

Crowds cheer as Flying Scotsman rolls into station

THE ICONIC Flying Scotsman steam locomotive pulled the first passenger train into Bridgnorth this year after a landslide had partially closed the Severn Valley Railway, writes Neil Gordon.

The world famous engine, number 60103, re-united the route on Friday (July 25) when it hauled the 9am special from Kidderminster to the Shropshire town which had been cut off from the line since January.



The Flying Scotsman passes Bewdley South signal box - picture by Tony Carwithen.

Passengers cheered and applauded as the train travelled over the now repaired Mor Brook Bridge and passed the engineers compound containing machinery used in the crucial works.

People lined the route to watch as the Flying Scotsman and a supporting diesel engine hauled the nine-carriage train carrying volunteers, invited guests, shareholders, railway contractors and ticket-holders - plus the media.

Once at Bridgnorth speeches were made by representatives of the railway and Bridgnorth's town mayor, while the locomotive took on water ahead of working back to Kidderminster.

Sisters Beth and Amy who were on board the train agreed the day

was exceeding their expectations. Beth said: "Everything is wonderful, even the singing at Kidderminster station - we were nearly in tears."

"The staff have been so welcoming, and a director came through the train thanking everyone for their support."

The Severn Valley Railway's managing director, Jonathan 'Gus' Dunster and landslide repair project manager, Anthony Bartlam, both offered their personal thanks to everyone involved with the repairs.

"It's a huge thank you from me to the external contractors and to everybody internally at the Severn Valley Railway," said Anthony.

Gus added: "It's been a massive team effort, we are blessed with so many talented people, shareholders

and members."

An army of volunteers, civil engineers and contractors worked tirelessly to repair the landslide, caused by a tree falling on the line during a storm in January.

Insurers paid for the re-instatement of the bridge's wing wall and stone arch, and the embankment while track relaying was completed inside two days by Network Rail, whose staff used their volunteering days for the work, while suppliers provided equipment.

More than 4,300 passengers travelled on the Flying Scotsman between Friday and Monday (July 28) when it operated services on the fully re-opened line.

■ Turn to pages 2-3 for more photos of the big weekend.



A young rail enthusiast. Picture by Marcus Mingins 3125001MMR3



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A warm welcome awaits at Bridgnorth station for the first 'Flying Scotsman' service last Friday, July 25. Picture by Stephen Thomas



On the footplate of the re-opening 'Flying Scotsman' service with driver Paul Fathers and fireman Andy Stringer. Picture by Keith Wilkinson.



SVR managing director Gus Dunster. Picture by Marcus Miggins 3125001MMRS

More Freedom to travel on SVR

THE Severn Valley Railway is celebrating its 60th anniversary by offering summer visitors the chance to come back again for free, writes **LESLEY CARR**.

The offer is available on all 'Freedom of the Line' tickets that are purchased online for travel up to and including Thursday, August 28 this year.

The free offer must be redeemed by September 4, 2025 and is not valid for

WHAT a celebration it was – four glorious days of steam celebrating the re-opening of the Severn Valley Rail line from Kidderminster to Bridgnorth, crowned by the Flying Scotsman. The emotional impact of that iconic engine left

fans and passengers with grins as wide as the River Severn. And while your Kidderminster Standard celebrates the event in photographs, the attractions continue on the Severn Valley Railway all summer long...just

and do here, and with the offer of a free return visit, you don't need to cram it all into just one day!

"We can't wait to see everyone and whisk you back to the golden age of rail travel."

The railway is putting on a host of summer activities for children at The Engine House, Highley every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday during the school holidays.

These are led by Perkins the Station Master and Junior the Apprentice,

who'll be on hand to keep young minds occupied with steam-themed games, the chance to jump on the footplate of an engine and to sort the mail in the travelling post office carriage.

Also returning by popular demand is Train Time UK's stay 'n' play activity with a model train set running amongst the full-size locomotives on display.

On Saturdays in August between 1pm and 2.30pm, adults and children aged eight and over can join the driver and fireman for a

10-minute footplate ride at Kidderminster.

There's an extra charge for this experience and pre-booking is advised.

There's also a range of weekend events throughout the summer including Brick Weekend on August 2-3, the Vintage Transport Extravaganza on August 9-10, Singin' on the Train on August 16 and the Art & Craft Fayre at the Engine House on August 23-24.

For more information, visit svr.co.uk.

travel on Saturdays. Terms and conditions apply.

Lewis Maddox, the SVR's visitor engagement manager said: "We're delighted that we've now got our full

16-mile line back in operation, and passengers can hop on and off at any of the six beautifully presented heritage stations.

"There's so much to see

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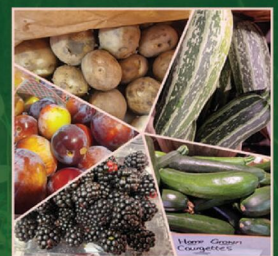
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RIGHT: The famous train pulls into Bridgnorth. 3125001 MMR7

LEFT: Full steam ahead for the iconic loco on the SVR heritage line. 3125001 MMR1

Pictures by Marcus Miggins



Full steam ahead as Santa joins iconic loco

by Ross Crawford

MIDSUMMER is an unlikely time to see Santa Claus, but as people sweltered in the hot sun, none other than Father Christmas himself has been seen striding along the platform at the Severn Valley Railway's Kidderminster town station.

Santa was in town to catch a glimpse of the SVR's very high profile visitor, 'Flying Scotsman' before its departure from the SVR, and also to carry out a recce of some of the locations for the all-new Christmas events that he'll be appearing in at the heritage railway later this year.

Last Friday, the iconic steam loco No 60103 hauled the first passenger service the full length of the 16.5-mile heritage line to Bridgnorth over the Mor Brook bridge since it was repaired.

SVR managing director



Mayor of Bridgnorth David Cooper and Mayoress Nicky Cooper with friends. 3125001MMR8

tor Gus Dunster spoke at a short ceremony at Bridgnorth and paid tribute to the many people who had worked so hard to repair the embankment which was damaged by a landslide following storms and flooding in January.

The 'Flying Scotsman' spent four days at SVR from

Friday to Monday.

Looking ahead, the SVR will be running Santa's Steam Specials from Kidderminster, while the Elf Express which will depart from Bridgnorth.

The heritage line is working in partnership with the Wise Owl Theatre Company to produce the events.

Wise Owl's artistic director Chris Brookes said he's taking inspiration from the railway itself:

"There's something about steam trains that's already very theatrical, and so for Santa's Steam Specials we're creating a unique immersive experience that's completely different from what you'd get in a standard theatre setting," he added.

"Passengers travel by steam train from Kidderminster to Arley for the Great Christmas Train Rescue, a theatrical show with Santa himself, plus Polly the polar bear and a scheming villain, Victor Von Sneeze. We're working with War Horse's Matthew Forbes to create some dazzling puppetry which will absolutely wow our audiences!"

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit svr.co.uk.

However before then, the Severn Valley Railway's 'Singin' on the Train' will return for another unforgettable day of live music and



The founder of the Severn Valley Railway Columb Howell speaks to the assembled crowds.

heritage travel on Saturday, August 16.

This one-of-a-kind event combines the stirring sounds of male voice choirs with the nostalgic charm of steam and heritage diesel locomotives.

Passengers can travel the line between Kidderminster and Bridgnorth, stepping off at stations along the way to enjoy live performances from seven celebrated male choirs.

All-day travel is available with a Freedom of the Line ticket, or for those looking for a shorter experience, Short Journey tickets are also on offer. Standard fares apply, and tickets can

be purchased in advance or on the day.

As the sun sets, the event continues with a special evening choir concert on the concourse at Kidderminster Station.

All seven choirs will come together for a powerful and uplifting performance under the station's striking glass roof. Hot food and drinks will be available throughout the evening from the award-winning King and Castle pub, just steps from the platform.

Tickets for the evening concert are bookable separately. For tickets and more information, visit svr.co.uk.



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Park revamp starts after £2.4m boost

WORK to reinstate heritage elements and enhance Brinton Park in Kidderminster is now under way.

Wyre Forest District Council, the custodian of the park, has commissioned contractor McPhillips (Wellington) Ltd to deliver the £3million improvement programme being made possible thanks to £2.4million of funding through The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Over the next 12 months the park will see significant visual and practical improvements.

The project includes demolishing the existing Sons of Rest building (subject to planning consent) and replacing it with a new pavilion, a café and a community space.

A new terrace will overlook a new ornamental pool which will be located where the original ornamental pool was.

Further work includes refurbishment of the existing toilet block, improvements to the footpaths and a new planting and landscaping scheme to add colour and refresh the flora of the park.

"We're delighted to see McPhillips installed on site and partnering with us on this exciting project," said Councillor Tracey Onslow, the authority's cabinet member for leisure.

"Talking to users of the park we are all looking forward to seeing the upcoming improvements."

"Once again, we would like to give our thanks to The National Lottery Heritage Fund for invest-

ing in Brinton Park by protecting and improving the park's natural beauty and heritage.

Stuart MacKenzie, the contracts director for McPhillips (Wellington) Ltd, added: "This is a really exciting project for our team."

"The plans bring together the park's rich heritage and its future as a modern, vibrant community asset."

"We're pleased to be working alongside the council to deliver a lasting legacy for Kidderminster."

Liz Bates, Midlands director at The National Lottery Heritage Fund, said: "This project shows how historic parks and green spaces can help connect people with nature, celebrate local history and inspire renewed pride in the places we call home."



Enhancing Brinton Park: Dan Redmond from McPhillips, Councillor Tracey Onslow Wyre Forest District Council and John Davis from the Friends of Brinton Park.

Council proud to be shortlisted in two categories in national awards

WYRE Forest District Council has been named as a finalist in the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) Service Awards 2025.

The authority has been shortlisted in two categories, Best Service Team: Parks, Grounds and Horticultural, and Best Community and Neighbourhood initiative.

The APSE Service Awards are open to all local authorities

and their public sector partners across the country, shining a light on frontline services and special initiatives.

The council's Adopt a Street scheme has also been shortlisted for Best Community and Neighbourhood initiative.

Launched in 2023, the scheme encourages both individuals and groups to take make a difference by keeping their local areas clean and tidy.

It runs alongside the council's own street cleaning service and is part of its priority to make the district a clean, safe and green place to live, work and visit.

Meanwhile the authority's Ranger service has been shortlisted for Best Service Team: Parks, Grounds and Horticultural.

The small team of Rangers play a key role in conserving, managing, and enhancing the

district's diverse natural landscapes.

Covering 654 acres, they oversee three Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and 14 Local Nature Reserves (LNRs).

Councillor Tracey Onslow, the council's cabinet member for leisure said: "We are extremely proud to be shortlisted in two categories for this year's APSE Service Awards. It is great recognition for both our officers and

volunteers who work tirelessly on our Adopt a Street scheme, which makes a real difference in the district."

"It is also a testament to the hard work and dedication of our fantastic team of rangers, who make sure our sites are maintained for biodiversity, community enjoyment and future generations."

The winners will be announced in September.

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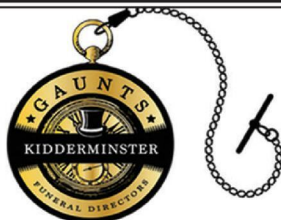
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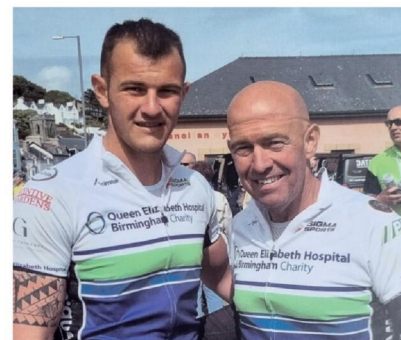


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LEFT: Paul with the Raising4Ria fundraisers on their Snowdon trek.

RIGHT: Ryan and his dad Paul on a cycle challenge for Brain Tumour Research.



Climbing high to remember Ryan

A HEARTBROKEN dad has completed a challenging Snowdon trek in honour of his son, who died from one of the most aggressive forms of brain cancer.

Ryan Hughes, aged 27 from Kidderminster, was a fit and healthy young man and county rugby player who was first diagnosed in October 2017.

What began as a headache after a rugby weekend quickly escalated into a devastating discovery.

A CT scan at Worcestershire Royal Hospital revealed a bleed on the brain and Ryan was blue-lighted to Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham where an MRI confirmed the shocking news, a 4cm tumour - glioblastoma - at the back of his brain.

Ryan's dad, Paul, aged 58, said: "We were in complete shock, nothing

prepares you to hear your child has a brain tumour."

Ryan underwent six hours of surgery at the QE in December 2017 to remove 90 per cent of the tumour, followed by chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

He responded well to treatment and was home for Christmas.

In the years that followed, he became a father to daughter Mia in 2021 and married his wife Meagan in 2023.

He also started his own landscape gardening business.

But in May 2024, Ryan began repeating conversations, and although his routine scan initially appeared clear, his condition worsened. A second scan revealed a new tumour at the front of his brain.

Ryan underwent further treatment, but this time, surgery was not an option.

"We knew the tumour would reappear eventually, we never asked how long he had, Ryan didn't want to know," said Paul.

"From that moment, things moved fast. His mobility and speech deteriorated, and treatment had no effect. It was devastating."

Ryan died at home on December 12, 2024, surrounded by his family.

Paul said: "Losing Ryan has left a hole in our lives that can never be filled."

"But in those final weeks, he was surrounded by the people who loved him most."

"We cared for him at home, and we made sure he knew how much he was loved every single day."

Ryan had previously joined Paul in the Aberdovey Bike Ride in 2019 to raise funds for Brain Tumour Research.

Paul said: "That was the best day of our lives, a memory I will never

forget. Through it all, Sarah, my wife, gave us so much support. She kept us all going."

This year, Paul, along with a team of supporters, joined fundraising group Raising4Ria to climb Wales' highest peak, raising vital funds for the charity. Raising4Ria was formed in memory of Ria, a close friend of Paul's goddaughter who also died from a glioblastoma aged just 25.

The team raised £3,595 for Brain Tumour Research.

Despite being the biggest cancer killer of children and adults under 40, brain tumours receive less than one per cent of the national spend on cancer research.

To add your support to the charity and help find a cure, visit: <https://braintumourresearch.org/>

INSET LEFT: Ryan with his daughter Mia.



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Drugs, cash and stolen car seized after tip off

TWO MEN were arrested, a stolen car recovered, and class A drugs, weapons and cash were all seized by police following a warrant in Stourport this morning (Wednesday, July 30).

Officers from Stourport Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT), supported by colleagues from north Worcestershire, successfully executed the warrant at an address in Abberley Avenue.

They were acting on intelligence around suspected criminal activity at the house which was also linked to a black Ford Fiesta car that was stolen from Malvern on Saturday, July 19.

On arrival at the address, officers encountered a man outside the house who was searched and found to have suspected class A drugs on him.

Inside, police found between 50 to 60 wraps of suspected class A drugs, an estimated £3,000 in cash, an imitation firearm and a bladed article, which were all seized as evidence.

A search of the attached

garage uncovered the black Ford Fiesta which was on cloned plates and was towed away as part of the investigation.

Two men were arrested – one, aged 19, on suspicion of possession with intent to supply class A drugs and theft of motor vehicle and another, aged 18, was arrested on suspicion of possession of a class A drug and theft of motor vehicle.

They are currently in police custody helping with enquiries.

PC Sam Maher, of Stourport SNT, who led today's warrant, said: "The warrant was a successful one, with two arrested, a stolen car recovered, as well as class A drugs, cash and weapons seized.

"We were acting on intelligence around the stolen car and suspicious activity at the address and we hope this shows we will always act where appropriate.

"We will not tolerate criminal activity in West Mercia and will continue to work around the clock to protect the communities we are here to serve."



The stolen Ford Fiesta is removed from the scene.



Police estimate they seized about £30,000 in cash and an imitation firearm.

Town plans to mark VJ Day

AN OUTDOOR service will be held in Bewdley on August 15 to mark the 80th anniversary of VJ Day. The event will be outside the entrance to Bewdley Museum at 10.45am and there will be refreshments afterwards at St Anne's Church.

As a mark of respect the VJ Day flag will be flown at St Anne's War Memorial which will be illuminated in the week leading up to the commemoration and for the weekend afterwards - from August 11 to 15.

The event has been organised by Bewdley Town Council. VJ Day or Victory over Japan Day, is the day Japan officially surrendered to the Allied forces, marking the end of the Second World War.

It took place on August 15, 1945. After the war ended in Europe (VE Day is on May 8), the conflict continued between the Allies and the Japanese until August.

Crashing time

THERE have been more than 1,500 road traffic collisions involving cars across the West Mercia Police area in the past year.

The force logged 1,522 collisions, providing a breakdown of the locations where the accidents occurred.

The most occurred in Shropshire, with 385 incidents, followed by Herefordshire, which saw 315.

According to provisional data released by the Department for Transport, the UK experienced a 12 per cent rise in reported road traffic accidents in the first half of 2024 compared to the same period in 2023, says Accident Claims Advice.

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New green tech centre is set to lead the way

A NEW Green Technology Centre which cost £4million has officially opened at Kidderminster College.

It aims to provide an immersive and hands-on learning experience with sustainability embedded into the curriculum.

The centre was developed in direct response to the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) and the region's increasing need for green skills and technologies.

The centre aligns with the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership's (LEP) strategic vision to prioritise sustainability in the region and Kidderminster College's own commitment to Net Zero.

It was officially opened by the renowned designer and founder of Hemmingway Design, Wayne Hemingway.

He sees Kidderminster by 2040 as a town of sustainability, creativity, and inclusivity.

College principal Cat Lewis said: "We are committed to being part of a cultural change.

"This centre will play a vital role in encouraging and empowering more women to enter and thrive in construction and technical careers, as well as those with additional needs, and we are proud to be a part of that shift."

Halford's head of skills devel-



Staff from the college open the new technology centre. s

opment, Dan McCann, touched on how sustainability is now at the heart of skills for the future.

He said: "Colleges like Kidderminster are not just places of learning, they are engines of transformation.

"You are equipping the next generation with the skills, the mindset, and the adaptability to thrive in a world that's changing faster than ever."

Gary Woodman, chief executive of Worcestershire LEP,

reinforced the centre's value; "Construction and automotive are cornerstone sectors for Worcestershire, and this centre responds directly to skills shortages that risk holding our region back.

"It's about more than qualifications - it's about building capacity, talent, and resilience into our local economy."

Vehicle Respraying student Ethan Taylor said: "The Green Technology Centre makes me

feel more prepared for the future thanks to its excellent facilities.

"It really feels like working in a real work environment."

Whilst equipping students with the skills and tools for a career in sustainable construction and automotive engineering, the building also incorporates sustainable features such as solar panels, water-saving systems, and light sensors to further reduce the college's environmental impact.

Eyes on the ball for this

KIDDERMINSTER Harriers are seeking volunteers to act as ball retrievers at Aggborough for the 2025/26 season.

The National League has implemented a multi-ball system for the upcoming campaign.

This will see eight balls placed on cones around the pitch at Aggborough to support continuous play.

Clubs will therefore require eight ball retrievers for every home game to retrieve balls and place the balls on the cones.

Ball retrievers must be aged 14 or over and under 18-years-old.

Children aged over 14 but under 16 will be required for 3pm kick offs only.

Children aged over 16 will be required for evening kick offs as well.

Any child over 14 but under 16 will need a local authority permit to complete the role which the club will process for any volunteers.

Anyone who would like to volunteer as a ball retriever for Kidderminster's home games should email Kevin Bunn: kevin.bunn@harriers.co.uk

Simply email the club with your child's name, date of birth and your contact details and state whether you can commit to every game or are happy to be part of a pool of retrievers on rotation.

Ball retrievers will receive free entry to any games they volunteer for, half time food and drink and a reduced priced parent ticket.

Anyone who is currently under 14 can also apply to become a volunteer at the club as soon as they reach their 14th birthday.

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School duo lead way in digital tech research



Cutting edge teaching: Gary Fendek and Gemma Alldritt.

A WYRE Forest-based multi-academy trust has become a founding member of a nationwide alliance of schools championing cutting edge technology in the classroom.

The Severn Academies Educational Trust has assigned two senior leaders to join the National PedTech Programme, ensuring their schools are at the forefront of digital teaching and learning.

Gemma Alldritt, director of the trust's Learning Academy

,and Gary Fendek, trust IT lead, will work on the two-year research programme, the first of its kind, putting digital technology at the heart of education.

"It is very exciting to be part of this as we grapple with the ever-changing developments in technology, learning together to ensure our teachers and pupils gain the greatest benefit," said Gemma.

"It's about putting how we teach first, a belief that digital tools enhance and support our school system when learning is put at the centre –

the pedagogy of technology, PedTech."

The programme will explore a number of themes, including the impact on curriculum and assessment, special needs education, inclusion and the role of artificial intelligence (AI).

Gary added: "A driving force of the programme is to reduce inequities in and across schools and to transform the experiences of our children and young people."

The trust's family of schools includes Kidderminster's Baxter College, Stourport High School, Stourport

Primary Academy, St Bartholomew's CE Primary in Areley Kings, Wilden All Saints CE Primary, Hartlebury CE Primary,

Far Forest Lea Memorial CE Primary Academy and Wolverley Sebright Primary Academy. Trainee teachers at the

trust's School-Centred Initial Teacher Training organisation in Stourport will also benefit from the sharing of the research findings.

33 affordable homes completed in regeneration scheme

A PARTNERSHIP between Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT) and J Harper & Sons (Leominster) Ltd has led to the completion of a 33-home affordable housing development in Stourport.

The Vale Road scheme will create affordable homes by providing one- and two-bedroom apartments.

Five homes have been built to comply with wheelchair adaptable standards.

J Harper & Sons (Leominster) Ltd also refreshed surrounding areas.

Vale Road is part of the town's ongoing regeneration and long-term social and economic growth.

Antony Rees, from the compa-

ny, said: "We are proud to have delivered another high-quality and much-needed affordable housing project in partnership with our valued client, BDHT."

"This project is a testament to the determination and hard work of all parties involved and serves as a fine example of how re-purposing under-utilised brownfield sites brings a wealth of benefits

to the community and helps meet local housing needs."

Louise Wooldridge, from BDHT, said "This project reflects BDHT's commitment to building thriving, inclusive communities."

"Working with J Harper & Sons Ltd has allowed us to not only deliver these much-needed homes but also address local feedback by enhancing the sur-

rounding environment through thoughtful landscaping and infrastructure improvements.

"Vale Road will play a vital role in Stourport's regeneration and we look forward to continuing this momentum of building more homes, providing accessible living and investing in energy efficiency to create better outcomes for our residents."

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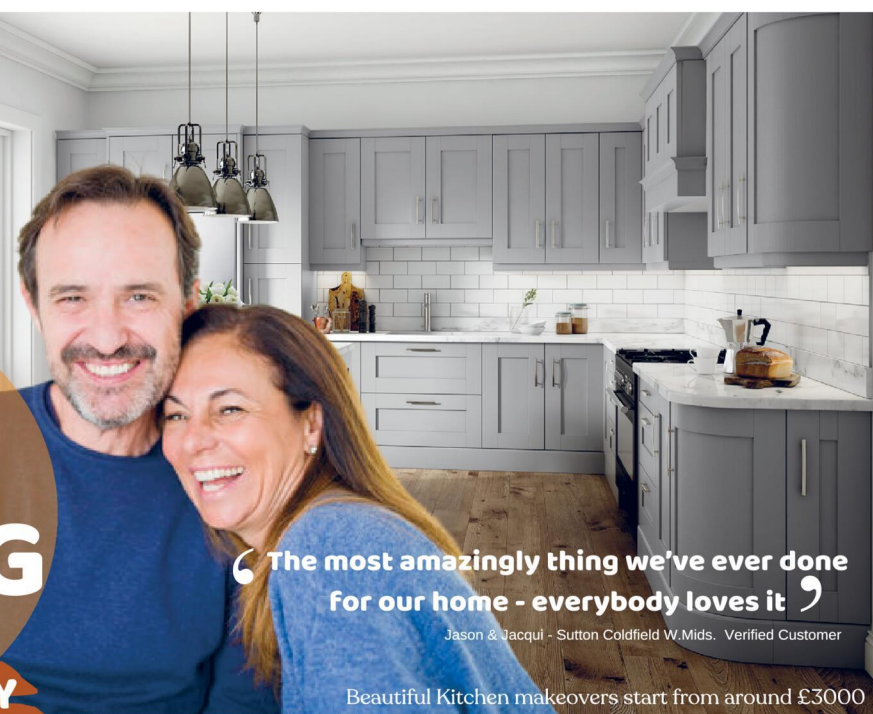
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Outbuildings ransacked as thieves strike

THIEVES made off with thousands of pounds worth of belongings after two outbuildings were broken into on Cobden Street and Franchise Street in Kidderminster last week.

Residents woke up to discover their sheds and outbuildings ransacked and valuable property missing.

In the Cobden Street incident, burglars struck between 1am on July 24 and 10am on July 28, forcing entry to a garden shed.

Items stolen include a large amount of fishing equipment, a lawnmower, and a scooter.

Police say no suspect description is currently available.

Just streets away, on Franchise Street, a second burglary occurred between midday on July 24 and 7pm on July 27.

An outbuilding was targeted, with bicycles, tools, and camping gear all stolen.

West Mercia Police are urging residents in the area to check any doorbell cameras, CCTV footage, or dashcam recordings that may cover those dates and times. Officers have asked anyone with information to come forward, no matter how small the detail may seem.

A police spokesperson said: "It is only by the police and public working together that we can prevent and detect crime. We urge anyone with even the slightest detail to get in touch."

Hotel's new manager started as receptionist

A NEW general manager has checked in at a four-star Victorian country manor hotel in Kidderminster – five-and-a-half years after joining as a receptionist.

Dan Brennan has been promoted to the lead role at the 24-bedroom Brockencote Hall Hotel in Chaddesley Corbett, after initially joining the hotel in December 2019 in a front house role, before being appointed deputy general manager in 2023.

He takes over from Jack Hartshorne, who has moved to one of Brockencote Hall's sister hotels, Mallory Court Hotel and Spa in Leamington Spa, to become a hotel manager.

Brockencote Hall Hotel is part of the Eden Hotel Collection, which alongside Mallory Court, also includes The Arden in Stratford-upon-Avon, The Greenway Hotel and Spa in Cheltenham, and Bovey Castle in Devon.

Dan has been acting general manager since the start of the

year, having completed Eden's internal leadership programme and the external Master Innholders Aspiring Leaders Programme.

"I am honoured to be given the opportunity to lead Brockencote Hall Hotel," he said.

"I love working in hospitality and leaving a lasting impression, and ever since my first day the Eden Hotel Collection have recognised this and shown their commitment in helping me to harness this passion – to a level where I can impart my knowledge to other members of the team.

"The property is a real asset to the community within which it sits – whether that is a place for local residents to regularly meet for a drink or afternoon tea, family and friends marking special occasions, or hosting wedding celebrations – and I am looking forward to leading the property into its next phase of growth."

Dan is the third general manager in a row at Brockencote Hall Hotel to have been internally promoted to the role – underlining the hotel's

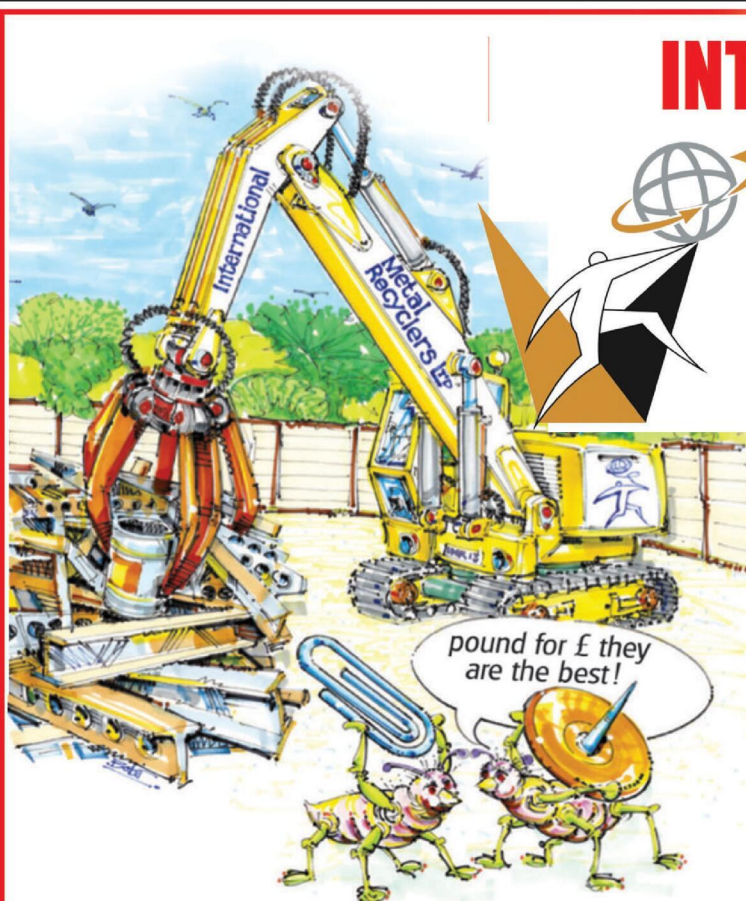


Moving up: Former receptionist Dan Brennan is now general manager.

commitment to investing in talent.

It also comes at a time when the Eden Hotel Collection's 90-day staff retention rate sits at 97 per cent; and the group also being recognised as Small Hotel Group of the Year by the AA.

Mark Chambers, managing director at the Eden Hotel Collection, added: "Looking after our people is at the heart of our workplace culture – which includes investing in their professional development like we have seen with Dan."



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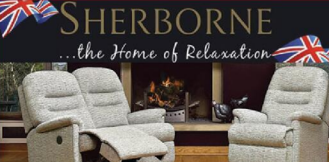
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Celebration offers the chance to follow in steps of walk leaders

A NEW video released by Worcestershire County Council captures the special event held celebrating walk leaders highlighting the incredible impact they have in local communities.

Walk leaders from across Herefordshire and Worcestershire came together at the end of National Walking Month to be recognised for their dedication and support.

Released as part of Love Parks Week, the video captures the energy, stories, and spirit of the celebration.

These walks often take place in local parks and green spaces, making Love Parks Week the perfect opportunity to showcase their impact.

More than 80 walk leaders from across the two counties came together at Worcester Cricket Club to share stories, catch up with each other, and celebrate the difference they make through their roles.

Walk leaders are volunteers, offering their time as part of Herefordshire Council's Ramblers Wellbeing Walks scheme and Worcestershire County Council's Health Walks scheme.

The event highlighted the vital work these volunteers do to help people stay active, build connections and boost their wellbeing.

Lucy Lloyd, Walk Leader for The Hive Walkers, said: "I've got people over 90 people with walking sticks, I've got a lady who's non-verbal, I've got people who suffer with all sorts of problems.



More than 80 walk leaders from across the two counties came together at Worcester Cricket Club to share stories. s

"I've had people come up to me and say you've changed my life because I've moved, I've retired and I'm just at home and I don't meet anybody. So it's really nice when somebody says that.

"It's amazing the characters you meet and the stories they've got to tell. Come and try it out. You don't have to stay. It doesn't cost you

anything, you're not committed to anything. They're all very friendly and you'll soon keep coming regularly."

Guest speakers included Stephen Brewster, CEO of Active Herefordshire and Worcestershire, and Dr Lisa McNally, Director of Public Health for Worcestershire County Council, who shared inspiring insights and data about the power of walking.

Speaking after the event, Stephen said: "It was such a privilege to come together to recognise our walk leaders and everything they do.

"Walking may seem like a simple activity, but the outcomes are powerful. It supports better physical health, builds stronger social connections, and creates a real sense of community.

"This celebration, along with the video we've produced, is a chance to say thank you and show just how much they matter."

Attendees also heard about the success of the #WalkThisMay Challenge, when walk leaders and participants covered an incredible 4,723.18 miles in just two weeks.

Coun Satinder Bell, Worcestershire County Council's cabinet member for health and wellbeing, added: "Walk leaders are changing lives in ways that often go unseen. They help people stay active, overcome loneliness and support their mental health.

"Their commitment and kindness are the foundation of our walking programme, and this event, and the video from the day, really show how valued they are."

The celebration also featured a scenic Health Walk along the River Severn, looping back to the Graeme Hick Pavilion.

Philippa Ellis, talk community health and wellbeing manager at Herefordshire Council, added: "We were thrilled to host so many of our amazing walk leaders and to say a heartfelt thank you.

"Their work brings real positivity and connection into our communities. The video from the event is a brilliant way to celebrate everything they do and the joy they bring to so many people."

Visit worcestershire.gov.uk/healthwalks for more information.

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Costs and council services at the top of the agenda as public debate the options



FURTHER analysis of the results of the Shape Worcestershire survey on how local councils across the county should be reorganised has been released.

Residents from across the county made more than 4,700 comments on the proposals as part of the survey, which ran throughout June, and asked for views on Government plans for Local Government Reorganisation.

Several focus groups were also held in each district in Worcestershire to explore residents' views in more detail.

Under Government plans for Local Government Reorganisation, Worcestershire County Council and the six district, borough, and city councils will be abolished on April 1, 2028.

They will be replaced by either one single council for Worcestershire running all services, or two councils – one for the North and one for the South – with each authority responsible for all services for its part of

the county. The analysis reveals a number of themes amongst residents including finance and costs, service quality, planning, housing and environmental protections, localism and representation and the role of parish and town councils.

More information is also given about why people chose their preferred option for reorganisation. In the survey, overall, 48 per cent of people preferred creating two new unitary councils, with 29 per cent one unitary council and 19 per cent supporting no reorganisation at all.

Survey feedback, analysis and other relevant information will be taken into account before the councils formally submit their final reorganisation proposals to the Government by November 28, 2025.

The Government will then decide which option to go forward with.

Councillors in Bromsgrove District, Malvern Hills District, Redditch Borough, Worcester City

Several focus groups were also held in each district in Worcestershire to explore residents' views in more detail. s

and Wychavon District will hold special council meetings to choose their preferred options.

They take place on September 2 for Malvern Hills at 6pm, Worcester City at 7pm and Wychavon District at 6.15pm. Bromsgrove will meet on September 3 at 6pm and Redditch Borough will meet at 7pm on September 4.

Wyre Forest District Council agreed at its meeting on February 26, 2025 to support the case for one unitary council and will consider final reorganisation proposals later in the autumn.

Vic Allison, consultation and engagement lead for Shape Worcestershire, said: "I'd like to thank everyone who gave their time

to take part in the survey or the focus groups. This clearly shows residents have thought carefully.

"Residents have some very clear priorities and concerns that will need to be addressed by whichever reorganisation option the Government chooses."

Visit www.shapeworcestershire.org for the full analysis.

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Annual chance to choose priorities

POLICE and Crime Commissioner (PCC) John Campion has launched his eighth annual survey on police performance.

Delivering on the PCC's 'Policing with the community' commitment, set out in the Commissioner's Safer Communities Plan, the survey encourages town and parish councils to give feedback on local policing, share concerns and identify what improvements they would like to see.

More than 120 councils took part last year, showing improvement was felt across the country with a 5 per cent drop in the number who feel police presence is poor.

After working closely with the PCC, West Mercia Police launched its refreshed Local Policing Charter in March, outlining its three priorities - visibility, accessibility and engagement.

Mr Campion said: "I believe it's vitally important that organisations inbedded into their community, who have a deep understanding of local concerns, are listened to.

"That's why I am calling on town and parish councils to complete my surveys so I can ensure their views continue to help shape the future of policing in West Mercia.

"Since I launched the survey, I have listened and delivered on calls for change and there are green shoots of progress. I want to build further on that momentum as I remain committed to ensuring West Mercia Police delivers a service more of our communities can have greater confidence in".



PCC John Campion has launched his survey on police performance. s

GPs score highly in new survey

GP PRACTICES in Herefordshire and Worcestershire have scored better than the national average in this year's GP Patient Survey.

In terms of patient satisfaction, the two counties have come out on top for the country, up from fourth last year.

The results show that 81 per cent of patients said their overall experience at their local GP was good or very good, which has increased from last year (79 per cent) and is above the national average (75 per cent).

In terms of online services, which are offered by all practices in Herefordshire and Worcestershire, 59 per cent said they found it easy to use their GP's website and 58 per cent found it easy to contact the GP practice using the NHS app.

For in-person services, 88 per cent reported that receptionists were helpful (above the national average of 83 per cent) and 61 per cent felt it was easy to get through to someone on the phone (above the national average of 53 per cent).

Dental access has been identified as an area of improvement, where 77 per cent said they were able to

get an NHS dental appointment, which although fell slightly below the national average (78 per cent), is up from 73 per cent in 2024.

Charmaine Hawker, director of delegated commissioning NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire, said: "In the face of growing demand our practices continue to make improvements with introducing improved telephone systems, enabling better access to features of the NHS app such as ordering repeat prescriptions, accessing medical records and receiving messages about their care and treatment.

"We acknowledge that dental access has also been an issue across the two counties, but it is encouraging to see that access has improved over last year.

"We have more work to do to get our access to national levels and every effort is made to improve this.

"There is always improvement to be made to ensure people have equal access across our two counties to the care they need when they need it, in a way that works for them, but we are really pleased to see the improvements our practices have made over the last year."



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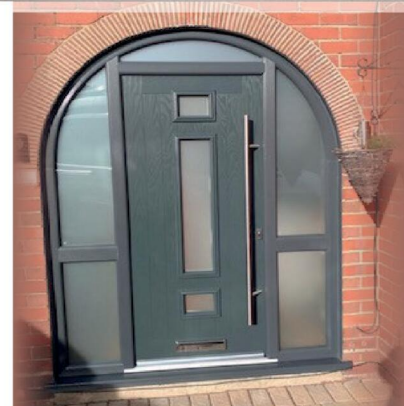
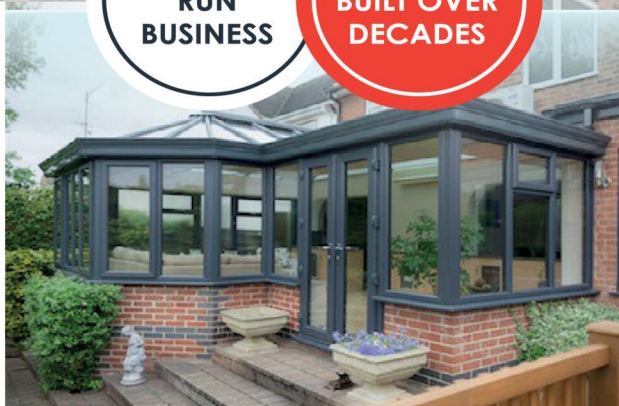


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Keeping it healthy is all in the game



NOW that the summer holiday has arrived, children and teenagers will likely be playing video games more. But the physical health issues caused by playing video games for extensive periods are often overlooked.

With that in mind, Emre Aksu, a spokesperson for online gaming site 1337 Games (<https://1337games.io>), discusses how to avoid some of the most common gaming-related health issues.

"Gamer neck" and poor posture

"Gamer neck" can occur due to poor posture while playing video games. When you lean your neck forward for long periods of time, it can cause it to become unnaturally positioned. It can also cause neck and back pain.

Being mindful of how you're sitting may prevent issues. Playing in a specialised ergonomic gaming chair with a straight, high back will encourage correct posture.

Regular stretching is another effective way to relieve stiffness, pain, and tension. Stretching your arms, neck, and back every hour or so should make you feel better.

Musculoskeletal issues

Musculoskeletal issues are one of the leading health problems associated with gaming. This can include carpal tunnel syndrome, repetitive

strain injury, and pain in the wrists and hands.

Carpal tunnel syndrome arises when pressure is applied to the 'median nerve' in the hand, which controls fine motor skills such as moving fingers and hand muscles. This can cause symptoms such as numbness, tingling, weakness and pain in the hands and fingers.

For PC gamers, elevating the wrists to be level with the keyboard and mouse will ensure that there is circulation throughout the wrist and hand to prevent the nerve from being trapped. A small, soft cushion can assist in elevation and make your wrist position more comfortable.

For console gamers, opening and closing your hand repeatedly between sessions can be helpful, as can bending your wrist forward and backwards or side to side before rolling the wrist. Warming up your hands and wrists before playing and stretching them after finishing may also be helpful.

Eye strain, vision problems and headaches

These can occur if you stare at your screen for too long. Screens may cause you to develop eye pain, blurred vision and headaches – especially if you are already susceptible to them or suffer from migraines.

Take a break of at least 20 seconds every 20 minutes, to look at something that is at least 20 feet

away from you. Taking longer breaks from screens every hour or so, for at least 15 minutes, will help prevent any significant eye problems or headaches.

Using a blue light filter on your computer or video console screen may also counter any eye problems.

Hearing loss

Hearing loss can be countered by maintaining lower volume levels and playing sound through speakers as opposed to headphones.

If you want to use headphones, over-ear headphones are better than in-ear headphones, as the sound does not travel directly to the ear canal, which allows more space for the sound to reverberate.

Obesity and blood clots

Physical inactivity can cause obesity, and sitting for long periods can interrupt circulation, allowing blood

clots to form, particularly in the legs.

Taking breaks from gaming every 90 minutes to walk around will enable healthy blood flow and reduce the risk of developing blood clots.

Crossing your legs or tucking them underneath or behind you should be avoided as it can restrict blood flow. Instead, stretch them out as much as possible.

Interperse your gaming routine with exercise; this doesn't have to be high intensity, and even a 30-minute brisk walk every day could significantly benefit your health.

Dehydration

Having water or another drink nearby you at all times will prevent dehydration.

Some gamers may also limit their fluid intake to avoid needing the toilet and having to pause their game. This isn't advisable, as it will result

in dehydration and may encourage individuals to suppress their bladder needs, which can cause a variety of health problems.

Fatigue and insomnia

This can arise in gamers who play late or right before bed. Gamers who play for long hours, particularly during the evening and nighttime, may also struggle to switch off when going to bed, due to the sensory stimulation of video games.

Avoiding gaming a couple of hours before you plan to sleep will allow you to switch off at nighttime.

Similarly, limiting your gaming hours is one of the best steps you can take to prevent insomnia. Gaming at the same time each day, for a specific period, will mean that you can enjoy yourself while still feeling energized throughout the rest of the day and reducing the risk of adverse health effects.



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Offering some food for thought

A SUMMER holiday, for many of us, means eating out, sampling local specialities and picking up some foodie treats.

But if you're concerned about animal welfare, it can be tricky to know what food to avoid, according to award-winning eco chef and food writer Tom Hunt.

Tom has teamed up with RSPCA Assured to help holiday-makers understand how to choose higher welfare products when travelling in new places.

Tom said: "Finding high-welfare meat when travelling or eating out can be tricky. I've learned to look for trusted certifications like the RSPCA Assured label alongside outdoor-reared, free range and organic here in the UK, the EU Organic logo across Europe, or Animal Welfare Approved in the US, which all have rigorous standards. Another important signifier of higher welfare is pasture-reared.

"My strategy is finding a local farmers' market or wholefood shop early in any trip. Not only can I stock up on quality ingredients, but the knowledgeable staff are goldmines for food and restaurant recommendations.

"The easiest way to check the animal welfare of a dish is to ask. If the waiter doesn't know or has a generic answer, it's best to avoid that meat and go vegetarian or order another dish you can be more certain of."

Say no to foie gras

Foie gras is a type of pate made by force-feeding ducks and geese,

making their liver expand to 10 times its normal size. Despite the practice being banned in the UK, foie gras can still be imported here and is widely produced in popular holiday destinations including France, Hungary and Bulgaria.

This cruel practice causes significant pain, suffering and injury to birds. You can do your bit to take a stand against it by avoiding buying foie gras if you see it on menus or in shops while on your travels this summer.

Be aware of local foods made from endangered animals

It's normal to want to immerse yourself in local culture, but make sure that's not at the expense of endangered animals. Sadly, there are still many animals hunted to near extinction for so-called delicacies, like shark fin soup or turtle jelly.

If you're travelling abroad, familiarise yourself in advance with any local cuisine which may come from endangered animals. And don't be tempted to try it, even if it's just a one-off - this is how tourists can unwittingly help drive up demand and encourage more hunting.

Looking for higher welfare? Look for the RSPCA Assured logo

If you're holidaying in the UK, the easiest way to make sure you're buying higher-welfare meat, fish, eggs or dairy products is to look for the RSPCA Assured logo. This means it has come from a farm



inspected by the RSPCA. Bookmark the RSPCA Assured store finder at www.rspcaassured.org.uk/retailers to help you find supermarkets stocking higher welfare meat, fish, dairy and eggs wherever you are in the UK. Remember, if you're not sure - look for the RSPCA Assured label.

If you're going abroad, a quick internet search will help you research higher welfare labelling and availability in the country you're travelling to.

Eat less, eat better

From the spicy and aromatic lentil dhal of India to the colourful, fresh salads of the Med, the world is bursting with incredible tastes, flavours and textures which are all naturally vegan. And holidays are a great time to give some of these a go, especially if you don't usually choose meat-free options.

So alongside eating better and choosing higher welfare options, why not pick a few days of your holiday where you'll try out local plant-based flavours? That doesn't mean you have to miss out - picture a lazy lunch in the sun with soft, herby focaccia served with succulent olives and creamy houmous. Perfect!

Visit www.rspcaassured.org.uk for more information on finding RSPCA Assured-certified products.

Eco chef and food writer Tom Hunt. Picture by Elsa Pearl.





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IMPROVE

DON'T MOVE

10 ways to turn your existing house into your dream home

In a property market marked by high interest rates, rising moving costs, and competitive housing stock, more and more UK homeowners are choosing to stay put – and upgrade.

The “don’t move, improve” movement isn’t just about saving money; it’s about reimagining your existing space to suit your evolving lifestyle, tastes and needs. From garden upgrades to major extensions, here are 10 smart,

impactful ways to transform your house into your dream home without the stress of relocating.

1. Open It Up: Create an Open-Plan Kitchen/Diner

Knocking down a wall to create a flowing, open-plan kitchen and dining space is one of the most transformative home improvements you can make. This layout is ideal for modern family life – more sociable, more spacious and filled with natural light. It also enhances resale value. Removing internal walls is usually a straightforward process, though you’ll need a structural engineer if the wall is load-bearing. Add in bi-fold doors or skylights, and you’ve

suddenly got the bright, functional heart of your home.

2. Add Space With an Extension

If your home is bursting at the seams, consider adding more square footage. Whether it’s a single-storey rear extension to enlarge a kitchen or a double-storey side return for an extra bedroom, extensions are a top-tier investment.

Costs vary depending on size and finish, but typical single-storey extensions start from around £1,500–£2,500 per square metre. While planning permission may be needed, many modest extensions fall under permitted development rights, making the process simpler.



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Don't Move - IMPROVE

3. Lighten Up With New Doors and Windows

Replacing old windows and doors has both aesthetic and practical benefits. Modern double- or triple-glazed units improve energy efficiency, security, and soundproofing. But they also make a huge visual impact – think sleek aluminium frames or traditional timber sash replacements. Adding French or bi-fold doors leading onto the garden can blur the lines between indoors and out, ideal for summer entertaining.

4. Upgrade the Kitchen – The Heart of the Home

A kitchen renovation remains one of the most desirable and value-

adding improvements you can make. Whether you're opting for a full overhaul or just replacing worktops and cabinet fronts, there's plenty of scope for creativity. Current trends include large kitchen islands, bold colour palettes, open shelving, and statement lighting. Don't forget integrated appliances and smart storage to enhance both style and function.

5. Boost Curb Appeal With a New Front Door

First impressions count, and a new front door is a relatively low-cost way to elevate your home's exterior. Composite doors are durable, secure, and come in a wide range of colours and styles – from traditional Victorian to ultra-modern.

Pair your new door with fresh paintwork, updated house numbers and good lighting, and you'll give your home a welcoming new face.

6. Create a Year-Round Conservatory or Garden Room

Unlike the draughty conservatories of old, modern garden rooms and orangeries are stylish, thermally efficient and designed for year-round use. Whether you use yours as a home office, gym, or snug lounge, these light-filled spaces add lifestyle value and character. If you're tight on budget, a prefabricated garden pod can offer similar benefits at a lower cost and with minimal disruption.

7. Reimagine the Garden

Your outdoor space is an extension of your home – and deserves just as much attention. Improving the garden can mean adding low-maintenance landscaping, installing decking or a patio, or creating distinct zones for dining, relaxing and playing. Consider garden lighting, built-in seating, or even an outdoor kitchen to create a space that's usable in all seasons. You don't need acres – even a small garden can be made to feel like a sanctuary.

8. Loft Conversion: Add a Bedroom or Office Upstairs

A well-designed loft conversion can add both space and value – typically increasing your home's value by up to 20%, according to industry



estimates. Whether you need a guest bedroom, home office or main suite with en suite bathroom, the loft is often the most underutilised area of the home.

Most loft conversions fall under permitted development, but always check with your local authority. Dormers, skylights, and structural adjustments may require approval.

9. New Flooring for a Fresh Feel

Never underestimate the impact of new flooring. Swapping tired carpets for fresh ones or replacing worn-out vinyl with wood or LVT can transform the feel of a room. Underfloor heating is also a worthwhile consideration during

a flooring upgrade – especially in bathrooms, kitchens or chilly downstairs rooms.

10. Redecorate and Refresh the Finishing Touches

If your budget won't stretch to major renovations, you can still make a big difference with smaller updates. A fresh coat of paint, new light fixtures, modern taps and handles, or upgraded curtains and blinds can all breathe new life into your home. Feature walls using wallpaper, panelling or textured paint add a touch of style without major expense. Don't forget energy-efficient lighting – both cost-saving and eco-friendly.



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Weight loss on the menu

A FREE 12-week online life-style programme for adults in Worcestershire looking to lose weight, feel more energetic, or simply develop healthier habits has been launched.

Led by a qualified nutritionist, each weekly session is packed with expert advice and practical tips.

Public Health from Worcestershire County Council is supporting this programme to encourage participants to make small, manageable changes that add up to a healthier lifestyle.

From tackling snacking and portion sizes to understanding fats and sugar, the programme provides the tools and motivation to help people feel their best inside and out.

Coun Satinder Bell, cabinet member for Health and Wellbeing at Worcestershire County Council, said: "This is a brilliant opportunity for anyone wanting to feel healthier and build better habits.

"What's even better is that it's all online, so you can take part from home. Not everyone finds it easy to attend sessions in person, and this virtual option makes it much more accessible.

"I'd really encourage anyone thinking about making a change to give it a go."

The programme runs every Monday from 1pm to 2pm on Microsoft Teams.

Visit healthyworcestershire.org.uk, email Healthy.Worcestershire@nhs.net or call 0800 772 0307 to sign up.

Businesses offered chance for one-to-one coaching

A CHANCE for Worcestershire businesses to receive up to ten hours of fully funded one-to-one business coaching is on offer through the Enterprising Worcestershire programme.

Support is designed specifically for growing businesses and helping entrepreneurs find clarity, direction, and renewed confidence in their next steps.

These tailored sessions are delivered by local business specialists Real World Consultancy (RWC) and supported by Worcestershire County Council.

This gives entrepreneurs the chance to step back from the day-to-day and refocus on long-term strategy, goals and growth, with practical and grounded advice.

Coun Alan Amos, cabinet member with responsibility for business and skills at Worcestershire County Council said: "This isn't about theory or tick-box exercises. It's about real conversations, honest guidance and tailored support that helps you get your business to where you want it to be.

"With places going fast, I urge any business serious about growth to apply now before it's too late."

The sessions begin with a strategy day where people work alongside an experienced Business Coach to explore goals and map out a clear, practical plan for growth.

Follow-up coaching is also avail-



The sessions are tailored to each business. s

able to help people stay on track and keep the momentum going.

Emma May Fishlock, founder of RWC said: "The ability to take time out and focus purely on your business strategy is something most owners don't prioritise- but it's absolutely vital. Strategic Planning

Days offer focused time and expert support to help you identify practical next steps and tackle business challenges head-on."

"The programme is available to business owners based in the districts of Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, Redditch, Wychavon or Wyre

Forest. This is a valuable chance to access professional support that's already made a difference to businesses in the county."

Visit realworldconsultancy.org/worcestershirebusinesscoaching for more information.

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Gardening

Timely advice for while you're away

AUGUST is usually the month when many people go on holiday and leave gardens to fend for themselves.

A little thought before heading off and some tender loving care on the return will be enough to make sure that you can go away without worrying about all of your hard gardening work going to waste.

While you are away and your garden is left unattended, many of your plants may suffer due to lack of water.

Make sure, before you go, you either arrange to have your containers and baskets watered, or set up a system that can supply water on a regular basis to your tubs and baskets.

Move any baskets and containers out of full sun to a position where they are shaded at the height of the day.

Stand terracotta pots on gravel trays topped up with water, so the pots can gradually absorb the reservoir of liquid or alternatively make a few holes in the lid of a plastic water bottle, cut off the bottom of the bottle, turn upside down into the plant compost and then fill with water (which slowly drips into the soil).

The same watering principles to your veg patch as well. August (and September) is a month of gathering, harvesting, bottling and jam making for all Grow Your Own gardeners.



Tomatoes will be ready and ripe to pick this month.

There is no need to chop them up, simply crush them gently when frozen and use as required. This includes Basil – the perfect herb for use in tomato dishes and also as an aromatic herbal tea. Basil is a member of the mint family, and basil tea can be served after meals to help digestion and is also a great source of vitamin K, especially dried basil leaves. A lemon basil tea smells amazing!

In addition to harvesting and watering other top tips from the RHS for August jobs in the garden include:

- Dead head flowering plants regularly
- Prune wisteria
- Prune rambling roses once they have finished flowering
- Collect seed from garden plants
- Harvest vegetables when they become ready
- Lift and pot up rooted strawberry runners
- Keep ponds and water features topped up
- Improve the soil with green manures
- Feed containers and border perennials with a liquid tomato food to encourage early autumn blooms
- Water containers and new plants, with grey recycled water or rainwater if possible

However, if the weather is good, you can still sow quick maturing salad crops such as lettuce, radish, rocket and chicory in troughs and containers. All of which go well with tomatoes – which are now ready to be picked straight from the vine. Some of the tastiest and easiest tomatoes to grow are Moneymaker, Tumbling Tom

and Tigerella. Moneymaker is an old fashioned, salad tomato that produces reliable crops of medium-sized red tomatoes with good flavour; Tumbling Tom is perfect for containers or hanging baskets, producing an abundance of small, super-sweet cherry tomatoes that are great for salads or eating straight off the plant; and Tigerella,

well suited to colder climates, will give you a good quantity of distinctive medium sized red tomatoes with orange and yellow stripes.

Another harvest for August is herbs. For a steady supply of fresh herbs through the winter cut the younger leaves now, rinse in clean water and, after putting them in a plastic bag, place in the freezer.

Quarter Jewellery and Malvern Goldsmiths



Quarter Jewellery (The most reasonable jewellers in Worcester) has now been open for 18 years, I have always endeavoured to run the shop as jewellers were run when I started in the jewellery trade 59 years ago. Five years ago we were lucky enough to acquire the lease of 28, Belle Vue Terrace, Great Malvern a beautifully fitted Victorian pharmacy, now reborn as Malvern Goldsmiths

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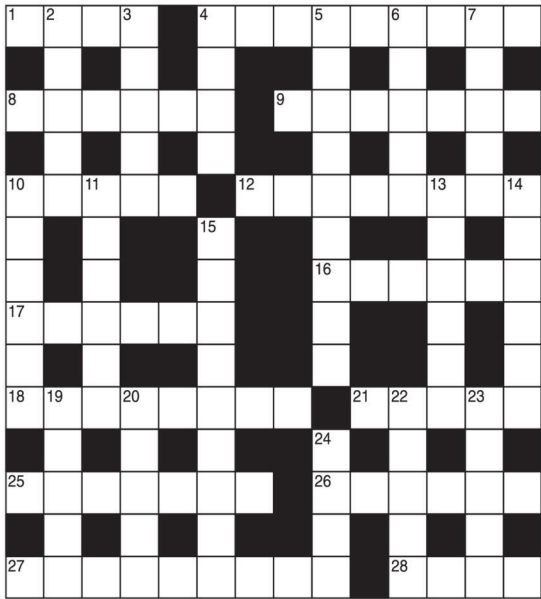
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GENERAL KNOWLEDGE CROSSWORD

- ACROSS**
- 1 First of the Hebrew Old Testament prophets (4)
- 4 Capital and important port of Sweden (9)
- 8 A kind of nut (6)
- 9 Another name for the wind-flower (7)
- 10 Relative of the racoon, found in South and Central America (5)
- 12 Yellowish-green gas used in bleaching, etc. (8)
- 16 A lock or patch of false hair (6)
- 17 Type of straw hat (6)
- 18 Church festival (8)
- 21 Minute eggs of frogs in a gelatinous mass (5)
- 25 Disembodied souls (7)
- 26 & 20 Down Hastings, Sandwich, Dover, New Romney and Hythe (6,5)
- 27 Corded fabric of silk, etc. (9)
- 28 Sunk fence bordering a garden or park (2-2)



- DOWN**
- 2 In music, word meaning very or much (5)
- 3 See 15 Down
- 4 Effervescent water for mixing with whisky, etc. (4)
- 5 Painter famous for his many scenes of Venice (9)
- 6 Legendary Greek epic poet (5)
- 7 Russian revolutionary, founder of the Bolshevik party (5)
- 10 Water-worn, rounded stone (6)
- 11 Base soluble in water, capable of neutralising acids (6)
- 13 A South African antelope (6)
- 14 & 23 Down Author whose works include Brideshead Revisited (6,5)
- 15 & 3 Down The Last Minstrel and Marmion are works by this poet and novelist (3,6,5)

- 19 John ---, British artist best known for his series of water colours of Windsor Castle, etc. (5)
- 20 See 26 Across
- 22 Suffolk ---, short-legged, thickset breed of draught horse (5)
- 23 See 14 Down
- 24 In radar, to traverse an area with a controlled beam (4)

SOLUTIONS

General Knowledge Crossword

ACROSS: 1 Amos; 4 Stockholm; 8 Almond; 9 Anemone; 10 Coat; 12 Chlorine; 16 Toupee; 17 Boater; 18 Ephraim; 21 Spanner; 25 Sprites; 26 Cinque; 27 Grosgrain; 28 Ha-ha. DOWN: 2 Moltis; 3 Scott; 4 Soda; 5 Canaletto; 6 Homer; 7 Lenin; 10 Cobble; 11 Alkali; 13 Impala; 14 Evelyn; 15 Sir Walter; 19 Piper; 20 Ports; 22 Punch; 23 Waugh; 24 Scan.

Crossword

ACROSS: 1 Discosomure; 7 Lithic; 8 Erode; 9 Dry; 10 Prouette; 11 Aftaid; 12 Sample; 15 Turplitude; 17 Era; 18 Guide; 19 Interruption; 21 Interruption; 22 Interruption; 23 Interruption; 24 Interruption; 25 Interruption; 26 Interruption; 27 Interruption; 28 Interruption.

Wordwheel

REPLACING: Geraint Thomas, Blame Riis.

Niner

REDRESSED: Eddy Merckx, Bradley Wiggins, Greg LeMond, Peter Sagan, Miguel Indurain, Mark Cavendish, Tom Dumoulin, Jan Ullrich, Andre Greipel, Marco Pantani, Cadel Evans, Chris Froome, Andy Schleck, Bernard Hinault, Carlos Sastre, Dylan Groenewegen, Marcel Kittel.

Codeword

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

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Motoring

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Grand touring for new OMODA

IN a bold demonstration of real-world range testing, OMODA UK has put its flagship SUV, the OMODA 9 SHS (Super Hybrid System), to the test by embarking on a more-than-WLTP range grand tour across nine European countries.

Completing the route using the power of only one charge and one tank of fuel, the OMODA 9 exceeded its

WLTP estimate of 700 miles. Remarkably, 730 miles were accomplished with no refuelling or concerns, and plenty more still left in the 70-litre fuel tank.

The nine-country tour began in England on the white cliffs of Dover and traced a path through France, Belgium, The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Germany, Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Austria.

From the cobbled towns of Luxembourg to the sleek stretches of the German Autobahn, the journey showcased the OMODA 9 as a powerful, luxurious and future-ready touring SUV.

Crafted for long-distance serenity and 'quiet luxury', the OMODA 9's proprietary Chery International-derived super hybrid powertrain combines near-silent propulsion with acoustically optimised tyres and glass.

The cabin is engineered around tranquillity, offering passengers a 24.6-inch curved screen display, ambient lighting, PM3.0 Air Purification, and fully reclining

heated and ventilated seats, making the journey to the destination, just as important as reaching it.

Powered by a 1.5-litre TGDI engine, dual electric motors and a 34.46 kWh M3P battery, the OMODA 9 delivers 449 PS, 700 Nm of torque, and acceleration from 0-62 mph in just 4.9 seconds. During the nine-country tour, the OMODA 9's six drive modes ensured smooth progress across every terrain and climate making for easy driving.

Whether in the congestion of rush-hour Brussels, cruising past sun-drenched hay bales in rural France, or summoning instant torque for the high-speed corridors of the autobahn, the OMODA 9 delivered consistent power, efficiency, and comfort at every turn.

Designed for pan-European versatility, the OMODA 9 has 660 litres of rear luggage space, expanding to 1,783 litres with split-folding rear seats.

With ample room for five adults and ele-

gant design details throughout, the vehicle's practicality meets aesthetic grace, making it the perfect partner for long-haul family touring.

OMODA UK CEO Gary Lan said: "For the OMODA 9 and team to have completed the nine countries trip is a huge accomplishment, embodying more than our faith in our Super Hybrid System technology - it reflects our belief in making a connection to the journey."

"The OMODA 9 links people to purpose, ambition to accessibility, and lifestyle to innovation."

"We challenged the convention of what a plug-in hybrid can do, and we did it not just with substance, but with style."

"Our core values; quiet luxury, intelligent technology, and bold design, come together in the OMODA 9."

"We're showcasing a vehicle that is not only a work of art in engineering, but a platform for creative expression and adventurous storytelling."

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CONSERVATORY 3 piece suite plus side table plus leg rest excellent condition £140 01527 550342

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STRESSLESS 3 seat high back brown leather sofa immaculate condition £850 07551992998

LIFE jackets (Bouyancy Aid) 2 junior 40kg 1 adult 70kg £15 0781420097

MISCELLANEOUS

2.50CM high side lamps pink silk shades cream base Peacocks flowers working order condition £20 pair 07738740038

INDESIT 6kg washing machine £50 excellent condition. Genuine reason for sale. Call 07910 244 949 and ask for Jo

ELECTRIC Sewing Machine for sale - Olympus - in good working order. £80 ono Tel: 0121 445 4844

OLD Charm Welsh Dresser £250 01299 488520

KITCHEN Items for sale, manual lurch spiraliser, lakeland smoothie maker, moulins whisk, kenwood grinder / chopper all powered £50 the lot Dorridge 07714 766428

MOTORCYCLE carrier fits standard car tow bar £120 ono 07933 245121

GREY filing cabinet with 2 drawers £20 L65.5 x W47 x H73 cms 07831488658

MISCELLANEOUS

3-BIKE rear carrier rack (Auto Care) Still in wrapper, £20. Phone after 6pm 0121 742-4250

NIKE Air MX-720-818 Trainers, "White Indigo Fog" UK Size 4, Hardly worn, £30. Tel.no.0121 742-2513

SINGLE bed only used for grandchild's visits £50 07831488658

KASCO Carry cart golf bag (used once), folding golf trolley, 6 men's RH clubs / irons. The lot £25. 0121 744 1003

BOTTLE Green Corner Sofa 8 ft x 8ft - Arms 32" depth £150 07506677447

SET of 14 LH Golf Clubs Bag / Accessories Good Condition Taylor Made, Gallaway, King Cobra £180 ono 07819015716

SMALL TV Oak Effect Corner Unit As New £50 ono 07879015716

GOOD Condition £100 ono 07879015716

MISCELLANEOUS

GOOD Condition £100 ono 07879015716

SIX Oak Dining Chairs (black seats) Good Condition £50 ono 07879015716

SAMSUNG Surround Sound Speaker Set (6 in total) - £60 ono 07879015716

LADIES Warehouse long blue skirt, size 18, new £10 07813 706 158 (Shirley area)

WAHL salon styling hair tongs, new in box £9 07813 706 158 (Shirley area)

BREAD tv series 1 & 2 (watched once) and 3 & 4 (new) £20 07813 706 158 (Shirley area)

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First Aggborough win for Murray in Halesowen friendly

by Aaron Sutcliffe
aaron.sutcliffe@bullivantmedia.com

FOOTBALL: ADAM Murray wants his Kidderminster Harriers side to develop 'winning habits' in pre-season following a 1-0 victory against Halesowen Town.

Murray found himself in the Aggborough dugout for the first time as Harriers boss with former Kidderminster manager Russ Penn in the opposite dugout.

A goal from summer signing Kurt Willoughby settled the contest and ensured Murray made a winning start in his first home game in charge of the club.

And after making a number of new signings this summer, Murray admits it may take a little bit of time before his players start to gel on the pitch.

Murray said: "We're not going to get promotion or push for a title without some steel and a winning mentality."

"It's a learning curve, we've gone from being a really experienced team last season to quite a young team this season."

"There's learning and development going on, the squad we've put together and the way we're trying to do things - I back these boys against anybody."

"We've just got to find our consist-

Harriers claimed another pre-season win against Halesowen. Picture courtesy of clivejonespr.com



ency of our rhythm and flow. When we do that, the chances start going in and we'll create more chances.

"We've got to make sure we're pushing standards, it's all about winning and that's good because that creates habits."

"When it does click there's some really good bits in there. I want it all to be perfect for the first game of the season."

"We have to be patient just because of the amount of new players and new ideas we've put in."

"It might take a couple of weeks,

the boys are trying to carry out what we're asking of them."

"We just need to be a bit more clinical and we have to get out of that pre-season mindset."

A flowing move brought about the game's only goal on 67 minutes as Willoughby raced into the box and fired a shot across goal past advancing Yeltz goalkeeper Dan Platt.

Kidderminster are next in action against Solihull Moors on Saturday, August 2 with kick-off at 1pm at Aggborough.

Boat Club gearing up for 149th annual regatta

ROWING: STOURPORT Boat Club are busy preparing for their annual regatta now in its 149th year.

The regatta first took place in 1876 and has remained an annual fixture on the calendar ever since.

This year's regatta takes place on the weekend of August 9 and 10.

Local clubs from Evesham, Warwick, Bridgnorth, Shrewsbury, Bewdley, Minerva Bath and Loughborough will all take part.

And the regatta has also attracted London-based crews from Putney and Auriol Kensington and from as far away as Greenbank Falmouth in Truro.

As many as 2,000 competitors could take to the water with racing to take place in all boat types from singles, fours and eights.

Entertainment will also take place at the club in the evening after the rowing has taken place on Saturday, August 9.

For more information, visit: www.stourportbc.co.uk

BEWDLEY SUCCESS

Elsewhere, Stourport celebrated 13 race victories across the different age categories at the Bewdley Regatta.

Stourport single sculler Catherine McNabb continued her winning streak with victory in the final of her race by four lengths.

And J15 sculler Ed Chandler triumphed in a hard-fought final which went down to the wire.

Stourport's mixed E quad of Sharon Salter, Jane Ryman, Andy Harris and Stew Barnett claimed a comfortable win in their race.

Crew member Harris secured his first-ever sculling success.

The open double of Luke Barnett and Jimmy Watson showed their class to win their race by a compre-

hensive margin.

Stourport's women's masters E quad of Julia Saunders, Deb Barnett, Liz Danby and Sara Peace won a tight contest against a crew from Stratford.

And the masters E 2x of Salter and Ryman won their event, overcoming an E to F handicap.

Stourport J18 pair Sophie Davis and Alice Dorrell also won their event ahead of a Pengwern crew by three lengths.

And the masters eight E crew of Gary Howson, Steve Lilley, Nigel Parker, Lee Evans, Chris Bird, Harris, Pete Spencer and Barnett, coxed by Michelle Chancellor, won a thrilling race by a quarter of a length.

Stourport eventually reeled in opponents Worcester in a handicap race.

The club's development squad also took to the water, mentored by Stu Cambell, and claimed victory by more than a length against another Stratford crew.

The crew of Sally Moon, Annabelle Perry, Rachel Moon and Claudine Harmon, with Michelle Chandler at cox, tasted victory.

Stourport's masters E quad then beat a Warwick crew by three quarters of a length.

Barnett triumphed in a single following an explosive start and hung on to win by three lengths.

Salter and Ryman claimed a three and a half lengths victory in the masters E double.

And the club's two development crews raced against each other in the final of the coxed quad event.

Just three quarters of a length separated them at the finish line as Harmon, Moon, Georgina Worsley and Jane Palmer, with Sophie Dimambro at cox, took the race win.

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