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# Budget plans to scrap school bus thrown out

by **Ryan Smith**  
[ryan.smith@bullivanmedia.com](mailto:ryan.smith@bullivanmedia.com)

**PLANS to scrap a school bus service for children on Droitwich's Newland Estate were voted down in dramatic fashion.**

At a meeting yesterday (Thursday), councillors were asked to debate whether to approve the savings identified in Worcestershire County Council's draft budget for 2026/27.

The routes to school review, which would have axed several services including the Newland bus, estimated savings of £80,000.

But, despite most of the draft budget comfortably going through, councillors were deadlocked at 28 votes each for and against the saving measure which would have seen the bus service scrapped.

This meant council chair Coun Louis Stephen had the casting vote and chose not to carry the proposal.

An email to Coun Dan Birch by a council staff member, seen by the Standard, said the cost for providing the Newland bus - used by 57 pupils - was £87,000 per year.

The letter added some pupils may have retained free home-to-school transport eligibility and, if so, some form of transport could still have been required, affecting the total saving.

Coun Birch, who opposes the move, told the Standard: "The numbers quite simply don't add up.

"How can the overall savings be less than the cut?"

"An overall saving of £80,000 that is going to make it harder for hundreds of children to get to school is not the right decision to be making.

"The savings don't outweigh the cost this will have on the education of young people in Droitwich and elsewhere in the county."

The county council wrote letters to parents whose children use the transport in November and launched a public consultation.

The national statutory walking distance for pupils over eight years of age is three miles.

According to the county council, the distance between the estate and the school is under that limit, which removes the free home-to-school transport entitlement.

Council documents claimed - like many other local authorities across the country - its budget for 2025/26 continued to face relentless demand and cost pressures in both Children's Social Care and Adult Social Care placements.

They said despite efforts to manage this in the year, the forecast remained a 'significant overspend'.

"The council's budget is essentially fixed in cash terms and its ability to raise income is limited."

And the documents added the draft budget proposals sought to address the continuing net recurrent financial pressure the council faced this financial year which would continue into 2026/27. They also made projections for next year based on the best available information.



**The mosaics are looking magnificent after their refurbishment.**

Church of the Sacred Heart and St Catherine of Alexandria.

The mosaics were largely completed back in 1932 and have won national acclaim.

Their restoration was part of a £260,000 regeneration project for the beautiful building.

The church was built in the style of the basilica churches of Ravenna, near Venice, between 1919 and 1921.

The walls are covered with some of the finest Venetian glass mosaic artwork in Europe.

It welcomes thousands of visitors from across the UK and other parts of the world each year to see the astonishingly beautiful scenes.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund cash secured has enabled the church to clean and conserve the mosaics.

It was also gifted to digitise the paintings by Gabriel Pippet that were converted into the mosaics by Maurice Josey and his assistant, Fred Oates.

Visit this story at: [droitwichstandard.co.uk](http://droitwichstandard.co.uk) for more on the historic mosaics.

AN ICONIC Droitwich church is celebrating after its almost century-old mosaics were restored to their former glory.

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# Councils offer residents the chance of a fitter new year

Monday sessions in Bromsgrove are held at the Ryland Centre. s

by Erica Murphy-Hogg

**RESIDENTS in Bromsgrove and Redditch are being encouraged to kick-start their fitness journeys by joining a 'Couch-to-5k' course this month.**

The nine-week courses, which begin this week in the two towns, are designed for complete beginners, to help them get into running and, in the process, provide people with a great opportunity to be more active.

There is no need to book and anyone is welcome to come to any session.

The Bromsgrove courses will be held at 6pm on Mondays at The Ryland Centre running track; at 10am on Wednesdays in Sanders Park (meeting at the Jubilee Bandstand); and at 9.30am on Thursdays at Catshill Meadow.

Redditch's Abbey Stadium track will host sessions at 9.30am each Sunday and at 7.30pm on Mondays and Wed-

nesdays. Other sessions take place at 9.30am on Fridays in Woodrow (meeting at The Hub, in Woodrow Centre) and at 9.30am at the Redditch, Cricket, Hockey, Rugby and Squash Club.

Bromsgrove District Council portfolio holder for leisure, Councillor Shirley Webb, said: "Couch-to-5k has always proved popular and we are very honoured to have been part of so many of our residents' journeys towards leading a healthier lifestyle.

"To be able to continue to host these sessions for free is a major asset for the people of our town."

Redditch Borough Council portfolio holder for leisure and recreation, Coun Juliet Barker Smith, said: "It's never too late to have a go at something new, and I'm finding, especially in later life, keeping fit and staying flexible is absolutely essential.

"Giving residents across the borough the opportunity to get active, pick up a new hobby and become part of a community is fantastic.

"We are continually grateful to all the run leaders who volunteer to facilitate these sessions, which consistently prove popular."

The courses are led by people with qualifications from England Athletics and the course is fully endorsed by the NHS.

Run leaders advise people to complete three sessions per week to maximise progress and reach their goal of running 5k.

The programme is suitable for new runners aged 12 and up and children must have a guardian running with them at all times.

Many graduates from local couch-to-5k groups go on to join local running groups, including Parkrun, and even become the next run leaders.

Couch-to-5k thanked all of its run clubs - STARS Redditch, Redditch Community Runners and Kingfisher Harriers - for their continued support.

Visit Couch to 5k, call the sports development team on 01527 881404 or email sd@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk for further information on how to get involved.



In Redditch, the Abbey Stadium hosts sessions on Sundays, Mondays and Wednesdays. s

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# Opportunity to study road plans

A WEBINAR on the A38 Bromsgrove Route Enhancement Programme (BREP) will take place online later this month.

The public information sharing event, from 6pm to 7pm on January 29 via Microsoft Teams, will be about the BREP - a predominantly Department for Transport (DfT) funded project aimed at improving journeys, safety and reliability in and around Bromsgrove.

The webinar has been organised to ensure as many people can watch live as possible. The session will also be available to view afterwards for those unable to make the session.

Worcestershire County Council, which webinar's organiser, said the format had been used many times for similar updates and the method had received positive feedback.



The session will begin with a short presentation outlining the programme, followed by a public question-and-answer session.

Attendees can submit questions to the project panel, both ahead of the event and during the webinar. Questions can

be submitted via slido.com using the code #A38BREP.

Any questions already covered by the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on the BREP website will have a link provided on Slido under that question.

The panel will bring together a broad range of technical knowledge and expertise, including representatives from Worcestershire County Council, Jacobs and Colas (construction contractor), who will discuss the programme and respond to questions.

Coun Karl Perks, Worcestershire County Council's Cabinet Member with Responsibility

for Highways and Transport, said: "The A38 Bromsgrove Route Enhancement Programme is an important project designed to address long-standing transport challenges in the area.

"This webinar is a valuable opportunity for residents to hear directly from the project team, understand the work in more detail and ask questions about the programme."

People can visit: [worcestershire.gov.uk/A38BREP](http://worcestershire.gov.uk/A38BREP) to access the webinar.

Visit: [worcestershire.gov.uk/a38BREP](http://worcestershire.gov.uk/a38BREP) for more information on the BREP project, including frequently asked questions.

## A chance to outline my list of priorities for the year

IN MY first Westminster Diary of the year, I want to take this opportunity to set out my priorities for 2026.

As an MP I have to focus on a multitude of issues every day and I regularly work on a several at any one time so this list does not capture everything I work on.

My first 2026 priority will centre on making life cheaper for you and your family. Your energy bills are too high, food prices are up and the cost of living is generally just too much at the moment for too many families in Bromsgrove.

That's why in Parliament I'll continue to encourage the Government to cut your taxes, which I've voted for a number of times and do what it can to reduce your energy bills.

We're all working harder than ever, but for what? There's no reward incentive anymore when, as of 2026, the UK tax burden is at its highest level in post-war history.

We must make hard work pay again - the Government can do this by cutting your taxes.

This year I'll also continue to focus on protecting our precious greenbelt.

As part of my work to get the 85 per cent increase in our Government man-

dated housing target reduced, I will meet with the Housing and Planning Minister in the coming weeks to set out the case for a reduction in our target.

It's not fair the Government has whacked up our target by 85 per cent, yet at the same time, has reduced Birmingham's housing target by 31 per cent. Birmingham has brownfield land, at least 140 hectares, and we do not.

The burden must be shared fairly and that's the case I'll be making to the Minister next month.

My third priority will be the revitalisation of our high streets. The best way the Government could do this is by cutting or abolishing business rates altogether for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses.

Last year I was proud to vote to scrap business rates for pubs, restaurants and shops. Sadly, with the Government's huge majority, the vote did not pass but I will continue to make the case in Parliament for the overhaul of these investment sapping taxes.

There's much to do this year and I look forward to continuing to represent you in Parliament.



### Westminster Diary

Bradley Thomas MP writes for The Standard



Bradley Thomas  
Bromsgrove MP



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# MP wants answers over gritting

by **Ashleigh Osborne**  
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**REDDITCH MP Chris Bloore has written to Worcestershire County Council seeking clear answers over the response to recent snow and icy conditions, following widespread reports from residents of untreated roads and pavements.**

During the recent cold snap, the MP received a lot of emails and phone calls from constituents across Redditch and the surrounding villages raising concerns about difficult and, in some cases, unsafe conditions for drivers and pedestrians.

He said residents reported skidding vehicles, hazardous junctions and slippery footways, causing disruption and anxiety, particularly for

vulnerable people and those relying on emergency services.

Mr Bloore has been clear his concerns are not directed at front-line gritting teams or highways staff, who, he acknowledges, have worked hard within the guidance

and resources available.

Instead, his intervention focuses on the planning, prioritisation and resourcing behind the gritting response.

In his letter, he has asked for detailed information on what plans

and schedules were in place for gritting roads and pavements, how decisions were made about which areas to treat, including the priority system used and why some roads and footways appeared to be left untreated. He also asked how many grit boxes remained within Redditch and when they were last filled.

The MP added: "Reports of skidding vehicles and hazardous junctions are deeply worrying and maintaining safe roads and footways is a vital public service.

"I want to be clear that this is not a criticism of gritting teams or highways staff, who I know are working hard.

"However, residents deserve clear answers about how decisions are made, whether resources are sufficient and what steps will be taken to ensure communities can move safely during future periods of wintry weather.

With cold conditions continuing, especially at night, Mr Bloore is also

gathering detailed feedback from residents about ungritted roads and footways, locations which felt particularly unsafe and any ongoing concerns.

This information will be used to press the county council for improvements and reassurance.

He added: "Listening to residents' experiences is essential.

"Their first-hand accounts will help ensure these concerns are properly raised and that lessons are learned, so safety is prioritised when severe winter weather hits again."

Coun Jo Monk, Worcestershire County Council leader, said: "Now I've formally received the letter from Chris Bloore, I will work with officers and respond in due course."

**Redditch MP Chris Bloore has written to Worcestershire County Council over its response to the recent cold snap. s**

## Villagers say they were 'overlooked' during Storm Goretti snow response

A RUBERY resident has hit out at what she calls a 'lack of gritting' by Worcestershire County Council in the village.

Jane Cotterill contacted the Standard, claiming there were some roads which were listed on the authority's gritting routes that had been 'totally ignored'.

Rubery and south Birmingham were among the worst affected areas in the Midlands by the heavy snow brought by Storm Goretti.

She said: "Residents on Hazel Road, for example, had been unable to get their cars out for three days.

"The hill on the road is extremely steep but it is on a blue gritting route which means it should be gritted in times of severe weather and we normally do see the gritter in the road if the temperatures are predicted to be below freezing.

"But the gritter had not been anywhere near Hazel Road since the

snow came on Thursday evening, by Sunday, the road was like an ice rink as the snow had started to thaw and refrozen three times.

"The residents tried to grit it themselves but the grit bin was half empty on Thursday and by the weekend was now totally empty (which has been reported to the council).

"This made it impossible to try and ease the situation.

"The residents feel like they have

been totally abandoned by the council as do other people who live in roads that are on the gritting route and have not been gritted either."

She called on Worcestershire County Council to explain why gritting had not taken place.

A Worcestershire County Council spokesperson said gritting crews were out last week treating the road network in line with its Winter Service Policy and Operational

Plan. "Treatments were deliberately timed using detailed local forecasts and real-time monitoring by winter service inspectors, with gritting and snow-ploughing commencing as rainfall turned to snow. "Crews worked throughout the event to keep the key road network operational.

"We have had a number of bins reported as being empty and are currently working on them being replenished."

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# New town hub is one that we can all bank on

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

**DROITWICH has celebrated the opening of a banking hub after public pressure followed the closure of all the town's bank branches.**

A special opening ceremony for the hub on St Andrews Square was held last Friday, attended by local dignitaries and the key players behind its opening.

Banking hubs are high street banks working together to bring shared cash and banking services to the community.

The Droitwich hub offers all normal banking services, except for foreign exchange, which is available at the post office. Each national bank is on hand at the hub one-day-

a-week for further banking discussions.

Droitwich Spa was recommended for a banking hub after its last remaining bank branch, Santander, would be closing.

Banking hubs are operated by Cash Access UK and the Post Office and are assessed for eligibility by LINK, which runs the nation's cashpoint network.

They protect residents and business owners' right to access to cash and other financial banking services when retail banks shut up shop.

Droitwich MP Nigel Huddleston said: "With the recent closures of several bank branches, this hub brings essential face-to-face banking services back into the town, supported by familiar bank names all under one roof."

"This has been a real com-

munity effort and my thanks go to the Droitwich Spa Place Board, town, district and county councillors, Cash Access UK and the banks involved for working so hard to make it happen."

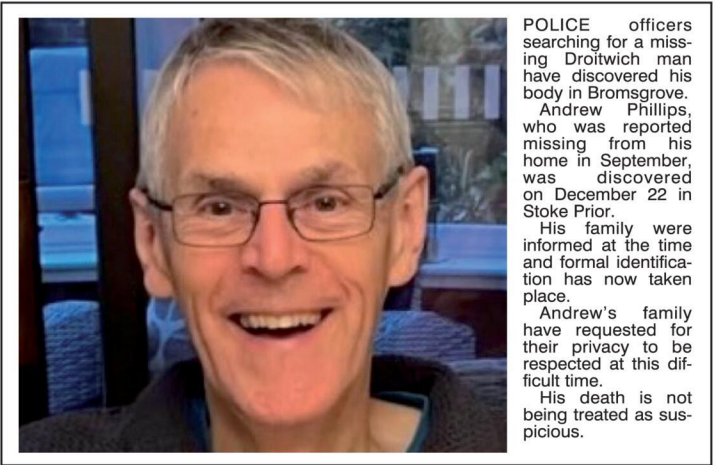
He added it was important residents and businesses used the hub so the vital services remained long-term.

Coun Dan Birch, who was at the banking hub opening, added: "Well done to the whole Droitwich Spa community, who have made this happen."

"It was thanks to the level of public pressure that all of you helped apply that this has happened."

He added, with a minimum 10-year lease, banking facilities are guaranteed in the town for the next decade.

Dignitaries celebrate the opening of the banking hub in St Andrews Square.



POLICE officers searching for a missing Droitwich man have discovered his body in Bromsgrove.

Andrew Phillips, who was reported missing from his home in September, was discovered on December 22 in Stoke Prior.

His family were informed at the time and formal identification has now taken place.

Andrew's family have requested for their privacy to be respected at this difficult time.

His death is not being treated as suspicious.

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## News in brief

THE 318 Bromsgrove to Stourbridge bus service is again serving Belbroughton after the reopening of the High Street following a gas leak.

The Kev's Cars and Coaches operated service had been diverted away from the village recently while gas company Cadent repaired the leak in the High Street.

A spokesperson for the bus company said: "Our 318 Bromsgrove to Stourbridge service is now serving Belbroughton again, and at this time (Wednesday), we have no service issues to report."

THE OWNER of a bus company has praised the 'first-class' job by Worcestershire County Council in gritting of roads in Bromsgrove District during Storm Goretti.

The praise comes from the owner of Kev's Cars and Coaches, Kevin Nind, after strong winds, rain and snow had battered Bromsgrove last weekend.

Mr Nind said: "Credit where credit's due,

the gritting of roads within the Bromsgrove District early last Friday and again on the Saturday, was first-class.

"Specifically, the roads in Catshill and around Bromsgrove train station in Aston Fields, which we run our services on, were perfect."

Last week, Mr Nind called for Worcestershire Highways to grit all the county's bus routes after his firm's 318 Bromsgrove to Stourbridge service encountered difficulties on Dark Lane and St Kenelm's Road in Romsley, during freezing temperatures last week.

Worcestershire County Council said, in response, it was not possible to grit every road and that, while the council focused on important routes, gritting routes were reviewed every year.

Mr Nind added: "I should say that we still encountered difficulties in Romsley during Storm Goretti, but elsewhere within the district, the roads were perfect."

Bromsgrove District Council chairman, Coun Samuel Evans, with Andy Bennett, the High Sheriff of Worcestershire, Ian Smith, and Coun Sam Ammar. s

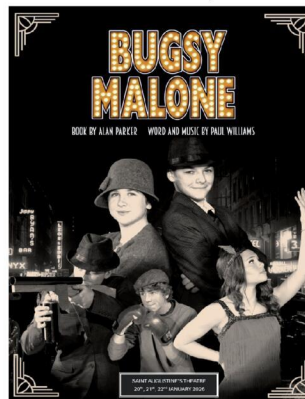


# Classic musical is school's next

THE SOUNDS of jazz, the spray of splurge guns and the spirit of the Roaring 20s will take over St Augustine's Catholic High School in Redditch next month. In a spectacular celebration of talent and school history, the students will present their production of the classic musical Buggy Malone.

these productions build confidence, resilience and a sense of belonging. "In the 50th anniversary year of this iconic story, seeing our students collaborate and shine on stage is a testament to the dedication we foster here at St Augustine's."

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the original 1976 film, and St Augustine's is pulling out all the stops to honour that legacy.



Set in 1920s New York, the show follows the rivalry between two gang bosses, Fat Sam and Dandy Dan, while the titular Buggy Malone tries to win the heart of the aspiring starlet, Blousey Brown.

The production features a massive cast and crew, from lead actors perfecting their Bronx accents to the technical team managing the infamous splurge effects.

This is the school's 20th annual production and, alongside Buggy Malone, it has staged classic shows such as Oliver, Fame, Grease, Return to the Forbidden Planet, School of Rock, Little Shop of Horrors, Into the Woods and Sister Act.

Under the guidance of the school's performing arts department, students have spent months rehearsing complex choreography and classic songs including 'Bad Guys' and 'You Give a Little Love'.

## Foundation's anniversary

COMMUNITY leaders from Worcestershire have visited the HB9 Harry Bennett Foundation ahead of its sixth anniversary.

The charity is named in tribute to Harry's passion for sport and his iconic shirt number 9, worn as a centre forward in football and a scrum half in rugby.

The foundation was set up in memory of Harry, from Bromsgrove, who died from sepsis at the age of 16 on January 17, 2020.

Andy said: "As we remember Harry and mark six years since we lost him, this visit meant a great deal."

During their visit, Ian Smith, the High Sheriff of Worcestershire, Coun Samuel Evans, Chairman of Bromsgrove Council and Coun Sam Ammar spent time learning about HB9's work across the district. The foundation supports local young people and sports teams to help them access sporting opportunities which provide benefits to physical and mental wellbeing.

"We're grateful for the encouragement shown and for the support in helping us spread the word about HB9 so more local people can benefit from the lasting legacy Harry left behind."

Harry's passing had a profound impact on his family, friends and the South Bromsgrove High School community.

Ian Smith, High Sheriff of Worcestershire, said: "It was a very special visit."

His parents, Andy and Yvette Bennett, established the foundation to ensure his legacy continued in a way that reflected what mattered most to him.

"I loved hearing how Harry's family has turned the most heartbreaking tragedy for any parent into a force for good, supporting a wide variety of people, helping them benefit from the power of sport and the life long bonds it creates."

The charity also offers financial support for equipment, training and help establishing new clubs and teams.

"It was a privilege to meet Andy and learn about the legacy of his remarkable boy."

Anyone wanting to support the foundation, can visit: [justgiving.com/hb9](http://justgiving.com/hb9) to make a donation.

Dr Chris Long, director of Performing Arts, who has overseen the production, said: "Buggy Malone is the ultimate ensemble piece."

"It requires sharp comedic timing and immense energy."

"Celebrating the film's 50th anniversary with this particular group of students has been a joy - they have embraced the 'speakeasy' style with such professionalism."

"It's a high-octane show that truly showcases the depth of talent we have in Redditch."

The show runs at 7pm on February 20, 21, and 22 at St Augustine's Catholic High School Theatre.



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# Obi's on the road to recovery after injury drama

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

A DOG'S life was saved thanks to emergency vets after a stick pierced his stomach.

The vet team at the Blaise Veterinary Referral Hospital in Longbridge, Birmingham, admitted him when the wood was found protruding him after he had been playing in the garden.

Owners Robert Clarke and Katie Luckman, from Kidderminster, called Obi in from the garden to go on a shopping trip when they spotted the stick (pictured).

Obi was transferred to the specialist team at IVC Evidensia's Blaise Referrals after an initial assessment at a local first opinion vet in Kidderminster.

The state-of-the-art specialist-led multi-disciplinary referral hospital offers 24-hour emergency and critical care.

An urgent operation was scheduled there but then vet Lara Dempsey discovered the wood was making its way out, not in. This meant five-year-old springer spaniel had actually swallowed the stick, possibly months earlier.

Despite the life-threatening risk of peritonitis with the skewer having pierced the stomach, the dog had shown few symptoms and has since made a remarkable recovery after the procedure.

Katie said: "As I slipped his lead



over his neck, we suddenly saw this sticking out.

"It was protruding really clearly, and we thought he'd maybe fallen onto something, and it had stuck in. But we keep the garden tidy and couldn't think how it had happened.

"Although there wasn't any bleeding, we knew we needed help right away and took him straight to out vets."

Vet Lara, a specialist in small animal surgery soft tissue, said: "This was a really unusual case as Obi was mainly asymptomatic - apart from him not gaining weight despite a normal appetite.

"However, the stick had perforated through the stomach and spleen. Despite that, Obi was still bright and trying to bounce around when he came in. We suggested blood tests and CT imaging, but they were keen to just proceed with the sur-

gery straight away."

But, after noticing how the stick got there, she added: "There wasn't much abdominal fluid, and I could see the stick had perforated through the stomach, skewered the spleen and then exited the left abdominal wall.

"We opened up the stomach to remove it and, as the spleen had been severely damaged, I had to do a splenectomy. I debrided and closed the abdominal wall on the inside, but left it open on the outside to allow it to heal."

After the 90-minute procedure, Obi was kept in overnight for observation but was showing huge signs of recovery by the time his owners picked him up the following day.

Robert added: "He was running round crazy and was immediately back to his old self when we got him home, playing with our cat.

"He started to put on weight again very quickly, but we'd never have thought the fact he hadn't gained weight before was because he had this in him.

"We're just so grateful to the team at Blaise for all they were able to do for him."

Lara said the stick perforating the stomach led to peritonitis which could be life-threatening.

"Obi's body had managed to wall off the stick, which is why he didn't show any obvious signs.

"Having had such damage to his organs and the stick in him for so long, Obi was very lucky."



Obi, seen with owner Robert Clark, has made a full recovery. s

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Bromsgrove MP Bradley Thomas is holding his Pub of the Year competition award after last year's successful inaugural event.

# MP supports 'turning point' railway bill

REDDITCH MP Chris Bloore has backed the Government's Railways Bill in the House of Commons, describing it as "the most significant reform of our railways in a generation" and a major step towards more reliable, integrated rail services for local passengers.

Speaking during the Commons Chamber debate, the MP drew on his experience as a regular commuter, a lifelong railway enthusiast, a member of the ASLEF parliamentary group and his involvement with local rail user groups to highlight how the current fragmented system is failing passengers in communities like Redditch.

He told the House of Commons that, just last week, passengers in Redditch had faced every morning service being cancelled because of poor weather, underscoring the urgent need for reform.

The Railways Bill will bring track and train back together under a new publicly owned body, Great British Railways, ending the current fragmented structure and creating a single organisation responsible for performance, reliability and long-term planning.

Chris Bloore MP said: "For too

long, passengers have suffered from a fragmented railway system, with split responsibilities, inconsistent priorities and no clear accountability. "My constituents in Redditch know exactly what that looks like when services are cancelled and reliability falls apart."

"This Bill is a turning point. It brings track and train together under one organisation, restoring the principle that our railways should operate as a single, integrated system that puts passengers first."

Mr Bloore highlighted that the current system involves up to 17 separate organisations with overlapping responsibilities, creating confusion for passengers and inefficiency for taxpayers.

He said the creation of Great British Railways would simplify fares and ticketing, introduce stronger accountability and improve both passenger and freight services.

He added: "This is about building a railway that works as one system, with long-term planning, modern ticketing and real public accountability."

"Alongside investment in the Midlands Rail Hub and the freeze on rail fares, the Bill lays the foundations for a railway that works for passengers and the staff who keep the network running."

## Where's best for a welcome pint?

A PUB of the Year competition organised by Bromsgrove MP Bradley Thomas is returning for 2026.

Pubs and bars across the district can nominate themselves to be in the running for the top title.

The Pub of the Year contest proved extremely popular in its inaugural outing after its launch last year.

The event celebrates the contribution pubs make to the economy and local communities.

Last year, 18 pubs from across the town and surrounding villages took part, and almost 1,000 votes

were cast by local residents.

Mr Thomas said: "Pubs in Bromsgrove and the villages are at the heart of our communities where we eat, drink and meet friends and family."

"It remains a challenging time for our pubs, so it's vital we celebrate the contribution they make - not just to our economy, but to our communities too."

"Pubs are under more pressure than ever before with hospitality venues facing a hike in business rates after the Budget in November."

"I look forward to receiving

your nominations and to once again celebrating our pubs."

Bremi's in Aston Fields was crowned Bromsgrove and the village's Pub of the Year in 2025.

Social Sticks on Station Street finished in second place and Bayley's of Bromsgrove on Worcester Road came third.

Pubs can visit: bradleythomas.org.uk/bromsgrove-and-villages-pub-year-competition to nominate themselves.



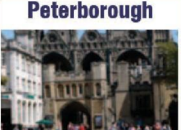

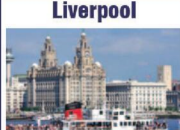
The public vote will open on Thursday, February 6, after the nominations close.

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An artist's impression of what the site might look like.

# Homes plan fears

by Ryan Smith  
ryan.smith@bullivantmedia.com

**CONTROVERSIAL plans have been lodged for 47 homes on green belt land next to Belbroughton CofE Primary School.**

Spitfire Homes has submitted a hybrid planning application to develop a 2.07-hectare site accessed from Bradford Lane.

The plan includes a full planning application for 46 homes and an outline application for a self-build plot.

Spitfire Homes said half of the homes would be affordable and they would include two, three, four and five-bed properties.

Vehicle access would be from Bradford Lane and pedestrian access would link the northern edge of the site with a public right of way north of the school.

The site is in the green belt south of the village, with Belbroughton CofE Primary School nearby, immediately north-west. The development is just beyond the boundary of Belbroughton Conservation Area. Many objections have been

submitted. One mum, whose children go to Belbroughton CofE primary school, said residents living directly by the school already complained regularly about school traffic and parking, adding the infrastructure, as it stood, would not cope with further housing.

Another woman added there were already difficulties with larger vehicles, such as delivery vans and lorries, getting stuck on the school road.

She added: "Another concern would be the proximity of this development to the conservation area in Belbroughton."

"Up until now, development has been confined to smaller infill sites, which are more in keeping with the character of the village."

"This larger development so close to the church and historic centre would undermine the character of the conservation area."

In planning documents, Spitfire said: "The vision is to create a high-quality, mixed tenure housing development that meets Local Authority requirements, delivers an integrated and sustainable neighbourhood, and reflects Belbroughton's historic village character and settlement-edge

location. "The site has been carefully designed to fit around the school's boundaries, ensuring privacy for the school and new and current residents."

"The design process has been informed by a detailed understanding of the local context, ensuring the development is sensitive to the character and heritage of Belbroughton and the surrounding conservation area."

The developer added the design was sensitive and aimed to deliver a high-quality, sustainable neighbourhood that enhanced the surrounding area while providing a safe and secure environment for residents and visitors.

And it said new pedestrian routes linking with an existing footpath supported and encouraged active travel.

"In conclusion, this proposal aligns with all relevant planning policies relating to design - including those concerning scale, massing, height, privacy, amenity, connectivity, landscaping, and architectural character."

# Everyone welcome for a chat



Residents enjoying time at the Chatty Cafe. s

A CARE home in Redditch is inviting members of the local community to come together for its weekly Chatty Cafe.

The friendly and relaxed social gathering - every Wednesday from 10.30am to 12.30pm in Millcroft's cafe room - is designed to bring people closer, reduce loneliness and create meaningful connections.

The weekly event offers an informal setting where people can catch up with old friends, meet new faces and enjoy a sense of community.

Visitors are treated to a selection of homemade cakes, along with a drink of their choice.

Whether popping in for a quick chat or staying for the full session, everyone is encouraged to relax,

socialise and feel at home.

By opening its doors each week, the home aims to create a welcoming space which is inclusive, friendly and accessible to all.

Lyndsay Sard, Millcroft Care Home manager, said: "Our Chatty Cafe is all about bringing people together in a warm and welcoming environment."

"We know how important social connection is for wellbeing and these sessions give people the chance to enjoy good conversation, great company and some lovely treats."

"We're always delighted to welcome members of the local community and hope the Chatty Cafe becomes a regular highlight in people's weekly routines."

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Worcestershire has been given a green rating in the government's traffic light map for local authority road repairs. s

# Top mark for county road repairs

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

## WORCESTERSHIRE is among the top council areas for spending government money on road repairs.

A new 'traffic light' map of the UK, based on current road conditions, looks at how local authorities fix potholes and invest in long-term road maintenance.

It shows which local highways authorities (LHAs) are excelling at road repairs and which ones 'could do better'.

While much of the country is the 'amber' middle category, Worcestershire is 'green'.

The map shows the government considers the county council is demonstrating 'best practice' such

as investing in more long-term preventative measures, rather than just 'patching up potholes'.

The government has invested millions into funding local authority road repairs.

The data was produced for 'national pothole day'.

Transport secretary Heidi Alexander said: "For too long drivers in the West Midlands have paid the price because our roads were left to deteriorate.

"I have heard, time and again, their frustration on footing the bill because they hit a pothole - money they should never have to spend in the first place.

"We've put our money where our mouth is, increasing funding in the West Midlands with £800million to fix roads and giving them the long-term certainty they have been asking for.

"Now it's over to them to spend the money wisely and, for the first time we are making sure the public can see how well local highway authorities are doing in delivering the improvements they want to see.

### Record

"This government's record investment will save drivers money on repairs, make roads safer and help restore pride in our communities."

Statistics show pothole-related car repair bills average around £320 and can run into thousands.

The government says its record £7.3billion national investment for local road maintenance is enough for LHAs to renew and improve tens of thousands of miles of roads.

The red, amber, green ratings are based on three key areas: road con-

dition, how much LHAs are spending on repairs and whether they are following best practice.

Red-rated LHAs will get support to bring them in line with best practice, backed by £300,000 worth of expert planning and capability assistance. The support programme will include peer reviews, with experts helping improve processes and providing practical advice.

Edmund King, AA president and founding member of the Pothole Partnership, welcomed the government scheme, adding it would 'hold local highways authorities to account' and help to promote the Pothole Partnership objective of more proactive, permanent repairs.

Caroline Julian, brand and engagement director of British Cycling, and founding member of the Pothole Partnership, said: "For cyclists, potholes are far more than

an annoyance. One unexpected impact can cause a serious crash, life changing injury or, in the worst cases, a fatality.

"Safe riding depends on the safest roads, and a smooth, well-maintained surface isn't a luxury for cyclists; it's essential for their safety.

"This new mapping tool is a step forward.

"It gives riders clear insight into how well their council is maintaining the routes they rely on every day whilst holding decision makers to account."

We contacted Worcestershire County Council for its reaction to the ratings but no-one was available at the time of going to press.

People can visit: gov.uk and search for 'road maintenance ratings map' to see the map and find out more.



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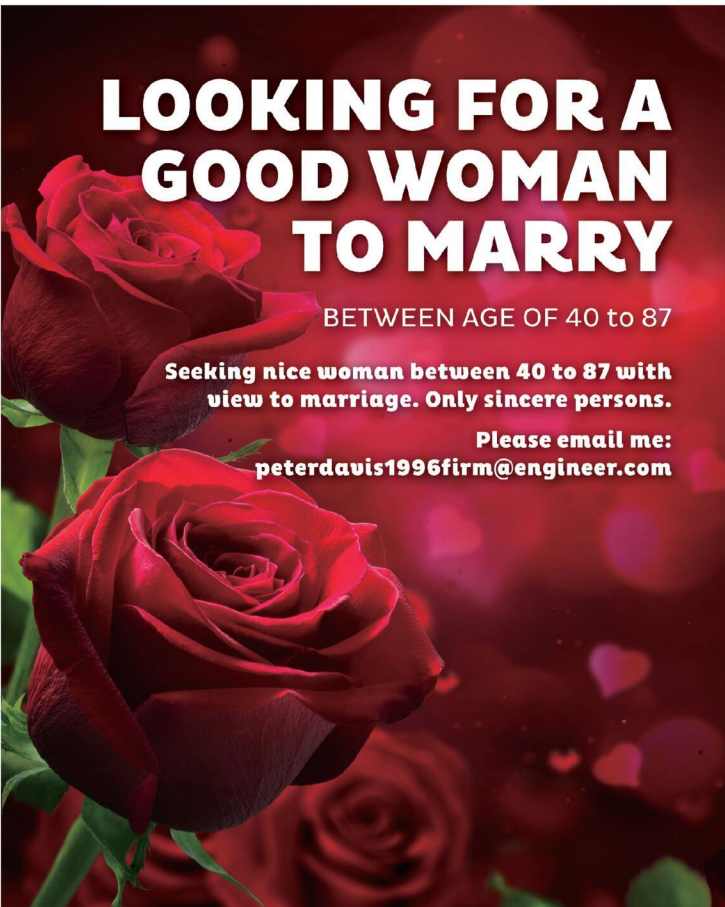
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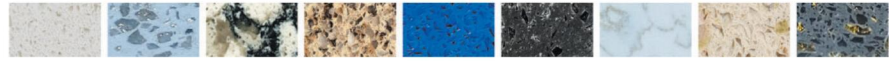


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LEFT: The talented Star Project cast of Grease 'Young at Part' and (ABOVE) in performance.

# For those ready for the next stage

A WORCESTERSHIRE based theatre school has launched its very own professional company to help young performers take their first steps into the world of theatre.

The Star Project, founded in 2006, runs four musical theatre schools across the county in Barnt Green, Cofton Hackett, Droitwich and Worcester.

Its dedicated team, all with professional industry backgrounds, pride themselves on nurturing confidence and creativity in children aged four to 18 whilst building their musical theatre skills. Now the school has launched

The Star Project Young Company, its first professional company, made up of 14 talented performers who successfully auditioned for their place.

The programme operates at an advanced level and is designed to help students progress into the professional theatre industry.

The Star Project Young Company operates as a not-for-profit organisation, reinvesting all income into training and productions, while ensuring its young artists are fairly paid for their professional work.

Their first professional event will be an immersive dinner-theatre experience

in January 2026, which the students will choreograph and stage themselves, with the support of their in-house theatre director and leader of The Star Project Young Company, Sarah Wymen.

"We are lucky to have such a talented group," Sarah said.

"And we were blown away by everyone who attended the auditions. Because our first performance is a realistic interactive piece, we're doing a lot of work around exploring our characters, the physicality of them and their traits, voices and accents.

"So far in rehearsals we've been

fostering a company spirit which is all about working together rather than competing against each other. Each member has been really thinking about what unique things they can offer. Our role is to nurture their talents and we're so proud of all our students, we know they will thrive as a professional company."

The Star Project director and founder, Jo Payne added: "Every child at our school has the opportunity to perform at a high level and build skills, memories and friendships that last a lifetime.

"I am so thrilled to launch our first

professional theatre company. This initiative is dedicated to our elite members who have excelled in their fields under the age of 18.

"We aim to provide them with the opportunity to become young professionals and artists, offering the chance to be paid as young artists within the non-profit organisation we have established.

"We know our chosen company members will be excellent role models for our younger students and will help us to continue to grow as a cornerstone of youth theatre in Worcestershire."



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# Community-minded volunteers can help the justice system

## The government wants more magistrates

by Erica Murphy-Hogg

**MAGISTRATES are wanted in Worcestershire as part of a national recruitment campaign.**

The Government, which launched the drive, is looking to recruit thousands of new magistrates to achieve swifter justice for victims.

All magistrates are volunteers who often do not have any prior legal experience and continue their full-time employment alongside their volunteering.

Local paramedic James Harper, 27, has been a magistrate since 2023.

He said: "Most people are surprised this is a volunteer role but that's what makes it so special.

"Anyone can step up and make a real difference in their local community."

James added: "You just need an open mind, sound judgement, and the ability to work as part of a team.

"Training and expert legal advisers support you every step of the way."

Every decision is made as a team of magistrates, to ensure a balanced consideration of cases.

James also noted how his volunteering had transformed his confidence and showed how volunteers had the chance to better themselves.

To be a magistrate you need to be 18 and over and would be expected to dedicate a minimum of 13 days per year (or 26 half days) to sitting on cases.

The launch of the campaign follows the announcement, in December, that magistrates will play a greater part in delivering justice as part of the government's response to Sir Leveson's Independent Review of Criminal Courts.

Magistrates, in the coming months, will hear more cases as defendants will lose the ability to elect for a trial by jury for minor offences.

Magistrates will also gain the power to sentence offenders to up to 18 months in prison, with an option for that to be extended to 24 months, in the future.

At the minute, around 90 per cent of all criminal cases conclude at magistrates' courts, with that proportion predicted to rise under the government's plans.

Deputy prime minister David Lammy MP said: "Magistrates play a vital role in our court system.

"We need more people of every age and background to volunteer not just to deliver justice but to serve and represent their local communities.

"Volunteering to become a magistrate can make a real difference to your life and the lives of others - that's why I'm

calling on the public to apply and play your part."

Magistrates, in their first year, receive robust training and an experienced mentor to develop their skills and legal knowledge.

The Ministry of Justice is looking for volunteers who have good communication skills, fairness and the ability to see the nuances in arguments.

Icanbeamagistrate.co.uk offers more information about becoming a magistrate in Worcestershire and visitors to the site can register their interest in the role.

**James Harper volunteers as a magistrate in the county.**



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Gateley staff celebrate extending their after-school club partnership. s

by Ashleigh Osborne  
[ashleigh.osborne@bullivantmedia.com](mailto:ashleigh.osborne@bullivantmedia.com)

### TWO Redditch after-school clubs will be funded by professional services group Gateley.

The company is bringing back its partnership with the Heart of England Forest charity for a third year, supporting its responsible-business objective of backing sustainability projects.

The partnership sees Gateley support the charity with its bid to create a 30,000-acre forest – equivalent to half the size of Birmingham – through woodland maintenance and tree-planting volunteering days for its colleagues across the Midlands.

Gateley will also continue to use the partnership to offer access to green spaces for disadvantaged schoolchildren in the region and this year will include two Redditch schools: St George's CE First School and Nursery and St Luke's CE First School.

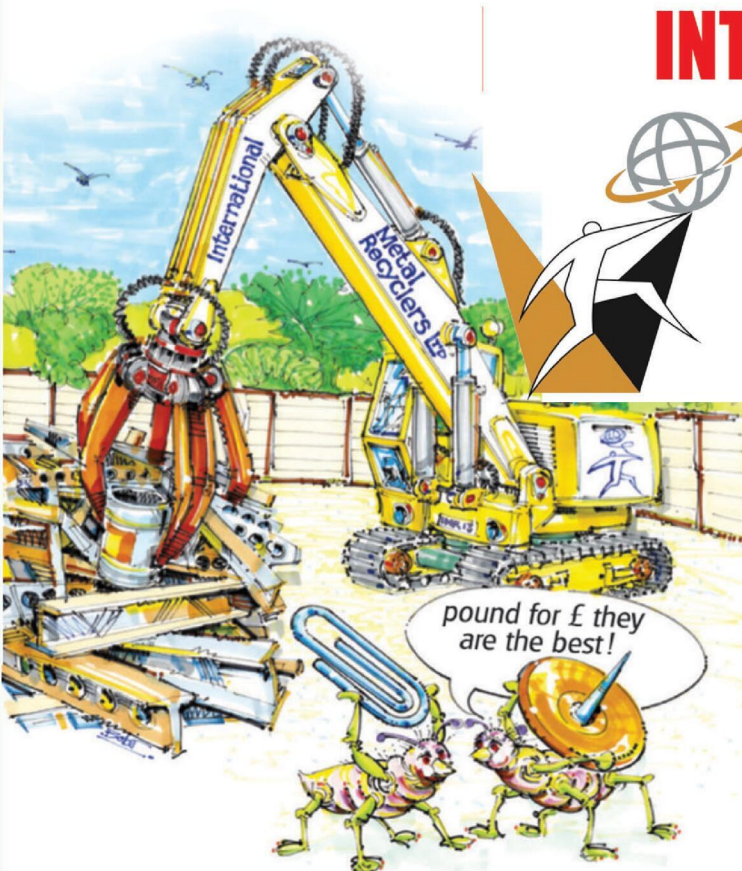
Rebecca Sherwin, partner and Birmingham office head for Gateley, said: "Our partnership with the Heart of England Forest has been built on a shared desire to protect and restore our planet.

"As well as supporting the planting of trees and the protection of threatened species, we were particularly proud to have facilitated access to nature for Year 4 pupils from Ark Kings Academy in Birmingham.

"Our responsible business ethos is built on having a positive impact on the communities we serve, and this is the perfect demonstration of how strategic partnerships can support this ambition."

Fran Bos, senior corporate partnerships manager, for the Heart of England Forest, added: "Our collaboration with Gateley has evolved beyond funding – it's a genuine partnership rooted in shared values and a drive to make a difference.

"From inspiring the next generation through outdoor learning to encouraging employee volunteering and wellbeing, it shows how business and environmental organisations can achieve lasting impact together."



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# Work to start on 128 new homes

**PLANS for 128 affordable homes in Wychbold have been approved.**

The 17.3-acre Crown Lane site will see 95 homes built for social rent and allocated to families on the Wychavon District Council waiting list.

The remaining 33 homes will be available through shared ownership.

Work on the new homes is expected to

begin in the coming months.

The project will be developed by Bromford with land promoter Richborough, which progressed the site through planning and secured approval for the project.

Lyndon Parkes, Bromford's head of land and new business, said the firm was delighted to bring high-quality, affordable homes to Wychbold.

"It's an area in great need of affordable, secure, long-term housing options and it's a huge privilege to be able to deliver that."

The development will include new pedestrian links to make it easier for residents to walk into the village, green spaces, new hedgerows, and native planting as part of the design.

Hannah Deverell, Richborough's disposals director, added: "This scheme has been shaped to respond to local character, landscape setting and community need."

"We're pleased to see it progressing with a partner committed to high-quality, affordable provision."

Matthew Barker, partner at property consultants Fisher German, said: "This proposal represents a logical and well-considered village extension and we're pleased to have helped unlock its potential for much-needed affordable homes to this area."

**Bromford workers at the site of the new Wychbold affordable homes. s**



THE INKBERROW Players' annual pantomime, which this year is Cinderella, gets under way at the end of this month. Performances take place at 7.30pm on January 29, 30 and 31, with a matinee on

the January 31 at 2.30pm at Inkberrow Village Hall.

Tickets are available from: [ticketsource.co.uk/inkberrow-players/e-gpxmzk](https://ticketsource.co.uk/inkberrow-players/e-gpxmzk) or from Simply Fresh on the High Street.

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## Standing tall and walking in confidence – Casey and Mikaela's scoliosis journey

**When 17-year-old student, Casey, from Lichfield first noticed her shoulder blade sticking out with discomfort, she knew something wasn't right and alerted her parents.**

Her sister, Mikaela, 16, experienced similar issues. A visit to the doctor and x-ray results confirmed that both sisters had scoliosis – a three-dimensional curvature of the spine. They were referred for treatment and both required spinal surgery.

"The hardest thing before surgery" Casey remembers, "was sitting up for a long period during exams – it was a struggle." Her sister, Mikaela added, "my shoulder blade just wouldn't sit comfortably on a chair."

The family opted for private healthcare, and their consultant introduced them to The Woodlands Suite – Private Care at The Royal Orthopaedic Hospital in Birmingham. What felt overwhelming at first soon became manageable. From the start, the team at The Woodlands Suite went out of their way to make the experience less daunting. "They treated us royally and even nicknamed us 'The Scol Sisters' during our hospital stay," Casey remembers with a smile.

Recovery was quicker than the family expected. Older sister, Casey, was back at sixth form college in just two weeks, sitting A-level exams just eight weeks after surgery. Both sisters noticed positive changes post-surgery too. "I have fewer aches, and I'm much taller now. I grew three inches after surgery!" said Casey. "Our clothes fit so much better now," added Mikaela. The sisters' mum, Kerry summed up the family's experience: "We honestly couldn't have asked for more than what we received at The Woodlands Suite."



**Sisters Casey (left) and Mikaela (right) in The Royal Orthopaedic Hospital gardens.**

Read more about Casey and Mikaela's journey and find out about our services at [rohprivatecare.co.uk](https://rohprivatecare.co.uk) or call 0121 685 4010.

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# Prepare your car for **WINTER!**

## Get your car winter-ready:

**P**reparing your car for the winter is crucial to ensure safe and trouble-free driving during the cold and often challenging weather conditions. Taking a few proactive steps can make a significant difference in how your vehicle performs and keeps you and your passengers safe. Here are some essential tips to get your car ready for winter:



- **Check Your Tyres:** Your tyres are your car's only contact with the road, so they need to be in excellent condition. Ensure your tyres have adequate tread depth and are properly inflated. Consider switching to winter tyres for enhanced traction on snow and ice.
- **Battery Inspection:** Cold weather can put additional strain on your car's battery. Have it tested to ensure it can handle the cold temperatures. Replace it if it's old or showing signs of weakness.
- **Fluids:** Check and top off all essential fluids, including engine oil, transmission fluid, coolant, and windscreen washer fluid. Consider using



winter-grade windscreen washer fluid to prevent freezing.

- **Brakes and Lights:** Ensure your brakes are in good condition and that all your lights (headlights, taillights, brake lights, and indicators) are working

correctly. Visibility is crucial during winter driving.

- **Heater and Defroster:** Test your car's heater and defroster to make sure they work efficiently. You'll need them to keep the interior warm and maintain clear visibility.

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# Prepare your car for **WINTER**

## Essential preparation tips

• **Antifreeze:** Ensure your vehicle's cooling system has the right concentration of antifreeze to prevent freezing. A 50/50 mixture of coolant and water is typically recommended.

• **Inspect Belts and Hoses:** Cold temperatures can weaken belts and hoses. Look for signs of wear, cracks, or leaks and replace them if necessary.

• **Wiper Blades:** Replace

old or worn wiper blades with winter blades designed to handle snow and ice. Clean your windscreen thoroughly to improve visibility.

• **Emergency Kit:** Equip your car with a winter emergency kit, including items like a torch, blanket, shovel, ice scraper, jump cables, and non-perishable snacks. Also, keep a fully charged phone and charger in the car.

• **Four-Wheel Drive/AWD:** If your car has four-wheel drive or all-wheel drive, make sure it's in good working order. Understand how to engage and disengage it properly.

• **Tyre Chains:** If you live in an area with heavy snowfall, it's a good idea to keep tyre



chains in your boot and know how to install them.

• **Tune-Up:** Consider getting a professional tune-up before winter hits. Mechanics can identify and address any potential issues that might worsen in cold weather.

• **Plan for Emergencies:** Familiarise yourself with the winter driving conditions in your area, and always check weather forecasts before heading out. Be prepared to change your travel plans if necessary.

*By taking these steps to prepare your car for winter, you'll increase your safety and minimise the risk of breakdowns during the coldest months. Remember that good maintenance practices should be a year-round commitment, but they become even more critical as winter approaches. Stay safe on the roads and enjoy a trouble-free winter driving season.*



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# MP backs Tory vow to restrict social media

BROMSGROVE MP Bradley Thomas has shown his support for the new Conservative policy to introduce age restrictions on social media.

His party said, if it won the next general election, it would under-16s from accessing social media platforms.

Members promise to follow the example of Australia, which became the first country to introduce the policy last month.

Conservative leader, Kemi Badenoch said her party would also aim to ban smartphones in school.

Mr Thomas said: "We must take action to stop children from being exposed to violence, pornography and extremist content."

"Experts warn this is a contributing to deteriorating mental health, poor sleep, isolation and knock-on effects for learning and behaviour.

"When I met with a local scout group last year, I was taken aback by how many young people hated social media, but they are on there because of peer pressure and fear of missing out.

"Parents should always be the first line of

defence when it comes to protecting children and as, Conservatives, we want to give parents the support in doing so."

He added a future Conservative government would introduce age restrictions on social media platforms for under-16s to support parents in protecting their children.

Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham said he agreed with 'a lot of what Ms Badenoch was saying' on social media use.

The restriction would mean tech companies, such as TikTok and Snapchat, would need to ensure they were using age-verification methods that would not require any form of government digital ID.

However, this will not apply to messaging apps such as WhatsApp.

Mr Thomas added: "Social media companies need to take more responsibility for the effects their platforms are having on young people.

"This isn't about freedom of speech. "Adults will be able to continue to use social media platforms, but it's about protecting children from the most corrosive effects of social media."



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# Aldi's festive campaign to help county food banks

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

**SUPERMARKET giant Aldi helped deliver 24,400 meals to people across Worcestershire over the Christmas and New Year festive period by donating surplus food from its stores.**

The supermarket teamed up with local good causes including Pershore Community Cupboard, Dines Green Community Food Project and The Granary Community Café, to donate a range of fresh and chilled foods from its stores after closing early on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.

Neighbourly, the community giving platform that partners with Aldi, found that charitable organisations faced increasing pressure over the winter period, with four in five charities saying demand for their services had risen over the past six months and demand for food-banks and other food provision was expected to increase by nearly

30 per cent over the colder winter months.

Aldi has worked with Neighbourly since 2019 and provides surplus food from all of its UK stores to thousands of charities across the country.

Luke Emery, national sustainability director at Aldi UK, said: "This Christmas we were proud to support so many incredible charities across the UK who provide essential support to those in need.

"The services provided by food banks are more important than ever in the current climate, especially over the festive period and we're committed to ensuring those that rely on them have access to a wide range of high-quality foods."

Steve Butterworth, CEO at Neighbourly, added: "We're so grateful to have had Aldi's support for another year.

"Christmas is one of the busiest periods for our charities and the donations from Aldi mean we can help even more people across the country who need that bit of extra support over the festive period."



Communities came together to help supply the county with meals over Christmas. s

Shoppers can donate food to local charities, food banks and community groups via the community donation points in Aldi stores nationwide.

Aldi also works with Company Shop Group – which claims to be the UK's leading redistributor of surplus food and household prod-

ucts – to redistribute food from its Regional Distribution Centres.

This year, Aldi provided more than 2,500 free Christmas lunches to Company Shop's award-winning social enterprise, Community Shop.

The UK's fourth largest supermarket also made it easier for shop-

pers to give back, via a warm clothing and post-Christmas clear-out appeal with The Salvation Army and InPost Lockers, enabling customers to donate coats, hats, scarves and gloves – as well as unwanted Christmas gifts in good condition – at InPost Locker donation points at Aldi stores across the UK.

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**THE all-new electric Mercedes-Benz CLA has achieved the top rating of five stars in the current Euro NCAP test and, thanks to outstanding individual results, taken the top spot of all models of all brands tested by the safety institute in 2025.**

In all four safety disciplines considered, the electric Mercedes-Benz CLA showed up with top values: in occupant protection for adults and children, in the protection of vulnerable road users and in safety assistants.

Jorg Burzer, Chief Technology Officer, Development & Procurement at Mercedes-Benz Group AG, said: "We have redesigned the CLA from the ground up. This also includes development of the safety features that are part of Mercedes' DNA.

"The confirmation by an independent organisation such as Euro NCAP that the CLA is the safest vehicle which was tested in 2025, once again highlights the long-standing expertise and commitment. "The

electric CLA not only leads the "Small Family Cars" category but also takes the top position across all classes in 2025.

It is following in the footsteps of the Mercedes-Benz E-Class, which Euro NCAP named "Best Performer" last year.

Euro NCAP (European New Car Assessment Programme) is an association of European transport ministries, automobile clubs and insurance associations and carries out crash tests and comprehensive safety assessments.

The all-new electric CLA has been developed from the ground up with state-of-the-art safety aspects in mind.

Prof. Dr. Paul Dick, Director of Safety and Accident Research at Mercedes-Benz AG, said: "Our ambition is to not only protect occupants in a Mercedes-Benz, but all road users.

"To achieve this, we develop and build state-of-the-art safety and assistance systems, which now contributed to this excellent result for the all-new electric CLA by the independent organisation Euro NCAP."

The new standard safety assistance systems can prevent many accidents. Should an accident nevertheless

occur, the crumple zones, the rigid passenger compartment and the restraint systems are specifically designed in such a way that the probability of being seriously injured is as low as possible.

In 2026, Mercedes-Benz marks 140 years since the invention of the automobile.

Throughout its history, the company has repeatedly set industry benchmarks by translating pioneering safety research into proven, series-production technologies — from passive and active safety systems to advanced driver assistance — often introducing them to the market first and establishing standards that later became commonplace across the industry.

POLESTAR 3 has been awarded Euro NCAP's Best in Class award for safest Executive Car of 2025.

The brand's flagship SUV impressed with scores of 90 per cent for adult occupant protection, 93 per cent for child occupant protection, 79 per cent for vulnerable road users, and 83 per cent for safety assist.

Euro NCAP praised Polestar 3 for setting "a new standard for child safety", with performance "tantalisingly close to a perfect score."

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Anonymous



# Family Notices

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## IN MEMORIAM

**Roy Merriman**  
28.01.2001  
Dear Roy  
25 years since we lost you  
Always loved and remembered  
*Sheila & Family*  
x



If you have a message for a loved one call 01527 588688

## DEATHS

### BOUSFIELD Peter Wallace 'Damage'

Sadly passed away on Saturday 3rd January, 2026, aged 59 years. A much loved Partner, Brother, Uncle and friend to many.  
'Forever in our Hearts'.  
A service to celebrate Peter's life will take place at Redditch Crematorium on Thursday 12th February 2026 at 1.15 p.m.

Please wear a splash of yellow or pink. Family flowers only please, donations if so desired to Cancer Research UK may be sent to:  
Thomas Brothers, The Funeral Directors, Birchfield House, 494 Evesham Road, Redditch, B97 5JF 01527 547777  
Thank you

## MEMORIAL SERVICES

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Email: [kfporter@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:kfporter@blueyonder.co.uk)

**Please call 01527 550505**

To arrange a home visit or to find out our opening times

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[www.nurseryshopredditch.co.uk](http://www.nurseryshopredditch.co.uk)

**Tel: 01527 550 700**



## DEATHS

### BOYD

**Helen (Nellie)**

Aged 86 Years young  
Passed away suddenly on Monday 5th January 2026.  
Now reunited with late Husband Liam. A much-loved Mother to John, Elizabeth & Fiona.  
A devoted Grandmother to William, Tara, Hugh & Luke.  
A beloved Sister to Attracta & Ann.  
Helen will be greatly missed by all of her family, work colleagues and her many friends both here and in Ireland.  
Helen's children wish to express their gratitude for all their mothers' love and support that she gave them and their families over her long lifetime.  
A service to celebrate Helen's life will take place at Our lady of Mount Carmel Church on Monday 2nd February 2026 at 12.00pm, followed by a committal at the Abbey Cemetery.

Family flowers only please, donations if so desired to Mount Carmel Church may be made via  
Thomas Brothers The Funeral Directors Birchfield House 494 Evesham Road Redditch B97 5JF 01527 547777  
Thank you

## DEATHS

### EARLES Derek Charles

Aged 94 Years  
Passed peacefully at home on Monday 22nd December 2025.  
Beloved Husband to late Wife Cynthia, loving Dad to Sue and Phil, much loved Brother to Pam and a special Grandad and Great Grandad.  
A service to celebrate Derek's life will take place at St Michael's Church, Stoke Prior on Thursday 29th January 2026 at 11am followed by burial at the Church Cemetery.  
Family flowers only please, donations if so desired to Redditch United Under 7's Football Team may be sent to:

Thomas Brothers, The Funeral Directors, Birchfield House, 494 Evesham Road, Redditch, B97 5JF 01527 547777  
Thank you

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01527 852213

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## FUNERAL DIRECTORS

## DEATHS

### COOPER

**Patricia (Trisha)**

of Cheltenham Avenue, CATSHILL.  
Passed away at home on 23rd December 2025.  
Deeply missed by husband Mark, son Jordan and all family and friends.  
Funeral service to take place at All Saints Church, Bromsgrove, on 27th January at 1.00pm, followed by burial at Bromsgrove North Cemetery.  
Flowers welcome or donations to the Cats Protection League.

All enquiries to  
James Giles & Sons Ltd, Bromsgrove, 01527 872318.

## DEATHS

### STANLEY Fred

Our beloved Father passed away peacefully surrounded by his Family on 10th December 2025.  
He was a loving and caring Dad, Grandad and Great Grandad.  
He will be sadly missed by Mark, Suzie, Emma, Family and Friends.  
His Funeral is on Friday 23rd January at St John's Church at 1pm followed by a large Wake at Millfields Social Club.  
Everyone is invited to say their final goodbyes to Fred.



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live for today,  
hope for tomorrow.  
Anonymous



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## FUNERAL DIRECTORS

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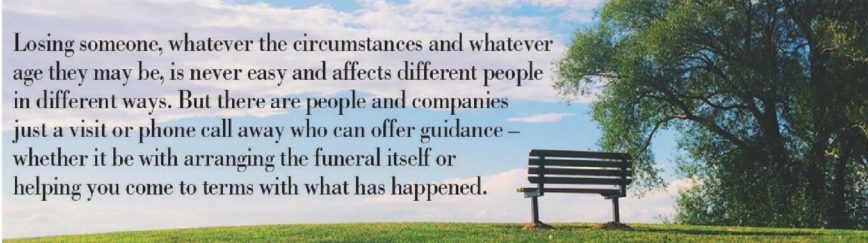


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Losing someone, whatever the circumstances and whatever age they may be, is never easy and affects different people in different ways. But there are people and companies just a visit or phone call away who can offer guidance – whether it be with arranging the funeral itself or helping you come to terms with what has happened.



Whatever the occasion, why not send your loved ones a message.... *Call our team on* **01527 588688**



# Appointments

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## BROMSGROVE SCHOOL

FOUNDED 1553

Bromsgrove is a co-educational Boarding and Day School well situated in the South Midlands with excellent facilities set in 100 acres of attractive grounds.

### GATEKEEPER

**(FULL-TIME 40 HOURS PER WEEK TO INCLUDE WEEKENDS)**

We seek a personable individual to provide a professional welcome to school visitors, assist with deliveries and provide security assistance.

Full details and application forms are available on the School website:

[www.bromsgrove-school.co.uk](http://www.bromsgrove-school.co.uk)

**Closing date for all applications 19 January 2026**

*The School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. Applicants must be willing to undergo child protection screening including checks with past employers and the DBS.*

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### LEARNING SUPPORT ASSISTANT

**(Fixed term through until 31.08.28 - Full time 37.5 hours per week)**

We seek a qualified individual to provide professional support to a pupils ensuring that they can access and integrate fully into school.

Full details and application forms are available on the School website:

[www.bromsgrove-school.co.uk](http://www.bromsgrove-school.co.uk)

**Closing date for all applications 19 January 2026**

*The School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. Applicants must be willing to undergo child protection screening, including checks with past employers and DBS*

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We are seeking a reliable and detail-focused **Finance Administrator** to support parish finances, including accounts, payroll, and shop back-office administration. This varied role works closely with the Treasurer, clergy, staff, and volunteers.

**Key Responsibilities:**

- Accounts payable/receivable, invoicing, banking, and reconciliations
- Payroll processing
- Basic shop administration

**Skills:**

- Strong attention to detail and good communication
- Excel essential; Sage/Staffology desirable
- Able to work independently and as part of a team

**Hours:**

20 hours per week

**Salary:**

£13,970 per annum

**How to Apply:**

Application forms are available at [www.stratford-upon-avon.org](http://www.stratford-upon-avon.org) or via the Parish Office (Tel: 01789 266316).

**Deadline:**

23:59, Sunday 25th January 2026

**Interviews:**

Tuesday 3rd February 2026 at the Holy Trinity Parish Centre

## Gold Crest

Require the following in the Redditch, Bromsgrove, Droitwich and Kidderminster areas

### Part Time Drivers

Transporting children to school. Vehicle provided.

– ALSO –

### Passenger Assistants

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## PUBLIC NOTICES

### PUBLIC NOTICES

#### Warwickshire County Council

**ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984**  
Warwickshire County Council has made the following Temporary Traffic Orders:  
**C38 WHITEMOOR ROAD/WHITEMOOR LANE, SAMBOURNE**  
Order Effect: Road Closed to vehicular traffic from B4090 Alcester Heath to Sambourne Lane/The Green.  
Reason for Order: Carriageway patching and associated works, 09.30hrs - 15.30hrs.  
Order Commences: 22 January 2026 for up to 18 months.  
Anticipated Completion: 22 January 2026.

**Access & Diversion:** The Green, Middletown Lane, A448 Bromsgrove Road, A435 Haydon Way/ Birmingham Road, B4090 Alcester Heath and vice versa.  
**Contractor:** Balfour Beatty, Tel: 03452 415 302.

**MOAT FARM LANE, ULLENHALL**  
Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.  
Reason for Order: Works to replace existing telegraph pole.  
Order Commences: 23 January 2026 for up to 18 months.  
Anticipated Completion: 23 January 2026.

**Access & Diversion:** Moat Farm Lane, Ramshill Lane, Danzey Green Lane, Well Lane, The Green, Vicarage Hill, Broad Lane, Alcester Road, Alderhanger Lane Layby, Gorcott Hill, Ullenhall Lane, Ullenhall Street, Henley Road, Barrells Park, Mount Pleasant Lane, Moat Lane and vice versa.  
**Contractor:** M J Quinn, Tel: 01543 547 118.

**POPLAR CLOSE, ALCESTER**  
Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic between its junction with Elm Drive.  
Reason for Order: Works to clear blockage on the network.  
Order Commences: 21 January 2026 for up to 18 months.  
Anticipated Completion: 26 January 2026.

**Access & Diversion:** No diversion available.  
**Contractor:** Quantum Traffic Management, Tel: 01724 786 286.

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

**WALCOTE ROAD, HASELOR**  
Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.  
Reason for Order: To safely enable works to repair waste water pipe.  
Order Commences: 2 February 2026 for up to 18 months.  
Anticipated Completion: 6 February 2026.

**Access & Diversion:** Walcote Road, Wood Lane, Pelham Lane and vice versa.  
**Contractor:** Customer Solutions Plus, Tel: 03456 027 723.

**D5384 COLD COMFORT LANE, ALCESTER**  
Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic from its junction with the A435 Alcester Road.  
Reason for Order: Carriageway patching and associated works, 08.00hrs - 16.00hrs.  
Order Commences: 2 February 2026 for up to 18 months.  
Anticipated Completion: 6 February 2026.

**Access & Diversion:** No suitable diversion.  
**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](http://warwickshire.gov.uk/roadworksmap) or call 01926 412515.  
S Duxbury, Director of Strategy, Planning & Governance,  
Shire Hall, Warwick CV34 4RL Date 15 Jan 2026

### PUBLIC NOTICES

#### BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL & REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Advertisement Key: ADVSTD = Wider Publicity, CAS = Conservation Area Setting, FP = Affects Footpath, MAJ = Major Development, DEP = Departure.

**25/01465/OUT MAJ DEP ADVSTD FP**  
Site: Land North Of Western Road, Western Road, Hagley, Worcestershire.  
Proposal: Outline planning application (with all matters reserved except for primary means of vehicular access from Western Road) for the development of up to 57 dwellings together with associated access, green and blue infrastructure (including public open space and drainage), required ground remodelling and supporting infrastructure. The proposed development does not accord with the provisions of the development plan in force in the area to which the application relates.

**25/01475/OUT MAJ DEP ADVSTD FP**  
Site: Land North Of Western Road, Western Road, Hagley, Worcestershire.  
Proposal: Outline planning application (with all matters reserved except for primary means of vehicular access from Western Road) for the development of up to 123 dwellings together with associated access, green and blue infrastructure (including play provision, public open space and drainage), required ground remodelling and supporting infrastructure. The proposed development does not accord with the provisions of the development plan in force in the area to which the application relates.

**25/01203/HYB CAS DEP ADVSTD MAJ FP**  
Site: Land At, Bradford Lane, Belbroughton, Worcestershire.  
Proposal: Hybrid planning application to include a full planning application for 46 dwellings inclusive of details of house types, layout, site access, drainage, and landscaping. Also includes an outline planning application for 1 self-build plot with all matters reserved except for access. Total number of dwellings proposed is 47. The proposed development does not accord with the provisions of the development plan in force in the area to which the application relates.

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](mailto: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

Keeping you up to date with the latest information on Planning Proposals, Traffic Notices, Goods Vehicle Operator Licences, Licences To Sell Alcohol, Probate Notices.....

# PUBLIC NOTICES

All your latest information on Planning Proposals, Traffic Notices, Goods Vehicle Operator Licences, Licences To Sell Alcohol and Probate Notices



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**GREY leather recliner** armchair, good quality, apart from bare patches, hence price £35 cv12 area Tel 07967401319

**BLACK Leather** armchair vgc, CV12 area; £45 (no offers) Tel 07967401319

**CUGGL** travel cot for sale grey gc. With mattress. Used as spare at grandparents house. 100 x 74 x 74. £20. Phone 01788840581

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# Saltmen see off Mangotsfield before cup exit at rivals Raiders

by **Aaron Sutcliffe**  
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**FOOTBALL:** JOSH Hurdman's first-half goal earned Droitwich Spa a 1-0 victory away at Mangotsfield United as the Saltmen stretched their winning run to three matches.

Hurdman scored the game's only goal on 32 minutes at Cossham Street as Spa claimed back-to-back one-nil victories on the road.

The result means Droitwich sit second in the Hellenic League Premier Division table, two points behind leaders Roman Glass St George with three games in hand.

However, second-placed Slimbridge sit two points behind Spa with three games in hand on Andy Crowther's side.

The game took place on a 3G surface while Spa's visit drew Mangotsfield's biggest home crowd of the season so far.

Mangotsfield spurned a glorious chance to take the lead after just two minutes as James White somehow fired over the crossbar from point-blank range after good work from Kyrese Morrison down the left.

Spa responded with a chance at the other end as Cory Rudd's through ball released James Lemon who saw his first time shot palmed to safety by Mangotsfield goalkeeper Josh Dempsey.

And Dempsey then kept out Lemon's free-kick soon after with the Droitwich captain making his 350th appearance for the club.

White wasted another chance to put the home side ahead as the legs of Spa goalkeeper Joe Stockton kept the game level.

Stockton then twice denied Morrison after the latter beat the offside trap on two occasions.

However, Spa went close at the other end just past the half-hour mark as Hurdman's strike came back off the post before Mangotsfield cleared the ball behind.

The home side could only half clear the resulting corner as the ball broke to Hurdman who fired a shot through a crowd of bodies and into the bottom corner.

Droitwich rode their luck before the break with Morrison unable to find the target on three occasions when well-placed.

The Saltmen went closest after the break as Dempsey denied Hurdman a second goal from another low drive.

Mangotsfield almost drew level with five minutes left to play as Jacob Spence saw his bullet header crash against the woodwork.

But Spa held on to claim a first win on a 3G pitch this season with the Saltmen unbeaten on the road in the league since November.

However, Droitwich exited the Wiseman Lighting Floodlit Cup at the fourth round stage following a 3-1 derby defeat against Worcester Raiders in midweek.

Raiders took the lead just past the half-hour mark only for Reiss Taylor-Randle to draw the visitors level shortly before the break at the Diary of a Debt Collector Stadium.

However, Worcester struck twice after the break to condemn Spa to a fourth round exit.

Raiders also exacted revenge on the Saltmen after Spa tasted victory in a league meeting between the two clubs at the end of 2025.

Droitwich are next in action against Cinderford Town on Saturday, January 17 with kick-off at 3pm at the King George Playing Fields.



Alex Dugmore pressures the Mangotsfield defence. Pictures by Mathew Mason.



Reiss Taylor-Randle plays a through ball.

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