

Youth group's shock as minibus is stolen

by **Tristan Harris**
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HEARTLESS thieves stole a Kidderminster youth club's minibus as the group was putting on its popular and packed summer programme.

Two raiders targeted the KDYT (Kidderminster and District Youth Trust) premises around 12.35am last Wednesday.

The pair broke into the vehicle which was parked on the Youth Club car park on Bromsgrove Street. One drove it away and the vehicle's number plates were found discarded in a river near Tenbury but the minibus itself has not been seen since.

The minibus allowed the local youth charity to provide a range of trips and residential to young people and the theft has meant it had to source a temporary replacement for this year's summer events. The packed programme sees young people visiting attractions and taking part in a range of activities.

The provision is so popular the group filled both KDYT minibuses on every trip with waiting lists operating for more places.

KDYT works with young people from across Wyre Forest, providing mentoring, youth clubs, day trips and residential weekends and also joins up with a range of partner agencies to ensure young people get the support they need when they need it.

A total of 81 per cent of members come from the top 20 per cent most deprived areas of England, with 98 per cent of members joining KDYT on



the recommendation of their friends. Cat Bennett, KDYT's senior youth

worker, said: "The loss of the minibus is upsetting for young people and the

KDYT team who are working hard this summer - thankfully we have

been able to borrow a minibus from Perdisswell Young People's Leisure Club which means we can deliver our very popular summer programme.

"During this time we need two minibuses to take young people to activities.

"We have insurance but this is a long process - another issue we are facing is the stolen minibus was in incredible condition with no rust and only 26,000 miles on the clock - the insurance will only pay what a standard 2008 minibus is worth, the majority of these have high mileage, and have been well used with damage and lots of rust.

"We will not let the selfish actions of a few ruin things for young people, but we are facing a struggle to get a bus as good as the one we lost."

KDYT has been on the Jeremy Vine Show on BBC Radio 2 to share its story, during a phone-in about the Ford Transit's 60th anniversary.

The Trust celebrates its own 60th anniversary in 2026 and describes this as a 'cruel irony'.

Anyone who can help the group with a permanent replacement minibus of similar standard to the last one is urged to email KDYT's operations manager Mike Brooke at: m.oliver-brooke@kdyt.org.uk or call him on 01562 228113.

Visit: kdyt.org.uk or [facebook.com/KDYTYouth](https://www.facebook.com/KDYTYouth) for more on KDYT and its activities.

KDYT's minibus was stolen last Wednesday and the group is now hoping for help in finding a replacement of the same standard. s

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The Kidderminster Royal Marine Cadets is looking for new recruits to join its ranks. s

Sign up to join their ranks

THE KIDDERMINSTER Detachment of the Royal Marine Cadets is looking for new members.

The group meets on Monday and Thursday evenings at the Kidderminster Army Reserve Centre.

There young people, aged between 13 and 18, can learn and develop friendships, confidence and an array of skills, including leadership, that will last a lifetime.

Members also have plenty of

challenges and adventures along the way.

Training is packed with activities, including fieldcraft, map reading, weapon handling, shooting, first aid, waterborne pursuits and more.

No experience is necessary, young participants just have to have enthusiasm and commitment.

Email: Kidderminster@acoy.co.uk or message through via - Kidderminster Sea and Royal Marines Cadets Facebook page.

All students off to uni after top grades

YEAR 13 students at Kidderminster's Holy Trinity School and Sixth Form were celebrating yesterday (Thursday) when 100 per cent of those applying to university secured their preferred choices.

All students were rightly proud of their achievements but among the stand-out performances were Miruna Butuc, who achieved and Distinction* in business, an A in psychology and a B in English

Literature, gaining a place at the University of Nottingham to study Politics and International Relations.

Mehar Sammi achieved a Distinction* in IT, a Distinction in Business and a B in Psychology. She will now study Occupational Therapy at Worcester University.

Other university courses students are undertaking include management at Warwick, mechanical engineering at Plymouth, environmental studies at Nottingham, law at Wolverhampton, computer science at Brighton, games art and design at Plymouth, biomedical science at Worcester and psychology at Plymouth. One student is joining the Navy.

Head of sixth form, Tamsin Fisher, said: "I am very proud of this cohort who have worked incredibly hard, achieved some very impressive results and are going onto some equally impressive destinations."

"I am proud of the young adults that they have become and it has been a privilege to watch them

flourish.

"I wish them all the best with their next steps."

Headteacher Ian Williams added: "I am delighted at the outcomes achieved by our sixth form students and send my fullest congratulations to them all."

"I would like to thank the teachers, support staff and parents for their commitment in encouraging our talented students during their time with us."

"We look forward to supporting every student to a positive destination at university, college or in an apprenticeship, further training or employment."

"I know these young people will go on to achieve great things and make a positive contribution to society in the future."

"Well done and good luck to them all."

The A level grades were coming in as the Standard went to press - visit: kidderminsterstandard.co.uk for more on results day.

Some of the students from Kidderminster's Holy Trinity School who received their results yesterday. s

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Rapist sent to prison for 20 years

ARAPIST from Kidderminster has been jailed for 20 years after being found guilty of two counts of rape and sexual assaults.

Jose Martin Holden, 32, of George Street, Kidderminster, was sentenced at Worcester Crown Court on Friday, August 1.

Holden was handed a 20-year term plus five on licence for the first count of rape, ten years for the second count of rape and eight years for assault of a female by penetration, along with two years for sexual assault. The three latter terms are to run concurrently.

Restraining orders against both his victims were also put in place.

Holden was further ordered to sign the sex offenders' register and to pay a victim surcharge of £190.

Det Sgt Poonam Parmar, from West Mercia Police CID, said: "We are pleased to get this lengthy prison term for Holden whose predatory sexual behaviour has caused so much harm to his victims.

"We hope this conviction gives them the chance to move on in some respects of their lives and we have supported them fully during the court and prosecution process.

"I would personally like to pay



Jose Martin Holden.

tribute to their bravery in coming forward and reporting his disgusting actions and for working with us to secure his conviction.

"We hope this will encourage other victims of rape or sexual assault to come forward and speak to us.

"We will always listen to you, take your concerns seriously and protect you from predators like Holden."

People who have been a victim of a sexual offence can visit the website at westmercia.police.uk to report it. Alternatively, contact Crimestoppers online via crimestoppers-uk.org or by calling 0800 555 111.



Kidderminster Male Choir, previously performing outside the Railwayman's Arms at Bridgnorth station, will be singing at the VJ Day anniversary event. Picture by David Bissett.

Choir lends its voice to VJ Day milestone

KIDDERMINSTER Male Choir will join the town's Royal British Legion branch to commemorate the 80th anniversary of Victory over Japan Day (VJ Day).

At 6pm this evening (Friday, August 15), the choir will be performing in the Parish Church of St Mary's, Churchfields, to honour the important milestone of when Imperial Japan surrendered in the Second World War,

effectively marking the end of the conflict.

A service of remembrance and wreath laying will take place, followed by an hour-long performance by the choir. Attendees will hear a variety of hymns, such as 'For the Fallen' and 'Let There be Peace on Earth' and there will also be Elvis Presley's 'An American Trilogy' and even some Paul Simon classics.

A spokesman for the choir told the Standard: "We are honoured to support the Royal British Legion and to mark this momentous anniversary in our town.

"All are welcome to what will be a respectful commemoration and, through the power of song, both a tribute to all those who perished and hope for the future."

Service will mark 80th anniversary of end of war

TODAY (Friday, August 15) marks the 80th anniversary of the victory of Japan (VJ Day) and there will be a service at 10.45am this morning outside Bewdley Museum, followed by refreshments at St Anne's Church.

As a mark of respect, the

VJ Day flag has been flown at St Anne's War Memorial from Monday until today (Friday). The memorial has also been illuminated throughout the week.

While VE Day (Victory in Europe) marked the end of the war in Europe in May 1945,

many thousands of Armed Forces personnel were still engaged in fighting in the Far East.

VJ Day marks the day Japan surrendered, on August 15 1945, bringing the Second World War to a final close and will be marked nationally by a two-minute silence held at noon.



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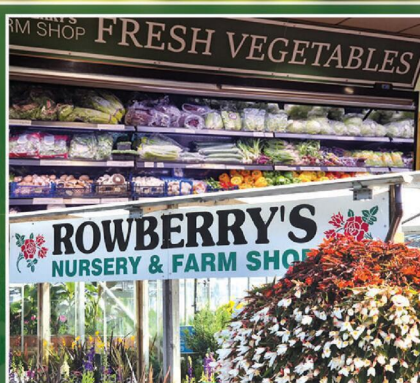
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Here is a selection of the boats which are hoping for votes. s

Aiming for the floating voters

RESIDENTS in Stourport and visitors to the town are being urged to vote for their favourite boat design in a competition which runs at Tontine Gardens.

The Emily Jordan Foundation charity created the boats for Stourport Forward and they were then bought by businesses, schools and community organisations.

Participants were given free rein artistic licence to design their vessel on the theme of 'what Stourport meant to them'.

People can now vote for their favourite design between now and September 23 either in person on open days, using a voting slip and ballot box, or online.

The competition began on Monday and the remaining open days are from 10am to 2pm on Tuesdays, August 19 and 26 and September 9, 16 and 23.

The boats can also be viewed

between 5pm and 10pm on Thursday, August 28, and from 10am to 4pm on Saturdays - September 6 and 13.

The event is one of several projects by Stourport Bramble which has received a three-year funding programme from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The scheme, which runs until 2027, is aimed at enabling Stourport Forward, operated by Stourport Forward, to organise lots of projects to engage and inform the local community with the town's heritage.

Gill Edwards, the project manager of of Navigate Stourport, said: "We have had some fantastic designs and already had hundreds of votes."

"Some of the designs are focused Stourport in general, while others have captured the upcoming carnival centenary."

"The Georgian Canal is what the town is built upon - we

are a canal town. Without that waterway, there would be no Stourport so engaging people with our history is very important."

There are 10 boats in total and the winning design will be announced after September 23 when all the votes have been counted.

The first prize being a free trip for up to 12 people on the Bramble working heritage boat.

The organisers are also planning, if there are more than 12, to provide an activity for as many people as were involved in the winning boat design project.

Visit facebook.com/FriendsBramble for more information, to see the designs and click through to vote online.

Alternatively, pay Tontine Gardens a visit during the open day times.



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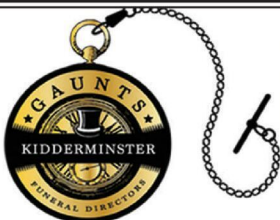
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Routine eye test at opticians helped save teen's sight

A ROUTINE eye test at Specsavers in Kidderminster ended up saving the sight of a teenager after a potentially serious neurological condition was spotted.

It began when 17-year-old Rebekah Chiad was taken for an eye test at the opticians in The Swan Centre after her mum Sarah noticed her daughter was struggling with headaches and increased fatigue.

Despite it being only 14 months since Rebekah's last routine examination, they were seen by optometrist Christopher Robinson, who has been testing the family's eyes for years.

Sarah said: "We always love visiting Chris, he's a safe pair of hands and is so thorough."

"He's also so empathetic and understanding which really helped given the results of Rebekah's eye test."

During the examination, Chris spotted signs which concerned him and urgently referred Rebekah for further investigation at Kidderminster Hospital.

Chris said: "Having seen Rebekah so recently, we were able to make a really clear comparison between

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the pictures we had of her optic nerve from her last eye test and how it looked on the day.

"I could see an almost haze around the optic nerve and it also appeared raised in the images – this combined with her headaches and changes to her vision were enough of a red flag for me to want her to get checked out."

Within 20 minutes of arriving at the hospital, Rebekah was referred to the same-day doctor at Worcester Hospital.

They immediately did a CT scan and while Rebekah and Sarah were sent home afterwards, they were told she likely had Idiopathic Intracranial Hypertension.

She had a lumbar puncture the next morning, which confirmed the diagnosis.

Idiopathic Intracranial Hypertension (IIH) is a condition where pressure inside the skull increases without an obvious cause.

It can lead to vision loss if left untreated, making early detection critical.

Sarah said: "Rebekah is so much better now."

"It was amazing how quickly the lumbar puncture got to work, the relief was almost instant."

"We were told she may have headaches or backache after the lumbar puncture, but luckily she hasn't had either."

"The fatigue has gone, she's back to college and her energy has returned which as her mum is so wonderful to see."

Sarah is now urging others to 'listen to their bodies and what their children are telling them'.

"When it's your own child, you really can't put a price on getting checked and being sure," she said. "Chris said he was just doing his job, but it meant so much more to us."

Chris added: "I'm so glad Rebekah came to see us when she did and that she feels more like her old self again."

"Being able to help people is an incredibly rewarding part of my job, spotting signs that can make a real difference to someone's life."

"Cases like this highlight the importance of getting your eyes checked if you notice any differ-



Eagle-eyed optometrist Christopher Robinson helped save Rebekah's sight after a routine check showed she had Idiopathic Intracranial Hypertension.

ences, even if you're not due for a test. While most of us experience headaches at times, in the vast majority of cases they are nothing to worry about. But it's always worth getting things checked if you're concerned."

Visit the store in Sainsbury's for more information or to book an eye or hearing test.

Alternatively, call 01562 754241 or visit [specsavers.co.uk/stores/kidderminstersainsburys](https://www.specsavers.co.uk/stores/kidderminstersainsburys) to book online.

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Car boot sale to help hall

THE NEXT Wolverley Memorial Hall car boot sale will take place tomorrow (Saturday, August 16).

Access to the field is from 7am. Refreshments will be available from the Wolverley Memorial Community Cafe, including hot food and hot and cold drinks.

The charge for car boots is £8 per regular sized car but larger vehicles will be charged more.

The car boot sale is run by volunteers of The Wolverley Memorial Charitable Trust. Donations, which would be appreciated by the organisers, will help with the hall's upkeep and ongoing refurbishment.

Visit facebook.com/wolverleymemorialcommunitycafe for more information and updates.



An architect's impression of how the front of the new-look Kidderminster Town Hall will look, and, right, the courtyard meeting space. Below, there will be improvements to the main auditorium. Pictures courtesy of Kidderminster Town Council. s

Town Hall revamp close to completion

THE MAJOR revamp of Kidderminster Town Hall is nearly complete and is due to be reopened in November.

The ongoing refurbishment of the Grade II listed building has been described by Kidderminster Council as a 'game changer' for the town.

The total cost of the work is \$11.5million, with the majority of cost covered by £8.5million from the

by Tristan Harris
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Government's Levelling Up Fund.

The rest of the significant transformation has been funded by the town council through its own reserves.

Among the many improvements will be brand new dressing rooms for performers, a reimagined cafe with flexible indoor and outdoor group

entertainment spaces, modernised toilets and improved accessibility throughout.

A new lift will also be installed and there will be enhanced disabled access, along with energy efficient upgrades throughout the building.

The historic organ pipes have also been restored, with that work supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Kidderminster Town Hall



manager Matt Smith said: "It's about the flexibility of the space to make it more commercially viable."

"Hopefully this will regenerate the town. We look forward to welcoming the community back to enjoy pantomimes, live comedy, music, and a wide range of community events in this iconic venue."

There will be several events leading up to the official civic reopening on November 7.

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£5m scheme to upgrade Vision Labs

OPTICIANS Vision Labs manufacturing centre in Kidderminster, which employs 350 people, is set to undergo a £5million expansion and upgrade after Specsavers confirmed the investment.

Specsavers says the cash injection in the company's supply chain operation reinforces its commitment to outstanding customer service and long-term sustainable growth.

The expansion will unlock additional capacity and mean the site's production increase incrementally from 140,000 to more than 200,000 lenses per week, once the centre is completed.

The centre produces prescription lenses for more than 900 Specsavers stores throughout the UK.

The major upgrade to invest £5million over two years will roll out new, state-of-the-art technology that will streamline the manufacturing process, making better use of space and materials. This will enable Specsavers to meet, and get ahead of, rising demand across its growing UK business.

The upgrade is also expected to result in a number of environmental benefits, including more efficient use of electricity, reduced water consumption and a reduction in the site's overall carbon footprint.

And staff at the site will benefit from improved working environments and updated amenities.



Specsavers' Vision Lab in Kidderminster is set to get a £5million expansion and upgrade. s

Lee Timbrell, director of European manufacturing and distribution operations at Specsavers, said: "The announcement is an important milestone for Vision Labs and marks an exciting new chapter for the site and its 350-strong team, who work tirelessly to provide the very best service to our stores throughout the UK. This investment is a commitment to them, to our customers and to the future of Specsavers in the UK."

Robert Elliot, director of busi-

ness engagement and policy, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce, said: "Specsavers has a long and proud history in Worcestershire, and we're delighted to see the business make such a substantial investment in its operations here in Kidderminster."

"This is a real vote of confidence in the local economy and workforce, and we look forward to continued close collaboration with Specsavers as they deliver this exciting next phase of growth."

Electric car firm to open showroom

A NEW BYD showroom is set to be launched in Kidderminster and another has already opened in Envile Street, Stourbridge.

BYD is a motor manufacturer which prides itself on providing the next generation of hybrid and electric vehicles (EVs).

It currently has a temporary showroom in Kidderminster on Worcester Road, next to where the permanent one will operate from in around six weeks' time.

At the temporary BYD showroom, drivers will still be able to check out BYD's range of electric and hybrids from sleek sedans to SUVs.

The centre in Stourbridge – and the one coming to Kidderminster – will be state-of-the-art showrooms but will be more than that. The company says they are hubs for green innovation where customers can explore the latest in EV and hybrid technology.

Every detail has been thoughtfully designed to reflect BYD's 'Build Your Dream' mission.

Managing director Jason Pickerill said: "The showroom is a reflection of BYD's commitment to sustainability, safety and smart innovation."

The showrooms are also hosting a Back to School event which begins today (Friday) and runs until August 25.

Step out for a new activity and give Nordic walking a go

A KIDDERMINSTER wellbeing charity is hosting free Nordic walking taster sessions at the town's Baxter College throughout this month.

Simply Limitless prides itself on supporting the community's help and hopes the

by Mia Sen-Gupta

sessions will help tackle loneliness and social isolation. After the session from 10am to 11am today (Friday) at the venue in Habberley Road, the next ones will be between 1pm and 2pm on Thursday,

August 21, and at the same time on August 28.

Nordic walking has many benefits. It burns more calories than regular walking; it is a great joint friendly full body workout; it improves posture, balance and core strength, boosts mood and

mental wellbeing and is social and fun.

The activity is suitable for all fitness levels, with no experience necessary and the poles are provided.

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One Railway plan given the go-ahead

THE ONE Railway project will push the SVR towards the next stage of its ambitious restructure plans after members of the Severn Valley Railway Company Limited (SVRCL) voted in support of the plan.

The heritage railway announced the proposal last December after the pandemic and increased costs had left it in financial strain.

Under the restructure plans, two of the three legally separate entities that make up the SVR would be combined to form a charitable community benefit society.

In June, the shareholders of Severn Valley Railway (Holdings)

by Mia Sen-Gupta

Plc, voted to support this conversion, with the process already under way.

And, on Saturday, at the company's annual general meeting (AGM) at Kidderminster Railway Museum, members voted overwhelmingly in favour of the amalgamation.

It was a legal requirement for at least 50 per cent of votes cast to be in support for the resolution being passed.

The chairman of the SVRCL, Diane Malyon, together with the rest of the board of directors, recommended members support the resolution.

She said: "I am extremely pleased

at the strength of support shown by our members for this second, important stage of the One Railway project and I would like to thank everyone for taking the time, either to attend the AGM or to vote online in advance.

"At each stage, members have examined the information presented to them, engaging with it and asking questions.

"Now they've given their mandate for the One Railway project to proceed, this is a terrific validation of the hard work that has been put into this project by a dedicated team of volunteers.

"The benefits and opportunity the One Railway project potentially brings to the SVR are hugely



Members of the Severn Valley Railway Company Limited voted through the 'One Railway' proposal. s

exciting - it will bring improved resilience, transparency and efficiency."

Charlie Wright, another director of the SVR Company Limited, played a leading role in steering the project.

He added: "We knew from the start that what we were proposing was a dramatic restructure of arrangements which were put in place many years ago for what

were, at the time, extremely good reasons. However, we're now operating in a very different commercial and regulatory environment, and it's crystal clear that we need a radical change.

"With the backing of our members, and the shareholders of the owning and operating company, we can bring about that change. Now the next stage of hard work begins."

The Severn Valley Railway is in the running for a Visit Worcestershire Award. Picture by Jack Boskett/Jack Boskett Media Ltd. s



SVR named as finalist in Visit awards

THE SEVERN Valley Railway has been announced as a finalist in the Visit Worcestershire awards.

Running through 16 miles of beautiful Worcestershire and Shropshire countryside, the steam and diesel trains offer a nostalgic journey back to the golden age of travel.

The regional tourism awards celebrate excellence in the industry and this year Visit Worcestershire has received

more applications than ever before.

Jonathan 'Gus' Dunster, the SVR's managing director, said: "The competition is very tough.

"We're absolutely delighted to have made it to the finals.

"We pride ourselves in putting our visitors first, whilst also keeping focus on the history, passion and commitment that have made us 'a leading standing-gauge

steam railway', according to VisitEngland."

The SVR has recently celebrated the return of trains through to Bridgnorth following an embankment collapse in January, as well as the 'Flying Scotsman' reopening the whole line.

Visit Worcestershire will announce the award winners at a special event which is scheduled for March next year.

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KEMP quartet set for marathon effort

KEMP Hospice has revealed the four amazing runners chosen to be the charity's first-ever to take part in the TSC London Marathon.

The charity has places for runners in the 2026 marathon, all sharing the commitment to raise vital funds for local people facing life-limiting illness and bereavement.

Will, who is running in memory of a relative who benefited from KEMP's palliative care services, is looking forward to 'finally being able to tick the marathon of his bucket list'.

Rachel has been documenting her running journey on TikTok and

by Mia Sen-Gupta

will be running in memory of her close friend. Rhys, who works for KEMP's charity partners, Harlow Timber, is passionate about hospice care and wants to give more to his community.

The fourth selected for the London Marathon is Sam, who is an avid runner who participates annually in KEMP's Santa Fun Run and is taking part in the upcoming Worcester City Run – all to raise funds in memory of his beloved grandmother.

The charity said, with personal targets of raising £2,500 each, any

donations to the runners would be greatly appreciated.

A spokesperson for KEMP Hospice said: "They're not just running a marathon - they're running for a cause that supports patients, families and carers who are living with life-limiting illness and bereavement across the Wyre Forest and Tenbury Wells. We hope you'll cheer them on, support their efforts and maybe even feel inspired to take on a challenge of your own."

Anyone wanting to boost the four's fundraising totals can visit justgiving.com/campaign/kemp-londonmarathon2026 for more details.



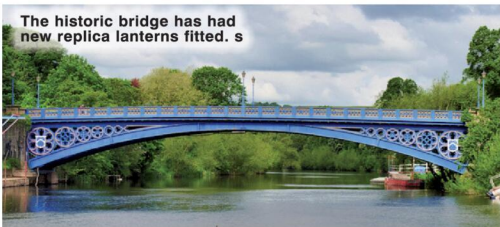
Rachel, Rhys, Will and Sam will be the first runners to line up in the 2026 TSC London Marathon to raise funds for the KEMP Hospice. s

Heritage-style lanterns recreated to light up landmark bridge

'BEAUTIFULLY'-CRAFTED heritage lanterns have been installed on Stourport Bridge to restore the historic charm of the iconic landmark.

Worcestershire County Council is overseeing the works, which include repainting existing lamp columns and installing 18 new lanterns – six on the bridge itself and six on either side along the approach roads.

The new lanterns replace the original Grade II listed fittings,



The historic bridge has had new replica lanterns fitted. s

which were removed in 2024 due to significant deterioration. Temporary lighting has been

in place since their removal, while the heritage-style replacements were carefully manufactured.

Coun Karl Perks, county council Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways and Transport, said: "Stourport Bridge is one of the district's most cherished structures.

"These new lanterns honour that legacy while bringing our lighting standards up to date.

"This is a great example of how we can protect our heritage and meet modern-day expectations.

"We're grateful to residents for their patience – it will be worth it."

Works began on Monday at the Astley end of the bridge and has progressed towards Stourport. Installation was carried out under temporary traffic lights, starting with three-way lights for two days.

That then switched to two-way

lights as work moved along the bridge, with the entire operation expected to take a week to complete.

The new lanterns have been produced by the original manufacturer to ensure authenticity and meticulous attention to detail.

They incorporate modern LED optics for improved energy efficiency, frosted rear panels to meet local ecology guidelines, and reinforced spigots (the component connecting the lantern to the column) for enhanced durability.

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LEFT - A Stourport crew on the water in glorious conditions.



RIGHT - Bewdley's under-17 quad winners, from left to right: George Garnier, Darcey Bethell, Matt Stendall and Daniel Askey. Picture courtesy of Bewdley Rowing Club.



A large crowd gathered to watch the action.

An oar-some day

SCULLERS of all ages descended upon Stourport Boat Club to take part in the 149th edition of the club's annual regatta.

The competition, which first took place in 1876, attracted a number of local clubs along with scullers from London and Truro among others.

A huge number of rowers took to the water across two days of action.

Home club Stourport racked up 15 wins while neighbours Bewdley claimed eight victories.

Stourport Boat Club cap-

tain, Stewart Barnett, said: "It was another brilliant regatta with loads of positive comments from our visitors on the friendly atmosphere and great organisation."

"Everyone chipped in and everything ran smoothly. All of us at the club feel proud to have helped run a highly successful regatta. It could be a record year."

"Thank you to everyone from me and the whole committee. I hope everyone enjoyed it whether racing or helping out."

"Amazingly we also managed another 15 wins - our

best win tally of the season.

"There were some fantastic performances all round and once again it was great to see the whole of the club represented from the development squad, the junior squad and all the seniors and masters."

The pick of Stourport's wins saw the club's junior squads triumph in the women's eight race and the women's 2x event.

And Bewdley's junior under-17 quad claimed their first-ever race win at the regatta in a boat donated to them by a recently retired crew.

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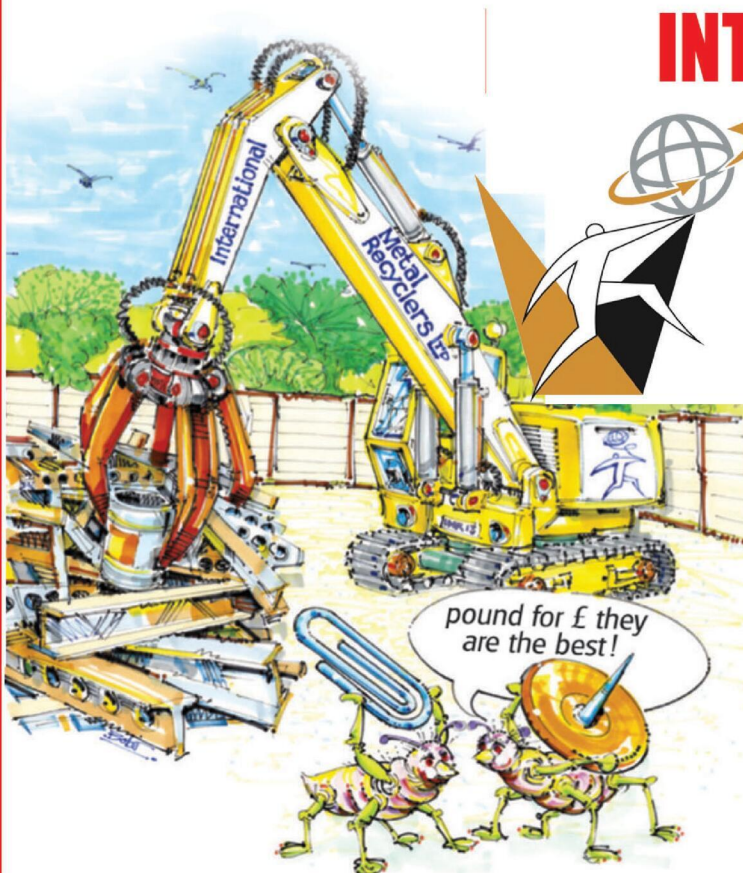
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In fine voice for sunset singing

A **POPULAR** event which combines music and trains returns to the Severn Valley Railway this weekend after the success of last year's outing.

'Singin' on the Train', which takes place tomorrow (Saturday) and Sunday, August 17, sees visitors board charming steam locomotives between Kidderminster and Bridgnorth.

As they travel along the line, they can step off at various stations along the way to enjoy the choir performances.

During sunset, an evening choir concert will bring all seven featured choirs together for a performance underneath the station's glass roof.

Food and drinks will also be available throughout from the award-winning King and Castle pub not far from the platform.

Lewis Maddox, the SVR's visitor engagement manager, said: "Throughout the day, stations along the route will come alive with music, creating a festival atmosphere that celebrates the best of choral tradition."

"You might also want to



stop off at The Engine House at Highley, where real ales and hearty pub fare will be served in a relaxed setting overlooking the railway.

"Whether you're a music lover, a railway enthusiast, or simply looking for a unique day out, Singin' on the Train promises a joyful celebration of heritage and harmony."

All-day travel is available with a Freedom of the Line ticket, though Short Journey tickets are also available for

purchase either in advance or on the day, with standard fares applying.

Tickets for the evening concert are booked separately.

Visit: svr.co.uk for more information and ticket booking.

A male voice choir in full song outside the Railwayman's Arms at Bridgnorth station.

Picture by David Bissett.



This US Army Ambulance was one of the vehicles on display. Pictures by Neil Gordon Media. s

Visitors stepped back in time at SVR

HUNDREDS of people immersed themselves in classic cars and vintage vehicles at the Severn Valley Railway's latest event.

The much-loved Vintage Transport Extravaganza took place on Saturday and Sunday just weeks after the railway proudly reopened its full 16.5-mile route from Kidderminster to Bridgnorth.

At the event, billed as one of the most exciting and nostalgic events of the summer holidays, enabled visitors to travel behind beautifully restored steam and diesel locomotives.

They could hop off at stations along the line to explore a stunning collection of vintage vehicles.

The line-up boasted timeless motorcars and motorcycles, gleaming buses, tractors, lorries and more.

Lewis Maddox, the SVR's visitor engagement manager, said "The Vintage Transport Extravaganza is one of our popular annual events."

"This year included a variety of classic vehicles from all eras, on display at our stations along the line, and vintage bus rides from Bridgnorth Station for the first time."

"Over the two days the event was enjoyed by hundreds of people admiring and enjoying seeing vintage classics in the setting of a heritage railway, providing a great nostalgic atmosphere."



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COUSINS FURNITURE



Robert (far left) on holiday with his Grandfather Bill Cole and other relatives.



Cole of Bilston delivery truck circa 1970

Cousins Furniture Celebrates 40 Years: The Future is Bright

This year marks 40 years of Cousins Furniture furnishing homes across the Midlands, Shropshire, and beyond. Join us in-store to celebrate our heritage, reflect on the past, and look forward to a bright future.

A Century of Roots

Cousins opened in 1985, but its story began in 1921 when Bill Cole founded 'Coles of Bilston,' a reclamation yard turned thriving business—complete with a private zoo! On August 17, 1985, cousins Robert and Edward Shotton and William Cole opened the first Cousins store in Tyseley, Birmingham, quickly becoming a destination for families.

A Family Business

Cousins grew with the opening of a Dudley store in 1996. Today, it is the Midlands' largest family-run furniture retailer, still led by Chairman Robert Shotton and his son John, who personally oversee quality and value.



Robert & Edward Shotton along with Faith Brown at the opening of Tyseley store in 1985.



Rose Shotton -Robert & Edward's mother- cuts the ribbon at the opening of the Dudley store in 1996.

Expansion & Innovation

In 2020, Cousins acquired former Alan Ward stores in Shrewsbury and Newcastle-under-Lyme, fulfilling 1,000+ outstanding orders and expanding reach. Distribution centres in Oldbury and Shrewsbury now serve the Midlands and Wales with fast delivery.

Trusted for 40 Years

Partnering with leading British brands like Parker Knoll, G Plan, Ercol, ViSpring, and Hypnos, over 60% of Cousins' customers are repeat buyers or referrals—proof of lasting quality and service.

Always Moving Forward

Cousins adapts to evolving lifestyles with bespoke made-to-order ranges, a growing online store, and in-store features like the Deja Brew café (Shrewsbury), accessories, and flooring—everything to furnish a home under one roof.



After the refurbishment of Tyseley store in 1997.



Cousins 38th Anniversary - Shotton family.

A Bright Future

Recent refurbishments include a new Dudley entrance and ongoing upgrades in Shrewsbury and Tyseley. "People need to be inspired when shopping," says Chairman Robert Shotton.

Commitment to Sustainability

Cousins recycles 1,000+ beds, uses low-emission vans, has installed solar panels, provides EV chargers, and offers FSC-certified reclaimed furniture—furnishing homes responsibly for the future.

Visit Cousins in Birmingham, Dudley, Newcastle-under-Lyme, or Shrewsbury to celebrate 40 years and create a home you'll love.



New modern entrance at Dudley store completed 2024.

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Tyseley Opening with Faith Brown 1985



Dudley Opening with Rose Shotton cutting the ribbon along with Jack & Vera Duckworth - 1996



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Happy to follow a club where there are still so many memories to be made

More memories will be made at Aggborough during this season which is now under way. Picture courtesy of Kidderminster Harriers FC. s

Chris Oldnall has been following his home-town football club Kidderminster Harriers since the early 1960s and he has also been chronicling their fluctuating fortunes for around 60 years.

Here, Chris brings us his first taste of nostalgia on the Harriers in our new monthly feature 'Harriers Heritage'.

FIFTY years ago David Beckham was born and football crazy Rod Stewart topped the charts with his classic hit single 'Sailing'.

And I could pop down the pub and buy a pint of beer for around 20p!

But that's not all – I also had the chance to boost Kidderminster Harriers' funds by purchasing their first ever Year Book, which I did loyally having been following the Harriers since the beginning of the previous decade.

In 1975 the club produced an informative publication in a bid to 'bring itself to the public of

Kidderminster through something tangible and useful'.

And this week I unearthed my well preserved copy of this book which certainly brings back a lot of fond football memories from the 1970s.

The book kicks off with an introduction from the Aggborough-based club's then programme editor Jeff Baker.

Life-long supporter Baker wrote: "Aggborough has, for many inhabitants of this famous town, been the place to spend their Saturday afternoons, the place where they can shout praise and abuse (within reason) at the players and officials and then go home to their tea, happy or disconsolate according to the result."

Half a century on and nothing much seems to have changed as Harriers again do battle in another National League North campaign after miss-



ing out on promotion last season following a disappointing 2-1 play-off semi-final defeat at home to Chester.

When the Year Book was published the club were performing in the Southern League Division One North under the guidance of player-manager Stan Jones and his assistant Ron Whitehouse.

Opposition teams we then did battle with included Redditch United, Cheltenham Town, Bedworth United, Merthyr Tydfil, AP Leamington, Banbury United, Bromsgrove Rovers, Barry Town, Stevenage Athletic, Bury Town, Wellingborough, King's Lynn, Dunstable and Worcester City.

Aggborough chair at the time was Bill Greaves who penned a heartfelt

foreword in the book which highlighted his beloved club's precarious financial position.

He wrote: "Unfortunately the general decline in public support for professional football, coupled with the problems created by national inflation, has hit the finances of the football club severely and it is only by organising fund raising projects such as this publication that we can hope to continue the service to which we are all so dedicated."

"The existence of a successful professional football club plays an important part in the presentation of the town's image to which it is attached, and there can also be a number of by-products from which local industries and trades people may benefit."

Several companies and businesses in the area responded to the club's rallying call for support by advertising in the book.

They included Leswell Building Supplies Ltd., Wright's Sports Shop, Worcestershire Gunsmiths, Comberton Garage Ltd, Vernon Electric Ltd, Austin Bros (Kidderminster) Ltd, GT Cheshire and Sons Limited, Kidderminster Glass Co, Greenhill Service Station, Edwards Bros, Brintons Carpets, H Ingram and Son, Harrison's Service Station and the Sun and Slipper Inn.

But, although the world of football has changed in many and varied ways, Harriers continue sailing along making lifetime memories – and hopefully talent spotting budding Beckhams of the future.

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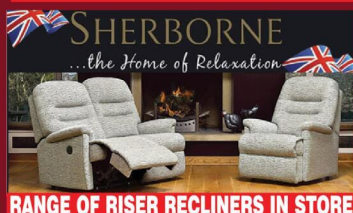
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Battling to save parts of town's hotel after devastating blaze

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

'KEY ELEMENTS of the original former Raven Hotel can be saved' - that was the view of Historic England which visited the site on Wednesday after the devastating fire which destroyed the building.

The blaze ripped through the centuries-old

structure on Sunday with fire crews spending hours overnight and into the next morning to extinguish the blaze.

Two teenage girls, aged 13 and 14, were arrested on suspicion of arson and have since been released on bail.

On Wednesday, Wychavon District Council met at the site with representatives from Historic England, structural engineers, building surveyors, Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service and West Mercia Police. A representative for the former hotel also attended.

Wychavon has also commissioned its own structural engineer who is preparing a detailed report due to be completed shortly.

The immediate priority is to make the site safe which will involve fencing off the area to protect the public and the controlled demolition of those parts of the hotel that pose a safety risk. This will safeguard the historic elements which remain.

Some residents have asked why the council had not made a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) for the site.

In response, the authority said CPOs could only be used as a last resort, requiring a robust legal case which could take up to two years to complete.

In this instance, the owner had planning permission granted three years ago and had publicly confirmed its intention to bring the site forward for development, including at the South Worcestershire Development Plan Examination earlier this year. This meant the legal threshold for a CPO was not met.

The building has always remained in private ownership and responsibility for its maintenance and security lies with the owner.

Wychavon has monitored the Grade II listed building and issued the owner with a court order in November under Section 77 of the Building Act 1984 to make the site safe.

Work that was ordered to be done was due to be completed this month and the council will still recoup the cost of this work from the owner.

Wychavon District Council leader, Coun Richard Morris, said the fire had been a 'deeply emotional moment' for the community.

"This building is woven into Droitwich's history, and I know how many treasured memories are tied to it.

"To see it in this state is devastating, and I completely understand the sadness and frustration people are feeling - I feel it too."

He added the owner had committed to redeveloping the site and constantly reassured that commitment.

"Our focus now is on protecting what can be saved, working hand-in-hand with the owners, Historic England, heritage bodies and our community to make sure the Raven's story continues in some form for future generations.

"I'm grateful to everyone who has been working tirelessly since the fire - your efforts mean a great deal to our town."

As the structural and conservation assessments are finalised, Wychavon said it would continue to play an active role in discussions about the site's future.

Firefighters worked through the night and into the morning to extinguish the blaze. Drone footage by @AKVISUALS. s
Picture by Paul Harley . s



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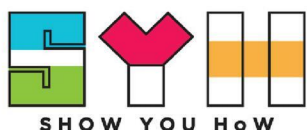
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From Results to Next Steps: Drop into HoW College's GCSE Advice Cafes!

Heart of Worcestershire College (HoW College) are opening the doors this August for their informative GCSE Advice Cafes!

Taking place across the Worcester, Redditch and Bromsgrove campuses on the 21st, 22nd and 26th August, these drop-in events are perfect for those who have taken their GCSEs this summer and are wondering what comes next.

Whether you're considering an apprenticeship, T Level or vocational course, HoW College's academic and business support staff will be on hand on all three days to talk through your results, explore options, help you find the best course and offer expert advice and guidance on your next steps.

Whilst you're there you can also take a look round the College's state-of-the-art facilities and get a feel for where your next chapter could begin.

When: Thursday 21st August - 10am - 8pm

Friday 22nd August - 10am - 1pm

Tuesday 26th August - 10am - 1pm

Where: Redditch, Bromsgrove, Worcester campuses

Who: Anyone who has taken their GCSEs this summer

HoW College is the largest further education college in Worcestershire, offering a wide range of post-16 options from apprenticeships and T Levels to vocational courses. With courses in everything from art and design, hair and beauty and computing to public services, travel and tourism, sport and more, HoW College offers pathways for every career goal.



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The fine art of winning

VISITORS to this year's Worcestershire Open Studios event are in with a chance of winning a \$250 voucher to spend on an artist of their choice.

Those who make a trip to one of the 167 studio spaces hosted by artists for the event can complete a short visitor feedback survey to be entered into the prize draw.

"We hope that this year's event will attract a great turn out," said event organiser and featuring artist, Gemma Griffiths.

"It's a fantastic free opportunity not only to support the county's growing artistic community but also to visit some truly lovely rural locations and to see the inside of some fascinating buildings ranging from a famous Worcester townhouse, once visited by Elgar, through to a charming converted pigsty and everything in between."

"We know wherever visitors choose to go that a warm welcome, some great art and a truly inspiring creative experience awaits them."

Worcestershire Open Studios is returning for its 10th anniversary with August Art Week – a showcase of artists and makers across the county who will open their creative spaces for visitors completely free.

The art week, scheduled for August 16 to 25, will feature a diverse range of artists and makers with painters, printers, sculptors, ceramists, jewellers, calligraphers and lots of other disciplines represented.

Visit www.worcestershireopensstudios.org/ for more information.

Police events offer range of advice against crime

WORKING in partnership to drive down emissions, Police and Crime Commissioner John Campion and West Mercia Police are aiming to be a Net Zero police force before 2050.

Events took place at police HQ and Redditch Police Station last week for National Cycle to Work Day, and focused on supporting police officers and police staff to commute to work in an environmentally friendly way.

It included a range of stalls which gave them tips on how to cycle safely and how to deter theft through technology like SmartWater, as well as an opportunity to get behind the wheel of electric cars.

These events are just one part of the ongoing work taking place to support behaviour change to ensure all parts of the organisation, from the workforce to the estate, do all they can to reduce the environmental footprint of policing to benefit local communities and the planet.

PCC John Campion said: "I know the public expects a police force that rises to the challenges of the day, and there are few more pressing than environmental sustainability."

"That's why, as set out in my police and crime plan, I am focused on ensuring policing in West Mercia is playing its part and that includes supporting and



Events included a range of stalls which gave them tips on how to cycle safely. s

encouraging our workforce to take up greener methods of transport.

"This is of course only one part, and that's why we continue to make progress to transition our fleet to electric, reduce emissions through our estate, and cut waste."

Superintendent Stuart Bill, West Mercia Police Force Operations,

said: "All road users have a right to feel safe on the roads and recent changes in the

Highway Code now place greater responsibility on motorists to ensure they are doing all they can to keep cyclists safe."

"Using a bike is not only more sustainable and good for the environment, it's also an effective way

to improve your general health and well-being.

"Cycle to Work Day has been a fantastic opportunity to showcase the facilities, technology, and equipment available to support the workforce in commuting to work in a healthier, safer, and more sustainable way, be that using a bike or electric vehicle."



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Firms in line to land awards

OVER 50 businesses are set to battle it out to be crowned best in class at this year's Visit Worcestershire Tourism Awards.

52 of Worcestershire's leading tourism businesses have been shortlisted for the annual Tourism Awards, which recognise the dedication, creativity, and exceptional visitor experiences offered in Worcestershire.

All shortlisted business now progress to the next stage of judging, which includes site visits by independent industry experts.

As well as competing for local recognition, winners could go on to represent Worcestershire on the national stage at the VisitEngland Awards for Excellence.

Last year's local winners included Plum Tree Glamping, The King's Arms, and Stanbrook Abbey Hotel. Abbots Grange Manor House and Andrew Hurley from Avoncroft Museum achieved further success, receiving national recognition at the VisitEngland Awards following their regional wins.

Councillor Alan Amos, responsible for business and skills at Worcestershire County Council, said: "Tourism in Worcestershire is thriving."

"These awards recognise the businesses that go above and beyond to create exceptional visitor experiences, and I am delighted to see so many showcasing the very best our county has to offer."

The upcoming event will mark the fifth annual ceremony, and this year, Acorns Children's Hospice has been named as the official charity partner.

Winners will be announced at a glittering black-tie awards ceremony on Friday, March 20 2026, at the Three Counties Showground in Malvern.

Visit visitworcestershire.org/tourism-awards/ for more information.

Working with businesses to tackle the skills gap

BUSINESSES across Worcestershire are being urged to take advantage of Skills Bootcamps - flexible training programmes designed to upskill staff, fill skills gaps, and support long-term growth.

Funded by the Department for Education and managed locally by Worcestershire County Council, Skills Bootcamps are part of the national Skills for Life scheme and play a key role in the Talent and Skills support offer for employers, co-promoted through the Worcestershire Growth Hub.

Skills Bootcamps offer free or heavily subsidised training tailored to employer needs across priority sectors such as construction, digital, engineering, and health and social care. These programmes offer a practical route to developing your workforce - whether to overcome recruitment challenges or retain talent through upskilling.

Coun Alan Amos, Worcestershire County Council cabinet member with responsibility for business and skills, said: "Any business serious about staying competitive should be using Skills Bootcamps."

"These courses aren't tokenism, they're not flat-pack, off-the-shelf, one-size fits all - they are specific, targeted, employer-led training programmes that deliver real results."



Abigail Jones, Skills Bootcamps Manager at Worcestershire County Council with one of the new Skills Bootcamps providers, RMF Training. s

"If we want Worcestershire to grow stronger economically, something I am passionate about, then we must ensure our local workforce has the practical skills businesses actually need."

"Skills Bootcamps do exactly that - they give employers the edge while helping people step up into better jobs. It's a win-win for growth, productivity, and long-

term economic success."

Abigail Jones, Skills Bootcamps manager at Worcestershire County Council, added: "It's great news to welcome even more training providers into the Skills Bootcamps 'family', it means we can offer more training to individuals and to Worcestershire businesses."

"What makes Skills Bootcamps so effective is the way they're

built in direct response to employer demand."

"We work closely with providers and businesses to ensure every course is practical, purposeful, and designed to have an immediate impact in the workplace."

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Visitors enjoy a day out at Witley Court in Worcestershire.

Advice is on offer

VISIT Worcestershire, in partnership with Worcestershire County Council, has launched a new round of specialist one to one business consultancy designed specifically for the tourism sector.

This latest phase of free business support builds on the success of previous programmes, which have helped 97 small to medium-sized tourism businesses across the county over the past four years.

Tourism businesses are now invited to get expert hands-on support on key areas such as team development, marketing, and business growth.

Coun Alan Amos, cabinet member with responsibility for business and skills at Worcestershire County Council, said: "Tourism plays a vital role in Worcestershire's economy, supporting jobs, local pride, and year-round activity. Giving businesses the support they need to improve and adapt is key to long-term success."

"That's exactly what this programme delivers – practical steps that strengthen our visitor economy and our wider growth ambitions."

Honeybourne Pottery, a hands-on clay workshop and popular visitor experience, is among the businesses that benefited from the previous programme.

Alan Cusack, Owner of Honeybourne Pottery said: "The support from Visit Worcestershire has been fantastic and has played a key role in helping us refine areas of our business strategy and future plans."

"The insights and networking opportunities have provided us with practical strategies to grow and connect with more visitors. We'd absolutely recommend the programme to other local businesses looking to develop and thrive."

Visit visitworcestershire.org/trade/tourism-consultancy for more information.

Sports groups can tap into support

A PROGRAMME of free support efforts is being made available to sports clubs and organisations across Worcestershire.

Active Herefordshire and Worcestershire's Sport Welfare offer ensures any club in need of guidance when it comes to the welfare and safety of its members is available.

This support comes as part of the wider Sport Welfare Network, which has been launched across all 43 Active Partnerships in England.

As part of the offer, clubs and organisations in the sport and physical activity sector can access appropriate advice and guidance, local training opportunities and events, signposting to relevant assets and access to networks where best practice is shared.

Emily Griffiths, Sport Welfare Lead at Active Herefordshire and Worcestershire, said: "We want clubs and organisations delivering sports and physical activity to children, young people and adults across the county know that we are here for them."

"Things such as general advice, support with policy and procedure, creating of resources and signposting to proper channels and training opportunities are all things we can support with. We are incredibly enthusiastic about the brilliant work in the sector that takes place across the counties, and this support is to help ensure that good work can continue in the best possible way."



Sport Welfare lead, Emily Griffiths, talking to athletes at the British Wheelchair Basketball Junior Championships in Worcester.

Stephen Brewster, Chief Executive Officer at Active Herefordshire and Worcestershire, said: "We are proud of the support that we can offer through our Sport Welfare offer. Welfare and safeguarding are instrumental to the running of any successful group or organisation, and specialist advice is available to all operating in this space across

both counties.

"We encourage clubs, governing bodies and organisations operating throughout the two counties to utilise the support."

After the Whyte Review in 2022, Sport England and UK Sport committed to a number of actions in UK Sport and Sport England's Responses to the Whyte Report including the embedding of the Sport Welfare Network.

Active Herefordshire and Worcestershire also oversees a variety of initiatives across the two counties including the School Games, This Girl Can and more.

Visit www.activehw.co.uk/sport-welfare or email activehw@worc.ac.uk for more information.

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At the Kidderminster Standard, we believe there's no better place to live, work, and explore than right here in Kidderminster — and this week, we're celebrating everything that makes our town a true gem of the West Midlands.

From world-famous industry roots to bustling shops, green spaces, exciting attractions, and community spirit, we're proud to launch our special feature: Kidderminster Standard Recommends — your guide to why Kidderminster is such a fantastic

place to be. So please support the advertisers who are supporting us on these pages who love Kidderminster as much as we do.

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Kidderminster's name echoes through the centuries, but it was during the Industrial Revolution that our town truly made its global mark. As the beating heart of the carpet manufacturing industry, Kidderminster supplied textiles to homes, hotels, and institutions across the world. That legacy is still celebrated today at the Museum of Carpet, a one-of-a-kind attraction where visitors can watch weaving demonstrations, explore industry artefacts, and hear personal stories from former workers.



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Standard KIDDERMINSTER recommends ✓

Kidderminster is a vibrant town in Worcestershire, England, offering a rich tapestry of attractions that cater to history enthusiasts, nature lovers, and families alike. We asked the team at the Kidderminster Standard to share some of their favourite things to see and do around Kidderminster and here are their suggestions:

1. Severn Valley Railway

Step back in time aboard the Severn Valley Railway, a heritage steam railway that runs between Kidderminster and Bridgnorth. Enjoy a scenic 16-mile journey through the picturesque Severn Valley, complete with beautifully restored carriages and stations.

2. West Midlands Safari Park

Experience an exciting day out at the West Midlands Safari Park, home to a wide array of exotic animals, including lions, elephants, and rhinos. The park also features an adventure theme park with rides suitable for all ages.

3. Museum of Carpet

Discover Kidderminster's rich industrial heritage at the Museum of Carpet. Explore the history of carpet manufacturing through interactive exhibits, working looms, and fascinating displays.

4. Harvington Hall

Visit Harvington Hall, a moated Elizabethan manor house renowned for its numerous priest hides. Explore the beautifully preserved interiors and learn about the hall's intriguing history.

5. Wyre Forest National Nature Reserve

Embrace the great outdoors in the Wyre Forest, one of Britain's largest ancient woodlands. Enjoy

walking and cycling trails, wildlife spotting, and the Go Ape treetop adventure course.

6. Bodenham Arboretum

Stroll through the stunning landscapes of Bodenham Arboretum, featuring over 3,000 tree species, tranquil lakes, and seasonal floral displays. It's a perfect spot for nature enthusiasts and photographers.

7. Drakelow Tunnels

Explore the mysterious Drakelow Tunnels, a vast underground complex with a rich history dating back to World War II. Guided tours offer insights into its past as a shadow factory and Cold War bunker.

8. Brinton Park

Relax in Brinton Park, a beautifully maintained public park featuring open green spaces, a children's play area, and seasonal floral displays. It's an ideal spot for picnics and leisurely walks.

9. Kidderminster Town Hall

Attend a concert or event at the historic Kidderminster Town Hall, a prominent venue hosting a variety of performances, exhibitions, and community gatherings throughout the year.

10. Habberley Trail

Embark on an adventure at Habberley Trail, an outdoor attraction offering scenic trails, interactive activities, and challenges suitable for families and groups seeking fun and exploration.

Kidderminster offers a delightful mix of historical sites, natural beauty, and family-friendly attractions. Whether you're a local resident or a visitor, there's always something new and exciting to discover in this charming town.

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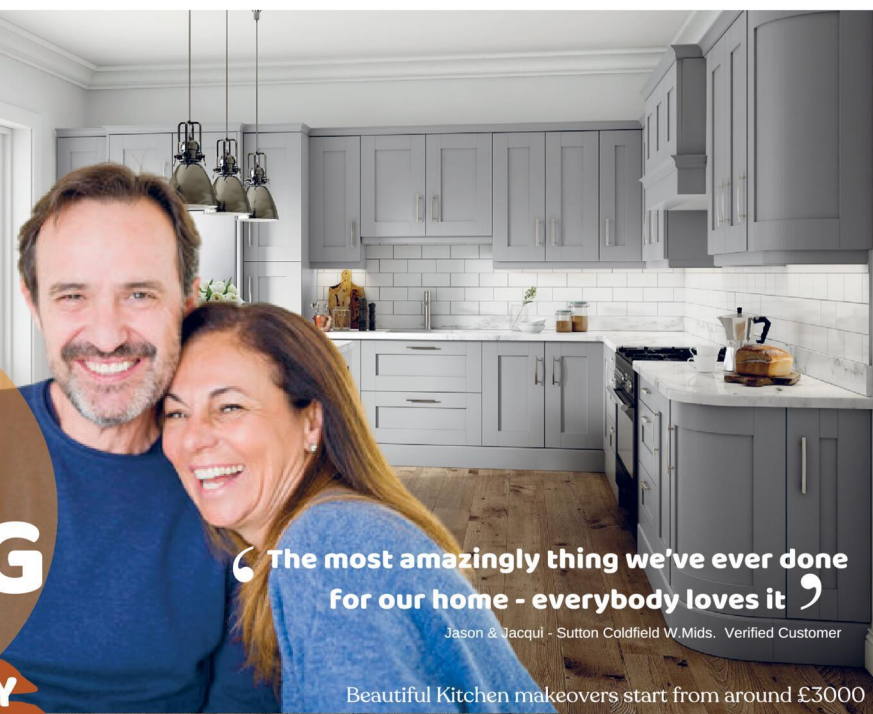
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Gardening

Still time to get things growing

NATIONAL Allotment Week is here, with August being a great time for sowing and planting a wide variety of crops that will provide a fresh, nutrient-packed harvest well into the colder months and early next year.

The tjeam at British Garden Centres has put together this guide to offer the perfect inspiration to plan and plant now for a kitchen garden that satisfies through late autumn and winter.

Many gardeners think the growing season ends with summer, but the truth is the hopefully warmer August days offer a prime opportunity to grow right through to the new year. When soil temperatures remain warm and daylight lingers, the cool weather crops flourish. By sowing or planting now, you can fill gaps where summer crops have finished and prepare your plot to burst more leaves, root vegetables, and pods as the weather cools.

What you can sow in August

With the theme of this year's week being Allotments and Wellbeing, we've put together our top picks for nutritious but tasty crops you can grow for a healthier you.

Radishes are one of the quickest and easiest crops to sow during late summer. They thrive in well drained, fertile soil and produce

crisp, mildly peppery roots in just a few weeks. Radishes fit perfectly into tight spaces and mature rapidly, making them ideal for filling garden gaps, container planting and providing fresh crunch for autumn salads and snacks.

Spinach, especially hardy varieties like 'Superhero,' is another excellent choice to plant now. This leafy green is particularly resilient; it tolerates cooler temperatures and resists bolting, even when the weather turns chilly. Spinach is a great crop to grow for wellbeing as it provides a sustained supply of nutritious greens to brighten winter meals.

Swiss chard, including varieties such as 'Apollo' and 'Celebration,' add splashes of colour to your autumn garden with its bright stems. These leafy vegetables grow well in cooler conditions and hold their flavour even after frost. Their leaves are rich in vitamins, making them a welcome addition to any winter vegetable patch.

Mustard greens and rocket offer more punchy, peppery flavours, bringing variety to your cold season greens after being sown this August. Both crops respond well to late summer sowing and can be harvested repeatedly through cut-and-come-again methods, ensuring



continuous fresh leaves for salads, sandwiches, and stir-fries.

For those wanting to grow healthy root vegetables, turnips can be sown in fertile soil this Allotment Week for an excellent winter crop. Besides the roots themselves, which can be cooked and used in your dishes, the tender leaves are also edible and nutritious. Carrots are another staple, and varieties such as 'Autumn King 2' are perfect for late sowing and will develop sweet, dense roots over the coming months.

Broad beans are not just a spring crop; they have some autumn varieties that can be sown now to establish robust plants for an early harvest next season. Varieties like 'The Sutton' and 'Aquadale Claudia' are particularly suited to later sowings and show resilience to colder soil and weather.

Winter lettuces, such as 'Winter Gem' and 'Valdor,' can be sown this Allotment Week and will provide crisp, tender leaves as temperatures drop. Sowing these now, especially under protection like cloches or

fleece, ensures a luscious supply of salad through the colder months.

Autumn onions and shallots can be started now to set a strong foundation for next season's bulbs, while containers or bags filled with seed potatoes like 'Charlotte' or 'Maris Peer' can be moved indoors before the frost for a festive Christmas harvest.

And don't forget garlic – varieties like 'Provence Wight, Carcassonne' & 'Provence' thrive when planted now and into autumn, establishing strong roots through the colder months for an early summer harvest.

Preparing your plot for National Allotment Week

To give your vegetables the best possible start, enrich your beds with plenty of compost or organic matter, ensuring good drainage and a weed free seedbed. Spacing is important as overcrowding weakens plants and increases disease risk. Thin seedlings thoughtfully to encourage strong root and leaf development. Using protective coverings such as horticultural fleece, cloches, or netting will help shelter tender crops from early frosts, birds, slugs, and other pests. Regular watering during establishment is essential, but avoid heavy, soggy soil, which may encourage rot.

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How to be upfront when it comes to choosing who gets to sit where

SUMMER road trips are here, and so are the arguments.

New research has revealed the true scale of Britain's 'Shotgun' battle - and finally settled the official rules for that coveted front passenger seat.

Competition for the front passenger seat, often praised as the best spot in the car with its extra leg room and the opportunity to play DJ, can be tense.

A survey of 2,000 UK adults, commissioned by temporary car insurance provider Tempcover, found that one in four confess that disagreements over Shotgun rules have led to arguments on road trips.

Siblings are the most common opposition at the heart of this conflict. More shockingly, three in 10 have even had disputes with their own children over the front seat.

In a bid to help keep Britain's roads drama-free this summer, Tempcover has put the debate to rest, launching the Official Rules of Shotgun, backed by the research.

1. Anyone with a physical need overrules 'shotgun' (height, weight, bad back etc)
2. The driver has final say and can overrule 'shotgun'
3. The first person to call 'shotgun' gets the front seat

4. If two people call it at the same time, it's up to the driver to decide

5. 'Shotgun' only lasts for one leg of the journey. It starts again for the return trip

6. 'Shotgun' is final - once called, you can't recall it

7. The 'shotgun' winner must be ready to leave at the driver's preferred time, otherwise 'shotgun' rights are withdrawn

8. You must be able to see the car to call 'shotgun'

9. 'Shotgun' resets once people get out of the car (e.g. if you stop at a service station and then continue the journey)

10. Calling 'shotgun' more than a certain time before a journey makes it invalid e.g. more than 24 hours before

According to the research, the highest priority for the front passenger seat should go to anyone with a physical need, such as being pregnant, tall or having a bad back.

The passenger with the longest legs was surprisingly named as one of the most worthy claimants



for trumping the Shotgun rules, alongside the oldest person on the journey.

Other rules to emerge from the study on why someone should bag the front seat included anyone who calls Shotgun first bags the front seat, that Shotgun only lasts for one leg of the journey, and that you must be in view of the car when you make your claim.

It all comes down to the driver for some, with 12 per cent believing the

driver should be the ultimate tie-breaker, whilst one in 20 say a quiz question should decide the winner.

To weigh in on the Shotgun debate, Tempcover has partnered with JB Gill, member of British boyband JLS, as he recalls his days on the road with the band ahead of their upcoming tour.

JB, who is encouraging Brits to use the official Shotgun rules to avoid any potential car squabbles, said: "Calling shotgun before a

car journey has sparked friendly competition over who gets to ride in the highly prized front seat for generations!

"Ever since I first started driving, the front seat was always the one that every passenger wanted and as you can imagine, it's led to many heated debates.

"Every driver has their own shotgun rules, so having official rules thanks to Tempcover means there's now a neutral way to make the decision and - hopefully - help the journey start smoothly from the off."

Marc Pell, Managing Director at Tempcover, which offers temporary car insurance for those borrowing a bigger car and taking turns behind the wheel, added: "With summer here, more people are taking to the road with friends and family."

"We asked people to share their ultimate shotgun wisdom to keep the rules simple and the process fair - helping car journeys start with fewer disputes over who gets the coveted front passenger seat with its better view and extra legroom.

"And if you share the driving, you can all take it in turns to ride shotgun too."



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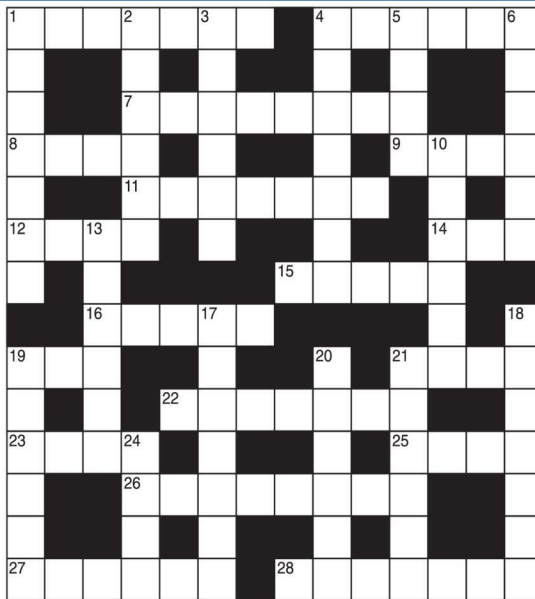
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GENERAL KNOWLEDGE CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 1 Small balls of glass, clay, etc., also known as taws (7)
4 Seaport of France whose "Burghers" were immortalised by Rodin (6)
7, 14 & 27 Across Book by George and Weedon Grossmith recounting the life of Charles Pooter (3,5,2,1,6)
8 See 10 Down
9 Trees whose numbers have decreased due to a fungus disease (4)
11 Clothes, bedding, etc., for a newborn baby (7)
12 Man of great wisdom (4)
14 See 7 Across
15 See 20 Down
16 Capital of the Seine-Maritime departement, where Joan of Arc was burned (5)
19 & 26 Across Pen name of the poet and novelist famous for Mrs Miniver (3,8)
21 Bivalve shellfish found on sandy or muddy shores (4)
22 The --, level stretch in County Kildare, famous for its racecourse (7)
23 The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (4)
25 Angle between branch and trunk of a tree (4)
26 See 19 Across
27 See 7 Across
28 Bones enclosing the brain (7)



DOWN

- 1 Port of Kenya, situated on an island of the same name (7)
2 East Sussex town, near the site of a battle in 1066 (6)
3 & 5 Down Musical-comedy star who played in such musicals as Bitter Sweet (6,4)
4 "Dirty British --, with a salt-caked smoke stack..." (Cargoes, John Masefield) (7)
5 See 3 Down
6 In Spain, a short sleep during the afternoon (6)
10 & 8 Across Composer and lyric-writer of Oliver! (6,4)
13 Type of dark red gem (6)
17 Officer in attendance upon a royal personage (7)
18 A mixture of mercury with other metal (7)
19 Surname of the dramatist whose works include Volpone, and The Alchemist (6)
20 & 15 Across Catholic priest and detective in stories by GK Chesterton (6,5)
21 The ferryman of the Styx, in classic mythology (6)
24 Capital of Norway, formerly called Christiania (4)

SOLUTIONS

ACROSS: 1 Marbles; 4 Calais; 7 The Diary; 8 Bart; 9 Elms; 11 Layette; 12 Sage; 14 Of A; 15 Brown; 16 Rouen; 19 Jan; 21 Mombasa; 22 Curragh; 23 NATO; 25 Axl; 26 Struther; 27 Nobody; 28 Cranium. DOWN: 1 Clam; 2 Curragh; 3 Evelyn; 4 Coaster; 5 Lay; 6 Siesta; 10 Lione; 13 Garnet; 17 Equerry; 18 Amalgam; 19 Jonson; 20 Father; 21 Charron; 24 Oslo.

General Knowledge Crossword

ACROSS: 1 Advancement; 9 Lattice; 10 Lemon; 11 Bloat; 12 Plaudit; 13 Ensure; 15 Psyche; 18 Gainsay; 20 Aesop; 22 Sense; 23 Tribute; 24 Temperament. DOWN: 2 Ditty; 3 Aviator; 4 Creep; 5 Malta; 6 Nomadic; 7 Flabbergast; 8 Unattempted; 14 Science; 16 Stadium; 17 Oyster; 19 Sleep; 21 Spurn.

Crossword

UNCOUTHLY Frances McDormand; Emma Stone; Brie Larson; Julianne Moore
Niner Sandra Bullock; Kate Winslet; Marion Cotillard; Helen Mirren; Cate Blanchett; Jennifer Lawrence; Meryl Streep; Natalie Portman; Reese Witherspoon; Hillary Swank; Charlize Theron; Nicole Kidman; Halle Berry; Kathy Bates
ORGANISED

Wordwheel Pathfinder

ACROSS: 1 Advance; 2 Ditty; 3 Aviator; 4 Creep; 5 Malta; 6 Nomadic; 7 Flabbergast; 8 Unattempted; 14 Science; 16 Stadium; 17 Oyster; 19 Sleep; 21 Spurn. DOWN: 2 Ditty; 3 Aviator; 4 Creep; 5 Malta; 6 Nomadic; 7 Flabbergast; 8 Unattempted; 14 Science; 16 Stadium; 17 Oyster; 19 Sleep; 21 Spurn.

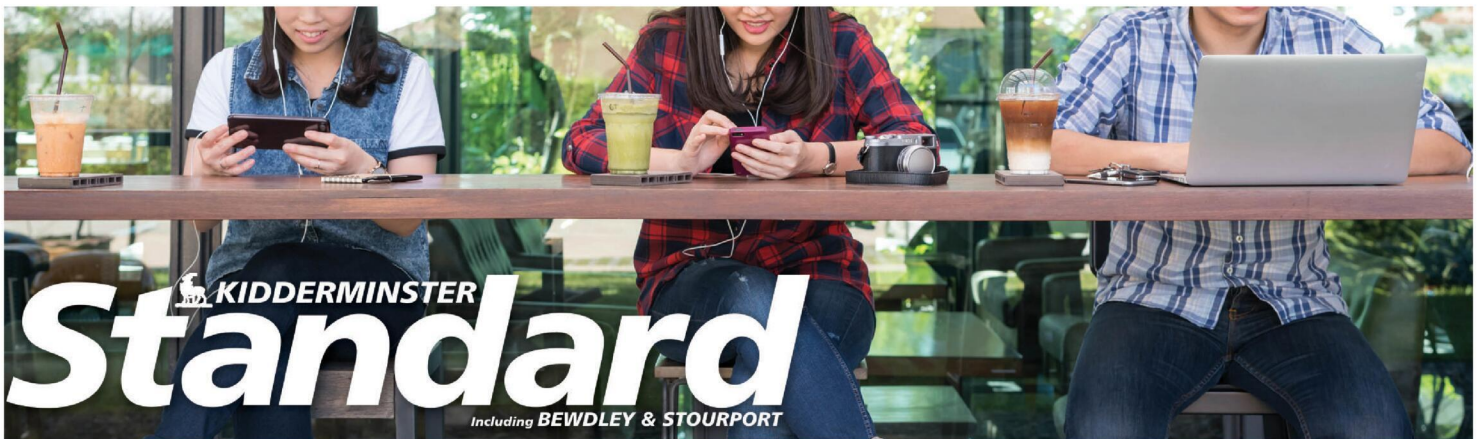
Codeword

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

Hard

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

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KIA has rationalised the line-ups for the Picanto and Xceed, two of its most popular internal combustion engine (ICE) models, to simplify the overall buying experience for customers.

Similar to the brand's EVs, the Picanto and Xceed move to an easily understandable three-grade line-up, consisting of a 'Pure' entry level, a 'GT-Line' mid-level and a 'GT-Line S' range topper.

The new three-tier line-up for Picanto and Xceed replaces the earlier '2',

'GT-Line', '3' and 'GT-Line S' grade structure.

Already introduced on the new Sportage, the new 'Pure' entry point to the Picanto and Xceed ranges merges the previous '2' and '3' grades.

This change is based on customer demand for certain features, and makes the Kia line-up easier to navigate.

'GT-Line' and 'GT-Line S' adopt the same sporty styling as ever, and a similar specification to before.

The Picanto has consistently held its position as one of Kia's UK best-sellers over its 21-year lifespan.

First launched in 2004, Kia's smallest UK and European model has seen three all-new generations and four mid-life facelifts, most recently in July 2024.

This also makes Picanto Kia's third oldest nameplate still on sale in the UK, after the Sportage and

Sorento. Proving its continued popularity, the Picanto is currently the second best-selling car in the A-segment year-to-date (and the best-seller to retail customers).

The Picanto is also Kia's second best-selling car in the UK so far in 2025, accounting for more than 12 per cent of the brand's overall sales.

The first examples of the new model year 2026 (MY26) Picanto will be delivered to customers from September.

Customers will also be able to order from the new three-tier specification structure now: 'Pure', 'GT-Line' and 'GT-Line S'.

The Picanto is also available exclusively with a new 1.0-litre Gasoline Direct Injection (GDI) petrol engine, producing 67bhp, with the option of a five-speed manual (5MT) or five-speed automated manual transmission (5AMT) on

every trim level.

Whereas the Picanto was previously available in a total of eight different variations, the new line-up of three trim levels and two transmissions brings the total number of Picanto variations down to six.

The MY26 Picanto is also welcomes a new Yacht Blue premium paint option on 'GT-Line' and 'GT-Line S' variants, meaning the Picanto is offered in a total of six premium paint options, costing £600 including VAT.

All variants of Picanto are finished in Clear White as standard, with no additional cost.

Both the MY26 Picanto and Xceed are available to order now, with first customer deliveries expected in September 2025.

This streamlined approach will be extended to other Kia ICE and HEV models to ensure consistency across the range.

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Murray lauds 'picture perfect' start after opening day triumph



by Aaron Sutcliffe
aaron.sutcliffe@bullivantmedia.com

FOOTBALL: ADAM Murray enjoyed a 'picture perfect' start to life as Kidderminster Harriers boss following an opening day victory against Scarborough Athletic.

The game's only goal came courtesy of Reece Devine to ensure Murray and Harriers started the National League North season with a win at Aggborough.

And while Murray praised his side for putting their bodies on the line, he admits there is still plenty for Harriers to improve on.

Murray said: "The most important thing [is to win], especially being at home.

"There was a lot excitement, tension and anxiety and you could feel it in the build up.

"The game panned out totally different to what we planned but we adapted.

"It was nice to be back in proper

football, it turned into a fight and a traditional National League North game.

"They're the games that win you a league. Everything can be fluffy and nice but they're the games that get you titles and get you promoted.

"Games where you're not getting your own way, you've got to put your body on the line and we did that.

"It's the perfect picture because it's a win, there were some really good bits but still so many bits we need to improve on."

The Harriers boss also opened up on his tactical approach for the season ahead.

And Murray insists Harriers will try and chase games if trailing but will also look to solidify his side if protecting a lead.

Murray added: "I'm the first to admit, it's been my biggest challenge as a coach over the last 15 years in terms of sometimes I overthink things.

"I have got a plan and a plan on a plan for a plan.

"At this level, I'm the type of guy where, if it's one-nil the other way, there'll be games we possibly lose by three or four because I like to go for those games.

"I don't like being safe but when we're one-nil up I want to make us solid. But I don't like being caught too deep and being stuck where you can't get out.

"It's just trying to find the balance but the players have to carry out the ideas and credit to them, they were outstanding."

Harriers battled to an opening day win against Scarborough. Picture courtesy of clivejonespr.com

Devine victory for Harriers in opener

KIDDERMINSTER Harriers secured a 1-0 opening day victory against Scarborough Athletic as new boss Adam Murray made a winning start to life at Aggborough, writes Neil Gordon.

An early goal from Reece Devine saw Murray's new-look side begin the National League North season with a home win.

The result means Harriers sit eighth in the National League North table.

Murray handed debuts to seven players as Harriers embark on a new era following the disappointment of missing out on the league title and promotion last season.

And Kidderminster made the perfect start as Devine pounced at the back post on 12 minutes when he finished off a flowing team move.

The referee played a good advantage in the lead up to the goal following a challenge on Kurt Willoughby which came after Dan Mooney saw his debut curtailed by an early injury.

Debutant Zanda

Siziba almost doubled Kidderminster's lead as Ryan Whitley's boot denied Harriers a second goal after good work from Jack Clarke.

The hosts had the ball in the net again later in the half only for Jason Adigun to see his header ruled out for offside.

The teams traded chances soon after as Scarborough's Rio Allen flashed a shot across the face of goal before Adigun forced Whitley to tip the ball over the crossbar.

After the break, Adigun glanced a header wide following more determined play from Joe Foulkes who had earlier played a role in the game's only goal.

A flare-up in the home technical area at the death saw both managers shown a yellow card but the whistle sounded soon after as Murray and Harriers enjoyed the perfect start to the new campaign.

Kidderminster are next in action against Workson Town on Saturday, August 16 with kick-off 3pm at Babbage Way.

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