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Battling to save parts of Spa's historic hotel

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.

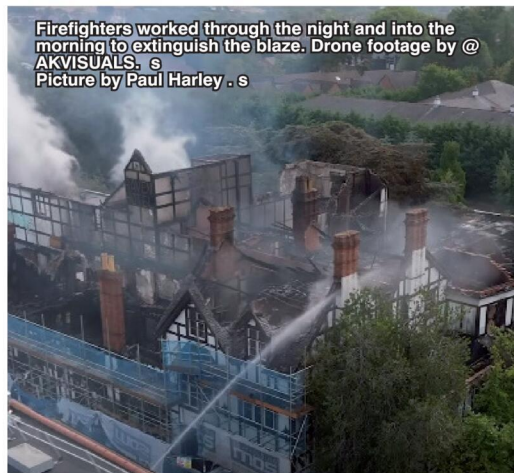
Two teenage girls, aged 13 and 14, were arrested on suspicion of arson and have since been released on bail.

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



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



(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.

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MP salutes vital baby bank

A WYCHBOLD baby bank has been praised for its work by the area's MP after the politician made a personal donation to the vital service.

Redditch MP Chris Bloore has donated his young son's outgrown clothes, toys and books to Wychbold and Droitwich Baby Bank.

The baby bank, founded and run by local Droitwich Town and Wychavon District councillor Rick Deller and his wife Ruth, has been a vital community lifeline for more than two years. The organisation supports families with children aged from birth to five by providing free essential items including clothing, toys, nappies, books and more.

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

Based at Wychbold Village Hall on School Road, the baby bank operates entirely on donations from the public, with no referral or paperwork required. It is free and open to anyone who needs it.

Mr Bloore said: "As a dad, I know how quickly little ones grow out of their clothes and toys - and how costly it can be for families."

"That's why I was delighted to donate some of my son's outgrown items to the Wychbold and Droitwich Baby Bank."

"Rick, Ruth and their team of volunteers are doing an outstanding

job quietly and consistently supporting local families when they need it most. This is community spirit at its very best."

The MP's visit comes at a time when many families across Redditch and Worcestershire are experiencing increased financial pressures.

The baby bank offers practical support to ease the burden, ensuring children can have access to essential items regardless of their circumstances.

Mr Bloore added: "What's so special about this baby bank is how welcoming it is - no questions asked, no forms to fill out - just genuine help when you need it."

"I'd encourage anyone who has spare items or wants to make a

difference locally to consider donating. Every babygrow, toy or blanket can mean a lot to a family going through a tough time."

The Wychbold and Droitwich Baby Bank accepts donations of clean, good quality items for children aged from birth to five, including clothes, books, toys, nappies and baby equipment.

For more, visit the baby bank's Facebook page by searching 'Wychbold and Droitwich Baby Bank' or pop into the hall during their published opening hours.

Redditch MP Chris Bloore has donated his son's outgrown items to Wychbold and Droitwich Baby Bank. s



Princess Peach, a former racing dog, is looking for a new home. s

Dog charity steps up calls to ban greyhound racing

A DOG rescue charity in Bromsgrove is renewing its calls for a ban on greyhound racing as it launches an appeal to find a home for an ex-racer in its care.

The Blue Cross is currently seeking a retirement home for ex-racing greyhound - three-year-old Princess Peach.

Laura Coveney, centre manager at Blue Cross in Bromsgrove, said: "Princess Peach enjoys a fuss and will run after a ball but is still figuring out how to be a dog

so hasn't worked out that she's meant to pick it up yet."

"We're looking for patient owners who will give her time to settle in to her new surroundings and who will help her to thrive."

"She would benefit from living with a confident dog in her new home and could live with older children who will understand her sensitive nature and are confident around larger dogs. Many people think that ex-racing greyhounds need lots of exercise but actually

they just want a few walks and cosy naps."

Two years ago, the Blue Cross launched a campaign for petition signatures to bring an end to greyhound racing. More than 100,000 people signed it and the petition has since been handed into Westminster.

The charity is now urging animal lovers to speak up on behalf of racing greyhounds by writing to their MP to keep up the pressure on the government to bring

an end to what it calls 'a cruel and outdated sport'. Between 2017 and 2024, official racing industry data reveals that more than 4,000 greyhounds died and over 35,000 injuries were recorded.

Visit bluecross.org.uk/campaign/EndGreyhoundRacing to find out more.

Contact the Bromsgrove rehoming centre on g 0300 777 1842 or email bromsgrove@bluecross.org.uk for more information on rehoming Princess Peach.

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See page **28**

Flags show UK pride say group

by **Sonny Rackham**
sonny.rackham@bullinmatme-dia.com

A DEBATE has erupted over a community group's Union Flags and St George Crosses fixed to lampposts across south Birmingham.

Northfield, Frankley, Weoley Castle and other areas have seen the flags added their streets but the movement has sparked arguments for and against them.

Last weekend a man named Sean Doolan took responsibility for the flags, posting an image of himself and 14 other men holding the flags in the Weoley Castle Community Facebook group.

He also shared a link to a GoFundMe page calling for donations for 'flags, poles and cable ties' launched by a group called Weoley Warriors.

On the donation page, Weoley Warriors described themselves as 'a group of proud English men with a common goal to show Birmingham and the rest of the country how proud we are of our history, freedoms and achievements'.

The movement caught the city's communities' attention and led to extensive online discussion. Independent Frankley councillor Simon Morrall claimed Birmingham City Council had already begun efforts to have the flags taken down.

Coun Morrall has expressed his utmost support for the project, calling on the council to keep the flags up until at least the end of August to 'avoid further tension'.

A small number of people aired concerns the message behind them was more political than proclaimed, with some pointing out the UK's national flags have previously been appropriated by

far-right movements to incite racist, anti-immigration sentiments.

Despite some negative feelings towards the movement, the vast majority of responses are in support of flying the UK flags as a representation of national pride, particularly at a 'fitting time', with the 80th anniversary of Victory in Japan (VJ) Day today.

The local authority's policy is to remove any flag fixed to council-owned property, regardless of what is on them. It is understood the council has arranged a subcontractor to remove the flags in Weoley Castle.

Birmingham City Council say upcoming street lighting upgrades mean anything attached to lampposts will need to be taken down.

It has also deterred the public from installing flags or anything similar on lampposts due to the potential to endanger themselves or pedestrians and motorists.



St George's flags on lampposts on Genners Lane. Photo by Dave Gibbs. s

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Kyle Pollard, 27, of Hayling Close, Rednal has been jailed for over three years for robbery and theft. s

A REDNAL man has been jailed for more than three years for threatening a worker at Subway in Rubery before stealing the store's till on two separate occasions.

Kyle Pollard, 27, of Hayling Close, Rednal, Birmingham pleaded guilty to robbery and theft after the two incidents on June 16 and 17.

Pollard was sentenced on Monday, following a trial at Kidderminster Magistrates Court on July 25. He was given a 42-month custodial sentence for the robbery and six

months for theft - his sentences will run concurrently, meaning he will serve 42 months in total. He was also ordered to pay a victim surcharge of £228.

His conviction follows an investigation by Hagley and Rubery Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) who arrested him after a robbery from Subway on New Road on June 16.

Pollard entered the store and demanded cash from a staff member, claiming he had a knife before forcibly grabbing the till and fleeing. He returned the next morning and stole the till again, targeting the same staff member.

He was pursued by a member of the public but they were unable to catch him. Pollard discarded the till while fleeing.

PC Matt Dunton was first on scene and immediately identified the robber as Pollard. Arrest attempts were carried out and Pollard was spotted and later detained.

PC Max Unitt gathered evidence quickly and provided one-to-one reassurance to the victim.

He said the force was pleased with the outcome.



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Success is on the timetable for students after top A-level grades

STUDENTS from across Bromsgrove and Redditch have been celebrating their students achievements following A level results day yesterday.

St Augustine's Catholic High School saw a significant number of students achieve top grades, including Noah Barker who got A*, A*, Distinction*. He will now study Aeronautical Engineering at Loughborough University.

Joseph Seager, who achieved A*,

A*, A, will study economics at the University of Warwick and Christa Vincent, who achieved A*, A, A is now doing chemical engineering at the University of Manchester.

Alexander Day-Jones will study veterinary bioscience at Harper Adams University after getting an A*, A, B and Conrad Skrycki, who achieved Distinction*, A, A, will study mechanical engineering at the University of Birmingham.

Headteacher Luke Payton said the results were testament to the

students' hard work and dedication, the unwavering support of their families and the fantastic staff's commitment.

At Tudor Grange Academy, most students secured their first-choice university places. Many are heading to Russell Group universities, while others are embarking on exciting higher-level apprenticeships and employment opportunities.

Headteacher Marie McNamara said: "We are incredibly proud of our students - not just for their results, but for the people they've become.

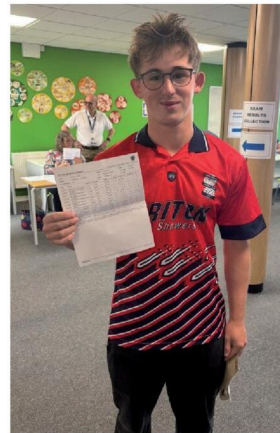
"This cohort has shown remarkable resilience, kindness, and ambition."

Students at South Bromsgrove High also performed well in the A level and Level 3 BTEC exams with many heading off to a variety of universities.

Sean Drew achieved four A*s in his A levels and Ross Dyson and Sophie Coleman both achieved three A*s in theirs. Sean is going on to study chemistry at Oxford University, and Ross and Sophie will be studying mathematics at the University of Warwick and Computer Science at the University of Liverpool respectively.

Olivia Harvey also secured a place at Oxford University to read English language and literature.

Headteacher Chris Smith said: "We are immensely proud of all the work and accomplishments of our



Joseph Seager will study economics at the University of Warwick after receiving A*, A*, A grades. s

students." He added everyone was looking forward to seeing what they would achieve next.

Students at staff at North Bromsgrove High School were celebrating as many students gained entry to top universities to study a wide range of degree courses, including law, maths, cyber security, psychology and zoology.

Among the high performers were Elias who will study law at Exeter, Umar going on to study maths at Birmingham University and Mya who will now pursue a post production and visual effects degree at Falmouth.

Headteacher, Nick Gibson, spoke of his pride and said: "The strong set of results are a testament to our students hard work and diligence, support from parents and our committed staff.

"The support provided by our staff, their dedication, hard work, care, and hours of guidance have paid off and we can feel justifiably proud of our students."

Waseley Hills High said it had its highest rate of student success in the past three years.

Notable achievements included Joshua Chambers who will study maths at the University of Leicester after getting A, B, B in maths, further maths and physics and Jack Whittaker who, after A, B, D in business, biology and physics, will undertake a marine biology and coastal ecology degree at Plymouth University.

Emily Dove (B, C, C in business, biology and maths) will study marine biology with oceanography at the University of Liverpool and Hannah Morrall achieved B, B, B in English literature, psychology and sociology.

Visit our website for more on results day.



Izzy and Madi from North Bromsgrove High sixth form with their A level results. s

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Whatever the weather the beer will still be flowing!



Faye Jackson. s

Shoplifter's banning order extended to 2 new stores

A PROLIFIC shoplifter has been banned from two stores in Droitwich under a variation of her three-year criminal behaviour order (CBO).

Faye Jackson, 51, of Lower Priest Lane, Pershore, was originally handed the CBO on April 16, 2024 which barred her from entering certain shops in south Worcestershire.

Last Wednesday at Kidderminster Magistrates' Court, Jackson's order was

amended to include the Tesco store on Mulberry Tree Hill and Sainsbury's on Worcester Road, both in Droitwich.

Jackson must also not enter Tesco Express on Pershore high street, Asda on King George's Way in Pershore, Savers on Pershore high street and Tesco Express on Foregate Street in Worcester.

She must also not consume alcohol or be in possession of an open vessel of alcohol

inside any retail premises not licensed for the consumption of alcohol.

Safer Neighbourhood Inspector for Wychavon, Dave Wise, said: "We are pleased to get this variation to Jackson's CBO to include two further stores.

"West Mercia Police works hard on continued efforts to prosecute shoplifters, as well as ensure preventative measures like this CBO are in place at every opportunity.

"We hope this serves as a warning to those thinking of stealing from shops we will prosecute and act where appropriate.

"This prosecution was achieved thanks to the 24/7 365 days a year efforts of our response officers in Droitwich, together with our Safer Streets Summer SNT (Safer Neighbourhood Team) officer and Prevention team in securing the additional CBO conditions."

Police raid finds 107 cannisters of 'laughing gas'

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

THREE people were arrested last Thursday after a large quantity of nitrous oxide cannisters were seized by police officers in Rubery.

A store on New Road was targeted in the drugs raid where West Mercia Police officers found 107 one-litre cannisters of nitrous oxide, along with other paraphernalia, such as balloons and bags used for distribution.

Two people in their 20s and one in their 30s were arrested under suspicion of possession with intent to supply a class C drug and remain in custody, helping police with their enquiries.

Nitrous oxide – commonly known as 'laughing gas' – is a colourless gas that can be misused as a recreational drug.

As of November 2023, nitrous oxide is classified as a Class C controlled drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. It is illegal to pos-



Illegal nitrous oxide and vapes were seized in a raid at a Rubery shop. s

sess, supply, or sell nitrous oxide for recreational use.

Mobile phones and evidential documents were also seized by the Hagley and Rubery Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT), as well as a quantity of illegal vapes, which were removed by Trading Standards.

PC Max Unitt, of Rubery SNT, said: "We will always

act upon information given to us where appropriate as we work together with partners to tackle the sale of illegal drugs and the harm they cause on our communities.

"We're grateful for the continued support from our local community – many of whom told us they wanted action taken. Your information helps us make a real difference."

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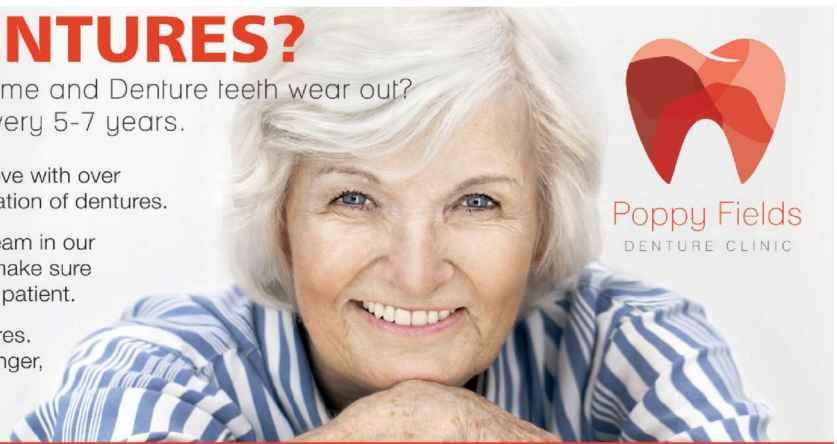
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Open-air Pirates film to conclude lido anniversary

A FREE open-air screening of a Hollywood blockbuster is set to bring Droitwich Spa Lido's 90th anniversary celebrations to a 'fitting' close.

Droitwich Spa Lido will host a free outdoor screening of Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl as part of celebrations marking its 90th anniversary.

The open-air showing will take place from 7.30pm to 9.45pm on Saturday, August 26, in the car park of the Worcester Road site. Visitors are encouraged to bring their own chairs. Food and drink will be available from Little Al's café.

Ahead of the screening, the pool will open for a public swim from 3.30pm to 5.30pm.

The event concludes a



Lido pirate alias lifeguard Tom Blackford, Seb Parker, Suzi Wood and Cllr Dan Birch looking forward to the seafaring epic. s

Friends of Droitwich Spa Lido, said the screening was marks the end of a 'fabulous summer'.

Coun Dan Birch, of Wychavon District Council, said the Lido remained a key part of the town's identity, adding that continued investment would help secure its future.

He added: "What better way to crown a brilliant summer at the Lido than to have a swim before venturing virtually onto the high seas for some breath-taking big screen action. A fabulous way to round off the Lido's 90th anniversary."

The Lido, known as the 'Seaside of the Midlands', is one of the UK's last remaining inland open-air saltwater pools. It is visited by people across Worcestershire and the Midlands every year.

Visit riversfitness.co.uk/droitwichlido for more information.

summer-long programme of activities celebrating the Lido's opening in 1935 by film star Ralph Lynn. Other events have included a birthday party, musical performances, and a synchronised swimming display.

A commemorative memory book featuring photographs and stories from past and present visitors has also been released and is on sale.

Suzi Wood, chair of the



Lots of people turned out for the open day at Winyates Green Allotment Association. s

Allotment open day helps grow funds

THE SUN was shining and the gates were open to visitors to at Winyates Green Allotment Association's open day last Saturday.

Organisers said the day went extremely well, and included lots of stalls from crafts, tombola, jewel-

lery making, cakes and home-grown fruit and veg. Visitors got to see the vegetable beds, colourful flower borders, and displays of fruit and vegetables.

Claire Deykin, from the association, said: "The

whole day took a lot of hard work and planning by all those involved. It brought the community together and in return made much-needed funds for the benefit of the allotments and out plot holders."

Man faces four charges of shoplifting

A BROMSGROVE man has been charged with shoplifting and breaching a criminal behaviour order (CBO).

Steven Fellows, 36, of Turntable Avenue, was charged with four counts of theft from a shop and one count of breaching the terms of a CBO. Fellows was due to appear before Kidderminster Magistrates'

Court on Tuesday, as the Standard went to press.

TWO men have been charged with shoplifting offences in Redditch.

Marius Gheorghe, 33, of Oscott Road, Perry Barr, Birmingham, and Florin Tudor, 39, of Houghton Road, Birmingham,

appeared before Kidderminster Magistrates' Court on Monday.

Gheorghe was charged with eight counts of theft from shop and Tudor with two counts of theft from shop. They were bailed with conditions to appear before Redditch Magistrates' Court on January 19, 2026.

u3a learn, laugh, live
Redditch

OPEN AFTERNOON

News Flash!
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For more information visit our website redditch.u3asite.uk

LEARN, LAUGH, LIVE!

The UK u3a national body is a registered charity with the aim of encouraging groups of people no longer in full-time work to come together and continue their enjoyment of learning subjects of interest to them. Redditch u3a has 26 interest groups and activities which hold monthly meetings at various venues throughout the town:

General Meeting with guest speakers
1st Tuesday meeting *

- Ancient History
- Art Appreciation
- Coffee and Chat
- Computer Users
- Exploring Science
- French Conversation
- Games Café
- Intermediate German
- Moving to Music
- Philosophy
- Research Help Desk
- Shakespeare

- Awesome Amblers
- Book Group
- Computer Help Desk
- Events and Outings
- Family History
- Games and Puzzles
- History
- Lunch Club
- Music in Our Time
- Poetry
- Roving Ramblers
- Stitch and Chat

*Includes our Games Café, Computer Help Desk, Games and Puzzles, Family History Research Desk, Stitch + Chat, and our New Members' meeting.

And we are always happy to hear from anyone who has a particular interest they would like to see started.

We hope you will come along and enjoy meeting the u3a Team!

For more information, visit our website, redditch.u3asite.uk

Garden to combat school stress

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

A NEW sensory garden has been designed and built at Droitwich Spa High School to combat students' increasing mental health challenges following post-pandemic isolation.

Designed and built with input from students themselves, the garden is the latest addition to The Link - a dedicated facility created to support young people struggling with anxiety and school avoidance. The garden has a range of features to stimulate students' senses ranging from relaxing furniture, water features and bundles of herbs.

The space also features a geodome among the trees and encourages biodiversity through bird-feeders, bird baths and plans for a wildflower garden.

Students have praised the impact. Amber, who helped with the garden, said: "It's helped me with my studies and made me more comfortable talking to new people."

"The Link is a home where everyone is accepted and understood. It was one of the best decisions I've ever made."

Funding for the garden came from a Wychavon Social Mobility Grant and a Worcestershire County Council's Public Health grant.

Kim Jones, the school's co-ordinator for vulnerable learners who has led The Link project, expressed her thanks to co-headteachers Gemma Lloyd Davies and Claire Moss for their support for the project. She said: "Like many schools since the pandemic, we've seen anxiety and school avoidance reach unprecedented levels."

"We knew we had to re-engage students struggling with their mental health and create an intervention that offered a clear, supportive pathway back into education."



The garden complements The Link, a pioneering scheme launched in response to the growing mental health challenges faced by students

post-pandemic. Housed in a repurposed caretaker's bungalow, The Link offers a nurturing, alternative environment

with three colour-themed zones to maintain a sense of school identity. Through consultation and observation, the school identified key barriers to attendance, including sensory overload, fear of academic failure, and separation anxiety.

This year, The Link supported 20 students, including seven in Year 11.

All sat exams in English, maths and science, with some also completing qualifications in art, child development, and health and social care.

Visit: wychavon.gov.uk/community-and-living/social-mobility-and-worcestershire.gov.uk/ for more information on the grants and how to apply.

Students joined by school staff and Wychavon social mobility officer Leonie Silk and Coun Richard Morris in The Link's sensory garden. s

AS I talk to businesses across Bromsgrove, the need to reindustrialise the UK and reinvigorate manufacturing in our country could not be more urgent.

Whilst globalisation has undoubtedly boosted prosperity, it's also undeniably, over many decades, led to the deindustrialisation of the UK.

And whilst the UK has reduced carbon emissions, this hasn't been delivered through great innovation, instead we've swapped 'Made in the UK' for 'Made in China' at

the expense of British jobs and skills.

If we want the sustained levels of high economic growth that Governments have been searching for, we need to reinvigorate our country's manufacturing base.

It first starts with education and ensuring children and young people are learning the skills our economy needs. This must be shaped by businesses - providing them with a pipeline of British talent to help their businesses grow and



Westminster Diary

Bradley Thomas MP
writes for The Standard

expand.

We then need to ensure jobs are there for them when they finish school, college or university.

To do that we need a Government that understands business and backs risk takers.

Whacking up National Insurance for employers is not the policy of a

business-friendly Government.

We then need a regulatory system that doesn't over burden businesses with unnecessary red tape that holds them back.

And we need a competitive tax system to make it attractive for businesses to return manufacturing back to the UK from abroad.

Our economy isn't in a good place right now, and local businesses are working hard to weather the storm. But it doesn't have to be this way.

By reindustrialising our country

not only will we create more British jobs for British people, therefore reducing our reliance on mass migration, we will boost our economy - generating more funding for the public services we all rely on.

A better future is possible - it's just going to take a lot of hard work, a clear vision and political will to deliver what our country so desperately needs.

Bradley Thomas
Bromsgrove MP

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MP makes plea over inquiry into grooming gangs

A CROSS-PARTY letter to the Prime Minister demanding victims and survivors are 'at the heart' of the National Inquiry into Grooming Gangs has been backed by Bromsgrove MP Bradley Thomas.

Mr Thomas previously voted for a national inquiry and was one of the signatories to the amendment which made the vote possible in Parliament.

However, the Government used its majority to block an inquiry. Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer later U-turned and a National Inquiry into Grooming Gangs was announced.

Now Mr Thomas has signed a cross-party letter, led by Robbie Moore MP, which demands the inquiry must be survivor-led in its design, scope and delivery.

The letter also sets out three clear principles Mr Thomas and the co-signatories believe the inquiry must follow.

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

This includes continued prosecutions of the perpetrators, an independent, survivor trusted mechanism to ensure survivors can come forward safely and demands survivors have formal, meaningful roles in shaping the inquiry's work.

Mr Thomas said: "The National Inquiry into Grooming Gangs must get to the truth about the extent of the abuse and any cover-up, and it must go further than previous inquiries.

"For this to happen, it's vital that the Government puts victims and survivors at the heart of the national rape gangs inquiry.

"The Government can do this by ensuring perpetrators continue to be prosecuted, ensuring survivors feel safe to come forward and by giving survivors formal, meaningful roles in shaping the inquiry's work.

"The British state failed the victims of these sickening crimes.

"We need to examine the failings among police, prosecutors, charities, academics, local and national government, consider the racial and cultural backgrounds of the perpetrators and how that contributed to these crimes, identify those public servants who facilitated or ignored this abuse so they can be removed from their roles and any foreign nationals involved in the abuse must also be deported.

"Justice must be done, and the truth must out."

Redditch MP Chris Bloore has also come out in support of the inquiry.

He said although he hasn't signed the letter, he has backed the calls to continue the prosecutions, and hopes that survivors at the heart of the inquiry get justice.

"I look forward to contributing to the terms of the inquiry when it comes before the House of Commons," he added.



Bromsgrove and Redditch Safer Neighbourhood Inspector Rich Field with e-scooters which are illegal on the roads. s

Police issue warning over e-scooters

REDDITCH Police have put out a warning on social media about the correct way to use e-scooters and e-bikes.

Officers are reminding people that, although it is legal to buy e-scooters, the use of them and hoverboards is illegal on public roads, pavements, cycle lanes and pedestrian-only areas.

Hoverboards, also known as self-balancing scooters, are not legal for road use and cannot be ridden on the pavement as this would be an offence under section 72 of the Highways Act 1835.

E-scooters and hoverboards can only be ridden

on private land with the permission of the landowner.

The vehicles are classed by the government as 'Powered Transporters' and fall under the same laws and regulations that apply to all motor vehicles in terms of requiring insurance, tax, MOT, licence, and registration.

A spokesperson for West Mercia Police said: "There is no mechanism in place currently to obtain insurance, tax, MoT, licence, and registration of for e-scooters so as this requirement can't be met, their use in public areas is illegal, anyone found using them in public areas

risks having the e-scooter seized."

For e-bikes, the law states that people can ride an electric bike if you're 14 or over, so long as it is an 'electrically assisted pedal cycle' (EAPC) and the motor used must be of no more than 250 watts.

EAPCs can be ridden anywhere a regular bicycle is permitted, including roads, cycle lanes, and bridleways, but cannot be ridden on pavements, unless that part of the pavement is specifically designated for cycling.

The police added: "Anyone found not adhering to these laws will be dealt with as appropriate."



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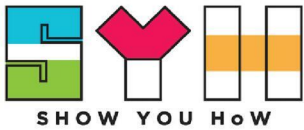
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From Results to Next Steps: Drop into HoW College's GCSE Advice Cafes!

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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Gearing up for epic mile munching trek

A WYCHAVON planning officer is temporarily ditching the meetings to get behind the wheel of his beloved Triumph for an epic near-2,000 mile fundraising roadtrip across the UK.

Going beyond his usual driving route through Wychavon, Andrew Ford has signed up to undertake a gruelling 1,900-mile drive around Britain - in just 48 hours - in his classic 1969 Triumph Vitesse.

With his son, Tom, as co-driver in this non-stop endurance drive, Andrew will first travel from the start in Knebworth, Hertfordshire to John O'Groats in north-east Scotland.

The pair will then motor down through central Wales to Land's End in Cornwall before making the final leg of the journey back to their starting point.

Andrew and Tom will join approximately 90 drivers taking part in the 29th Club Triumph Round Britain Reliability Run over the weekend of October 3 and 5 in aid of Parkinsons UK.

Andrew, who is Wychavon's principal planning officer, said: "The event has been running biennially since the 1960s in Triumph cars from the period, mainly 60s and 70s models.

"So, a test for vehicles and drivers, particularly as the latter is of the same vintage.



Father and son, Andrew and Tom, are on a mission to travel round Britain in a Triumph Vitesse in 48 hours to raise money for Parkinsons UK. s

"I've owned the car for 15 years. It is well maintained so should be up to the challenge but I must make sure I take along a few key spare parts.

"I'm not super mechanically minded but cars of this age are much simpler with less to go wrong and repairs can be made at the roadside - although good breakdown cover is a must."

"This will be the first time Andrew has taken the car any significant distance and although he had been eyeing up the route for some time, he did not have a co-driver until Tom, who has just finished university, agreed to join him.

To break up the journey there will be a number of short 'control'

stops where he will need to sign in and then the two longer stops at John O'Groats and Land's End where both men and machine will refuel.

Driving will be shared between the two every couple of hours while each has the chance to grab some sleep.

Andrew added: "The distance is daunting without doubt and clearly tiring, especially towards the end of the weekend.

"But we'll both support each other as we go round, and there is also support and camaraderie from the other crews on the route."

Visit: wonderful.org/fundraisers/7bbmV to sponsor Andrew.



The Droitwich Arts Network Hub, Droitwich Spa was vacated by the organisation on Saturday (August 9). Picture by Marcus Mingsins 0725009MMR

DROITWICH Arts Network (DAN) has shared details of proposals to transition into a Community Interest Company (CIC).

The organisation currently operates as an unincorporated association with plans to host a meeting in September to discuss the proposed incorporation with members.

Unincorporated organisations, as DAN currently exists, cannot own property, employ staff, or sign contracts.

By becoming a CIC, DAN would establish itself as a legal entity, capable of owning assets, signing agreements and applying for substantial grants.

Importantly, the new structure would also protect committee members and volunteers from personal liability, which they currently face in the event of legal action.

CICs are specifically designed for social enterprises, requiring them to have a clear community benefit

purpose and an 'asset lock' that ensures profits are used for that purpose.

The problems with the nature of the organisation's structure has been highlighted by recent negotiations involving its premises at St Andrew's Square.

The organisations base of operations, The Hub in St Andrews Square shopping centre, is currently under offer with a new tenant meaning the arts network was ordered to vacate its home on Saturday.

Droitwich Arts Network's extraordinary general meeting on the topic of CIC incorporation will begin at 7pm at Rotary House, Corbett Avenue, Droitwich on September 2 with all members invited.

Visit: droitwichstandard.co.uk to read more about The Hub's closure.

Go to: droitwichartsnetwork.org/ for more information on DAN.

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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 along with Jack & Vera Duckworth - 1996

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Charity day hits sweet spot

THE POPULAR Butcher's Block on Bromsgrove High Street has so far raised £600 after holding its annual charity day on Saturday.

Lilith and Michelle Holsey-Sheppard put on the extravaganza every year on the anniversary of the shop which this year celebrated seven years in the town.

The funds, which the pair hope will hit £900 in total, will go to Ladies Fighting Breast Cancer, The Basement Project and Sapcote Memory Hub which provides dementia support.



Lilith said: "The response we had on the day was insane.

"We had both Ladies Fighting Breast Cancer and The Basement Project visit us through the day and are pleased to announce,

after making £600 on the day, they are on track to hit £900 by the end of August."

Michelle added: "Because we choose three charities to support each year, our goal is always to get a minimum of £300 each.

"That doesn't seem like much but actually can help a lot locally."

Lilith and Michelle also fundraise all through the year after launching their Sunday dinners on Mother's Day this year.

Working with The

Neighbourhood on Rubery high street, they donate £3 from every Sunday dinner served at their pop-up to local causes.

They take place on the last Sunday of every month, ensuring the money goes back to the local community.

Check out @butchersblock-bromsgrove on social media or visit the shop on the high street for more.

Lilith and Michelle, from Butcher's Block in Bromsgrove, hosted a successful charity day, which included a selection of special cakes, inset. s



A fair and compassionate welfare state also needs to be sustainable

PARLIAMENT has now risen for the summer recess after a packed few weeks of debates, announcements and international engagement.

From welfare policy developments to high-profile visits and changes to my own role in the Shadow Cabinet, there's been plenty happening as the summer term came to a close.

Recent changes to the Government's welfare reform plans have raised concerns about the long-term sustainability of public finances. A key element of proposed reforms to health and disability benefits has now been withdrawn, despite forecasts spending in this area could reach £100billion by 2030.



Westminster Diary

Nigel Huddleston MP writes for The Standard

With no alternative savings plan announced, the Office for Budget Responsibility has questioned how this gap will be addressed. A fair and compassionate welfare system is vital, but it must also be financially sustainable. I will continue to follow developments closely and ensure local concerns are heard.

It was a privilege to be in the Royal Gallery to hear French President Emmanuel Macron

address members of both Houses.

He spoke of the enduring partnership between the UK and France, our shared values, and the importance of working together on global challenges such as climate change, migration, and support for Ukraine.

I attended a Parliamentary event hosted by Glaucoma UK to highlight the importance of early detection of Glaucoma in preventing sight loss.

Glaucoma is one of the leading causes of preventable blindness in the UK and often develops without symptoms in the early stages.

If it's been a while since your last eye test, I encourage you to

book one - it's quick and could protect your sight.

I was pleased to meet with the British Beer and Pub Association to discuss the importance of our pub sector, which contributes more than £34billion to the UK economy and supports more than a million jobs. Pubs remain central to our communities and I'll continue to support measures that help them succeed.

As part of a Parliamentary delegation, I visited Washington, DC for meetings with members of the US Congress and Senate.

We discussed a wide range of issues, including trade, security, artificial intelligence, and the UK-US relationship. It was clear that our longstanding partner-

ship remains strong and deeply valued.

I was honoured to be appointed Shadow Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, a department I previously served in as a Minister. I look forward to holding the Government to account across a range of sectors - from sport and tourism to the arts, broadcasting and civil society.

It has also been a privilege to serve as co-chairman of the Conservative Party over the past 10 months. I leave that role with great memories, new friendships, and gratitude for the opportunity.

Nigel Huddleston, MP for Droitwich and Evesham



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Charity joins wider outcry over protests

A REFUGEE charity has joined forces with more than 200 other organisations to condemn the racist anti-migrant protests which took place at the weekend.

Bromsgrove and Redditch Welcome Refugees (BRWR) joined the likes of Amnesty International and Oxfam in signing an open letter that was delivered to UK political leaders on Monday demanding an end to the divisive politics, racist rhetoric and demonising language used to describe migration.

The open letter stated anti-refugee protests across the country had been distressing to witness, with echoes of last summer's riots making them all the more alarming.

It tells UK party leaders to take action.

BRWR, which has recently become a charity, supports about 200 refugees from Ukraine, Afghanistan, Iran and Syria in and around the two towns.

Chair Yvonne Rendell condemned the recent protests.

She said: "These demonstrators are badly misinformed by comments and skewed data from some politicians and others with extremely right wing views."

"The desperate people who risk their lives crossing the channel in search of sanctuary, because they feel they have

no alternative, make up only a small minority. Most of them are eventually granted asylum because they are genuine cases.

"The refugees we support have fled from horrendous circumstances that are almost impossible to imagine. Many have had to leave behind friends and family who still face the constant threat of violence, war, persecution or even worse."

Yvonne said the refugees needed to be given sanctuary and compassion and not be faced with racism and hatred.

"Our refugee friends and other immigrants and asylum seekers just want somewhere safe to live, somewhere to earn a reasonable wage, pay their taxes and bring up their children."

"Almost all would rather be in their own countries, but for the horrendous circumstances that they've been forced to flee from."

"It's long past the time for political leaders to act for the good of the country and to tell the truth, not to pander to the extremists because they're worried about the polls."

"They must stop fanning the flames of these protests with racist rhetoric and stop using migrants as scapegoats for problems that have nothing to do with them."

Visit brwr.uk for more information.



Sgt Dave Roberts is moving on to pastures new. s

Standing down after 30 years

WEST MERCIA police are bidding a fond farewell Sgt Dave Roberts, as he hangs up his pocket notebook and radio after 30 years of service.

Sgt Roberts is a well-known face around Redditch after three decades of unwavering commitment to public service in Worcestershire and will be dearly missed by officers and colleagues at West Mercia, as well as partner agencies and communities the force works with.

He will move on to pastures new in a new role with a neighbouring force.

Insp Rich Field said: "Today we mark the retirement of Police Sergeant David Roberts, a

colleague whose career has spanned over three decades of dedicated public service — first with British Transport Police and then with West Mercia Police from 2003 to this year.

"Dave's career has been defined by his unwavering commitment to community policing, his operational leadership and his ability to bring both professionalism and personality to every role he's held."

"From his early days in Rubery through to his final posting with the Safer Neighbourhood Team in Redditch, Dave has consistently demonstrated integrity, compassion and a deep-rooted sense of duty."

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RIGHT - Don't get too close. Picture by Marcus Mingins 3225012MMR2

LEFT - It's not scary. Picture by Marcus Mingins 3225012MMR3



Dino fun at park

by Ashleigh Osborne
ashleigh.osborne@bullivantmedia.com

THE DINOSAUR takeover of Arrow Valley Country Park in Redditch proved a 'rex'hilarating day for all.

Last Thursday August 7, the Country Park welcomed over 700 people as animatronic dinosaurs transformed the park into Jurassic Valley thanks to the Travelling Natural History Museum.

The event saw the opportunity for resi-

dents to get involved with fossil digging, regular arena shows with Reggie Rex, and meet and greets with mini baby Dino puppets. Redditch Borough Council's Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Recreation, Coun Juliet Barker Smith, said: "The programme of Summer Fun is absolutely jam-packed with something for everyone to enjoy. "The best bit is, all of the events are free, delivering for our communities when budgets are getting tighter every day.

Visit redditchbc.gov.uk/things-to-do/events/events-in-the-borough/ for the full list of events and timings.



Travelling Natural History Museums Peter Ta Bois and Kay Lane introduce Primrose (ten) and Zinnia (seven) to the dinosaurs. Picture by Marcus Mingins 3225012MMR1

James Giles & Sons Charity Rally



Bromsgrove, Droitwich, and Studley based funeral directors, James Giles & Sons Ltd, will be participating in the 2025 Pavestone Rally – one of the construction industry's biggest charity fundraising initiatives – this September (3-6 September).

James, Kerri, Damien, and Andy from James Giles & Sons Ltd will form one of at least 30 rally teams which will purchase their own rally car for less than a £2,000 and then undertake an exhilarating four-day journey through northern Europe to raise money for five charities. Each team must raise a minimum of £2,000 for charity and is strongly encouraged to wear fancy dress to match a theme which is set for every day of the event.

Covering Germany, Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands, this year's rally is raising funds for the Teenage Cancer Trust, the Variety Children's Charity, CRASH and Lighthouse Construction Charities. Each team also gets to nominate a charity of their own choice with the James Giles team choosing to support Huntington's Disease Association.

James Giles, the Director of James Giles & Sons Ltd said: "As a family owned and run funeral directors, we are committed to honouring the values of kindness and compassion in everything we do and to supporting people from all walks of life. When we first heard about the rally from a former participant, we knew we wanted to be involved. The Rally gives us the chance to make a real difference to some very deserving charities as well as to enjoy what promises to be a very interesting and enjoyable four days participating in an event which has been described as a mixture of Wacky Races and Top Gear!"

Now in its fifth year, the 2025 Pavestone Rally has set a fundraising target of £250,000, exceeding the £217,000 raised last year.

To support the James Giles & Sons Ltd team, please visit: <https://sponsorme.charitiestrust.org/event/32d18f85-568b-4204-99ac-b7e6c29d5f73>

Or go to our Facebook 'James Giles & Sons Ltd' or our Instagram @jamesgiles_sons to follow our journey and to also see our pinned posts to donate through there.

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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.worcestershireopenstudios.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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Making sure they stay safe in the school holidays starts in the home



Police are reminding parents and guardians to ensure they know how to manage their children's online safety. s

COUNTER Terrorism Policing West Midlands, which covers the West Mercia Police area, is urging parents to help keep their children safe online over the summer break.

With the school holidays underway, young people will be spending more time online and they want to remind parents and guardians to ensure they know how to manage their children's online safety, and remind them of the things they can do to support their children to be safer online.

This follows messages delivered by Counter Terrorism Policing and the National Crime Agency last week, which are increasingly seeing children being routinely exposed to the most serious harmful online content.

This includes sexual violence; self-harm and suicide content; extreme gore; animal cruelty; indecent images of children; and terrorist content.

This bombardment of online

harms can quickly become normalised. Worryingly, some of the children who come to the attention of Counter Terrorism Policing and the National Crime Agency are completely desensitised to extreme and obscene content.

Parents and guardians are urged to talk to their children about who they talk to online and the platforms they use to better understand the type of content they are consuming.

They can then support them with identifying harmful content and knowing what to do if they come across something that concerns them.

Physical measures such as using parental controls on apps, routers and individual devices can also help, but it's essential that these take place alongside regular conversations to help children and young people make the right decisions when online.

Detective Chief Superintendent Alison Hurst, Head of Counter Terrorism Policing West Midlands,

said: "Unfortunately we know that nationally more and more young people are being exposed to harmful content online and led down dangerous paths because they are being targeted by criminal gangs or extremists.

"By speaking directly to parents, guardians and caregivers, we hope to increase awareness of the dangers young people may be facing online, and empower them to feel confident in supporting their children and protecting their safety in

online spaces.

Counter Terrorism Policing and MI5 are seeing high levels of young people in terrorism-related investigations and 2023 saw the highest numbers of terrorism arrests of young people since records began.

They said a significant proportion of parents are unaware of their children's online safety – who they talked to, the content they viewed and the platforms they use.

Internet Matters provides practi-

cal advice to parents on how to help their children navigate the ever-changing digital landscape.

Parents and carers can access information and advice specific to their child's age, the apps they use, or the issue they wish to address.

Anyone with concerns can report to us by calling 101 or 999 in an emergency.

If people concerned that someone might be taking a dangerous path, get advice and support via ACT Early.

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Reader Travel

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Indulge in some pre-Christmas celebrations at the Bosworth Hall Hotel, located in the Leicestershire countryside. We spend time in the towns of Stamford and Oakham, explore the vibrant city of Birmingham and can discover Shakespeare's Stratford-upon-Avon.

Your break includes

- ✓ Return coach travel from Bromsgrove
- ✓ 4 nights at the Bosworth Hall Hotel, near Market Bosworth (JG3 rating) with dinner & breakfast (includes traditional 'Christmas' dinner)
- ✓ 2 for 1 bar (6pm-9pm) on selected drinks
- ✓ After-dinner tea & coffee
- ✓ Light entertainment every evening
- ✓ Excursions to Stamford, Oakham & Birmingham

Optional excursion to Stratford-upon-Avon (£14pp)

5 Days by Coach only £299
Single Supplement £80

SCARBOROUGH & WHITBY
TURKEY & TINSEL
Departing Mon 8 Dec '25

Situated on Yorkshire's coast between two large bays, Scarborough has been welcoming visitors for nearly 400 years and provides a lovely setting for some pre-Christmas celebrations. We also discover the seaside town of Whitby and the market town of Beverley.

Your break includes

- ✓ Return coach travel from Redditch, Bromsgrove
- ✓ 4 nights at a selected hotel, Scarborough (JG2 or JG3 rating) with dinner & full English breakfast (includes traditional 'Christmas' dinner)
- ✓ 2 for 1 bar (6pm-9pm) on selected drinks
- ✓ After-dinner tea & coffee
- ✓ Light entertainment every evening
- ✓ Excursions to Whitby & Beverley

Optional excursion to York (£14pp)

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Visitors enjoy a day out at Witley Court in Worcestershire. s

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 con-



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

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.

tinue in the best possible way."

Since establishment, the Sport Welfare offer at Active Herefordshire has provided specialist support directly to clubs and organisations, funding for training courses, and has provided presence at national panels for governing bodies to impart key information about welfare and safeguarding.

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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The Standard Recommends

The benefits local businesses can bring to our community

Local companies play a pivotal role in reinforcing the fabric of their communities, offering a myriad of benefits that extend beyond their immediate economic contributions. These enterprises contribute significantly to the social, cultural, and environmental well-being of their surroundings.

Economic Impact

One of the most significant benefits of local companies is their positive economic impact on the communities they serve. Local businesses tend to use local suppliers and hire from the local workforce, ensuring that the money spent remains within the community. According to numerous studies, for every £1 spent at a local shop, approximately 63p circulates back into the local economy. This contrasts sharply with national chains, where a lower proportion of each pound spent stays in the local area. As a result, the presence of local businesses boosts

the community's economic health, supporting job creation and reducing unemployment rates.

Furthermore, local companies often adapt their offerings to the specific needs and preferences of their community. Whether it's a café that provides organic produce sourced from regional farms or a craft shop showcasing local artisans, these businesses cater to the tastes and values of their customers. This ability to tailor products and services fosters a unique market environment that attracts residents and visitors alike, enriching the local economy. >>



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Community Engagement

Local companies are often deeply rooted in their communities. They frequently engage in community events, sponsorships, and charitable activities, which can enhance social ties and foster a sense of belonging among residents. Many local businesses participate in community projects, supporting local schools, sports teams, and charity initiatives. This engagement cultivates an environment where local citizens feel valued and connected to one another. Moreover, the owners and employees of local businesses are typically members of the community themselves, creating relationships based on familiarity and trust. This personal connection can enhance customer loyalty, as consumers feel more inclined to support businesses that demonstrate genuine investment in their community's welfare. Such relationships can lead to increased social capi-

tal, as businesses become integral to the community fabric, contributing not only economically but also socially.

Environmental Sustainability

Local companies often exhibit a commitment to sustainable practices that benefit the environment. By sourcing their inputs locally and serving local customers, these businesses tend to have a smaller carbon footprint than their larger, multinational counterparts. Their proximity reduces transportation emissions and encourages sustainable practices that align with the values of the community. Many local companies embrace eco-friendly principles, from implementing recycling initiatives to using sustainable materials in their products. For example, a local bakery might use organic flour sourced from nearby farms, while a clothing boutique might prioritise environmentally-friendly fabrics. By placing



emphasis on sustainability, local businesses inspire residents to adopt similar practices in their daily lives, promoting a broader culture of environmental responsibility.

Cultural Enrichment

The cultural contributions of local companies can be profound. They often provide stage for local artists and craftsmen, helping to preserve and promote the unique cultural identity of the community. By hosting events, workshops, and exhibitions, local businesses not only showcase local talent but also create opportunities for interaction and collaboration among community members. Furthermore, local eateries and shops

often reflect the culinary and artistic heritage of the region. They offer unique products that tell the story of the area, fostering a sense of pride among residents while attracting tourists interested in authentic experiences. These businesses serve as ambassadors of local culture, reinforcing community identity and cohesion.

Resilience and Innovation

Local companies often exhibit resilience and innovation in ways larger corporations may not. Because they are closely connected to their communities, they can respond quickly to changing conditions or customer needs. >>



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During challenging economic times or crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, many local businesses adapted by pivoting their operations, whether by enhancing their online presence, offering delivery services, or creating new products that met emerging needs.

This adaptability not only ensures the survival of local businesses but also strengthens the community's economy in the face of adversity. Communities with robust local business ecosystems tend to recover more quickly from economic downturns, as these businesses are often more flexible and capable of navigating change.



Conclusion...
Local companies are essential to the health and vitality of their communities. From bolstering the economy and promoting environmental sustainability to enriching local culture and fostering strong social bonds, the benefits of these enterprises are far-reaching. As communities grapple with various societal challenges, supporting local businesses emerges as a crucial strategy for building resilient, prosperous, and vibrant neighbourhoods. By choosing to buy local, consumers not only invest in their economy but also contribute to the enduring spirit and identity of their community.





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SUDOKU

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

EASY

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

HARD

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

PATHFINDER

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

Best Actress Oscar winners

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

Solutions opposite

CROSSWORD

	1	2		3		4		5		6				8
7														
9								10						
11						12								
13		14					15	16						
						17								
18				19				20		21				
22							23							
	24													

ACROSS

- Promotion (11)
- Network of crossed laths (7)
- Pale yellow (5)
- Inflate (5)
- Praise bestowed (7)
- Make certain (6)
- Soul (6)
- Deny (7)
- Best known fabulist (5)
- Meaning (5)
- Expression of approval (7)
- Disposition (11)

DOWN

- As before (5)
- Airman (7)
- Horrific (6)
- Mediterranean island (5)
- Wandering (7)
- Dumbfound (11)
- Not tried (11)
- Formulated knowledge (7)
- Athletic ground (7)
- Pearl-producer (6)
- Soak (5)
- Disdain (5)

Scribble pad

LADDER

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

- Bird part
- Alcoholic drink
- Metal cord
- Had on the body
- Language component



NINER

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

- 42315 gives an element;
- 619658 gives a second element;
- 6157 gives charged particles.

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

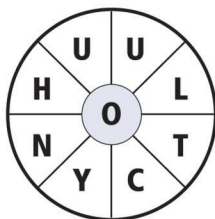
CODEWORD

This puzzle has no clues. Instead, every number printed in the grid represents a letter, with the same number always representing the same letter. For example, if 8 turns out to be a V, you can write in V wherever a square contains 8. Using your knowledge of words, complete the puzzle.

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

WORDWHEEL

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

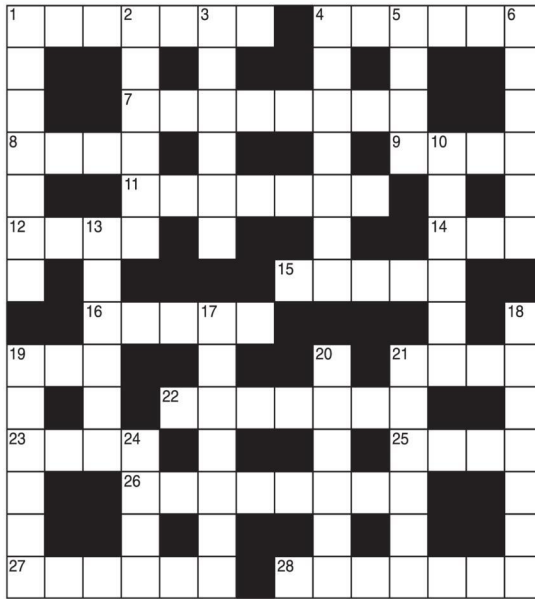


How you rate
 8 words: average
 12 words: good
 16 words: very good
 20 or more: excellent.

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 1 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 department, 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)

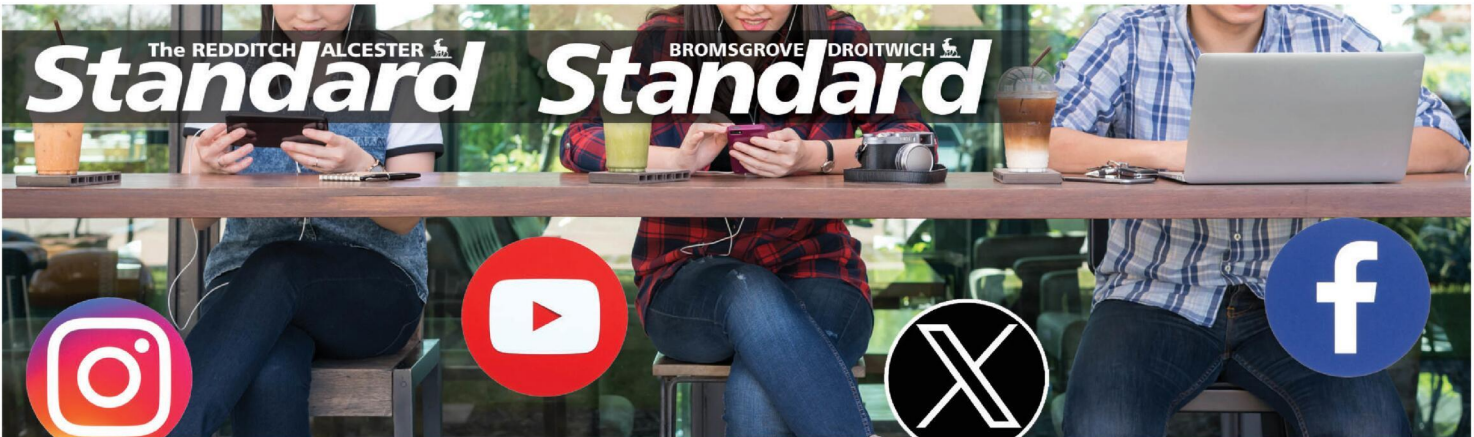
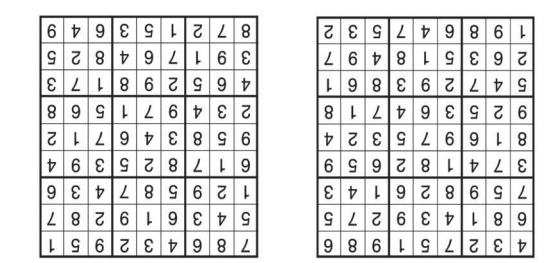
SOLUTIONS

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

General Knowledge Crossword
 14 Science; 16 Stadium; 17 Oyster; 19 Spurr.
 Down: 2 Ditto; 3 Aviator; 4 Creep; 5 Malta; 6 Nomadic; 7 Flabbegast; 8 Unattempted; 15 Psyche; 18 Gainsay; 20 Aesop; 22 Tribute; 24 Temperament.
 Across: 1 Advancement; 9 Lattice; 10 Lemon; 11 Boat; 12 Plaudit; 13 Ensure;

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

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



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DEATHS

CHATTERLEY

Robert

Aged 78 years

Passed away peacefully at the Alexandra Hospital on Saturday 26th July 2025

A much-loved Brother and Uncle. Robert will be greatly missed by all his family and friends.

A service to celebrate Robert's life will take place at Redditch Crematorium on Tuesday 2nd September 2025 at 11.45am. There will be a live webcast available on the day for anybody who can't make the service.

Followed by refreshments at The Redditch Golf Club, Lower Grinstead Lane, Calow Hill Redditch B97 5PJ Family flowers only, donations if so desired to Primrose Hospice to

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DEATHS

Announcing the death of

Ann Aldous

of Barnt Green

On 31st July 2025 after a short illness.

Funeral to take place on Tuesday 26th August at 11.45 at Redditch Crematorium.

Family flowers only please.

Donations for the Stephen Bayley Suite at the Alexandra Hospital Redditch.

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DEATHS

MAULLIN

Sheila Margaret

Aged 87 years

Passed away at Tutnall Hall Nursing Home on Wednesday 23rd July 2025.

Sheila will be sadly missed by her Daughter Karen and all of her family and friends.

A funeral service will take place for Sheila at Redditch Crematorium on Tuesday 26th August 2025 at 11am.

Family flowers only please, donations if so desired to Midland Air Ambulance and Birmingham Women's and Children's Hospital Charity may be sent to:

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Redditch,
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DEATHS

PRICE

Lewis Graham

Passed away peacefully at Tutnall Hall Nursing Home on 31st July 2025
Aged 90 years

Much loved Dad to Jeannette and son in law Simon, Grandad to Step Grandchildren Richard and Christopher, A loving Gangan to Louisa, Georgia, and Freddie.

Sadly missed by all family and friends.

A Service to celebrate Lewis's life will take place at Redditch Crematorium on Wednesday 27th August 2025 at 11.45a.m.

Family flowers only please, Donations in Lewis's memory to Prostate Cancer UK can be gifted in the collection box on the day.

The family wish to express their special thanks to all the staff and carers at Tutnall Nursing Home for looking after Lewis whilst in their care.

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DEATHS

WALSH

Peter Augustine

Aged 87 years

Sadly passed at the Worcester Royal Hospital on Thursday 31st July 2025.

A beloved Husband to Valerie and much-loved Father to Richard and Jon and daughter-in-law Mel.

A cherished Grandfather to Tom, James and Mia.

Peter will be greatly missed by all his family and friends.

A service to celebrate Peter's life will take place at Redditch Crematorium on Monday 8th September 2025 at 11:45am. Refreshments to follow at The Abbey Hotel.

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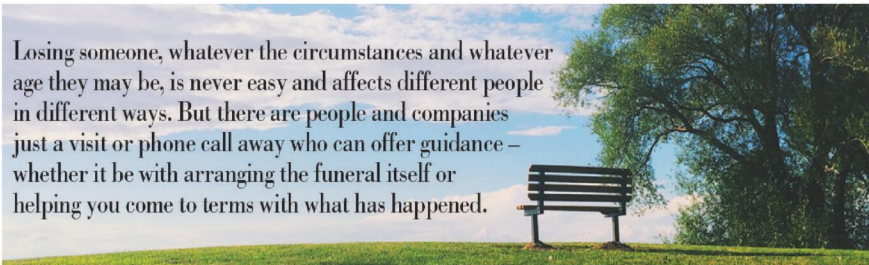
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Application packs can be found on the church website:

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www.bromsgrove-school.co.uk

Informal discussions with the Transport Manager
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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. 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.

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.

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Team Vertu impress on Croft return

by Aaron Sutcliffe
aaron.sutcliffe@bullivantmedia.com

BTCC: JUSTINA Williams admits Team Vertu's five podium finishes at Croft went 'beyond expectations' as the Droitwich-based team returned to the track in the British Touring Car Championship (BTCC).

Team Vertu secured a race win and four further podium finishes in North Yorkshire as the BTCC returned following a mid-season break.

And a race win for Team Vertu driver Tom Ingram, who also finished second in race three, means the Coventry racer now sits top of the drivers' standings.

Fellow Team Vertu driver Senna Proctor placed third in races one and three while Tom Chilton finished second in race two.

And with Team Vertu now just three points off top in the teams standings, team owner Williams feels confident for the remainder of the season.

Williams said: "We were confident that Croft would be a strong weekend for us but to come away from it with five podium finishes is beyond expectations.

"All four drivers have done a fantastic job, and we're delighted to have reclaimed the championship lead on the back of another win.

"As I've said before, there is still a long way to go until anything is won but we are confident about the remainder

of the season."

Team Vertu made the perfect start to the weekend as Ingram led from start to finish to take the overall lead in the drivers' standings.

And teammate Proctor ensured Team Vertu secured a double podium with a third-place finish behind Dan Cammish.

Proctor moved from eighth to third on the opening lap as the Yorkshire driver wowed his home crowd.

Teammates Chilton and Adam Morgan finished fifth and 10th respectively.

Ingram could not repeat his success in race two with the Championship leader down in eighth.

However, Chilton claimed second place with Morgan fourth and Proctor down in 18th.

Team Vertu responded with another double podium in the final race as Ingram and title rival Ash Sutton engaged in an epic tussle for the race win.

Ingram made contact with pole-sitter Aiden Moffat on the first lap and overtook Sutton later in the race following a safety car.

However, a sublime move from Sutton saw him move from third to first at the final hairpin despite his car taking damage in the process.

That left Ingram in second with Proctor third, Morgan fifth and Chilton eighth.

The BTCC season continues at Thruxton on the weekend of August 16 and 17.

Saltmen on winning trail as Spa battle to victories against Fairford and Thornbury

FOOTBALL: DROITWICH Spa battled to a 2-1 win against Fairford Town to secure a third straight league victory.

First-half goals from Cory Rudd and Charlie Tilley put the Saltmen in command at the King George Playing Fields.

A late goal from Fairford substitute Tom Chamberlain set up a tense finish but Spa held on to claim the points.

The result means Droitwich sit fifth in the Hellenic League Premier Division table.

Fairford went close early on as Alfie Presley's effort hit the outside of the post.

And the visitors spurned another chance when Joah Hall's powerful shot travelled inches over the crossbar.

Spa responded with a couple of chances of their own as Reiss Taylor-Randle and James Lemon both saw efforts blocked.

However, the Saltmen broke the deadlock on the half-hour mark when Rudd curled a shot into the top corner from Jack Brighton's cross after he latched onto Ben Tilbury's through ball.

Droitwich doubled their lead on 40 minutes as Tilley produced a deft finish back across goal.

And only a crucial save from Fairford goalkeeper Connor Johns kept the visitors in the contest at the break.

However, the away side halved the deficit two minutes from time when Chamberlain's effort evaded Spa's debutant goalkeeper Dominic Hill.

Fairford pushed for an equaliser but Spa held on as Andy Crowther's side celebrated a



third successive victory.

That came after Tilbury's late penalty helped Droitwich to a thrilling 3-2 victory away at Thornbury Town.

Tilbury's spot kick put Spa back in front after Josh Hurdman and Alex Dugmore had twice put Droitwich ahead at the Mundy Playing Fields.

And the Saltmen had to play the final 20 minutes without a recognised goalkeeper after Dom Rogerson sustained an injury.

Spa broke the deadlock on 19 minutes when Hurdman headed Taylor-Randle's deep cross back across goal and into the corner of the net.

However, Thornbury drew level on 38 minutes as Callum Chalmers scored from the penalty spot.

Droitwich reclaimed the lead on 64 minutes when Dugmore rose highest to head in at a cor-

ner after he failed to capitalise on two earlier chances.

Spa lost keeper Rogerson to injury on 70 minutes as defender Rohan Levy took the gloves for the remainder of the game.

And Levy had to pick the ball out of his net almost immediately as Marcus Wormwell drew the home side level for a second time.

However, Spa won a penalty eight minutes from time when Dugmore drew a foul in the box.

And Tilbury duly converted from the spot to secure the Saltmen's first away win of the season.

Droitwich are next in action against Longlevens AFC on Saturday, August 16 with kick-off at 3pm at Kingy's.

Ben Tilbury celebrates after scoring from the penalty spot. Picture by Mathew Mason.

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