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Campaigners hope new year will bring progress

by **Ryan Smith**
 ryan.smith@bullivanmedia.com

WITH 2026 set to be a crucial year for the future of Droitwich's former Raven Hotel, campaigners are busy working behind the scenes in a bid to buy the listed building to transform it into a community asset.

The Raven Heartbeat group has confirmed 'constructive discussions' have begun with the developer to progress a deal in a timely way.

The group said it was working carefully and responsibly to protect the building's historic character, but insisted safety must come first after it was discovered the chimney stack had fallen.

Due to a covenant on the Raven, which was devastated by fire in August, it cannot be turned back into a hotel and so campaigners feel a community space is the most well-supported alternative.

The Raven is privately owned by Live Urban Two Limited, with Inroka Limited, a development company, still in place.

Earlier this year, Wychavon District Council installed the fencing around the site after being made aware of recent instances where sections had fallen.

Coun Dan Birch, who represents Droitwich East on Worcestershire County Council and has been working

with Raven Heartbeat, added that the authority was looking into what further action could be taken to ensure the boundary remained secure and safe for the public.

Coun Birch added he had requested asbestos monitors be installed, despite agencies being satisfied the site was safe while the asbestos in the building remained undisturbed.

A Raven Heartbeat spokesperson said: "The Raven is an important part of Droitwich's heritage and local identity."

"While safety must come first, our group is committed to working carefully and responsibly to protect the building's historic character for the benefit of the community once we have had final talks with the present owner."

"We can confirm a chimney stack has fallen and the situation has been taken very seriously with immediate steps taken to ensure public safety by Wychavon."

Coun Birch added: "As the local county councillor, but more importantly as a resident of this town, I want to see the Raven brought back to life."

"The Raven Heartbeat Group is serious, well-organised, and taking all the right steps to secure the Raven."

"It is increasingly clear a passionate, community-driven solution may be the best hope for restoring this landmark."

"I will do everything I can to support this group as I wholeheartedly believe they are the best way forward."



A very cool design

FLAGS designed and created by pupils from Colmers Farm Primary School in Rednal are now proudly flying in one of the coldest places on Earth after children took part in the British Antarctic Survey's Antarctica Day Rewind Team Competition.

The contest challenged school pupils to get creative to illustrate their hopes for the future of the planet. The flag created at the school was taken out to Antarctica by an ice core drilling team embarking on a mission there.

Turn to page five for the full story.

The flags designed by Colmers Farm Primary School pupils are now flying in Antarctica. s



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Wishing a happy and prosperous New Year to all our readers and advertisers



Volunteers helping with the 2025 Primrose Hospice Treecycle campaign, Sarah Pemberton, Sue McDowall and Rob McDowall. s

Treecycle will help hospice coffers

RESIDENTS across Bromsgrove, Redditch, Rubery and Droitwich can get their Christmas trees recycled and help raise funds for the Primrose Hospice at the same time.

Treecycle offers a simple solution whereby people – in return for a donation to the Primrose – they can have their trees collected straight from their doorstep.

Between January 10 and 12, 2026, the Primrose Hospice elves will be out and about, gathering

trees from the following postcode areas: B60, B61, B80, B96, B97, B98, B45 and WR9,

Hannah Issac, the hospice's corporate fundraiser, said: "We are really excited about our Treecycle campaign again."

"The last one was a huge success with over 1,000 trees collected throughout Bromsgrove and Redditch and we are hoping this will be even bigger and better."

"We all know how long our trees can be sat in the

garden for after Christmas – so why not save yourself a job and get the Primrose elves to come and take it away for you."

Every donation made through Treecycle helps fund the essential care and support Primrose Hospice provides to individuals with life-limiting illnesses and families in our community.

Visit the website at primrosehospice.org/events/treecycle/ or call 01527 889796 to book slots.

CAS looks back at 'whirlwind' year with pride

THE Bromsgrove Creative Arts Showcase has reflected on a busy 12 months which featured its 'best showcase ever' and young creators.

In the five years since it started, Creative Art Showcase (CAS) has gathered quite a following among the many like-minded in the community.

Annamarie Hulley, who manages the free lottery-funded 'Creative Friends' programme, said: "It's been a very exciting journey, quite a whirlwind - but it's very worthwhile to see how happy we make people."

Showcase 25 moved to Artrix for its annual extravaganza of art/craft and performance and it proved to be an excellent venue.

Because of the different layout, it enabled the CAS team to offer three new aspects – a VR experience, family silent disco and a full production by Oddsocks, the professional touring theatre company.

The venue was further enhanced by hot food provided in style by Golden Wheat, the Ukrainian cafe, and Pizza Heaven, making it perfect for everyone to enjoy a highly affordable and jam-packed community fun day out.

The visitor numbers more than doubled this year to more than 2,000 making this the most successful Showcase yet. The feedback forms were glowing with happy stallholders and satisfied customers.



The silent disco was one of the new additions to the Bromsgrove Creative Arts Showcase 25. Picture by Keith Woolford. s

ers. Dominic Baker, the lead trustee, said: "The volunteers on-site over the weekend were amazing with more than 90 of them giving their time, energy and experience free to make it a happy and safe environment for everyone in the community."

"Artrix volunteers and our team worked as one joined up force which made life so much easier for all of us. We can't say a big enough thank you."

The team at CAS is moving forward under the direction of Dominic, a well-recognised community leader with strong management skills and all the right credentials

to embed creativity into communities. There will be the Young Creators Online exhibition and workshop opportunities in early 2026 and the chance to 'get involved'.

There are roles for anyone who is passionate about art, craft, performance, administration and management or anyone who just wants to help support a vibrant community event or volunteer.

Email info@creativeartshowcase.org or call 07818 830988 for more. People can also visit the website at creativeartshowcase.org or go to facebook.com/creativeartshowcase for further details and updates.

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Banking hub

DROITWICH now has its own banking hub after the premises opened in St Andrews Square.

It will be open between 9am and 5pm on weekdays.

The official launch will be planned in the new year.

Wychevton District Council leader, Coun Richard Morris, said the new banking hub was great news for the town.

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Pupils have their say in debating event

STUDENTS from South Bromsgrove High School won the annual Michael Holt Debating Competition.

The 'Youth Speaks' event was hosted by Bromsgrove Rotary Club and held in the Hospitality Suite at Bromsgrove School, showcasing some exceptional debating talent.

The competition featured young people from North Bromsgrove High, South Bromsgrove High and Bromsgrove School.

South Bromsgrove High

impressed the judges with their articulate and persuasive discussion on the motion: 'Young people have never had it as good as now'. Their team, comprising chairperson Matilda Middleton, proposer Xander Dixon, and opposer Georgia Eades, demonstrated confidence, clarity and teamwork throughout the competition.

Judges praised the high level of preparation and performance across all schools, noting how close the final scores were.

Chris Smith, headteacher at South Bromsgrove High School, said: "Every student should feel immensely proud of their contribution to an evening that celebrated critical thinking and public speaking."

As winners, South Bromsgrove High will now progress to the Rotary District Final in February, where they will represent Bromsgrove against other top-performing schools in the region.

The team also retained the prestigious Michael Holt Debate trophy.



The Michael Holt Debating Competition was held earlier this month and was won by South Bromsgrove High School. Picture by Marcus Mingins. 5125001MMR

Pub fundraiser helping dad for cancer treatment

A DROITWICH pub has raised more than £5,000 to help a family member live with terminal brain cancer as long as he can.

James Davies, known as Jam, was recently diagnosed with Grade 4 Astrocytoma, an aggressive form of cancer.

Kirsty's cousin Andy Docherty, landlord at The Red Lion pub, held a fundraiser earlier this month to help raise the cash needed for James to go abroad for the treatment needed to help him live as long as possible.

The family day, which also included an auction and raffle, generated £5,025.67 towards the total needed for James's treatment.

Andy said: "From the bottom of our hearts at the Red Lion, we want to say a massive thank you to everyone who came to support us or donated auction or raffle prizes.

"We had such a great day, and raised a whopping amount of money."

James, from Worcester, has been given just 12 to 18



James Davies, known as Jam, has been recently diagnosed with cancer. s

months to live without chemotherapy and radiotherapy or five years with treatment.

The 46-year-old and partner Kirsty Howard have four children between them, the youngest being just four years old, and a one-year-old grandson. They are desperate to raise funds for treatment overseas to help him live for as long as he can.

However, the cost of the treatment could be as much as £50,000.

Kirsty said: "Thank you to

each and every one of you who has supported us and donated, we really do appreciate it and are so overwhelmed and grateful - we couldn't have got this far without you.

"We are all so heartbroken, having recently been told the worst news a family can hear. He'll never get rid of the cancer - we've got to prolong his life as long as we can and create happy memories.

"We have a young boy, so even if he manages to live another five years, he will only be nine - we need Jams around longer than that.

"There is a clinic in Germany that specialises in Dendritic Cell Treatment, which is more tailored to Jam's diagnosis.

"We have researched the clinic and the treatments and feel we're making the right decision to give Jam the best chance at beating this horrible disease."

Currently, more than £30,000 has been raised of the £36,000 needed for James to make the journey to Germany for treatment.

Visit gofundme.com/james-davies-jam to donate.

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Here's where to get help if you need it

PEOPLE are being urged to make sure they get the right healthcare treatment this new year.

The changing of the year is usually the busiest time of year for emergency departments and West Midlands Ambulance Service.

And, with that unprecedented demand, staff at the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust's minor injury units (MIUs) want everyone to be aware of the alternative treatment centres available.

MIUs across Worcestershire are open seven-days-a-week throughout the festive season (including bank holidays). They offer advice and treatment to anyone with a minor injury.

Bromsgrove's MIU at the Princess of Wales Community Hospital is open from 8am to 8pm, while the MIU at Kidderminster Hospital opens from 8am to 10pm.

The minor injury units at Evesham Community Hospital and Malvern Community Hospital open from 9am to 9pm. The one at Tenbury Wells opens from 9am to 5pm every day.

Local pharmacists can also give expert confiden-

tial advice, as well as medicines for a range of minor ailments. No appointment is necessary.

Here are the pharmacy times for Worcestershire for the New Year bank holiday.

New Year's Day

Knights Chemist, Birmingham Road, Bromsgrove is open from midday to 3pm.

Vale Pharmacy, Evesham Medical Centre, Abbey Lane, Evesham, is available from 10am to 12pm.

Kidderminster Pharmacy, Comberton Hill, Kidderminster, is open between 10am and 1pm.

York Pharmacy, Tork Street, Stourport-on-Severn is open from 1pm to 4pm.

In Malvern, Boots, Enigma Retail Park, is open from 9am to 6pm.

Boots, Kingfisher Centre, Redditch, is open from 10am to 1pm.

Knights Pharmacy, New Road, Rubery, is open from 10am to 4pm.

Asda, Silver Street, Worcester, is open from 10am to 4pm..

And people, if they are unsure of where to go, can initially contact NHS 111, either online at 111.nhs.uk or by calling 111.

Rounding off the year in Severn Valley style

THE SEVERN Valley Railway (SVR) will round off 2025 in style with the return of its popular Winter Diesel Day on Monday, December 29, offering a full day of powerful diesel action.

The trains will be set against the scenic backdrop of the Severn Valley on a crisp winter's day.

Designed to appeal to committed railway enthusiasts and families alike, the Winter Diesel Day will see an intensive timetable in operation between Kidderminster and Bridgnorth, showcasing the SVR's impressive home diesel fleet alongside a pair of special visiting locomotives.

The event offers a chance to experience the line at its loudest, with engines working hard through the winter landscape.

Passengers can relax in the comfort of the SVR's heritage carriages, all kept warm throughout the day.

Where diesel locomotives are unable to provide carriage heating themselves, the railway will be utilising two of its smaller steam locomotives within the train to supply traditional steam



Picture courtesy of the SVR. s

heat, ensuring everyone stays cosy on board while enjoying the sights, sounds and atmosphere of winter rail travel.

Away from the trains, there will be plenty to enjoy along the line.

Visitors can break their journey at The Engine House at Highley, browse station gift shops and enjoy hot food and drinks from cafes and kiosks across the railway.

SVR pubs will also be open, serving a range of well-kept real ales, making the event a

great day out for all ages.

SVR managing director Gus Dunster said: "Our Winter Diesel Day is a fantastic way to end the year. It combines big diesel power, visiting favourites and a busy timetable with the unique charm of travelling through the Severn Valley in winter."

"By using steam heating within the train, we can offer all the atmosphere and warmth of our heritage carriages, whatever the weather, and create a memorable day

for enthusiasts, families and first-time visitors alike."

Stars of the show will include Class 37s 37418 and 37508, thanks to LORAM and Steve Beniston and Class 17 'Clayton' D8568 - making its first runs of the year.

And there will be Class 20 20048, Class 33 33108, Class 46 46045, Class 50s 50049 'Defiance' and 50033 'Glorious', Class 52, D1015 'Western Champion', Class 101 and 108 DMUs.

Visit svr.co.uk for more.

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New bin lorries to hit road in revamp

A FLEET of 15 new bin lorries have arrived in Bromsgrove to keep household waste and recycling collections running smoothly.

The modern vehicles are replacing older refuse trucks that have reached the end of their service life. Coun Karen May, leader of Bromsgrove District Council, said: "Good planned investments in our vehicle fleet help ensure reliable bin collections and efficient services for our residents."

Bromsgrove's fleet empties around 2.6million bins a year across the 84-square-mile district.

Refuse collection vehicles typi-

cally need replacing every seven years to maintain reliability.

To support that, the district council allocates a budget of about \$4.5million to a strategic vehicle replacement programme.

The new bin lorries also prompted the replacement of Bromsgrove's wheeled household bins, as the district had been the last in the country still using a legacy bin design that had become incompatible with modern UK-standard lorries.

Those bin swaps are almost complete, and, like the bins, new bin lorries have been coming in to replace their obsolete counterparts area-by-area.

The council is now gearing up to

write to its garden waste customers to arrange their new brown bins in the new year, as the last leg of the big bin changeover.

Coun May added: "We had to replace the bins because new trucks simply can't empty those old ones."

"But it will benefit taxpayers because it brings us fully in line with the national standard across the board."

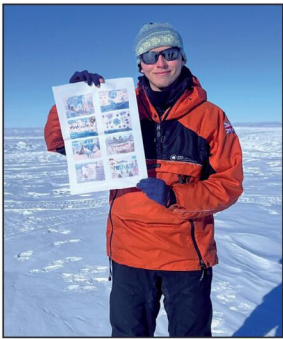
"That's more efficient than before, and when you're going round a big district emptying millions of bins, efficiency really matters."

The old trucks are sold for parts and scrap, with the proceeds going back into the public purse to reduce pressure on council tax.



Transport manager Alex Parry, Coun. Karen May and senior technician Baz Harris with one of the new lorries. Picture by Marcus Mingins 5125002MMR

Team flies the flag to highlight youngsters in Antarctica



THE HEADTEACHER of Colmers Farm Primary School in Rednal has described a project to fly pupils' flags in Antarctica as 'truly inspiring'.

The project was undertaken for the British Antarctic Survey's Antarctica Day Rewind Team Competition which invited young people across the UK to create artwork that represented their hopes for the planet. It aimed to give young people a tangible connection to real-world science, helping them see how their ideas linked to global efforts to pro-

tect the planet. The experience sparked excitement across the school, with pupils inspired by the idea that their artwork has reached one of the most remote places on Earth.

The pupils learned about Antarctica's unique environment and the importance of ice core research before designing flags themed around environmental protection, global unity and the importance of scientific discovery.

The REWIND ice core drilling team, who are currently under-

taking major drilling missions to better understand climate and ice dynamics, took Colmers Farm's flags with them to the icy continent to celebrate Antarctica Day.

Headteacher David Williams said: "Designing flags for Antarctica has not only deepened their understanding of climate science but also given them a sense of pride and global connection."

"Knowing their work has travelled thousands of miles to support a world-leading scientific

mission has been incredibly empowering for them."

By linking geography, art, science and global citizenship, the project has strengthened pupils' understanding of climate research and broadened their sense of connection to the world.

Colmers Farm, part of the Excelsior Multi-Academy Trust, said it would continue to explore opportunities which bring learning to life and encourage pupils to see themselves as future innovators, scientists and global citizens.

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More set to benefit from new support for families

CHILDREN in Redditch are set to have a more positive year ahead after the government announced scrapping the two-child limit and introducing a comprehensive package of support for working families.

The strategy will lift 2,350 children in Redditch out of poverty by expanding free school meals for families receiving Universal Credit, rolling out free breakfast clubs, and expanding free childcare and increasing upfront childcare costs through Universal Credit.

Scrapping the two child benefit cap was a controversial move in the recent budget, after seven Labour MP's were suspended for supporting an amendment to scrap it in 2024.

Redditch MP Chris Bloore has welcomed the news.

He said: "Child poverty stifles opportunity and I see every week in Redditch how rising costs and insecure work have made life harder for families who are trying their best to get by.

"This strategy is a real turning point. No child's future should be determined by the circumstances of their birth."

Almost three in four children growing up in poverty today live in working families, with the two-child limit identified as the single biggest driver of rising child poverty in recent years.

The strategy will also put an end to the inappropriate placement of families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation beyond six weeks, it will aim to increase support to help parents return to work.

They will also put in new measures to make infant formula more affordable, potentially saving families up to £540 in a baby's first year

Mr Bloore added: "In Redditch I've met hardworking parents doing everything they can to provide for their children, yet still struggling with soaring costs. This strategy puts fairness and opportunity back at the heart of government and will make a real difference to families across our community."



Council leaders visiting the business. s

Teaming up to develop

A REDDITCH based business is reaching new heights and new markets, after council support.

Quattro Display Ltd, specialists in designing and building exhibition stands, interiors, and showrooms, have seen a 15 per cent boost in annual growth after working with the Elevate Manufacturing Programme.

With over 30 years in the industry and a client list featuring names like Fujitsu, Panasonic and Makita, Quattro wanted to expand further especially into international markets.

Through the programme, Quattro teamed up with a dedicated Manufacturing Growth Manager to develop a digital marketing strategy that would raise their online profile and help reach customers abroad.

Ashley Blizzard, managing director, Quattro Display Ltd said: "The Elevate Manufacturing Programme provided us with the strategic insight and support needed

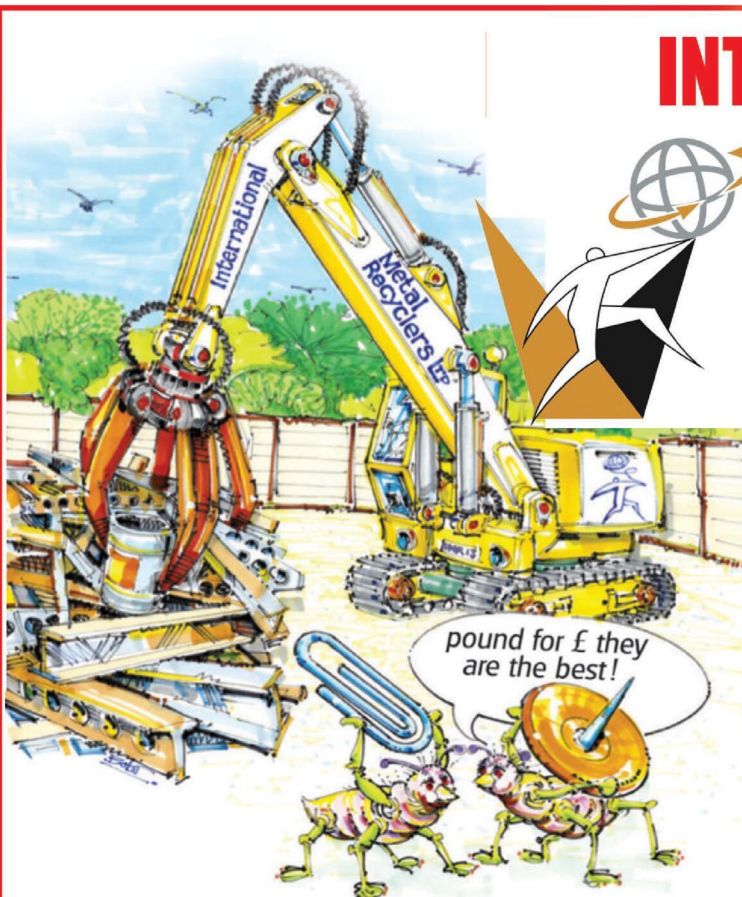
to overcome our growth challenges. The tailored advice and resources were instrumental in helping us navigate new markets and improve our operational efficiency."

Coun Jo Monk, Leader of Worcestershire County Council said: "Quattro Display is a great example of how the right support can unlock real growth.

"Their journey shows just how powerful tailored business advice and funding can be.

"I'd strongly encourage other local manufacturers with big ambitions to explore the Elevate Manufacturing Programme - the expert guidance and grants available can help businesses scale up, innovate, and compete with confidence on the global stage."

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Tributes paid to true servant of the club

TRIBUTES have been paid to Bromsgrove Rovers goalkeeper Chris Hooper, a 'true football hero', who has passed away aged 83.

Hooper, who played 686 times for Bromsgrove Rovers in the 1960s and 1970s, passed away last month, and his funeral was held earlier this month.

He joined Birmingham City from school, but a broken leg hampered his career at St Andrews.

Towards the end of the 1961/62 season, Hooper joined the Rovers, managed by Joe Wainwright, towards the end of the 1961/62 season, aged 19.

He was the number one goalkeeper for the next 13 seasons, at one stage playing in 170 consecutive games, and was granted a testimonial match in 1971.

He played the final game of his career against Milton Keynes City in the Southern League Division 1 North in April 1975.

Bromsgrove Sporting was formed in 2009 by a group of former Bromsgrove Rovers' directors and supporters when the latter club was in serious financial difficulty and facing closure.

A Bromsgrove Sporting spokesperson said: "We are sad to hear of the passing of former Bromsgrove Rovers goalkeeper Chris Hooper last month, at the age of 83.

"Chris played nearly 700 games for Rovers between 1962 and 1975 - he signed towards the end of the 1961/62 season and, from then onwards, was the automatic choice in goal for



the next 13 years, securing a legendary status at the club.

"A full tribute to Chris will be featured in a future match day programme."

Several former Rovers fans have also taken to social media to pay tribute to their former goalkeeper.

One said: "I remember when he first started playing for Rovers - I was at school.

"He was a wonderful player for Bromsgrove."

Another described him as a true football hero of Bromsgrove Rovers.

Chance to have your say on social housing

A CONSULTATION on proposed changes to how social housing is allocated in Bromsgrove District is under way, ahead of the introduction of a new system next year.

'Bromsgrove Home Choice' will replace 'Home Choice Plus' in 2026 as the district's local housing register and the way social and affordable rented homes from housing providers across the area are advertised.

Applicants on the local housing register can use it to express interest in available properties.

That system is all underpinned by a local social housing allocation policy.

Setting that policy - which must comply with national housing legislation - is one of Bromsgrove District Council's statutory responsibilities and the council is now consulting on proposed revisions to it.

Coun Kit Taylor, Bromsgrove District Council's portfolio holder for planning, WRS, and strategic housing, said: "This essential update will ensure our housing register continues to prioritise applicants fairly and effectively.

"With demand for social homes far exceeding supply, it's vital to ensure our allocations policy isn't just legally compliant, but that it's as fair as it can be to those with a local connection."

The change to Home Choice Plus will mean all existing applicants will need to reapply under the new criteria in the future.

To qualify, applicants must first be eligible for social housing and then meet legal definitions of 'reasonable preference' for housing or a lower housing need as defined locally.

Applicants' priority will then be deter-

mined by financial and personal circumstances.

Proposed changes to local policy, now under consultation, include having six numbered priority bands to make levels clearer.

The highest level - Band 1 - will prioritise homeless applicants as they are owed a duty to a home and are in the highest need only. Within the bands, priority will be down to the date applications were made.

In Band 2 will be people ready to move on from council-referred supported accommodation and, in Band 4, will be those who have a reasonable preference but no local connection.

Income thresholds will also be raised with applicants in Band 4 earning \$47,000 for couples and \$60,000 for families.

Low-level disrepair (non-category 1 hazards) will be removed as grounds for 'reasonable preference'.

Under the new system, applications from non-qualifying homeowners would be rejected, except in exceptional circumstances.

As these changes will affect outcomes for some applicants, the council is urging people to respond to the consultation by sending in their views on the changes.

The survey is promoted through the Home Choice Plus website directly. Alternatively, people can go to: bromsgrove.gov.uk/consultations to have their say.

Paper copies are available from the council's Parkside offices on Market Street, Bromsgrove.

The closing date for comments on the consultation is 5pm on January 14.

The closing date is 5pm on Wednesday 14 January, 2026.



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Milestone for key research

TWO decades of groundbreaking work in tackling domestic abuse and sexual violence through education, research, and advocacy has been marked at the University of Worcester.

The milestone event brought together alumni of the university's pioneering Master's programme - Understanding Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence, alongside professionals and partners working across the sector.

Launched in 2005, Worcester was the first UK university to offer a postgraduate qualification dedicated to this critical area. Over the past 20 years, the programme has empowered more than 500 graduates to lead change in policing, social work, healthcare, education, and the voluntary sector, shaping policy, transforming practice, and improving outcomes for survivors.

The anniversary event opened with a video message from safeguarding minister Jess Phillips MP, who congratulated the university on its leadership and impact.

In it, she said: "Education and evidence are the foundations of driving real change and I want to personally thank you all for the contributions each and every one of you have made towards tackling what is without question a national emergency - violence against women and girls."

Dr Claire McLoone-Richards, co-course leader for the MA, continued: "We were delighted to have a video message from Jess Phillips to mark this important occasion and to celebrate the achievements of our alumni and partners over the past 20 years. This anniversary is a reminder of how far we've come, but also of the urgent need to continue this work. Domestic abuse and sexual violence remain pressing issues, and our commitment to education, research, and collaboration is as strong as ever."

Beverley Gilbert, co-course leader, added: "It was wonderful to bring lots of our alumni back together and to hear about the impact that they are making in this field, following their studies with us. There is so much more to do for the future."

The event coincided with the International 16 Days of Action against Gender-Based Violence.

Alumni of the university's pioneering Master's programme gather for its 20th anniversary.



Sgt Cathy Atkinson, Sam Ellis from the Moving Forward project, Hannah Fowle from Quality Crust and PCSO Ben Mawby at the launch of the new scheme.

A PCSO from Droitwich Safer Neighbourhood Team has brought a bakery and community project together to help residents who need support.

And PCSO Ben Mawby's scheme also provides a way for the police to engage with some people in the town who do not usually talk to officers.

PCSO Mawby, based around Droitwich town centre, had the idea after a conversation with Quality Crust which is now providing unsold baked products to Moving Forward.

The project offers a variety of support to residents, particularly in Westlands, including the Community Fridge launched to help reduce food wastage and provide food support.

PCSO Mawby said: "Part of my role within the town centre is to engage with businesses and listen to any concerns they have about

shoplifting, anti-social behaviour and safety. "I can offer advice, reassurance and a direct link to the police should they need it."

He realised bringing the bakery and local project together could provide support to those who needed it, could help build confidence in the community and engage with people.

Hannah Fowle, from Quality Crust, said the business was pleased to be supporting such a fantastic project.

"It is a small gesture from us, but we hope it can make a big difference to others."

Nikki Beeston, Moving Forward's project manager, thanked PCSO Mawby and said: "The daily donations we receive are a wonderful boost to our Community Cafe and Fridge and the quality of the food is exceptional."

"It's a fantastic example of how local businesses can make a real difference in their community."

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Winning for the third year

COLLEAGUES at an Evesham retirement development are celebrating after their company won a top award in a national competition for the third year running.

Staff at Charles Lodge on Bewick Court are on a high after Churchill Living got gold in the Best Retirement Home Developer category in the WhatHouse? Awards 2025, bagging the top spot for an impressive three times in a row.

Presenter Gabby Logan was the host for the event which took place on Friday, November, 21 at the Grosvenor House Hotel, London which was attended by over 1,300 industry professionals.

The category recognises the best developers serving the 'later living' sector, looking at a range of factors including overall commitment and contribution to the promotion and enhancement of retirement housing.

The judges' report highlighted Churchill's impressive performance during a difficult year for the entire housebuilding industry. They said: "Churchill leads the way in later living, with its unwavering commitment to this sector. Not just in the quality of developments it builds right across the UK, but in its tireless championing of the residential and social needs of older people."

Spencer J McCarthy, Churchill's chairman and CEO, added: "Winning this accolade for a third year in a row is an incredible achievement which would not be possible without our fantastic team of people around the country.

"Recognition like this underlines the strength of our business, the quality of our product and the positive change we strive for on behalf of our sector."

Charles Lodge is a collection of low-maintenance, energy-efficient one and two bedroom retirement apartments in the heart of Evesham.

RSC role sees Daniel's stage hopes take off

A FORMER performing arts student from Stratford College is flying high in his career after starring in Wendy and Peter Pan with the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Daniel Krikler, who studied musical theatre at the college from 2007 to 2009, took on the title role of Peter Pan at the Barbican Theatre in London.

Daniel was destined for a performance career after falling in love with the stage at a young age. He joined a local youth theatre group and dance school and his passion for it grew.

He knew the best chance of getting into drama school was to continue to study, so chose Stratford College as his training ground.

Following his time at college, Daniel went to the prestigious Laine Theatre Arts for three years, before later studying a master's degree in acting at Central School of Speech and Drama.

Since training, Daniel has performed in several productions. He fondly remembers Musical Loserville which transferred to the West End, and his first play Pink Mist.

Now Daniel is to sprinkle himself with fairy dust and fly to Neverland.



Hannah Saxby and Daniel Krikler as Wendy and Peter, in Wendy and Peter Pan. Picture by Manuel Harlan (RSC).

He said: "I grew up just outside Coventry and would cycle for over an hour to the RSC to watch shows. I remember cycling home afterwards along country roads with my mind

full of these incredible characters I'd just seen. So to work with that company all these years later on such a magical show and character feels really extraordinary.

"Just being paid to do what you loved felt crazy. There's always that little voice in your head that tells you you'll probably never get a job, so to land these roles, it's pretty great."

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Help to stay active over Twixmas



THE festive season is filled with joy, celebration... and long stretches of cosy downtime.

With social events, rich food and shorter days, it's easy for movement to slip to the bottom of the priority list.

But staying active in December doesn't have to mean skipping mince pies or spending hours in the gym. With a little creativity, you can keep your body moving and enjoy all the magic of the season.

Make movement part of the festivities

The easiest way to stay active is to blend it into your celebrations, take a post-lunch family walk on Christmas Day or Boxing Day, do a winter lights walking route around your neighbourhood or try out winter sports like ice skating, or a stroll round a Christmas market.

When movement is the event, you'll hardly notice you're exercising.

Dress for the weather

Cold weather is one of the biggest barriers to winter exercise. The best way to stay warm is to layer up, with a thermal top, light fleece, waterproof jacket and of course not forgetting tick socks and gloves.

If you're warm and comfortable, you're far more likely to head out-

side — even if it's just for a brisk 15-minute walk.

Keep it short and simple

Forget hour-long workouts, December is about efficiency.

Try a 10–15 minute home workouts, a quick yoga stretch when you wake up, two brisk 10-minute walks and a five-minute mobility break between wrapping presents

Short bursts keep your energy up and help counter long periods of sitting.

Make the most of mornings

Festive evenings fill up fast - dinners, drinks, carol concerts, parties - so mornings are your best bet for consistent movement.

Even a short morning session can boost your mood, keep you energised for the day and educe the temptation to skip exercise later

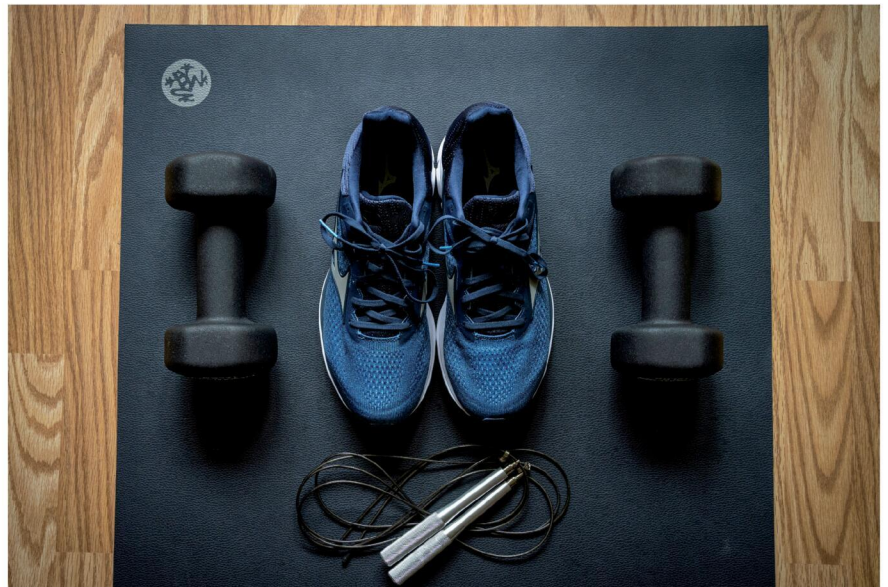
Think a walk with a coffee, gentle stretching, or a quick home routine before the celebrations begin.

Try fun, festive themed workouts

Add a bit of novelty to keep motivation high including 12 Days of Christmas circuits, a festive playlist dance workout a Santa-run or charity fun run.

A sprinkle of silliness goes a long way in December.

Prioritise wellbeing, not perfection



December is not the month for strict fitness rules or guilt.

Instead set a low-pressure goal for example move every day, walk 20 minutes or stretch before bed

Be flexible, if plans change, swap a long workout for a short one.

The key is gentle consistency, not rigidity.

Don't Forget to Rest

Staying active is important, but so is rest. December is emotionally and physically busy. Prioritise good sleep, hydration and relaxation with spending time away from screens and with family and friends.

The goal is to start the new year feeling energised, not exhausted.

The Bottom Line

You don't need a tough regime to stay active during the festive period - just small, joyful habits woven naturally into your days. Movement should feel like a welcome break from the busyness, not another item on the to-do list.

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Stratford care home gets a makeover



A Stratford care home has been given a new lease of life, thanks to a major refurbishment and development programme.

The Limes, a 31-bedroom home on Alcester Road run by local charity WCS Care, has added a café, outdoor patio and hair salon, and several ensuite have also been upgraded to wetrooms to support comfort and independence.

Set in quiet, private grounds near the town centre and train station, The Limes supports both privately and socially funded residents.

Supporting wellbeing every day

WCS Care's aim is simple – that every day is well lived.

At The Limes, this includes regular activities and trips out in the Memory Maker minibus, helping residents and families revisit familiar places and make new memories.

Music is a big part of life too, with regular sessions from WCS Care's dedicated community musicians. Research shows music can help reduce

pain and anxiety, support speech and memory loss, and even improve balance and appetite. It also helps families connect with loved ones.

Sleeping well at night

In many care homes, night checks disturb sleep. Staff often open doors every one or two hours, which can leave people feeling tired the next day.

At The Limes, a night-time acoustic monitoring system offers a quieter approach. Used with consent, it listens for unusual sounds like someone calling out or moving and alerts staff who respond straightaway. Sleeping residents are left undisturbed.

This system has been shown to reduce falls and improve wellbeing. People who sleep better are more alert, steadier during the day, and often eat and drink better too.

The Limes is currently the only home in Stratford-upon-Avon using this

technology – another way WCS Care supports people's dignity and comfort.

A consistent and caring team

The home benefits from a long-standing, dedicated team who were recently recognised with Investors in People Platinum – an accreditation achieved by just 5% of accredited organisations.

Manager Karen Hall has been with WCS Care for over 20 years.

'I'm incredibly proud to be the manager here,' says Karen. 'The Limes has a real family feel. Our small lounges and dining rooms help people connect. The café and hair salon have brought something new to daily life and we're already planning lots of social events to welcome the community into our home.'



New café



New hair salon



Karen Hall
Care Home Manager

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New Year Feature

Trying something new in 2026

WITH the new year always comes a sense of wanting to do or try something new.

Whether it is to reach a goal, bring some joy or just put yourself out of your comfort zone, there are plenty of hobbies and past-times you could take up.

To get an idea of the kind of things which could be taken up, we looked at the top leisure activities across the UK.

You will probably not be surprised to see that - according to top pollsters YouGov - the top five are: listening to music, using the Internet, reading, travelling and going to restaurants.

And, while most of us probably do these regularly, you could vary them - maybe try listening to different bands or genres of music, set yourself a target to read so many books in a certain amount of time or travel to some places you have never visited - either in the UK or abroad.

FYI, the rest of the top 10 consists of watching movies on TV, spending time with family, walking, spending time at home and visiting historical sites.

Traditional

Among the traditional leisure activities we think about, baking is 15th, doing puzzles is in 17th (jigsaw puzzles is 36th), going to

the cinema is 19th and gardening is 20th. Maybe you could start a gardening project to create a new plot or area. Quizzes and pub quizzes are 24th and 25th respectively, tenpin bowling is 30th and DIY is 43rd - undertaken by 53 per cent of the population. Brits are notoriously renowned for not being able to speak the lingo when they go abroad but learning foreign languages is 46th in the list - done by 52 per cent (over half) of us. Wine making is 59th and wine tasting is 66th. Collecting things is 73rd and playing chess is 76th.

Arts and crafts

When it comes to creative past-times, the most popular one is photography which, according to the figures, 72 per cent of us do. In 32nd place is playing a musical instrument (the guitar is the most popular of those), in 37th is writing and 41st is drawing. Telling jokes is 44th but watching stand-up comedy is 35th (enjoyed by 57 per cent of the population) so maybe you could give that a go. Painting is the 61st most popular past-time and acting is 62nd. Knitting is 95th.

Health and wellbeing

We all need a bit of relaxation and in this category, meditation is 68th and yoga is 69th - both done

regularly by 45 per cent of the population. Pilates (which could equally go in the category below) is 93rd.

Fitness

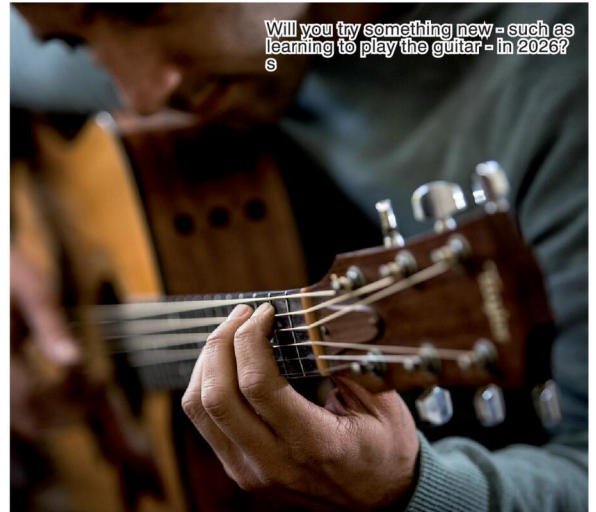
After walking, the next most popular fitness activity is swimming in 18th - 68 per cent of us do that regularly. Following that is trekking or hiking in 26th, playing sport is 50th and running or jogging is 53rd. Playing the nation's most-loved sport and beautiful game - football - is 57th and cycling is 58th. Weight-training is 77th, Zumba is 102nd and going to the gym 105th. Of course, all of these are a great way to meet new people and get fit at the same time and there will be plenty of clubs and groups in your local area you could seek out.

Out and about

Visiting museums is 16th, going to the theatre is 29th, watching live music is 31st, birdwatching is 78th, going to festivals is 83rd and going to the ballet or dance is 136th.

Wild cards

If you want to have a go at something, not done by many people, here are our pick of the 'wild cards' - at the very least it will probably make a good conversation start-



Will you try something new - such as learning to play the guitar - in 2026?

er. Puppetry, in 148th, is undertaken by just 17 per cent of the population, as is Tarot. Even less popular is Quilling art - delicately rolling, shaping and gluing thin strips of paper to create decorative designs for cards and pictures and 'Cardistry' - performing and manip-

ulating playing cards to create visually stunning flourishes, cuts, fans, and patterns. So there you go.

Whatever you choose to do, give it your all, enjoy yourself and take pride at the end of 2026 that you tried something new.



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Special Feature

Celebrations across the globe

“TWIXMAS” is a modern British term for the quiet, in-between days from December 26 to December 31.

Other cultures don't usually use the word Twixmas, but many have long-standing traditions for this same “between holidays” period.

Here are some of the most notable:

Germany and Austria - Zeit zwischen den Jahren

Literally “the time between the years,” this period is seen as reflective and a bit mystical.

Many people visit family, relax, and avoid work.

Old folk customs include Rauhnächte (the “Rough Nights”) - 12 mystical nights with traditions like burning incense to “cleanse” the home.

Some avoid doing laundry or major chores due to old superstitions.

Scandinavia - “Romjul” (Norway)/Mellandagarna” (Sweden)

A time for rest, visiting relatives, eating leftovers, and spending time outdoors.

Many offices close or run reduced hours.

Norwegians often go skiing. Swedes enjoy sales similar to Boxing Day promotions.

Spain - Between Navidad and Reyes

This is an active, festive period leading up to Three Kings' Day (January 6).

Families go out to enjoy holiday lights, markets, and parades.

Children are excitedly anticipating gifts from the Three Kings.

Italy - Between Natale and Capodanno

The “in-between” days are used for long meals, visiting family, and gift exchanges.

Many people rest before the big celebration of New Year's Eve (Capodanno).

Some regions maintain folk traditions, such as bonfires or fortune rituals.

Greece - The Dodekaimero (12 days of Christmas)

Considered a continuous festive season from December 25 to January 6.

Traditions include carols, parties, church services, and folklore about mischievous goblins (kallikantzari) said to roam during these days.

Japan - Omisoka Prep Period

Japan doesn't celebrate Christmas religiously, but the days between December 26 to December 30 are crucial for deep house-cleaning (osoji), preparing osechi (New Year's food), traveling to visit family, and wrapping up the year's business before Shogatsu (New Year).



China - Not a major festival period

As Christmas isn't traditionally celebrated, the days between December 26 and December 31 are mostly normal workdays.

Young people may still enjoy Christmas sales or Western-style decorations.

The big festivities instead cluster around Lunar New Year, usually in late January or February.

Latin America - Post-Christmas Posadas to Día de Reyes

In many Latin American countries, the Christmas season extends until January 6.

Families enjoy leftovers, gatherings, and community events.

Many places host fiestas, fire-works, and holiday markets.

Children anticipate gifts from the Three Wise Men.

United States and Canada

While not formally named “Twixmas,” the week between Christmas and New Year is widely understood as a time for relaxation, shopping returns, travel, and informal family gatherings.

Many offices shut down or run half-capacity.



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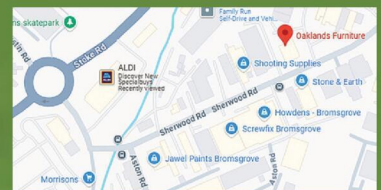
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Eco Feature

Sustainability at Christmastime



EVERYONE is more aware of how important it is to be more sustainable in many aspects of their lives.

Yet ripped wrapping paper, discarded Christmas trees, and monumental amounts of food waste make Christmas a time when we 'do not give to the planet'.

Christmas is a time of excess in more ways than one.

But through some simple eco hacks, you can have a greener Christmas this year and save some pennies along the way.

Wrapping Paper

According to GWP Group, the average consumer in the UK uses 227,000 miles of wrapping paper each year.

Some wrapping paper has a plastic film which means, in many cases, it cannot be recycled, leaving ripped-up pieces of paper lying around landfills.

To be more eco-friendly this year, when unwrapping presents, try not to rip the paper off the gifts and instead fold it up and keep it for next year.

This little hack can save you from buying wrapping paper next year while avoiding lengths of wrapping paper ending up in landfills.

Save a tree

Real Christmas trees are one of the best ways a person can have a greener Christmas.

If you have a tree in a pot, it can be replanted in your garden and reused yearly or could make a beautiful outdoor Christmas tree.

However, fresh-cut trees cannot be planted, but you can recycle them through schemes hosted by charities and companies.

If you have a fake tree, keep using it and try to make it last as long as possible before possibly switching to a real one.

Outside Christmas lights

The cost of living is pulling on everyone's purse strings and, with energy costs soaring, turning off your Christmas lights late at night can save you money and the planet.

Turning off your Christmas lights at a set time each night or scheduling them on for two hours can stop vast amounts of energy waste while still enjoying your festive display.

Leftover food

Food waste is one of the leading excesses we have at Christmas.

Cooked food cannot be recycled or put in compost, leaving masses of it being thrown away each Christmas.



Some Christmas food is frozen or can last a few days if kept in the fridge to be eaten.

Christmas baps are one way you can reduce your food wastage by using up leftover food to make a festive sandwich.

Certain foods can also be fro-

zen and reheated to be eaten for another day.

Unwanted presents

At Christmas, we all get presents that we may not like, and instead of throwing these away, if unopened,

they can be donated to local charities.

Or they can be kept and distributed to your friends and family next Christmas - just make sure you remember who gave you the present first.



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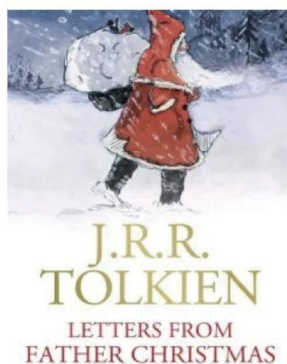
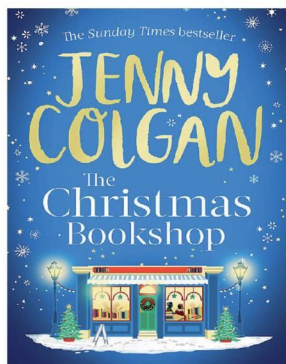
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The gift of a good festive read



AS we gear up for the big day, it brings with it a longing for stories that feel as comforting as a woollen blanket.

Christmas is a season made for reading - when the world slows just enough for us to lose ourselves in a good book.

Whether your festive mood calls for mystery, romance, nostalgia or pure magic, these five Christmas books offer the perfect literary companions for your cosiest evenings.

A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens

No festive reading list is complete without the story that shaped

the season itself. Dickens' classic tale of Ebenezer Scrooge - equal parts ghost story, social commentary, and joyful redemption - still sparkles with life nearly two centuries on. At just over 100 pages, it's the ideal read for a busy December. And for those of us who like being doubly festive, why not follow up with watching one of its many adaptations. My favourite being The Muppet's version.

The Christmas Bookshop by Jenny Colgan

If you're dreaming of a cosy escape, Colgan's charming novel delivers exactly that. Set in a crumbling Edinburgh bookshop in the heart of winter, this is a story about second chances, sis-

terhood, and falling in love - both with people and places. Colgan's has the skill to make a literary world you want to jump right in. A brilliantly cosy book.

Perfect for readers who love feel-good fiction, bookshops, and a touch of festive romance.

One Day in December by Josie Silver

This modern winter romance begins with a fleeting moment - two strangers locking eyes through a bus window - and blossoms into a decade-long journey of missed chances, hopes, and heartbreaks. Set against the backdrop of twinkling London, it's a warm, emotional story that captures the way love can surprise us, especially at Christmas.

One to pick up if you want something heartfelt and utterly addictive.

Letters from Father Christmas by J. R. R. Tolkien

Long before Middle-earth, Tolkien wrote magical letters from "Father Christmas" to his children. Filled with illustrated adventures featuring polar bears, goblins, and the bustling life of the North Pole, this beautiful collection is a treasure for families and nostalgic readers alike. It's whimsical, generous, and infused with childlike wonder - everything Christmas should be.

Hercule Poirot's Christmas by Agatha Christie

Not everyone craves sugar-sweet stories - and for those who like their Christmas with a twist, Christie's holiday murder mystery is irresistible. When a wealthy patriarch is found dead in a locked room during a tense family gathering, Poirot must unravel the truth amid lies, secrets, and festive chaos. Deliciously dramatic, wickedly clever, and endlessly fun.

Best for readers who want a sharper, more suspenseful slice of Christmas.

Whether you're curled up by the window watching snow fall or unwinding after a busy day of festivities, these books offer warmth, wonder, and a welcome escape.

Browse the Winter Edition of Seasons



As winter's chill begins to settle across our three counties, there's a certain kind of beauty that only this time of year brings.

This, then, feels like the perfect moment to launch 'Seasons' - our brand-new glossy magazine, created to celebrate the people, places, and stories that make Worcestershire, Warwickshire and the West Midlands such a wonderful part of the world

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'Seasons' magazine is brought to you by your local 'Observer' Newspaper team

Each quarter, Seasons will follow the rhythm of the year - from the crisp calm of winter to the first buds of spring, the brightness of summer and the richness of autumn - highlighting the very best of local life, from independent shops and community ventures to countryside walks, home inspiration, and hidden gems worth discovering.

Our first Winter edition is all about warmth - in every sense of the word. You'll find features that reflect the spirit of the season: comforting food, inspiring people, caring places, and ways to make the cold months glow with local charm.

This magazine is for you - our readers, neighbours and local businesses - and we can't wait to share the year ahead with you, one beautiful season at a time.

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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

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

HARD

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

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.

Children's authors

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

Solutions opposite

CROSSWORD

1		2		3			4		5		6
7							8				
						9					
10									11		
12						13					
						14				15	16
						17				18	
19		20							21		
22						23					
24							25				

ACROSS

- 7. Merited (6)
- 8. Empty (6)
- 10. Wrap up (7)
- 11. Irate (5)
- 12. Chances (4)
- 13. Disdain (5)
- 17. Perspire (5)
- 18. Inflamed eyelid (4)
- 22. Permit (5)
- 23. Remark (7)
- 24. Abandon (6)
- 25. Staggered (6)

DOWN

- 1. Evolve (7)
- 2. Supply (7)
- 3. Kingdom (5)
- 4. Gruesome (7)
- 5. Scope (5)
- 6. Remains (5)
- 9. Watcher (9)
- 14. Clumsy (7)
- 15. Surprise (7)
- 16. Protects (7)
- 19. Robust (5)
- 20. Near (5)
- 21. Awry (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.

- Youth
- Prepared a golf shot
- Nurse
- Curve
- Attach



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.

- 17531 gives an Asian country;
- 87932 gives an African river;
- 6371274 gives an Irish county.

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

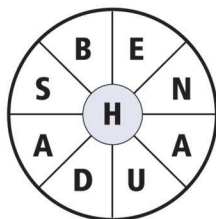
CODEWORD

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.

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

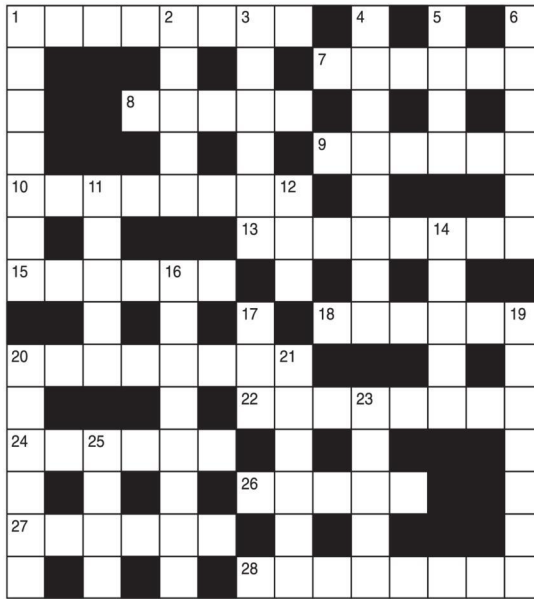


How you rate
 8 words: average
 12 words: good
 16 words: very good
 20 or more: excellent.

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- Double-headed weight, swung in order to develop the muscles (8)
- Mortal Gorgon beheaded by Perseus (6)
- Hebrew patriarch, father of Methuselah (5)
- Distilled liquid (6)
- Ball game played with long sticks, originating in North America (8)
- Anthony —, novelist famous for his "Barchester" series (8)
- Drink of a mixture of beer and lemonade or ginger beer (6)
- Colour lying between blue and violet in the spectrum (6)
- Leonardo da Vinci portrait famous for its smile (4,4)
- In history, a French Protestant (8)
- One who professes Islam (6)
- Virus infection characterised by inflammation of the parotid glands (5)
- Gas without colour, taste or smell, supporting life and combustion (6)
- Sea-floor creature of which most species have five arms (8)



DOWN

- Capital of the Isle of Man (7)
- A kind of gambling game (5)
- Migratory insect destructive to vegetation (6)
- German dirigible airship used during World War I (8)
- Murmuring sound made by a happy cat (4)
- Fleshy growth at the neck of a turkey (6)
- A number of stores, etc., owned and operated by one person or company (5)
- In physics, a unit of work (3)
- Conspicuous constellation containing many bright stars (5)
- Musical instrument called a cimbalom in Hungary (8)
- Common forest tree (3)
- Large flightless bird found in Africa (7)
- According to Matthew 6 "Ye cannot serve God and —" (6)
- Month named after a Roman emperor (6)
- Top part of a boot or shoe (5)
- Species of Asiatic bean yielding an oil, and a type of flour (4)

SOLUTIONS

ACROSS: 1 Dumbbell; 7 Medusa; 8 Enoch; 9 Spirit; 10 Lacrosse; 13 Trollope; 15 Shandy; 18 Indigo; 20 Mona Lisa; 22 Huguenot; 24 Muslin; 26 Mumps; 27 Oxygen; 28 Starfish.
 DOWN: 1 Douglas; 2 Bingo; 3 Locust; 4 Zeppelin; 5 Purr; 6 Walter; 11 Chain; 12 Egg; 14 Orion; 16 Dulcimer; 17 Ash; 19 Ostrich; 20 Mammoth; 21 August; 23 Upper; 25 Soya.

General Knowledge Crossword
 Across: 7 Earned; 8 Vacant; 10 Envelope; 11 Angry; 12 Odds; 13 Score; 17 Sweat; 18 Sly; 22 Allow; 23 Observe; 24 Desert; 25 Reeled; Down: 2 Provide; 3 Ream; 4 Macabre; 5 Range; 6 Stays; 9 Spector; 14 Awkward; 15 Startle; 16 Defends; 19 Hardy; 20 Close; 21 Askew.

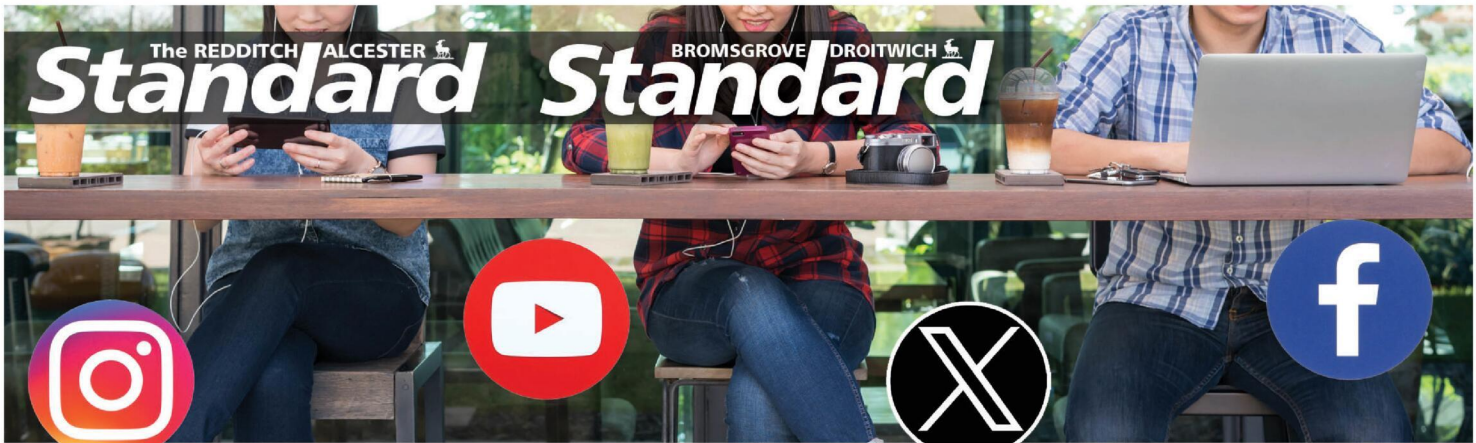
Crossword
 TREMBLING
 Blackman, Allan Ahlberg, Beatrix Potter
Niner
 Anne Fine, Lemony Snicket, Ruyard Kipling, Susan Cooper, Morpurgo, A.A. Milne, Julia Donaldson, Joan Aiken, Enid Blyton, UNABASHED
 Philip Pullman, Judy Blume, Nina Bowden, Dr Seuss, Michael

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

Ladder
 Tem, Teen, Teed, Tend, Bend, Bird, Bird

Codeword
 1 3 8 5 7 9 2 6 4
 2 7 9 4 8 2 6 3 1 5
 3 6 2 5 1 3 4 9 8 7
 4 8 1 9 6 7 5 2 3
 5 1 2 6 9 3 4 7 8
 6 7 4 4 8 5 1 3 2
 7 3 6 3 5 1 8 4 6
 8 4 8 1 9 6 7 5 2 3
 9 6 7 4 4 8 5 1 3 2
 0 5 1 2 6 9 3 4 7 8
 1 4 3 7 1 2 6 5 9
 2 4 3 7 1 2 6 5 9
 3 4 3 7 1 2 6 5 9
 4 4 3 7 1 2 6 5 9
 5 1 2 6 9 3 4 7 8
 6 7 4 4 8 5 1 3 2
 7 3 6 3 5 1 8 4 6
 8 4 8 1 9 6 7 5 2 3
 9 6 7 4 4 8 5 1 3 2

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 Easy
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Warwickshire County Council proposes to make the following Temporary Traffic Orders:

C92 PETTIFORD LANE, WOOTTON WAWEN/PRESTON BAGOT
Order Effect: Road closed between A3400 Stratford Road and A4189 Warwick Road/Whitley Hill.

Reason for Order: Carriageway patching works, closed 09.30hrs - 15.00hrs.

Order Commences: 15 January 2026 for up to 18 months.
Anticipated Completion: 15 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: A4189 (Whitley Hill, Blackford Hill, Warwick Road), A3400 Stratford Road and vice versa. Vehicular access & egress will be maintained where possible and safe to do so for businesses and residents only.

Contractor: Balfour Beatty, Tel: 03452 415 302.

L0XLEY CLOSE, WELLESBOURNE
Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.

Reason for Order: To enable works for new gas service.
Order Commences: 12 January 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 19 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: No diversion available.
Contractor: Cadent Gas, Tel: 0800 111 999.

ILMINGTON ROAD, TREDINGTON
Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.

Reason for Order: Works to install boundary box and water meter.
Order Commences: 15 January 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 16 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: Imlington Road, Darlingscote Road, Tredington Road and vice versa.

Contractor: Chevron Traffic Management Ltd, Tel: 03300 080 820.

BILLESLEY ROAD, WILMCOATE
Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.

Reason for Order: To enable installation of a water hydrant.
Order Commences: 14 January 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 11 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: Billesley Road, Church Road, The Green, Station Road, Featherbed Lane, Birmingham Road, Stratford Northern Bypass, A46, Arden Street, Alcester Road, The Ridgeway and vice versa.

Contractor: Chevron TM Ltd, Tel: 03300 080 820.

SHOTTERY LANE, STRATFORD UPON AVON
Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.

Reason for Order: To enable works for installation of a water pipe.
Order Commences: 10 January 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 11 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: Shottery Road, Evesham Road, Hathaway Lane, Shottery, Bell Lane and vice versa.

Contractor: Chevron TM Ltd, Tel: 03300 080 820.

MIDDLE STREET, ILMINGTON
Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.

Reason for Order: Works to investigate possible collapse and leak.
Order Commences: 12 January 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 16 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: No diversion available.
Contractor: Customer Solutions Plus, Tel: 08007 834 444.

D6847 CHERINGTON ROAD, BARCHESTON/BURMINGTON
Order Effect: Road closed between Willington Road and North Farm Road.

Reason for Order: Carriageway crack sealing/patching works, closed 08.00hrs - 16.00 hrs.

Order Commences: 12 January 2026 for up to 18 months.
Anticipated Completion: 16 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: Cherington Road, Willington Road and vice versa.

Vehicular access & egress will be maintained where possible and safe to do so for businesses and residents only.
Contractor: Balfour Beatty, Tel: 03452 415 302.

For all of the above temporary orders, pedestrian access to and egress from properties and land situated adjacent to the length of road to be closed will be maintained at all times. Vehicular access will be maintained where possible.

To report any problems with these works or for further details of our current & planned roadworks visit our website warwickshire.gov.uk/roadworksmap or call us 01926 412515.

WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984
THE WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL (B4455 FOSSE WAY, ETTINGTON, STRATFORD UPON AVON) (50 MPH SPEED LIMIT).

ORDER 2025
Warwickshire County Council propose to make the above-named Order under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, the effect of which will be to impose a 50mph speed limit on the length of road mentioned in the Schedule below.

A copy of the proposed Order, together with a plan showing the length of road affected and a statement of the Council's reasons for proposing to make the Order, may be inspected at the Main Reception, Shire Hall, Market Place, Warwick and on the Council's website: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/20209/stratford-avon-district>

Any objections to or representations in support of the proposals, which must be in writing and specify the grounds on which they are made, should be addressed to Dana Loxley, Safety Engineering Team, Communities Directorate, Warwickshire County Council (telephone number 01926 412889) or send by email to danaloxley@warwickshire.gov.uk using subject header "B4455 Fosse Way Stratford upon Avon 50mph Speed Limit Order".

(Objections, representations, and the name of the objector or person making a representation, will normally be treated as public information and may be published. For further information on how Warwickshire County Council processes personal data please refer to the Customer Privacy Notice which is available at <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/privacy>). Objections and representations must be sent so as to be received by 16th January 2026.

SCHEDULE

B4455 FOSSE WAY, ETTINGTON, STRATFORD UPON AVON
From its junction with A422 Banbury Road in a northern direction for a total distance of 178 metres.

B4455 FOSSE WAY, ETTINGTON, STRATFORD UPON AVON
From its junction with A422 Banbury Road in a southern direction for a total distance of 178 metres.

S Duxbury, Director of Strategy, Planning & Governance, Shire Hall, Warwick CV34 4RL Date 24 Dec 2025

PUBLIC NOTICES

Warwickshire County Council

ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984
Warwickshire County Council proposes to make the following Temporary Traffic Orders:

C47 WELFORD ROAD, BARTON
Order Effect: Road Closed to vehicular traffic between its junction with Honeybourne Road and the entrance to Cottage of Content Public House.

Reason for Order: Carriageway patching and associated works, 09.30hrs-15.30hrs.

Order Commences: 12 January 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 12 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: Welford Road, Barton Road, Long Marston Road, Welford Road, Main Street, Welford Road, Long Marston Road, B4632 (Stratford Road, High Street, Broadway Road, Stratford Road), B4035 Evesham Road, Honeybourne Road, Weston Road, Station Road, Buckle Street, Honeybourne Road and vice versa.

Contractor: Balfour Beatty, Tel: 03452 415 302.

D5128 LEA CLOSE, ALCESTER
Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic from its junction with Hertford Road.

Reason for Order: Carriageway patching and associated works, 08.00hrs-17.00hrs.

Order Commences: 16 January 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 19 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: No suitable diversion.
Contractor: Balfour Beatty, Tel: 03452 415 302.

CROOKS LANE, STUDLEY
Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.

Reason for Order: To safely enable works to lay new gas main.

Order Commences: 10 January 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 11 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: Crooks Lane, Toms Town Lane, Foster Avenue and vice versa.
Contractor: Cadent Gas, Tel: 07831 706 512.

For all of the above temporary orders, pedestrian access to and egress from properties and land situated adjacent to the length of road to be closed will be maintained at all times. Vehicular access will be maintained where possible.

To report any problems with these works or for further details of our current & planned roadworks visit our website warwickshire.gov.uk/roadworksmap or call us 01926 412515.

S Duxbury, Director of Strategy, Planning & Governance, Shire Hall, Warwick CV34 4RL Date 24 Dec 2025

PUBLIC NOTICES



PUBLIC NOTICE - LICENSING ACT 2003

APPLICATION FOR A PREMISES LICENCE TO BE GRANTED UNDER THE LICENSING ACT 2003

Name of applicant: RIZZO WINE CLUB LIMITED
Postal address of premises: RIZZO WINE & DELI, 3 KING STREET, WORCESTER, WR1 2NX

The applicant proposes to carry out the following licensable activities on or from the above premises:
Supply Alcohol On/Off Premises
Monday to Sunday 08:00hrs to 18:00hrs

Representations by interested parties or responsible authorities should be made in writing to Worcestershire Regulatory Services, Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster, DY11 7WF or enquiries to worcsregs@worcsregs.gov.uk by 13.01.2026

The record of the application is available for inspection by appointment. Please call us on 01905 822799 for an appointment.

IT IS AN OFFENCE, LIABLE ON CONVICTION TO AN UNLIMITED FINE, UNDER SECTION 158 OF THE LICENSING ACT 2003 TO KNOWINGLY OR RECKLESSLY MAKE A FALSE STATEMENT IN, OR IN CONNECTION WITH, AN APPLICATION.

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PUBLIC NOTICES

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25/00481/FUL MAJ ADVSTD

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Application forms and plans may be inspected online <https://publicaccess.bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk/online-applications/>

Comments can be submitted online, via email to newplan@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk or in writing Planning Services, Redditch Town Hall, Walter Stranz Square, Redditch, B98 8AH.

Comments should be made within 17 days of the date of this publication. The Council does not acknowledge comments but will make these available for inspection online.

PUBLIC NOTICES

STRATFORD-ON-AVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Application for the Renewal of a Sexual Entertainment Venue License made under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1982, Part II, Schedule 3

Notice is hereby given that we: **STRATFORD UNION LTD** Applied on **Thursday 18th December 2025** To: Stratford-on-Avon District Council In respect of the premises known as:

CAZ BAR Located at: **7-9 Union Street, Stratford-on-Avon, CV37 6QT** For the Renewal of a license to use the premises as a: **SEXUAL ENTERTAINMENT VENUE**

ANY PERSON wishing to oppose the application should write to: **The Licensing Authority, Stratford on Avon DC, Elizabeth House, Church Street, Stratford on Avon, CV37 6HX**

No later than 28 Days after the date of the application, stating the grounds for objection. Letters in support should also be sent to the Head of Environmental Development by that date.

Please note that any written representations received in response to this consultation are likely to be required to be made available for public inspection in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985.

C.N.A. Risk Management Ltd Authorised Agent

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Closing date for all applications is

Monday 5 January 2026.

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Full details and application forms are available on the school website: www.winterfoldhouse.co.uk

Closing date for all applications is Monday 5 January 2026.

The School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.

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Bentley shows its quality in



the toughest of conditions

The Bentley Flying Spur has proved its attributes in all conditions by setting a new 'winter lap record'.

BENTLEY has once again demonstrated the exceptional performance of its 'Flying Spur' in all conditions by setting a new 'winter lap record' at the world's most northerly active race circuit.

The record was set at the Drivecenter Arena circuit in Fallfors, northern Sweden - just 100 miles from the Arctic Circle and a former military airbase.

Despite the entirety of the 2.05-mile track being covered in 12ins of ice and snow, the Flying Spur Speed was able to complete laps in under three minutes, with the best time standing at 2mins 58secs - the quickest any vehicle has lapped the facility in winter conditions, ever.

The Flying Spur's variable four-wheel drive system and rear-wheel steering combined to give the car outstanding agility in the conditions and the peak speed was 120mph during the record run, despite the longest straight being only 450metres long and covered in sheet ice.

The record was inspired by a combination of previous events from Bentley's

history - the two Ice Speed Records captured by Bentley in 2007 and 2011 and the one-hour endurance record set by a Turbo R at Millbrook Proving Ground in the UK in 1986 where 140mph was averaged around the banked bowl.

While the conditions mirrored those of the Ice Speed Records, the car used - registration Y15 BML - has a specification matched to the Turbo R in Bentley's Heritage Collection.

Identical Brooklands Green paintwork, yellow fine lines, and an interior in Linen, Cumbrian Green and Open Pore Walnut were specified to mark the Turbo R's 40th birthday this year.

Speedy Spur

The Flying Spur Speed is a car designed to deliver exceptional driving performance in all conditions, thanks to its Ultra Performance Hybrid powertrain and advanced chassis systems.

An advanced 600 PS 4.0-litre twin-turbo V8 is combined with a 190 PS electric motor that is neatly integrated within the 8-speed dual clutch trans-

mission.

In Sport Mode this powertrain deploys a full 782 PS and 1,000 Nm, with the instant torque of the E-motor complementing the charismatic cross-plane beat of the V8.

In pure EV mode, the E-motor provides 190 PS and 450 Nm of torque, more than enough to keep up with the traffic in most situations, while the 25.9 kWh battery offers up to 47 miles (76 km) of usable electric-only range (on the EU drive cycle).

Together, the V8 and E-motor provide the new Flying Spur with a total range of 515miles (829 km). Full electric mode can be deployed at speeds of up to 87mph (140km/h) with throttle applications of up to 75 per cent.

The Bentley Performance Active Chassis comes as standard with the Flying Spur Speed.

Features of the sophisticated new setup include Bentley Dynamic Ride and All-Wheel Steering, along with an electronically controlled Limited Slip Differential, while a new generation of ESC software permits a range of driving

styles to be accessed and provides reliable traction in all conditions - though the record was set with the system completely switched off.

With the new car's rear-biased weight distribution of 48.3 : 51.7, the chassis systems and ESC have a mechanically-optimised platform in which to provide the final refinement.

The system uses active torque vectoring front to rear through a centre differential, and precision vectoring across each axle using the brakes, to provide exceptional traction in all conditions - vital for a fast lap on snow-covered sheet ice.

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Pears face trip to Derbyshire in County Championship opener

CRICKET: WORCESTERSHIRE CCC will begin life in Division Two of the County Championship with a trip to Derbyshire following the club's relegation last season.

The Pears finished bottom of the Division One table in 2025, some 42 points from safety after winning just one of their 14 matches.

Worcestershire spent just two seasons back in the top flight following promotion in 2023 but now return to Division Two for the 2026 campaign.

And the Pears begin the new season away at Derbyshire on April 3 after the latter side just missed out on promotion last term.

Worcestershire then travel to Middlesex on April 10 as the Pears start the campaign with back-to-back away trips.

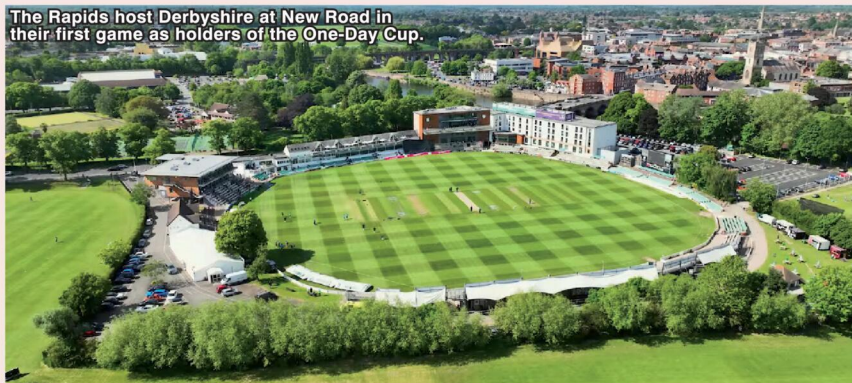
The county's first home game of the season sees the Pears entertain Kent at New Road on April 24.

Alan Richardson's side start the following month at Northamptonshire (May 1) before hosting fellow relegated club Durham (May 8) and then travel to Lancashire (May 15).

The County Championship season breaks for almost a month before the Pears return to action with back-to-back home games against Middlesex (June 12) and Gloucestershire (June 19).

Another month-long break follows with the Pears back in action away at Gloucestershire (August 20).

The Rapids host Derbyshire at New Road in their first game as holders of the One-Day Cup.



A red ball festival of cricket will take place at New Road for Worcestershire's fixture against Lancashire (August 27).

The Pears then travel to Kent (September 2), host Northamptonshire (September 8) and make the trip to Durham (September 15).

Worcestershire close the season by hosting opening day opponents Derbyshire at New Road (September 24).

And head coach Richardson wants to make a strong start to the campaign following a difficult 2025 season.

Richardson said: "First class cricket provides a plethora of demands and last year we showed unbelievable fight and spirit right

until the very end in Championship cricket.

"We want to be challenging across all competitions, especially in red ball cricket and are already building towards a big start to 2026."

T20 BLAST

Worcestershire Rapids will host four Friday night matches and two double-headers as part of a revamped T20 Blast schedule in 2026.

The Rapids' men's side failed to make the quarter-finals of the competition for the second year running last season.

And the women's side competed in the first-ever edition of the

women's T20 Blast last term.

Both Rapids teams begin the 2026 season with a trip to Leicestershire Foxes on May 22 in a double header.

And the two teams then welcome Northamptonshire Steelbacks to New Road on May 24 for another double header as the teams play their first home games of the season respectively.

The men then host Warwickshire Bears in the first derby clash of the season at New Road on May 29 with the game live on Sky Sports.

And the return meeting between the two rivals takes place on June 26 at Edgbaston.

The men's competition consists of 12 group matches, comprised of three groups of six teams.

Finals Day will once again take place at Edgbaston on July 18.

ONE-DAY CUP

Worcestershire will begin their defence of the One-Day Cup with a home game against Derbyshire Falcons at New Road.

The Rapids lifted the trophy last season following a dramatic three-wicket DLS win against Hampshire at Trent Bridge in Nottingham.

And the victory marked Worcestershire's first-ever success in the competition since it began in 2014 as the county lifted their first List A title for 18 years.

The defending champions begin their 2026 One-Day Cup campaign at home against Derbyshire on July 24.

And the Rapids then host Hampshire in a repeat of last season's final on July 26 before making the trip to Yorkshire on July 29.

Worcestershire return home to celebrate 'Blue for Bakes' in memory of Josh Baker against Middlesex on July 31.

Trips to Essex (August 2), Sussex Sharks (August 7) and Glamorgan (August 9) follow before the Rapids round off the group stages with a home game against Durham (August 11).

The top team in each group progresses directly to a home semi-final with the second and third-placed teams to meet in a quarter-final.

And the final will once again take place at Trent Bridge.

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