: "It's great to see V2G technology becoming available at scale – effectively turning EVs into energy assets that can help power homes and support the grid."

"We're proud to be part of a pilot that's not only breaking new ground in energy, but also ensuring the benefits are accessible to disabled people across the UK."

The Power Pack Bundle will be available later this year.

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## Expert seeks to reassure Harriers fans on finances

by Aaron Sutcliffe  
aaron.sutcliffe@bullivantmedia.com

**FOOTBALL:** FOOTBALL finance expert Kieran Maguire has analysed Kidderminster Harriers' accounts for the 2023/24 season.

The club's accounts revealed Harriers lost in excess of 200k in 2023/24 bringing Kidderminster's cumulative losses to nearly £4million.

However, speaking exclusively to the Standard, finance expert Maguire did not see anything particularly alarming regarding the club's current financial situation.

Maguire exclusively told the Standard: "It seems quite boring to me and boring is good."

"They don't appear to have a lot of debt, they lost 200k last year and didn't spend any money signing players but most National League clubs don't sign players for fees."

"They lost 200k in a year but the average losses were 800k so it's okay."

"They're solid not spectacular but that's what you'd expect given where the club is in its history and geographically."

"Harriers have £2million of debt so how is that going to be paid off? It looks like the money is coming from the owners."

"The club is sensibly run and sensibly managed."

Maguire added: "There's limited scope for huge investments but they're doing enough to keep the lights on and to be broadly competitive."

"The club doesn't publish its income statement so we can't determine how much the revenues are or the wages due to the size of the club."

"There's an awful lot of interest in National League clubs from investors and some of those investors deliver as we've seen at Wrexham and clubs start to accelerate."

"Some owners get bored quickly, if you're running at a 200k loss and you've got nobody to put in that 200k that's when you've got a problem but I don't see that at Harriers."

## Rowbottom on the podium again at Oulton Park ahead of BTCC break



**BTCC:** DAN Rowbottom admits the early leaders in the British Touring Car Championship (BTCC) are 'becoming a bit of a problem' after he failed to close the gap at Oulton Park.

The Kidderminster driver secured a podium finish in the final race at the Cheshire circuit as the first half of the season drew to a close.

Rowbottom sits fourth in the drivers' standings on 159 points with Ash Sutton top on 233 points and Tom Ingram just behind on 223 points.

The NAPA Racing UK driver finished 14th in race one, sixth in race two and third in race three at Oulton Park.

However, Rowbottom is looking forward to the second half of the campaign with the BTCC season to resume at Croft on the weekend of August 2 and 3.

Rowbottom said: "It's a positive end to the weekend, we

should have got a little bit more out of that race."

"Just a couple of little mistakes early on, trying to go around the outside at the chicane just locked the whole car up and cost us a lot of time."

"We'll take a P3 to finish the first half of the season, it's been an okay first half of the year, we need to focus on the remainder of the season now."

"The problem with Oulton is, it's a fantastic place, these cars are big now."

"When the conditions change, you've only got to drop a wheel off and come back on, it's very difficult to not collect someone."

"There were a lot of incidents this weekend, it's been a bit frantic, it's touring car racing, that's what we do."

"Qualifying was odd for us, we had really good pace in FP1. FP2 we were exactly where we expected to be given our tyre and turbo boost combination."

"Then it didn't really turn

out for us in qualifying, the whole weekend has been a bit strange."

"We'll take it, we've had a half decent weekend."

"We're sitting well, we're somewhere near the front [of the table]."

"Ash and Tom have extended that gap again which is becoming a bit of a problem because there's only 15 races left."

"We've got a lot of work to do but we're going to some of my favourite tracks now, I'm really looking forward to getting my head down."

Rowbottom has now secured five podium finishes in the BTCC this season with two race wins and three third-place finishes.

**LEFT:** Dan Rowbottom on the podium at Oulton Park. Picture by Mark Cowdrill.

**BELOW:** Dan Rowbottom on the track at Oulton Park. Picture by Darren Price.



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Contemporary  
Black  
Colour Option

Why not upgrade to our **low maintenance steel fencing, railings, or gates** and enjoy a hassle-free season?

- Made from galvanized steel**  
Built to last in any weather.
- Maintenance free**  
No painting, no hassle.
- 25-year guarantee**  
Peace of mind for decades.
- Withstands 130mph winds**  
Strength you can trust.
- Professional installation**  
Backed by years of experience.

Whether you're just exploring options or ready to get started, we're a family-run business that prides itself on offering friendly advice and clear, honest quotes. Contact us today!

01384 594791 [dyfencing.co.uk](http://dyfencing.co.uk)