

# DROITWICH Standard

Friday, June 5th 2026 Week 23

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The 2026 World Cup promises to be a tournament for the ages, but who will prevail?

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2 FIFA World Cup 2026

Overview

# The greatest show on turf just got bigger

**T**HE 2026 World Cup is set to be one of the most exciting and ambitious tournaments football has ever seen as the United States, Canada and Mexico combine to host 104 ties in an expanded 48-team format.

With more nations involved and millions of fans expected to travel across North America, the competition is set to redefine the scale of international football and there are storylines aplenty ahead of the big kick-off on June 11.

Defending champions Argentina will arrive carrying the pressure of repeating their success from 2022 in Qatar, which saw Lionel Messi finally achieve his World Cup dream.

The Inter Miami star did limp off with an apparent hamstring injury on May 25, too, so that could hamper what will be his sixth and likely final World Cup appearances.

Also bringing down the curtain after this tournament will be France's Didier Deschamps and victory would cement his legacy as their greatest manager adding to their 2018 glory.

The 57-year-old took charge of the national team in 2012 and has picked a

■ Jamie Barwick

squad littered with talent that puts them among the favourites. Ballon d'Or winner Ousmane Dembele and Kylian Mbappe are the star attractions, but a supporting cast of Rayan Cherki, Michael Olise, Desire Doue and Bradley Barcola ensure Les Blues are certainly ones to fear this summer.

Other traditional powerhouses hoping to stake their claim are Brazil, who are now under the stewardship of the legendary Carlo Ancelotti. The Selecao have found a spot for Neymar in their 26-man squad, but expect his impact to be fleeting with their hopes pinned on how Ancelotti combines their talents.

Spain will be there come the latter stages of the tournament and for the first time in the tournament's history, head coach Luis de la Fuente has named no Real Madrid players.

England have turned to a German in the hopes of finally getting them over the line as Thomas Tuchel (left) becomes the first foreign manager to take charge of the Three Lions since



Fabio Capello. He has already made some bold decisions admitting he prioritised picking a team of "specialists" over individual talent after leaving a host of star names out.

There is also intrigue at how well Germany will do after successive group-stage exits, with Manuel Neuer coming out of international retirement to be the only player left in their ranks from their 2014 triumph in Brazil.

Die Mannschaft hope a new era is upon them guided by the rising talents of Jamal Musiala, Florian Wirtz and Aleksandar Pavlovic.

A similar theme echoes in the corridors of the Belgium national team, with their golden generation now consigned to the history books. Kevin De Bruyne and Thibaut Courtois remain, but new stars must emerge here and the stage is set for Manchester City's Jeremy Doku.



Portugal arrive with a stellar roster of players to fall into the 'dark horse' bracket as Cristiano Ronaldo prepares to make his final outing on football's biggest stage, but for once not everything falls upon his shoulders.

Manchester United's Bruno Fernandes (left) and Old Trafford team-mate Diogo Dalot feature in a squad that also includes Paris Saint-Germain trio Joao Neves, Nuno Mendes and Vitorinha. Manchester City's triumvirate of Bernardo Silva, Matheus Nunes and Ruben Dias are in and they could spring a surprise.

The expanded format creates greater opportunities for smaller nations to qualify, too, meaning new stories and unexpected heroes will come to the fore this summer. Countries that have rarely competed at World Cups may finally have their moment of

reaching the knockout stages, adding unpredictability and fresh energy.

The likes of Cape Verde, Curacao, Jordan, and Uzbekistan will all make their World Cup debuts and while little is expected of them, just getting there is an achievement.

Perhaps the eventual winner, though, will be the one who can adapt to the sweltering conditions. Fifa has acknowledged that hot weather could be an issue and has introduced mandatory three-minute cooling breaks in each half of every match for the tournament.

And while some critics question whether the larger format could reduce the quality of the early stages, fans believe the tournament will become more inclusive and entertaining.

Overall, the 2026 World Cup has the potential to become a landmark moment in football history - a tournament that unites world-class talent and passionate fans alike on an unprecedented scale to create a truly worldwide celebration of the beautiful game.



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Groups A-D

FIFA World Cup 2026 3

GROUP A

	<b>CZECH REPUBLIC</b>
Manager .....	Miroslav Koubek
Captain .....	Ladislav Krejci
FIFA ranking .....	41

	<b>MEXICO</b>
Manager .....	Javier Aguirre
Captain .....	Edson Alvarez
FIFA ranking .....	15

	<b>SOUTH AFRICA</b>
Manager .....	Hugo Broos
Captain .....	Ronwen Williams
FIFA ranking .....	60

	<b>SOUTH KOREA</b>
Manager .....	Hong Myung-bo
Captain .....	Son Heung-min
FIFA ranking .....	25

GROUP B

	<b>BOSNIA &amp; HERZ</b>
Manager .....	Sergej Barbarez
Captain .....	Edin Dzeko
FIFA ranking .....	65

	<b>CANADA</b>
Manager .....	Jesse Marsch
Captain .....	Alphonso Davies
FIFA ranking .....	30

	<b>QATAR</b>
Manager .....	Julen Lopetegui
Captain .....	Hassan Al-Haydos
FIFA ranking .....	55

	<b>SWITZERLAND</b>
Manager .....	Murat Yakin
Captain .....	Granit Zhaka
FIFA ranking .....	19

# IT'S WIDE OPEN

**G**ROUP A might be short of one of football's traditional powerhouses, but in Mexico, South Korea, Czech Republic and South Africa, has all the ingredients to be one of the most open across the newly-expanded 48-team tournament this summer.

The burden of expectation, though, could weigh heavy on a Mexico side that were poor in Qatar back in 2022.

Now led by legendary manager Javier Aguirre, he will need all of his nous to guide El Tri into the latter stages on home soil with a squad lacking quality.

South Africa know all too well the dangers of hosting a World Cup with their last appearance on the World Cup stage back in 2010.

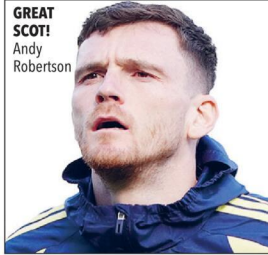
That yielded a group-stage exit, but it has been barren on the world stage ever since. Managed by Hugo Broos, South Africa recently went on a 27-match unbeaten run and that consistency and unity will be key for them.

Similarly hoping for safe passage are South Korea who arguably have the most quality in the pool, while the Czech Republic are finally back on the world stage having been a mainstay in the Euros since 1996.

In Group B, Canada will be sweating on the fitness of Bayern Munich star Alphonso Davies.

The 25-year-old is expected to spearhead their charge as the Canucks look to secure a first-ever place in the knockout rounds, but he has been suffering with a hamstring issue.

German football expert Raphael Honigstein said: "I think they'll get him fit, and he'll come in maybe for the second or third game."



**GREAT SCOT!**  
Andy Robertson

Switzerland will be confident of progressing beyond the second round for the first time since 1954 and could shock a few pundits.

Managed by Murat Yakin, they are one of those sides bracketed under the 'dark horse' label.

This will be only Bosnia & Herzegovina's second outing at the World Cup and they will have their sights set reasonably high.

In what could be a standout World Cup for the veteran stars, Edin Dzeko turned 40 in March and will arrive at the tournament in buoyant mood having just helped his club side win the 2.Bundesliga title.

For the first time, Qatar have qualified for a World Cup, coming through a convoluted AFC phase and are the rank outsiders in the group.

Andy Robertson has admitted that leading Scotland into a first World Cup since 1998 would rank near the top on his list of feats.

The 32-year-old said: "To take this country to the World Cup is the hugest of honours."

A 28-year hiatus will be ended when the Scots head out to battle in the US and their reward is a Group C containing Haiti, Morocco and five-time winners Brazil.

History also awaits Brazil as Carlo Ancelotti becomes the first foreign manager in a century to lead the Selecao in competitive ties. But it has been a turbulent time for the five-time winners. They finished just fifth of a 10-team CONMEBOL group and suffered embarrassing losses to Paraguay and Bolivia.

Brazil have never gone six World Cup cycles without lifting the famous trophy, but several question marks still hang over them.

There are similarly big shoes to fill in the Morocco ranks, with Mohamed Ouabbi filling the void left by Walid Regragui.

And he will be sweating on the availability of Achraf Hakim. The PSG wing-back, who finished sixth in last year's Ballon d'Or voting, has suffered a thigh injury.

The minnows of the pool are Haiti, after Les Grenadiers topped their CONCACAF group - beating the likes of Costa Rica and Honduras.

This could be Mauricio Pochettino's swansong for the US, with speculation mounting the Stars and Stripes' boss will be heading back to club football in Europe next season.

He will want to go out on a high as the joint host nation prepares to stage the footballing bonanza with Canada and Mexico.

Turkey finished third at the 2002 World Cup, but have had to wait 24 years to get back on football's biggest stage, Paraguay are back at the World Cup for the first time since 2010, while Australia have never progressed past the round-of-16 stage.

GROUP C

	<b>BRAZIL</b>
Manager .....	Carlo Ancelotti
Captain .....	Marquinhos
FIFA ranking .....	6

	<b>HAITI</b>
Manager .....	Sebastien Migne
Captain .....	Johny Placide
FIFA ranking .....	83

	<b>MOROCCO</b>
Manager .....	Walid Regragui
Captain .....	Achraf Hakim
FIFA ranking .....	8

	<b>SCOTLAND</b>
Manager .....	Steve Clarke
Captain .....	Andy Robertson
FIFA ranking .....	43

GROUP D

	<b>AUSTRALIA</b>
Manager .....	Tony Popovic
Captain .....	Mathew Ryan
FIFA ranking .....	27

	<b>PARAGUAY</b>
Manager .....	Gustavo Alfaro
Captain .....	Gustavo Gomez
FIFA ranking .....	40

	<b>TURKEY</b>
Manager .....	Vincenzo Montella
Captain .....	Hakan Calhanoglu
FIFA ranking .....	22

	<b>USA</b>
Manager .....	Mauricio Pochettino
Captain .....	Christian Pulisic
FIFA ranking .....	16



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# 4 FIFA World Cup 2026

ROUND OF 32			
GROUP E WINNER	3RD GROUP A/B/C/D/F	Match 1: June 29, 9.30pm - Boston, USA	
GROUP I WINNER	3RD GROUP C/D/E/G/H	Match 2: June 30, 10pm - New Jersey, USA	
GROUP A RUNNER-UP	GROUP B RUNNER-UP	Match 3: June 28, 8pm - Los Angeles, USA	
GROUP F WINNER	GROUP C RUNNER-UP	Match 4: June 30, 2am - Monterrey, Mexico	
GROUP K RUNNER-UP	GROUP L RUNNER-UP	Match 5: July 3, 12am - Toronto, Canada	
GROUP H WINNER	GROUP J RUNNER-UP	Match 6: July 2, 8pm - Los Angeles, USA	
GROUP D WINNER	3RD GROUP B/E/F/I	Match 7: July 1, 1am - Santa Clara, USA	
GROUP G WINNER	3RD GROUP A/E/H/I	Match 8: July 1, 9pm - Seattle, USA	

ROUND OF 16			
WINNER OF GAME 1	WINNER OF MATCH 2	Match 17: July 4, 10pm - Philadelphia, USA	
WINNER OF GAME 3	WINNER OF MATCH 4	Match 18: July 4, 6pm - Houston, USA	
QUARTER-FINAL 1			
WINNER OF GAME 17	WINNER OF GAME 18	July 9, 9pm - Boston, USA	
QUARTER-FINAL 2			
WINNER OF GAME 19	WINNER OF GAME 20	July 10, 8pm - Los Angeles, USA	
ROUND OF 16			
WINNER OF GAME 5	WINNER OF MATCH 6	Match 19: July 6, 8pm - Dallas, USA	
WINNER OF GAME 7	WINNER OF MATCH 8	Match 20: July 7, 1am - Mexico City, Mexico	

GROUP A			
MEXICO	SOUTH AFRICA	June 11, 8pm - Mexico City, Mexico - ITV	
SOUTH KOREA	CZECH REP	June 12, 3am - Guadalajara, Mexico - ITV	
CZECH REP	SOUTH AFRICA	June 18, 5pm - Atlanta, USA - BBC	
MEXICO	SOUTH KOREA	June 19, 2am - Guadalajara, Mexico - BBC	
SOUTH AFRICA	SOUTH KOREA	June 25, 2am - Mexico City, Mexico - BBC	
CZECH REP	MEXICO	June 25, 2am - Monterrey, Mexico - BBC	
W D L F A Pts			
1			
2			
3			
4			

GROUP B			
CANADA	BOSNIA & HERZ	June 12, 8pm - Toronto, Canada - BBC	
QATAR	SWITZERLAND	June 13, 8pm - Santa Clara, USA - ITV	
SWITZERLAND	BOSNIA & HERZ	June 18, 8pm - Los Angeles, USA - ITV	
CANADA	QATAR	June 18, 11pm - Vancouver, Canada - ITV	
SWITZERLAND	CANADA	June 24, 8pm - Vancouver, Canada - ITV	
BOSNIA & HERZ	QATAR	June 24, 8pm - Seattle, USA - ITV	
W D L F A Pts			
1			
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3			
4			

GROUP C			
BRAZIL	MOROCCO	June 13, 11pm - New Jersey, USA - BBC	
HAITI	SCOTLAND	June 14, 2am - Guadalajara, Mexico - BBC	
SCOTLAND	MOROCCO	June 19, 11pm - Boston, USA - ITV	
BRAZIL	HAITI	June 20, 2am - Philadelphia, USA - ITV	
SCOTLAND	BRAZIL	June 24, 11am - Miami, USA - BBC	
MOROCCO	HAITI	June 24, 11am - Atlanta, USA - BBC	
W D L F A Pts			
1			
2			
3			
4			

GROUP G			
BELGIUM	EGYPT	June 15, 8pm - Seattle, USA - BBC	
IRAN	NEW ZEALAND	June 16, 2am - Los Angeles, USA - BBC	
BELGIUM	IRAN	June 21, 8pm - Los Angeles, USA - ITV	
NEW ZEALAND	EGYPT	June 22, 2am - Vancouver, Canada - ITV	
EGYPT	IRAN	June 25, 4am - Seattle, USA - BBC	
NEW ZEALAND	BELGIUM	June 27, 4am - Vancouver, Canada - BBC	
W D L F A Pts			
1			
2			
3			
4			

GROUP H			
SPAIN	CAPE VERDE	June 15, 5pm - Atlanta, USA - ITV	
SAUDI ARABIA	URUGUAY	June 5, 11am - Miami, USA - ITV	
SPAIN	SAUDI ARABIA	June 21, 5pm - Atlanta, USA - BBC	
URUGUAY	CAPE VERDE	June 21, 11pm - Miami, USA - BBC	
CAPE VERDE	SAUDI ARABIA	June 27, 1am - Houston, USA - ITV	
URUGUAY	SPAIN	June 27, 1am - Guadalajara, Mexico - ITV	
W D L F A Pts			
1			
2			
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4			

GROUP I			
FRANCE	SENEGAL	June 16, 8pm - New Jersey, USA - BBC	
IRAQ	NORWAY	June 16, 11pm - Boston, USA - BBC	
FRANCE	IRAQ	June 22, 10pm - Philadelphia, USA - BBC	
NORWAY	SENEGAL	June 23, 1am - New Jersey, USA - ITV	
NORWAY	FRANCE	June 26, 8pm - Boston, USA - ITV	
SENEGAL	IRAQ	June 26, 8pm - Toronto, Canada - ITV	
W D L F A Pts			
1			
2			
3			
4			

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**SME** UK Legal Awards 2026

# Joe hits the road in father's name

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

### A DROITWICH runner is set to undertake a 220-mile challenge for St Richard's Hospice, which cared for his late father.

Joe Hemming will run 33 to 45 miles every day from today (Friday) until Wednesday, in memory of his father, Robert.

Joe is aiming to finish the Severn Way route a year to the day after his dad died, at St Richard's.

Today, Joe aims to complete a 37-mile run, from Plynlimon to Abermule, and tomorrow he will run the same distance, to Shrewsbury.

Sunday will take the tireless fundraiser a further 35 miles, from Shrewsbury to Bridgnorth and from there - on Monday - Joe will undertake the 33 miles to Worcester.

At 43 miles, Tuesday's run, from Worcester to Frampton-on-Severn, will be Joe's longest stretch.

Wednesday's home straight will take Joe from Frampton to Bristol Cathedral for the final 36 miles.

Joe said: "This challenge is not just about the miles but about honouring the strength my dad showed and giving back to the hospice that supported him, and us, so compassionately in his final days."

Joe said training had been tough. "Managing injury setbacks and waking up at 4.30am to smash out half marathons before work has truly tested me," he said.

"But along the way, watching the spring snowdrops appear was an incredible, quiet reminder of exactly why I'm doing this.

"As the run draws closer, so does a massive personal milestone.

"The day I cross the finish line, in Bristol, will mark exactly 365 days since my dad passed away.

"In those 365 days, the incredible team at St Richard's Hospice has carried on caring for more than 3,000 people in our community, providing unwavering support to patients and their loved ones when they need it most.

"That's why I'm stepping up to the start line to give back to the people who give so much."

Joe had already raised more than £2,600 for St Richard's as *The Standard* went to press.

Visit: [justgiving.com/page/joe-hemming-3-to-donate-and-visit-strichards.org.uk](http://justgiving.com/page/joe-hemming-3-to-donate-and-visit-strichards.org.uk) for more about St Richard's Hospice.

■ **Joe Hemming, right, will undertake a 220-mile run, starting today, in memory of his dad and to raise funds for St Richard's Hospice.**



## Teen trio arrested

THREE teenage boys have been arrested on suspicion of burglary, after accessing a property that was undergoing renovation in rural Droitwich.

The incident, on Thursday, May 28, prompted police to issue a warning about trespassing in abandoned or derelict buildings.

Officers have warned of the risks and the potential criminality of entering abandoned and derelict buildings, which often contain unstable structures, exposed wiring, hazardous materials and unsafe flooring.

Such sites pose a high risk of serious injury from falls, collapsing walls or ceilings and other environmental dangers.

Responding to incidents in unsafe environments can also place emergency services workers at risk.

Entering a building without permission may constitute criminal trespass or burglary, officers have warned.

Causing damage to property, whether intentional or reckless, can result in charges of criminal damage.

Insp Lisa Hornberger, from Droitwich safer neighbourhood team, said: "We are discouraging people from committing an unlawful entry and encouraging parents to speak to their children around this too.

"We cannot emphasise enough that such behaviour can lead to both serious harm and/or criminal prosecution."

The trio arrested were bailed pending further enquiries.

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Evelyn Jervis and Isabel Kilpatrick, Assistant Teachers at Redditch lifesavers. s

## Rescue boards to help vital training

REDDITCH Lifesavers were excited to try out their new Rescue boards that were purchased thanks to funding provided by the town's Lions Club.

The boards will be used in the swimming pool, and for open water training at lake and beach venues, enabling the swimmers to take open water and paddle board awards.

Redditch Lifesavers meet on a Tuesday evening at Abbey Stadium.

Visit [redditchlifesavers.co.uk](http://redditchlifesavers.co.uk) for more information.



# Chance to lead skills programme

THE LATEST tender opportunity for the ReNEW project is now welcoming submissions from interested parties across Bromsgrove and Redditch.

ReNEW is on the look-out for someone to deliver the Local Cultural Sector (LCS) Skills Development Programme as part of their wider work across the two towns.

Part of the ReNEW programme, this tender represents a major cultural scheme to strengthen creativity, skills and opportunities across North East Worcestershire.

Funded by Arts Council England and working with local partners, the successful candidate will focus on building skills, capacity, and resilience within the local cultural sector. The programme is likely to consist of delivering training, networking sessions and undertaking research.

The opportunity is open to experienced providers, whether an individual, consortium or organisation.

Cabinet member for health and wellbeing, leisure and culture,

on Bromsgrove District Council, Coun Shirley Webb, said: "This is an exciting opportunity to help us to invest in the people and organisations that make our local cultural sector so vibrant.

"Through this programme we're not only supporting skills development, but strengthening the networks, creativity, and collaboration we know already exists locally."

The project will focus on developing sector skills in areas such as leadership and governance, communications, event management, sustainability and fundraising.

The ReNEW project has a strong focus on inclusion, accessibility, collaboration and creating real-world support for organisations. The successful application will reflect and uphold these beliefs.

Leader of the Redditch Borough Council and portfolio holder for leisure and recreation, Coun Matt Dormer, said: "Culture is at the heart of our communities and this tender is about giving it the space and support it needs to grow and thrive.

"By investing in skills, devel-

oping networks and fostering collaboration, we're helping to build a stronger, more sustainable cultural sector that reflects and celebrates the voices of our residents."

Chair of Cultural Compact for North East Worcestershire, Petro Nicolaidis, added: "We know the strength of our cultural sector lies in the passion and talent of the people within it.

"This is a chance to make a lasting difference to how culture is supported and developed across North East Worcestershire.

"We're inviting ambitious, collaborative partners to step forward and help us co-create a skills programme that responds to real needs and creates real impact."

The deadline for tender submission is June 22 for work expected to start July 2026 and last until March 2028.

All those interested are encouraged to visit the Proactis Portal to see the full details and submit an application.

Visit this story on our website to click through and apply.

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**32**





Peter Richardson, centre, opened an highly-anticipated exhibition. s

## Final chance for laughs at Rik Mayall fest

THE CURTAIN will come down on The Rik Mayall Comedy Festival tomorrow (Saturday) but there are still more than 100 shows, events and other activities taking place in Droitwich before the festival ends.

The popular festival got under way last weekend and one of the first events saw Comic Strip founder and festival patron Peter Richardson officially open an exhibition of rare, highly anticipated photographs of comic legends.

The photo collection, available to view at the festival hub in the former M&Co building, celebrates

the golden era of British alternative comedy.

Hosted at the Droitwich headquarters of the festival, the Trevor Rogers Exhibition brings to light an extraordinary archive of portraits which had been locked away in storage for more than a decade.

Curated by the late photographer's daughter, the collection offers an intimate, candid look at the 1980s alternative comedy scene.

The exhibition features iconic shots of legendary performers including Mayall and Richardson as

well as Adrian Edmondson, Dawn French, Jennifer Saunders, Alexei Sayle, and Nigel Planer, capturing the raw, anarchic energy of a group which redefined British television comedy.

As a long-time collaborator of Mayall's, Richardson's opening of the showcase served as a fitting tribute to both the photographer who documented their rise and the comedy icons who changed the industry forever.

Visit rikmayallcomedyfestival.com for more on the festival and the remaining shows and events.

# Cricket contest is a smash hit

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

**THE INAUGURAL HB9 T10 tournament, which took place at Avoncroft Cricket Club in Stoke Heath, raised more than £2,000 for The Harry Bennett Foundation (HB9).**

Four teams – Friends and Family; Staff and Invitational; Harry's Friends; and Bromsgrove Cricket Club – enjoyed an afternoon of fast-paced cricket and fundraising.

Amid glorious sunshine, supporters relaxed pitch-side, enjoying snacks, ice cream, refreshments from the bar and a packed afternoon of the sound of leather on willow.

The event was the brainchild of 21-year-old Henry Smith, one of Harry Bennett's friends. Henry, with Josh and Alfie Bullivant, helped set up the Bennetts Boots scheme in 2020, following Harry's sudden death from sepsis at just 16 years old.

Henry played a key role organising the tournament, coordinating volunteers, rallying the teams and organising food and an ice cream vans.

Bromsgrove Cricket Club won the final with a score of 171 – 13 more runs than

Friends and Family, who finished the match on 158.

Paul Hutchins was man of the tournament after scoring important runs and helping the Friends and Family team to the final.

The funds were raised through entry donations, HB9 merchandise sales and a raffle that featured sporting prizes donated by local businesses.

Following the success of the tournament, HB9 has confirmed the event will now become an annual event in its fundraising calendar.

Henry said he could not thank everyone involved in the event enough.

"It was a wonderful day of cricket, community and support for The Harry Bennett Foundation," said Henry.

The HB9 Harry Bennett Foundation was created in memory of Harry, to help people, through the power of sport.

Whether supporting individuals or teams, taking part or watching, the foundation works to ensure more people can experience the life-changing physical and mental benefits of sport.

Visit [justgiving.com/charity/hb9](http://justgiving.com/charity/hb9) for more about the charity, to support its work and to make a donation.



The four teams who took part in the inaugural HB9 T10 cricket tournament. s

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The exhibition on the renowned Speedwell Bicycle Club was launched at the Norton Collection Museum on Sunday when there was free entry for cyclists. Picture by Jo Slade. s



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# History is on display

A SPECIAL exhibition to celebrate 150 years of the Speedwell Bicycle Club has gone on display at the Norton Collection Museum in Bromsgrove.

The Speedwell Bicycle Club was founded in 1876 in Edgbaston.

It was named after Speedwell Road where the first meeting took place and among the early members were Sir Alfred Bird, founder of Bird's Custard Factory, James Baldwin JP and the Earl of Dudley.

They were keen to be part of the bicycle boom which began with the Penny Farthing and gained momentum following the Safety Bicycle's introduction. This new invention by John Kemp Starley in the 1880s established the foundation for the modern bicycle design, featuring equal-sized wheels and chain drives.

Bromsgrove's Town Crier, Kevin Ward, himself a keen cyclist, is one of the few remaining members of the Speedwell Club.

He holds the club's archives and is curating the exhibition at the Norton Collection Museum.

Among the artefacts on display are many original trophies, photograph albums, memorabilia with fascinating facts about cycling and past editions of the club magazine.

From its early days, the club was a touring and a racing club, with plenty of competitive spirit.

In 1883, two 24-hour rides were organised - one for bicycles, one for tricycles which was won by Sir Alfred Bird who covered 221.5 miles.

The club's popularity increased into the 1900s, but was curtailed by the two World Wars.

In the 1960s, an Open 50 Mile

Mountain Trial launched and continued for many years, along with the time trials and night rides.

Regular club meetings were held at Wythall Parish Hall.

The exhibition opened on Sunday with a celebration event, along with a short ceremony with local dignitaries, including newly elected Bromsgrove District Council Chairman, Coun Josh Robinson, Bromsgrove Court Leet Bailiff Robert Spittle, Reeve Jonathan Till and Speedwell Club President Roy Male who cut the celebratory cake.

Bike enthusiasts and local cycle club members from Bromsgrove, Redditch and surrounding areas, were encouraged to ride to the museum and anyone arriving by bike on Sunday was given free entry.

The exhibition will run at the Norton Collection Museum until the end of August.

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# Lifesavers issue warning about open water



Lifesaving club members are temporarily training at Droitwich Lido. s

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

**DROITWICH Spa Lifesaving Club is urging families to think about water safety after the open-water death toll rose to 13 during the UK's record-breaking May heat-wave.**

The club, affiliated to the Royal Life Saving Society UK (RLSS UK), said those deaths had brought into sharp focus why teaching young people to be safe in and around water cannot wait.

Temperatures broke records across England and Wales during the bank holiday week, reaching 35.1C at Kew Gardens on May 26 – the hottest May day ever recorded. Many of the open-water victims had entered rivers, lakes or reservoirs to cool down, unaware of how cold water remains below the surface.

“Warmer weather unfortunately sees an increase in accidental drownings,” said a spokesperson for Droitwich Spa Lifesaving Club. “Water temperatures remain very cold despite increased air temperatures and cold water shock can make swimming difficult.”

The RLSS UK warned, when air temperatures reach 25C, accidental drowning rise fivefold.

Jim Bridge, from the Water Safety Partnership, urged anyone in difficulty in open water to use the ‘float to live’ technique.

Speaking on BBC Radio 5 Live, Jim said: “Lie on your back with your head back, with your ears submerged, use your arms and legs to stabilise yourself and just let your breathing come back to a normal breathing pattern.”

“When you are feeling confident that your breathing is normal, you can shout for help or swim to save yourself.”

While Droitwich Spa Leisure Centre has been undergoing a refurbishment, the lifesaving club has been training at Droitwich Lido, giving younger members experience of open-air swimming, learning about water conditions, safe entry and exit, and how to stay calm in unfamiliar environments. The leisure centre is due to reopen in September.

The lifesaving club runs the RLSS UK Rookie Lifeguard Programme, covering first aid, rescue skills, communications and hazard awareness – as well as swimming – for children aged nine and above. Lifesaving club training takes place on Sunday evenings at 6pm.

Families with children aged nine or over who are interested in joining the club are urged to get on the waiting list now, as places are limited.

Email the club at [info@droitwichlifesaving.org.uk](mailto:info@droitwichlifesaving.org.uk) or visit: [droitwichlifesaving.org.uk](http://droitwichlifesaving.org.uk) for more information.

## Court date for man over shootings

A MAN will appear at Birmingham Crown Court this month in connection with a shooting in Northfield.

Zion St Juste, aged 21 and from Birmingham, appeared at the city's magistrates court this week for his first hearing.

He has been charged with two counts of attempted murder and two counts of possession of a firearm with intent.

The charges followed reports of a man being shot in the hand in Brook Lane on May 14. The man sustained inju-

ries which were not life threatening.

A gun was also fired on Gorsyead Grove at around 4.30pm on Thursday, May 28.

A man received non-life threatening gunshot wounds to the leg in that incident and was taken to hospital.

St Juste will appear at Birmingham Crown Court on June 29 for a plea and trial preparation hearing.

A 25-year-old man who was arrested has been released on bail as West Midlands Police's enquiries continue.

## Have a say on plan

RESIDENTS can have their say on Droitwich's neighbourhood plan when a consultation about the document begins on Monday.

A six-week consultation about the plan – which will seek to guide town centre development in Droitwich Spa – will run until July 20.

Paper copies of the draft Droitwich Spa neighbourhood plan will be available to view at Droitwich Spa Heritage Centre and at the town council offices, at St Richard's House.

Paper and electronic response forms will also be available on Wychavon District Council's webpage.

The planning document, when completed and if approved by voters, will inform planning and development decisions within the town until 2041.

The neighbourhood plan will also set out a vision, objectives and policies for Droitwich Spa.

Visit [wychavon.gov.uk](http://wychavon.gov.uk) for more information and to view the plan.



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Roads will be closed to ensure the day runs smoothly for all runners. s

## Best feet forwards

THE Wythall and Hollywood Fun Run returns to Wythall Park on Sunday, with runners gearing up to put their best foot forward.

To help the event run smoothly a number of road closures will be in place on the day and the fun run team are keeping disruption to a minimum for drivers by closing the roads for a minimum time from 9am to 12.30pm.

Roads affected are Baccabox Lane, Batemans Lane, Bell Green Lane, Dark Lane, Headley Heath Lane, Icknield Street, Middle Lane, Packhorse Lane, Silver Street and Wilmore Lane.

Roads will be fully open at 12.30pm. The event includes a 5k, 10k and Families on Track 5k relay race.

It will also be a wonderful family fun day with lots going on for all ages, including a

BBQ, bouncy castles, food stalls, ice cream, bar, archery, bowls, tennis, and a licensed bar.

Acorns Children's Hospice is the official charity partner for the race, and David Lloyd Clubs Solihull Crannmore and Bromsgrove are the main sponsor of the fun run.

The community event is a partnership between Wythall Community Association together with Olympic Medallist and World Champion runner, Steve Cram's Events of the North Team and is supported by Worcestershire County Council's Public Health team.

If you want come along to support and enjoy the festival atmosphere, there is still time.

Visit [wythallhollywoodfunrun.org.uk](http://wythallhollywoodfunrun.org.uk) for more information.



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# BOA place is a dream come true

A STUDENT at a Droitwich theatre school is celebrating after earning a place at the prestigious BOA Creative, Digital and Performing Arts Academy in Birmingham.

Matthew Sidwell, 14, who attends SJ Theatre Arts Academy for singing and vocal lessons, will start at BOA next academic year. He was chosen after a successful audition day.

Matthew said: "It's a dream come true to be able to go to BOA and I can't wait to start in September."

"I want to thank everyone who has helped me achieve this goal."

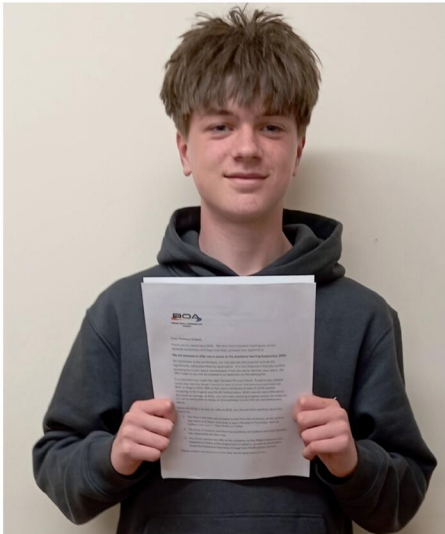
Matthew's parents, Claire and Ben Sidwell, added: "We are immensely proud of what Matthew has achieved and so excited to see where his acting journey will take him."

"Stuart and also all the team at Star Project have played a huge part in helping him achieve his dream of going to BOA."

Stuart Inglis, principal and director of SJ Theatre Arts Academy, said: "We are all extremely proud of Matthew's achievement and we wish him every success for the future."

SJ Theatre Arts Academy is a not-for-profit CIC (Community Interest Company) for children aged three and upwards and adults, is based at Droitwich Community Hall.

It continues to support and inspire young



performers across the region, providing opportunities in singing, acting, and musical theatre for students of all ages and abilities. Visit [sjtheatre.org](http://sjtheatre.org) for more.

**Matthew Sidwell, who attends SJ Theatre Arts Academy, is heading to BOA in September. s**



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# Dangerous debt

A REDDITCH charity that offers free debt help says it is becoming more difficult to repay 'dangerous debt'.

Christians Against Poverty (CAP), working with Oasis Christian Centre, provides free debt advice to local people struggling with the cost of living

A landmark report from CAP reveals families in the West Midlands coming to the charity for help face an 11-year battle to clear their debts as costs continue to rise.

Redditch CAP Debt Centre manager, Emma Marshall, said: "It's become much more difficult for families to repay their debts over the last decade with only a quarter of CAP clients now able to do so in a suitable time, compared to 40 per cent back in 2014.

"Living in spiralling debt is dangerous. It often results in families unable to afford healthy food, living in cold, damp unsafe properties and facing isolation, anxiety and depression.

"But we know poverty can be beaten. By walking alongside people through their toughest storms, churches working with Christians Against Poverty are restoring hope and building the long-term financial resilience our region needs.

"To tackle poverty in Redditch it will take more people to get involved - we can all contribute and make a difference.

"Please consider joining us and supporting our work so we can stop poverty in Redditch together."

Email Emma at [emma.marshall@capuk.org](mailto:emma.marshall@capuk.org) for help and support.

# Blue Cross praises role of volunteer helpers

THE BROMSGROVE Blue Cross has been using Volunteers Week (June 1 to 7) to thank those who give up their time to care for homeless animals.

The charity is also calling on local animal lovers to find out more about volunteer opportunities including becoming a volunteer foster carer.

Last year the rehoming centre on Wildmoor Lane, Catshill, helped nearly 2,000 pets.

So far this year, the team has already helped nearly 1,000 pets.

Christine Tilt, 72, has been fostering for Blue Cross for four years.

She said: "I was at a crossroads - I had lost my own dog and was in desperate need of a dog as a companion and to give me a reason to get up each day.

"I didn't want a dog full time I couldn't commit to that so I started to foster.

"Four years and 25 dogs later I feel really fulfilled I have made new friends and being part of a team I feel included and given a purpose in life."

Foster carers receive full training and all costs, including travel, are covered by Blue Cross and there is full support and guidance throughout.



belonged.

"Giving up my time to be with the animals and support the charity felt like the most natural thing to do.

"Over the years I have given as much time as I possibly could."

She added some time it was up to three to four days, other times just a few hours.

"But whenever I am at Blue Cross, my heart and my hands are fully there.

"I don't measure it in hours, because to me, being there is a part of who I am."

Laura Coveney, Bromsgrove's Blue Cross centre manager, said: "We are so grateful to all of our volunteers like Christine and Samina.

"We know they find the experience incredibly rewarding and some even say it has been life changing, for both themselves and the pets they have helped.

"We're seeing a real hidden pet welfare crisis in the UK, with more pets and people needing our help."

She urged anyone who could volunteer at the Blue Cross to visit: [bluecross.org.uk](http://bluecross.org.uk)

Samina Araf, 59, has volunteered at the Bromsgrove Blue Cross since 2009, helping to volunteer in the on-site catteries and with fundraising activities.

She said she knew it was where she

uk/volunteer to find out more.

Samina Araf has volunteered at the Bromsgrove Blue Cross since 2009. s

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- 6<sup>th</sup> JUNE: EVERLY BROTHERS BY CANDLELIGHT
- 19<sup>th</sup> JUNE: BEEGEES YOU SHOULD BE DANCING
- 26<sup>th</sup> JUNE: I'M EVERY WHITNEY
- 4<sup>th</sup> JULY: SOUND & VISION (TRIBUTE TO BOWIE)
- 10<sup>th</sup> JULY: BLONDISH (THE MUSIC OF BLONDE)
- 11<sup>th</sup> JULY: G2 DEFINITIVE GENESIS
- 23<sup>rd</sup> JULY: ULTIMATE ELVIS EXPERIENCE
- 24<sup>th</sup> JULY: DESPERADOS EAGLES
- 6<sup>th</sup> AUGUST: 50 YEARS OF FENDER
- 3<sup>rd</sup> SEPTEMBER: THE JEFF BECK EXPERIENCE
- 4<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER: LUKE COMBS EXPERIENCE
- 6<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER: A NIGHT IN KILKENNY
- 10<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER: SIXTIES EXPLOSION
- 12<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER: CLASS OF 55 (HISTORY OF ROCK N ROLL)
- 13<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER: THE STROY OF JOHNNY CASH & JUNE CARTE

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- 14<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER - MICHAEL BUBLE TRIBUTE
- 15<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER - THE OGRETONES
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# Care home approval draws fire from locals

The business centre will be demolished to make way for a care home. Picture by Marcus Mingins 2326008MMR

by Ashleigh Osborne  
ashleigh.osborne@bullivantmedia.com

**A CONTROVERSIAL plan to demolish a business centre in Hollywood, to make way for a 65-bedroom care home, has been approved after an appeal.**

A planning application for a purpose-built, three-storey, 65-bedroom residential care home – with associated access, parking and landscaping for older people – was submitted to Bromsgrove District Council last year.

The authority refused planning permission in August, stating there was inadequate safe access to the site and, given the expected elderly and vulnerable occupants, there was no emergency plan.

Another reason given for rejection was the inappropriate scale, mass and visual appearance of the development, which was judged not in keeping with the area.

Residents and councillors also hit out at the plans, saying historic flooding of May Lane, and an adjacent brook, meant the development would increase flood risk to houses on the road.

The developer appealed to the Planning Inspectorate which has now approved the application.

Inspector Mr Bromley said a flood risk assessment (FRA) had concluded the pro-

posed development would not increase flood risk elsewhere.

Mr Bromley wrote: "In addition, with detailed hydraulic modelling, the FRA establishes that, subject to the finished floor level of the building being 300mm above the estimated flood levels, the proposed building would not be at risk of flooding."

A flood management plan prepared by the applicant stated that, during a flood event, residents of the care home could remain in the building.

However, in instances of a medical emergency, when May Lane and the site access might be flooded, alternative arrangements for the safe access and exit of staff, and possible emergency services, would be necessary, the developer's report added.

Coun Derek Forsyth, Wythall parish councillor for the Hollywood ward, dubbed the appeal verdict a "terrible decision".

"It is hard to see how the developer intends to prevent flooding on May Lane," said Coun Forsyth. "If anything, it will get worse as the existing site currently acts as a soak-away but this will be built on and covered in tarmac for a car park, meaning surface water will add to the flooding."

"This is how it's going to be from now on: Councillors and residents put forward genuine reasons why this care home should not be built but along comes the government inspector and gives it his approval."

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# Slash benefits and net zero to help business

OUR COUNTRY, under this government, is living beyond its means, locked in a doom loop of high spending, high debt and higher taxes.



## Westminster Diary

Bradley Thomas MP writes for *The Standard*

This is killing growth, fuelling inflation and killing jobs, weakening our economy.

The chancellor claims the government "has the right plan" but the truth is it is too weak to stand up to backbenchers and too distracted by leadership rivals to act in the UK's interest.

We need to get our country's finances on track, cut taxes and back business to break the doom loop and deliver a stronger economy to get Britain working.

We can do that through a package of savings worth \$47 billion over the next parliament. Those savings will be delivered by cutting welfare spending by \$23 billion; reducing the size of the civil service, which will save \$8 billion; cutting spending on social housing for foreign nationals, saving \$3.9 billion; reducing the cost of the asylum system (\$3.5 billion); abolishing net zero schemes (\$1.6 billion); and cutting overseas aid by \$7 billion.

I have voted for this in parliament but it has been consistently voted down by the government.

Under a government led by Kemi Badenoch, we will introduce our golden economic rule: for every pound saved, half or more will go to reduce the deficit and half will go on cutting

taxes or spending to boost the economy.

We all have to live within our means, so that should apply to our government too.

To back business, we will end business rates for thousands of high street businesses to build a stronger local economy here in Bromsgrove district.

A total of 250,000 retail, hospitality and leisure businesses will benefit from the relief offered as a result, delivering substantial savings which can then be reinvested in better premises, more staff and lower prices, and lifting thousands out of business rates altogether. I've also voted for this in parliament.

And we will cut taxes too. To reduce the tax burden, a government led by Kemi Badenoch will abolish stamp duty on family homes and introduce a \$5,000 first-job bonus.

While other parties ignore economic reality, only my party, under new leadership, has a plan to break the doom loop and deliver a stronger economy to get Britain working again.

**Bradley Thomas  
Bromsgrove MP**



Students from The Star Project took centre stage for the FAMEous Showcase. s

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

## THE STAR Project Young Company delighted audiences at Bromsgrove's Artrix studio with performances of its FAMEous Showcase.

The shows featured 16 performers from the Young Company, the Star Project Theatre School's elite, pre-professional theatre group, giving each one the chance to present a solo piece to highlight their strengths.

The solos were connected through spoken introductions and character moments.

The show opened with a high-energy, 15-minute medley inspired by the musical *Fame*, with each performer demonstrating individuality

and confidence as they showcased their crafts and artistry.

From powerful vocal performances to dramatic monologues and dance pieces, the showcase celebrated the wide range of talent in the company.

Several performances stood out: Ava O delivered a breathtaking rendition of *Maybe This Time*, from *Cabaret*, while Sienna impressed audiences with a striking contemporary dance performance to *Electricity*, from *Billy Elliot the Musical*. She used movement and storytelling to create an emotional and visually engaging piece.

Maisie delivered a moving monologue from *Our Town*, performing with maturity and sensitivity in a poignant reflection on life and letting go.

Star Project bosses praised the

students' backstage professionalism along with the way they approached technical elements, entrances, exits, curtain work and backstage organisation with a high level of maturity and focus. They also highlighted how any minor stage issues in the first show were ironed out for the second.

Technical support – lighting, transitions and sound – was also done to a high standard.

Four awards were given out: Ava O won Best Solo Performance, Ava A took the Best Ensemble Member title, Millie C won the Star Quality Award and Maia was the Adjudicator's Choice.

Maia was particularly recognised for her outstanding vocal delivery in *Alto's Lament* and her powerful performance as Mabel during the *Fame* section of the showcase.

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# Survey aims to find out views on air quality



RESIDENTS across Bromsgrove and Redditch are being urged to complete a survey on air pollution and public perception ahead of Clean Air Day.

The questionnaire aims to capture insights into issues, such as awareness and use of local air quality tools, lifestyle changes to improve air quality and communication preferences on the important topic.

Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) is carrying out the poll on behalf of Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils and is being delivered in partnership with Worcestershire County Council.

An evaluation previously carried out in 2024 saw respondents voice concerns about public health, the environment, urban planning and quality of life.

This informed strategies to reduce air pollution exposure and promote air quality information, including making improvements to the behavioral change workshops in schools and community groups.

It is hoped the new survey results will continue to help make a difference to the future of work to improve air quality and will see more engagement with the communities to achieve this.

Redditch Borough Council's portfolio-holder for climate and biodiversity, Coun Gemma Monaco, said: "We need to work together on environmental issues and not least the quality of our air which has an impact on the health of our residents."

"By understanding what lifestyle changes our residents could make and how we can encourage this in the most effective way, we can improve the air that we breathe."

Based on results, future air quality messaging will be tailored to ensure key stakeholders can play their part in combating air pollution.

Bromsgrove District Councillor Kit Taylor, whose portfolio covers WRS and Climate Change, said: "The quality of the air we breathe can impact our health."

"By working together and identifying and making sensible changes we can make a big difference."

Worcestershire County Council's public health consultant, Matt Fung, added: "While we live in a beautiful, predominantly rural area, air pollution can still affect our daily lives."

"This survey is a great opportunity for people to share their views and help us understand what small changes could make a difference, whether that's reducing car emissions outside schools or thinking about how and when we use solid fuel or wood-burning fires."

He highlighted the need of people working together to find practical, realistic ways to improve air quality for everyone.

Clean Air Day is on June 18 and the consultation runs until July 31.

Visit [worscsregservices.gov.uk/all-services/pollution/air-quality/](http://worscsregservices.gov.uk/all-services/pollution/air-quality/) to complete the survey.

Bromsgrove MP Bradley Thomas with Denise Wetton, Director for Network Rail Central Route, at Barnt Green Station. s

**MAKING LIFE EASIER:** THE NEW lifts at Barnt Green Railway Station have 'transformed' access for rail users and made a real difference to the local community, according to rail bosses.

The £7.5million investment has provided step-free routes to all platforms for the first time, making it significantly easier for passengers to move around the well-used station.

The lifts were installed to help a wider range of people travel with confidence, including those with reduced mobility, passengers with pushchairs, and those carrying heavy luggage.

Denise Wetton, Network Rail's Central route director, said: "It's already making journeys easier and more reliable for a much wider range of passengers, whether that's people

with reduced mobility, those travelling with luggage or families with pushchairs.

"We're really pleased to see the benefits now being felt, with a more inclusive station and a noticeably better experience for passengers."

Bromsgrove MP Bradley Thomas recently visited the station and hailed the completed project as delivering a more inclusive station environment and an improved passenger experience.

He said: "When I was first elected, this was one of the very first issues I picked up as the newly elected MP for Bromsgrove."

"As I saw for myself recently, the new lifts have transformed access at Barnt Green station. I'm pleased this long-awaited investment has improved access for rail users at this incredibly well-used station."



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9th August	Do we need the Old Testament?
16th August	What the Bible says about you.

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For further information, please visit: [www.studleychristadelphians.org](http://www.studleychristadelphians.org)



Work has started on the new site. s

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

**WORK has started to transform an industrial site in Redditch into 72 one- and two-bedroom apartments, by social landlord GreenSquareAccord (GSA).**

The scheme, known as Clive Works – a nod to the needle factory that once stood on the site – received planning approval from Redditch Borough Council last year.

The wider project will see the redevelopment of two roads near Redditch railway station, delivering 175 social homes.

Town MP Chris Bloore recently visited the site and welcomed progress on the site.

He said: "I'm proud to see Clive Works under way on Edward Street. This is about more than housing – it is about dignity, security and creating strong foundations for local families.

"Transforming a derelict industrial site into 72 modern, virtually-plastic-free social

homes tackles our housing crisis head-on while helping to regenerate the town centre.

"Redditch needs affordable homes and this £35million investment delivers exactly that. I've seen the progress, first hand, and commend GreenSquareAccord and TR Partnership Homes for their commitment.

"These homes will change lives and I will continue working to ensure they deliver the difference our community deserves."

Mary Doria, project manager at GSA, said: "We are delighted to have commenced construction at Clive Works.

"The initial phases of the project involve clearing the site and ensuring all pre-construction planning conditions are met."

GSA has appointed Midlands-based construction firm TR Partnership Homes to deliver the new homes at Clive Works.

Steve Thompson, managing director at TR Partnership, said: "Clive Works represents an important regeneration project for the town, transforming a disused industrial site into high-quality, energy-efficient homes that will benefit local people for generations."



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**Toasted teacake with butter - £2.95 add jam £3.45**

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**Chocolate fudge brownie - £6.50**  
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**Summer sundaes - £7.50**  
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**Choose from...**  
Sundae, Affogato, Brownie

# Heat-dome drought is just the first of many

THE UK HAS broken long-standing records for the hottest day and the hottest night in May by more than two clear degrees. That is national news.

What they don't tell you is the reason behind it: a 'heat dome', a blocking extreme-weather pattern holding hot air from the Azores above a swathe of Europe for a period of weeks.

Heat domes are a feature of the climate emergency, what we are doing to the planet and these events are due to get more severe and frequent.

The associated problem is drought, with more than 15,000 homes in Kent left without water on May 28.

The Environment Agency has predicted we will be short of 5 billion litres of water per day by 2055.

What do we do about all this? Clearly it is not a simple matter of putting your socks in the fridge overnight! Opening the windows, drawing the curtains and planting trees for shade will not be enough.

The government's Climate Change Committee (CCC) has just produced a report drawing attention to the seriousness of the situation.

Britain was "built for a climate that no longer exists" and needs urgent changes to survive global heating, the report indicated. We must think like a hot country.

Heatwaves are expected to exceed 40C in all parts of the UK by 2050. Periods of hot weather will be longer, which could lead to an additional 10,000 heat-related deaths every year.

Around nine in 10 UK homes are likely to overheat.

Without restoring our ecosystems, building resilience and making climate adaptation a priority across all of government,



we are playing with the future of our communities.

Preparing is far cheaper than reacting. The CCC estimates every £1 spent on adaptation returns around £5 in avoided harm while the cost of inaction - already £60bn per year - is on course to reach £260bn within two decades.

Our current short-term, reactive approach diverts more of our budget away from vital services and undermines our ability to keep the cost of living lower for millions of households.

The government should implement the CCC's recommendations in full.

Most people are blithely unaware of all this, however.

What we really need, as a top priority, is a public information campaign similar to the one broadcast during the Covid pandemic.

There is currently a *People's Emergency Briefing* film being screened at around 1,000 locations across the country.

Bromsgrove has its own, first screening on June 9. Email: [PEBteam@ourclimateconversation.uk](mailto:PEBteam@ourclimateconversation.uk) for details.

The documentary provides an opportunity for everyone to understand the situation and to discuss the effects on our local community and how we should react.

Visit [xrworcs.org.uk/2021/04/24/bromsgrove-bee-action/](http://xrworcs.org.uk/2021/04/24/bromsgrove-bee-action/) or email: [bromsgrove@extinctionrebellion.uk](mailto:bromsgrove@extinctionrebellion.uk) for more about Bromsgrove XR.

**Bromsgrove Extinction Rebellion (XR)**



The gym has transformed the former Hughes Electrical store into a modern facility for the local community. s

## Gym sparks fitness fanatics

FITNESS enthusiasts in Redditch have a new gym to enjoy with the opening of Snap Fitness Redditch this week.

The gym, the brand's largest in the UK and Ireland, has transformed the former Hughes Electrical store into a modern fitness facility for the community.

Hundreds of members rushed to the gym on its opening day with many queuing to get in and experience their first workout, ahead of its 11am launch. Snap Fitness said mem-

bers will benefit from 24/7 access to exercise to fit their lifestyle, top-of-the-range equipment, group exercise classes, free parking and the ability to use all of Snap Fitness' global locations.

Co-owner Kapil Arora said: "We're delighted our opening day is here.

"It's been brilliant to see all of this come together and I'm so proud of everyone that played their part.

"With it being the largest Snap Fitness gym across the UK and Ireland, we've

worked hard to provide fantastic value to our members and create a facility the local community wanted.

"We understand setting foot into a gym can be overwhelming for some people but that won't be the case here.

"Our goal is to be the most inclusive gym in the area so people feel completely at ease when they walk through our door."

Visit [snapfitness.com/uk/gyms/redditch](http://snapfitness.com/uk/gyms/redditch) for more information.



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# Running to help towns' refugees

VOLUNTEERS will put their best foot forward in a fundraising run for a Bromsgrove and Redditch charity which supports refugees who have made the towns their new homes.

The runners will tackle the Run Redditch 10K and Half Marathon to raise cash for Bromsgrove and Redditch Welcome Refugees (BRWR). The organisation has 70 volunteers supporting around 200 refugees seeking sanctuary in the two towns.

The charity provides friendship and help, ranging from practical support such as form-filling, advice and lifts, to DIY, loans and grants.

The run takes place at Arrow Valley Country Park on June 21, the final day of Refugee Week 2026, which has a theme of courage.

The team is Eileen Mawdsley, Bernard and Penny Sugden, Bob Jefford and Pete Rendell.

BRWR committee member Pete enjoys running with his friends and has said it helps him stay active and keep healthy. He is looking forward to the challenge.

He said: "It's an opportunity to use my running to help other people."

"The money will be used to help refugees settle into their new homes, into their communities and help them become independent and self-supporting."



"British people have generally always supported refugees."

"My grandmother helped a refugee family from Belgium escape the Nazis at the start of the Second World War."

Penny added: "I think BRWR is a great charity and we should all support anyone escaping warzones and unpleasant regimes."

Visit [www.justgiving.com/team/brwr-1](http://www.justgiving.com/team/brwr-1) to donate.

**Three of the five charity runners - Pete Rendell, Eileen Mawdsley and Bob Jefford - will be stepping out in a bid to raise funds. s**



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# Hospitals staff salute volunteers and try to recruit more

A volunteer speaks to a staff nurse. s



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

**THIS volunteers' week, Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust is saying thank you to the hundreds of helpers who play a vital role supporting patients, visitors and staff across its sites every day.**

Across the Alexandra Hospital, Kidderminster Hospital and Treatment Centre, and Worcestershire Royal Hospital, more than 300 volunteers give their time generously to help services run smoothly and enhance the experience of patients and families.

In the past 12 months, volunteers have contributed more than 14,800 hours of support

across many areas of the trust's hospitals.

To mark the occasion, the trust is hosting "appreciation stations" in hospitals, giving staff and patients the opportunity to share thanks and recognise the difference volunteers make.

Throughout the week, members of the trust board and senior leadership team will take part in the 'walk an hour in a volunteer's shoes' scheme, shadowing volunteers in a range of roles and gaining first-hand insights into the impact they make. They will also meet volunteers to thank them in person for their contribution.

Much loved therapy dogs Olive, Bertie, Casper and Aero will also be at Worcestershire Royal Hospital during the week, as part of their regular visits to bring comfort and reassurance to patients, families and colleagues.

The trained dogs are known for helping to reduce stress and anxiety and are a much-valued presence for patients.

The trust is keen to welcome more therapy dogs, at the Alexandra Hospital, and is encouraging anyone with a registered therapy dog to consider getting involved and helping to brighten patients' days.

Volunteers across the trust support a wide range of services, from welcoming and guiding patients and visitors to helping behind the scenes in some clinical areas.

As demand for volunteering continues to grow, Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust is introducing new opportunities for people who want to get involved.

The discharge response service is expanding, with new volunteers invited to join the team at

Worcestershire Royal Hospital. In this role, volunteers collect medication from the hospital pharmacy and deliver it directly to wards, helping patients leave hospital and return home sooner.

Last year alone, volunteers helped more than 4,000 patients through this service.

The patient and public forum is also looking for new members. Those volunteers work with the trust to help a journey of continual improvement by bringing a variety of experience including lived, patient, carer, family and friend's experiences, which provide unique and specific knowledge and really helps the trust to understand patient and carer perspectives.

A new volunteering role is also being introduced at Kidderminster Hospital and Treatment Centre, where volunteers will support

patients by making telephone calls before appointments, offering reminders and checking whether any additional support is needed.

Janet Neate, volunteer manager at Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust, said: "Our volunteers make an incredible difference to our hospitals every single day.

"Whether helping patients return home sooner, offering reassurance before appointments or providing a friendly face, their contribution is invaluable.

"Volunteers' Week is a wonderful opportunity to say thank you and to welcome new people who want to give their time to support their local NHS."

Visit [worceacute.nhs.uk/volunteers](http://worceacute.nhs.uk/volunteers) or email [wah-tr.volunteers@nhs.net](mailto:wah-tr.volunteers@nhs.net), or call 01905 733159, for more information about volunteering.

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Peter has been recognised in the Times Vouched For guide to the UK's top rated financial advisers since 2017.

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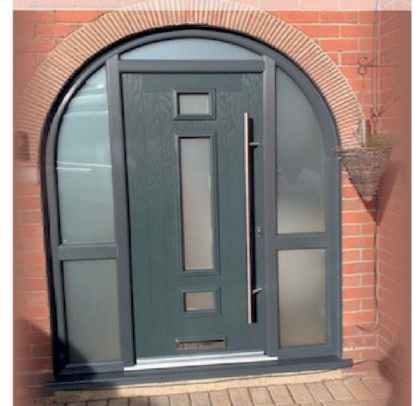
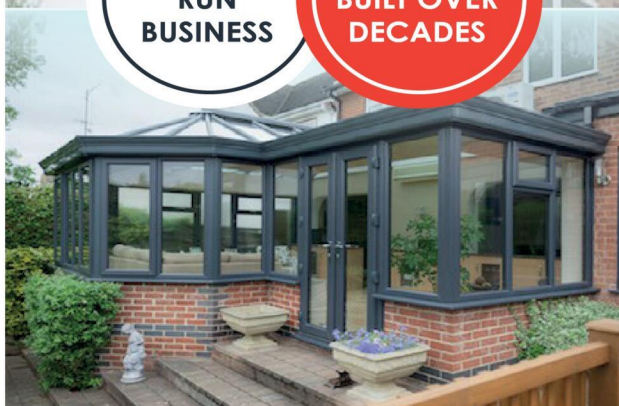


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The food in the warehouse before packaging. s

# An ethical way to expand

by Ashleigh Osborne  
ashleigh.osborne@bullivantmedia.com

**OAKLAND International has confirmed a new on-site partnership between Oddbox and Mindful Chef, bringing three 'purpose-led' food businesses together to scale sustainably, reduce food waste and simplify how customers shop.**

Food-waste reduction company Oddbox will operate alongside recipe-box business Mindful Chef at chilled and frozen food distributor Oakland's Redditch site, sharing infrastructure, expertise and low-carbon operations to create a more flexible, scalable packing solution as demand grows.

Emilie Vanpoperinghe is chief executive and co-founder of Oddbox, which sells refillable products and 'rescued' fruit and veg which would otherwise be wasted.

She said the tie-up with Oakland and Mindful Chef was in response to a need for greater flexibility and long-term growth.

"We'd been thinking about how to build more flexibility into our packing, something that could scale with us," said Emilie. "When

we looked at who could make that happen, what clinched it was how closely aligned we are on the things that matter: reducing waste, sourcing responsibly and building a food system that actually makes sense."

The partnership enables Oddbox to respond to growing customer demand for a more complete, convenient weekly shop.

Oakland sustainability officer Elinor Smith said: "Our partnership with Oddbox builds on our established relationship with Mindful Chef and reflects a shared commitment to using business as a force for good."

"We're delighted to have Oddbox join us on site with Mindful Chef, strengthening a collaborative relationship between three like-minded businesses. As all three are [social and environmental rating] certified B corporations, this reflects a strong alignment around sustainability, responsible growth and delivering positive social and environmental impact."

The Oakland International site is powered by renewable electricity, some purchased and some generated by a 990.26 kilowatt-peak solar array, helping Oddbox and Mindful Chef reduce their carbon footprint and progress toward net zero ambitions.



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The Slug and Lettuce in Bromsgrove will be closing. s

# Pub trade not sluggish enough

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

**THE SLUG and Lettuce pub in Bromsgrove will be closing this month due to “economic pressures”.**

The team which runs the pub announced the news on Facebook, adding the last day of trade will be on Saturday, June 20.

The property – at 126 to 130 High Street – has been up for rental for the past year.

A statement by the Slug and Lettuce team, however, said that plan had not come to fruition.

The statement added: “Due to the multi-

tude of economic pressures placed upon our industry, ultimately, we have had to make the painful decision to cease trading completely.

“We know this will come as just as much of a shock to you as it did to us.

“Over the years we’ve hosted and served so many of you and sincerely hope you’ll help us make our final days ones to remember by joining us over the next couple of weeks to see us out in style.”

Anyone with bookings after June 20 will be contacted by the Slug and Lettuce chain’s head office.

Saddened customers reacted on social media, with one saying: “I’ve had so many great birthday nights out and memories.

“It is very sad to see you guys go.”



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# New contract set to boost number of EV charge points across the county



The new contract to deliver significantly more charge points across the county. s

**WORCESTERSHIRE'S efforts to expand and enhance its electric vehicle (EV) charging network have taken a major step forward with the award of a new contract to deliver significantly more charge points across the county.**

Working in partnership with Leicestershire County Council, Rutland County Council and Warwickshire County Council, Worcestershire has secured a contract that will unlock £3.5 million from the Department for Transport fund, alongside around £13 million in private investment, to install new EV charging infrastructure across the county.

Councillor Tom Wells, cabinet

member for highways and transport at Worcestershire County Council, said: "It's fantastic news that we now have partners in place to deliver these electric vehicle charge points across the county."

"We're another step closer to delivering charge points where they're needed, ensuring high-quality installations for those who already own an electric vehicle, as well as helping drivers to make the switch to EVs in the future."

Under the agreement, EZO has been appointed to deliver at least 64 rapid charge points sockets, while Connected Kerb will provide 1,700 additional lower-powered charge point sockets. This will give EV drivers in Worcestershire access to a broad mix of rapid and on-street charging options.

EZO CEO Ollie Chatten said: "This contract is an important step in strengthening EV charging infrastructure across the region and EZO is pleased to be working with Worcestershire County Council and its partner authorities on this significant investment."

"EZO will help deliver rapid charging that gives drivers greater confidence and supports the wider shift to cleaner transport. Our focus will be on providing a dependable, user-friendly network that works for residents, businesses and visitors alike."

Chris Pateman-Jones, CEO, Connected Kerb, added: "We're delighted to be working with Worcestershire County Council, alongside Leicestershire, Warwickshire and Rutland, on this

important step to increase on-street EV charging across the county."

"As part of the wider Midlands Connect programme, more than 6,600 charging sockets will be delivered across the region, helping Worcestershire be part of a shared regional effort to make cleaner, more sustainable travel easier for everyone."

The consortium of councils was supported by Midlands Connect, the region's Sub-national Transport Body, in awarding the contract.

Maria Machancoses, chief executive of Midlands Connect, said: "This is a fantastic example of what strong regional partnership working can deliver. By collaborating across the Midlands, local authorities have secured significant public and private investment that will

make a real difference to communities, helping expand EV charging infrastructure at scale and supporting the transition to cleaner, greener transport."

"It shows the power of working together to turn ambitious plans into tangible outcomes, benefiting communities, businesses and the wider economy. We are collaborating to reduce duplication, maximise efficiency and ensure every pound delivers the greatest impact."

The programme is funded through the Government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund, which aims to accelerate the roll-out of local, primarily low-power, on-street charging across England and drive greater commercialisation and investment within the UK's EV charging sector.

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# The World of Park & Leisure Homes Show Returns to Stoneleigh This June

**THE UK'S leading outdoor event for park, leisure and holiday home living returns to NAEC Stoneleigh from 12-14 June, bringing an impressive showcase of homes, lodges, park operators and lifestyle inspiration to the heart of Warwickshire.**

The World of Park & Leisure Homes Show is free to attend with complimentary parking and offers visitors the chance to explore a wide range of around 40 fully furnished homes in a relaxed outdoor setting. From residential park homes and luxury lodges to holiday homes, tiny houses, and innovative eco-builds including a Fold Out Container ! and much more....



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Whether visitors are actively considering a move, looking for a holiday retreat, exploring downsizing options, or simply curious about the lifestyle, the show provides a rare opportunity to step inside the homes, compare layouts, speak directly with manufacturers and meet park operators from across the UK — all in one place.

This year's event will also feature a special appearance from Kelvin and Elizabeth Fletcher, stars of ITV's **Fletcher's Family Farm**, to unveil the new **Fletcher's Farmhouse Lodge**, created with **Pathfinder Homes**.

Visitors can also browse products and services for park home living, see the latest

innovations and interior decoration designs, and speak with specialists providing guidance on finance, insurance, planning, legal matters and lifestyle choices.

The event is designed to showcase the very best of the park and leisure home lifestyle, while offering a friendly and informative day out for visitors of all ages. **COME ALONG AND BE AMAZED!**

The show is Great Fun and simply, a nice Free day out. Its dog-friendly (on leads and under control of course), and visitors can enjoy free show bags, magazines, visit the catering areas and have plenty of time to explore the showground and browse at their own pace.

**Event details: The World of Park & Leisure Homes Show, NAEC Stoneleigh, Stoneleigh Park, CV8 2LH, 12-14 June, 10am-4pm. Free entry and free parking. For full details, visit [www.parkhomeandleisure.co.uk](http://www.parkhomeandleisure.co.uk).**



# 2026 Short Breaks

## Something for everyone to enjoy!



### Borders Country Vera's Northumbria & Barnard Castle

Departing Mon 10 Aug '26

On this break, we journey to some of the filming locations for the popular Vera TV series with a local, specialist guide, discovering the dramatic beauty and heritage of the North East, from Barnard Castle to the Durham Dales and the rugged Scottish Borders.

**So much included...**

- Return coach travel from Bromsgrove
- 4 nights at the Leonardo Hotel, Newcastle (JG3 rating) with dinner & breakfast
- Blue Badge guided tour of Vera's Northumbria
- Guided tour of the Durham Dales, North Pennines & Barnard Castle with a local specialist
- Guided Borders Country tour (Ford, Etal, Coldstream, Kelso & Jedburgh) with a local specialist
- Photo stop at the Angel of the North
- Free time in Newcastle-upon-Tyne



### Isle of Wight Weekend

Departing Fri 17 Jul '26

A long weekend by the sea beckons on this lovely escape to the Isle of Wight. Beloved since Queen Victoria's reign, follow in the footsteps of royalty and relax at our base in a popular seaside resort and discover other highlights during an optional trip!

**So much included...**

- Return coach travel & ferry crossings from Redditch, Bromsgrove
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### Wonderful Whitby & the North Yorkshire Moors Railway

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- Return coach travel from Redditch
- 4 nights at the Royal Hotel, Whitby (JG3 rating) with dinner & breakfast
- Entertainment some evenings
- Heritage train journey on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway
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# Family Notices

## IN MEMORIAM

### In memory John Cleverley 'Chinkie'

Sunrise 28th september 1945  
- Sunset 6th June 2025

Too good in life  
to be forgotten  
in death  
(up the Wolves)



Love Pat  
and Family

God bless xxxx

## DEATHS

### BENNETT Norma

Aged 86 years

Norma sadly passed away at  
the Alexandra Hospital on  
Tuesday 12th May 2026.

Beloved Wife of Brian, wonderful  
Mother, cherished Grandmother and  
Great-grandmother.

A service to celebrate Norma's life will  
take place at Redditch Crematorium on  
Wednesday 10th June 2026 at 11.45am

Family flowers only please.

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## DEATHS

### DUGGAN Frederick James "Jim"

Sadly, passed away on the 23rd May 2026  
aged 87 years.

Dearly loved husband of Maddie, father to  
Karen and Phil and stepfather to  
Gary and Helen.

He will also be missed by all of his in-laws,  
grandchildren, great grandchildren, all of his  
extended family and friends and by everyone  
who had the pleasure of knowing him.

Jim's funeral will be taking place on  
Friday 12th June 2026 at  
Waseley Hills Crematorium at 10:30am.

Flowers are welcome.

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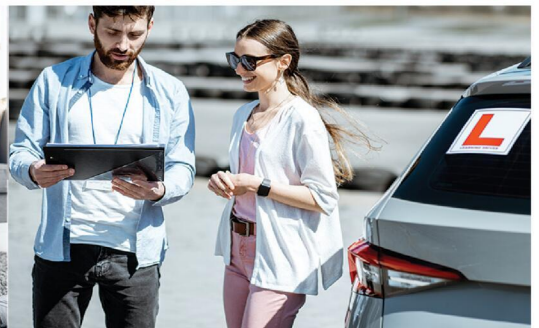


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## PUBLIC NOTICES

### PUBLIC NOTICES

#### Warwickshire County Council

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

**HAYE LANE, MAPPLEBOROUGH GREEN**  
**Order Effect:** Road closed to vehicular traffic.  
**Reason for Order:** To enable works for installation of boundary box and meter.  
**Order Commences:** 25 June 2026 for up to 18 months.  
**Anticipated Completion:** 26 June 2026.  
**Access & Diversion:** Haye Lane, Birmingham Road, Henley Road and vice versa.  
**Contractor:** Chevron TM Ltd, Tel: 0330 008 0820.

#### SOUTH WARWICKSHIRE – SURFACE DRESSING 2026

**Order Effect:** Roads closed to vehicular traffic as indicated below. In addition, a 10mph speed restriction will be imposed.

Road(s) Subject to Closure & Temporary 10mph Speed Limit	Location	From	To
A422 Arrow Lane (Main Street)	Arrow	A435 Alcester Bypass Roundabout	Dunnington Road
C214 Dunnington Road (Main Street)	Arrow	A422 Arrow Lane	B4088 Evesham Road
D5434 Lower Haselor Lane	Haselor	Trench Lane/Stratford Road	Pelham Lane
C41/C46 Pelham Lane	Haselor	B4089 Henley Road/School Road/Village Road	Lower Haselor Lane/Walcote Road
C38 Whitmore Road/Whitmore Lane/The Green	Sambourne	Middletown Lane	Alcester Heath/Salt Way
C47 Honeybourne Road/Buckle Street	Marlcliff	Welford Road/Cleeve Road	Warwickshire County Boundary (nr Buckle House)

**Reason for Order:** The closures and temporary speed limits are required to facilitate carriageway surface dressing, carriageway sealing treatments, removal/replacement of road studs, pre-surface dressing patching, road markings/lining, sand carpeting, road sweeping and other associated works.  
**Order Commences:** 22 June 2026 for up to 18 months.  
**Anticipated Completion:** 30 September 2026.  
**Access & Diversion:** All closures/speed limits will be indicated by advance signage.  
**Contractor:** Balfour Beatty, Tel: 03452 415302.

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 us 01926 412515.  
S Duxbury, Director of Strategy, Planning & Governance, Shire Hall, Warwick CV34 4RL Date 05 June 2026

### PUBLIC NOTICES

#### JEAN CECILIA LAWRENCE Deceased

Pursuant to the Trustee Act 1925 anyone with a claim against or an interest in the Estate of the deceased, late of 50 Cottage Lane, Marlbrook, Bromsgrove, B60 1DW, who died on 04/06/2025, must send written details to the address below by 06/08/2026, after which the Estate will be distributed with regard only to claims and interests notified.  
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## A future classic

**ROLLS-ROYCE announces Spectre Series II, introducing a suite of technical and creative enhancements to the marque's landmark super-coupe.**

Since its introduction in 2022, Spectre has become one of the most significant and celebrated Rolls-Royce motor cars of the modern era, widely praised for its timeless design, serene performance and effortless driving character.

Spectre Series II builds on this success, engineering

updates up to 18 per cent more range, alongside higher torque of 1,015 Nm increased to 1,100 in Spirited Mode and up to a 14 per cent reduction in charging times.

Newly crafted interior illuminations, an expanded palette of exquisite materials, and striking exterior treatments further elevate Spectre's interior possibilities.

These changes sharpen Spectre's character while preserving the quality and control for Series II, further strengthening Black Badge Spectre's standing as the most powerful Rolls-Royce in history.

Power output now reaches 442 kW whilst torque rises to 1,015 Nm. In Black Badge Spectre Series II, Infinity Mode unlocks 500 kW of power, while Spirited Mode summons up to 1,100 Nm torque.

Spectre has emerged as one of the most compelling canvases for Bespoke in Rolls-Royce's contemporary portfolio, with some clients requesting more than 20 individual and personal Bespoke elements in their motor car.

The super-coupe's celebrated fast-back profile, clean surfacing and split headlamp signature are retained for Spectre Series II, underlining the marque's confidence in this initial, widely acclaimed design.

Since launch, Spectre has been widely praised as one of the most elegant automotive forms of the era and now stands alongside Phantom Coupé and other revered Goodwood-era models in the marque's collector canon.

Of the numerous international accolades Spectre has received, its timeless design is consistently celebrated by judging panels, while clients have embraced Spectre as a true modern masterpiece.

To accentuate Spectre's form and surfacing, a new solid exterior finish, named Ethereal Blue, has been developed for Spectre Series II.

For Black Badge Spectre Series II, a suite of new design enhancements further dramatise the marque's alter ego, amplifying its intense and uncompromising character.

A new Iced Black Exterior Detailing

offer has been developed, transforming almost all of the motor car's brightwork with a matte finish.

The treatment is applied to the grille surround, sideframe finishers, bumper inserts, 'Double R' Badge of Honour side surround, door handles and the Spirit of Ecstasy.

The effect is achieved using a specially developed matte clear coat, creating a refined, satin-like finish. Notably, the vanes of the Pantheon Grille remain polished - a decision taken by Rolls-Royce designers to preserve the motor car's identity.

A new wheelset has also been developed to create an even more imposing visual character for Black Badge.

The open-spoke design places emphasis on the motor car's powerful braking hardware while a polished outer ring - pushed to the very edge of the wheel - accentuates the diameter of the seven-spoke structure.

A subtle sparkle effect is achieved through fine glass flakes embedded within the finish.

This bold new design is also available in Iced Matte Black - the first time a Black Badge wheel has been offered in this finish - created using a specialised high-temperature curing process.

In 2025, Spectre retained its position as the marque's second best-selling model globally.

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# Hamilton celebrates historic feat as BTCC heads to Oulton Park

by Aaron Sutcliffe  
 aaron.sutcliffe@bullivantmedia.com

**BTCC:** NICOLAS Hamilton achieved a 'childhood dream' after winning the Jack Sears Trophy driving for Team Vertu in the British Touring Car Championship (BTCC).

Hamilton claimed the first silverware of his racing career driving for Droitwich-based Team Vertu at Snetterton.

The 34-year-old came out on top in the Jack Sears Trophy - awarded to drivers without a BTCC podium at the start of a new season.

Hamilton, younger brother of seven-time Formula 1 world champion Lewis Hamilton, is the only disabled driver to take part in the BTCC.

Told he would never walk as a child after he was born with cerebral palsy, the Team Vertu driver races in a specially modified car.

Hamilton finished 16th in the qualifying race and then finished 17th, 16th and 16th in the three main races to step onto the podium as the Jack Sears Trophy winner.

And Hamilton dedicated his victory to the disabled community and hopes his success will inspire more disabled drivers to take up competitive motorsport.

Hamilton said: "I honestly cannot believe what has happened as I never expected to walk away from Snetterton as winner of the Jack Sears Trophy."

"My whole focus was on developing



Nicolas Hamilton won the Jack Sears Trophy at Snetterton. Picture by Mark Cowdrill.

and improving myself, and to end up on the podium was the most amazing experience.

"Thanks to the team and the car, but also through hard work from myself, I've been quicker here than ever before and I'm so proud of how I have driven."

"I've always said that I wanted to win a trophy, but I didn't want to just be gifted it, and I feel like I earned it and deserved it."

"I know I need to work on my starts, but I was able to work my way forwards in every race because I had the pace to do it, and that is something I am massively proud of."

"I'm not going to, but I could happily hang my boots, gloves and helmet up after

this weekend knowing that I have achieved the dream of a little boy who was told he would never walk."

"The amount of support from the BTCC paddock and from the whole community around the championship has been incredible and it was truly a surreal moment to be there on the podium seeing everyone cheering."

"This is for everyone who has stuck by me and supported me, and even those who have doubted me as it has only fuelled my desire to reach my goal."

"For all those in the disabled community, hopefully this will provide further inspiration of what is possible."

The BTCC season continues at Oulton Park over the weekend of June 6 and 7.

# Spa cruise to win against Burghill

**CRICKET:** A FOUR-WICKET burst from Finn Taylor inspired Droitwich Spa CC to a 98-run victory against Burghill, Tillington and Weobley CC.

Taylor (4-44) ripped through the home side's middle order as Droitwich skittled their opponents for just 105 all out at the PAF Cricket Ground.

That came after Droitwich managed 203 all out in 49.1 overs as Jez Hanson (44) top scored with the bat.

The result means Spa sit third in the Worcestershire County League Division One table after seven matches, just 11 points behind leaders Belbroughton.

Droitwich won the toss and elected to bat only for the away side's top order to struggle to build a solid partnership.

Opener Obaidullah Sherzad (6) fell in the fourth over while Jonathan Miles (18), Taylor (0) and Harry Butler (13) all departed the crease to leave Spa on 54-4.

Burghill bowlers Tristan Smit (4-70) and Barney Morgan (3-41) did the early damage with the ball as the latter removed Max Young (13) to leave Droitwich on 73-5.

However, Hanson and Sam Woolley (39)

combined for an 85-run sixth-wicket stand as Martyn Davies (15) and Sam Smith (20) took Spa beyond the 200-run mark.

Burghill's George Stevenson (3-28) mopped up the tail order batters as Spa reached 203 all out.

However, Droitwich enjoyed similar success with the ball early in Burghill's reply.

Smith (3-37) took the first three wickets of the innings, including two LBW's, as Jake Hutson (13), Tyler Garrard (16) and Theo Darke (8) all fell cheaply.

And Taylor then accounted for Sabil Sarmad (4), Smit (1), Max Denny (3) and Morgan (25) in a devastating spell which left Burghill in trouble on 78-7.

Young (2-14) quickly removed Will Friday (3) to edge Spa closer to victory despite late resistance from G Stevenson (12), Archie Stevenson (7 not out) and Afaq Khalid (6).

Spa skipper Davies (1-8) accounted for G Stevenson before Young bowled Khalid to ensure Droitwich secured a comfortable 98-run success.

Droitwich are next in action against Hagley on Saturday, June 6 with play to begin at 12pm (midday) at St Peter's Playing Fields.

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Chart



FINAL

WINNER OF SF 2  
New Jersey, USA

SEMI-FINAL 2

WINNER OF QF 3 WINNER OF QF 4  
July 15, 8pm - Atlanta, USA

PLACE MATCH

LOSER OF SF 2  
Miami, USA

FIFA World Cup 2026 5

ROUND OF 16

WINNER OF MATCH 9 WINNER OF MATCH 10  
Match 21: July 5, 9pm - New Jersey, USA  
WINNER OF MATCH 11 WINNER OF MATCH 12  
Match 22: July 6, 1am - Mexico City, Mexico

QUARTER-FINAL 3

WINNER OF GAME 21 WINNER OF GAME 22  
July 11, 10pm - Miami, USA

QUARTER-FINAL 4

WINNER OF GAME 23 WINNER OF GAME 24  
July 12, 2am - Kansas City, USA

ROUND OF 16

WINNER OF MATCH 13 WINNER OF MATCH 14  
Match 23: July 7, 5pm - Atlanta, USA  
WINNER OF MATCH 15 WINNER OF MATCH 16  
Match 24: July 7, 9pm - Vancouver, Canada

ROUND OF 32

GROUP C WINNER GROUP F RUNNER-UP  
Match 9: June 29, 6pm - Houston, USA

GROUP E RUNNER-UP GROUP I RUNNER-UP  
Match 10: June 30, 6pm - Dallas, USA

GROUP A WINNER 3RD GROUP C/E/F/H/I  
Match 11: July 1, 2am - Mexico City, Mexico

GROUP L WINNER 3RD GROUP E/H/I/J/K  
Match 12: July 1, 5pm - Atlanta, USA

GROUP J WINNER GROUP H RUNNER-UP  
Match 13: July 3, 11pm - Miami, USA

GROUP D RUNNER-UP GROUP G RUNNER-UP  
Match 14: July 3, 7pm - Dallas, USA

GROUP B WINNER 3RD GROUP E/F/G/H/I  
Match 15: July 3, 4am - Vancouver, Canada

GROUP K WINNER 3RD GROUP D/E/I/J/L  
Match 16: July 4, 2.30am - Kansas City, USA

GROUP D

UNITED STATES PARAGUAY  
June 13, 2am - Los Angeles, USA - BBC  
AUSTRALIA TURKEY  
June 14, 5am - Vancouver, Canada - ITV  
UNITED STATES AUSTRALIA  
June 19, 8pm - Seattle, USA - BBC  
TURKEY PARAGUAY  
June 20, 5am - Santa Clara - ITV  
TURKEY UNITED STATES  
June 26, 3am - Los Angeles, USA - ITV  
PARAGUAY AUSTRALIA  
June 26, 3am - Santa Clara, USA - ITV

W D L F A Pts

1						
2						
3						
4						

GROUP E

GERMANY CURACAO  
June 14, 6pm - Houston, USA - ITV  
IVORY COAST ECUADOR  
June 15, 12am - Philadelphia, USA - BBC  
GERMANY IVORY COAST  
June 20, 9pm - Toronto, Canada - ITV  
ECUADOR CURACAO  
June 21, 1am - Kansas City, USA - BBC  
CURACAO IVORY COAST  
June 25, 9pm - Philadelphia, USA - BBC  
ECUADOR GERMANY  
June 25, 9pm - New Jersey, USA - BBC

W D L F A Pts

1						
2						
3						
4						

GROUP F

NETHERLANDS JAPAN  
June 14, 9pm - Dallas, USA - ITV  
SWEDEN TUNISIA  
June 15, 3am - Monterrey, Mexico - ITV  
NETHERLANDS SWEDEN  
June 20, 6pm - Houston, USA - BBC  
TUNISIA JAPAN  
June 21, 5am - Monterrey, Mexico - BBC  
JAPAN SWEDEN  
June 26, 12am - Dallas, USA - BBC  
TUNISIA NETHERLANDS  
June 26, 12am - Kansas City, USA - BBC

W D L F A Pts

1						
2						
3						
4						

GROUP J

ARGENTINA ALGERIA  
June 17, 2am - Kansas City, USA - ITV  
AUSTRIA JORDAN  
June 17, 5am - Santa Clara, USA - BBC  
ARGENTINA AUSTRIA  
June 22, 6pm - Dallas, USA - BBC  
JORDAN ALGERIA  
June 23, 4am - Santa Clara, USA - ITV  
ALGERIA AUSTRIA  
June 28, 3am - Kansas City, USA - BBC  
JORDAN ARGENTINA  
June 28, 3am - Dallas, USA - BBC

W D L F A Pts

1						
2						
3						
4						

GROUP K

PORTUGAL DR CONGO  
June 17, 6pm - Houston, USA - BBC  
UZBEKISTAN COLOMBIA  
June 18, 3am - Mexico City, Mexico - BBC  
PORTUGAL UZBEKISTAN  
June 23, 6pm - Houston, USA - ITV  
COLOMBIA DR CONGO  
June 24, 3am - Guadalajara, Mexico - ITV  
COLOMBIA PORTUGAL  
June 28, 12.30am - Miami, USA - BBC  
DR CONGO UZBEKISTAN  
June 28, 12.30am - Atlanta, USA - BBC

W D L F A Pts

1						
2						
3						
4						

GROUP L

ENGLAND CROATIA  
June 17, 9pm - Dallas, USA - ITV  
GHANA PANAMA  
June 18, 12am - Toronto, Canada - ITV  
ENGLAND GHANA  
June 23, 9pm - Boston, USA - BBC  
PANAMA CROATIA  
June 24, 12am - Toronto, Canada - BBC  
PANAMA ENGLAND  
June 27, 10pm - New Jersey, USA - ITV  
CROATIA GHANA  
June 27, 10pm - Philadelphia, USA - ITV

W D L F A Pts

1						
2						
3						
4						

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ENGLAND vs GHANA  
9PM KO

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ENGLAND vs PANAMA  
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# 6 FIFA World Cup 2026

# Group E-H

## GROUP E

	<b>CURACAO</b>	
Manager	.....Fred Rutten	
Captain	.....Leandro Bacuna	
FIFA ranking	.....82	

	<b>ECUADOR</b>	
Manager	.....Sebastian Beccacece	
Captain	.....Enner Valencia	
FIFA ranking	.....23	

	<b>GERMANY</b>	
Manager	.....Julian Nagelsmann	
Captain	.....Joshua Kimmich	
FIFA ranking	.....10	

	<b>IVORY COAST</b>	
Manager	.....Emerse Fae	
Captain	.....Frank Kessie	
FIFA ranking	.....34	

## GROUP F

	<b>JAPAN</b>	
Manager	.....Hajime Moriyasu	
Captain	.....Wataru Endo	
FIFA ranking	.....18	

	<b>NETHERLANDS</b>	
Manager	.....Ronald Koeman	
Captain	.....Virgil van Dijk	
FIFA ranking	.....7	

	<b>SWEDEN</b>	
Manager	.....Graham Potter	
Captain	.....Victor Lindelof	
FIFA ranking	.....38	

	<b>TUNISIA</b>	
Manager	.....Sabri Lamouchi	
Captain	.....Elyes Skhiri	
FIFA ranking	.....44	

**G**ERMANY are no longer looked upon as overwhelming favourites, like previous generations of Die Mannschaft, and this may well be Julian Nagelsmann's last time in charge of the Group E stars.

But first, the 38-year-old remains committed to the cause as Germany continue their transition, with Manuel Neuer's inclusion ensuring the goalkeeper is the player left in their ranks from their 2014 triumph in Brazil.

That changing of the guard has allowed Nagelsmann to freshen up his squad, with a youthful zest fronted by Florian Wirtz and Jamal Musiala, while big things are expected of Bayern Munich's Lennart Karl.

Musiala (inset) is the posterboy of German football, but has endured an injury-plagued season after suffering a broken leg and dislocated ankle in July. He believes he can be fully fit come the big kick-off, saying: "I definitely want to go to the World Cup. I've taken a step forward, but there are still many I can take."

With a population of under 160,000, Curacao broke new ground to become the smallest nation to ever qualify. It is a remarkable story with Curacao going unbeaten in their 10 CONCACAF qualifiers, with Gervane Kastaneer netting five goals en route. There is also a return for Dick Advocaat at the helm, which will make him the oldest coach in World Cup history at 78.

Ivory Coast are back on the up after successive qualifying failures and could spring a few surprises, while Ecuador breathed a sigh of relief that Moises Caicedo's qualifying ban will not carry over into the main tournament.



# NAGELSMANN'S LAST HURRAH?

Netherlands are the ultimate World Cup bridesmaids, having finished runners-up three times, third once and also fourth, without ever having won it and they headline Group F.

Outright odds of 16-1 don't suggest they are going to break their duck in 2026, but it would be folly to overlook the chances of a team that have some of the cream of European talent.

Japan have plenty of confidence, after a run of results that have included wins over Brazil and England, the latter at Wembley via Kaoru Mitoma's goal. Boss Hajime Moriyasu, though, will have to cope without Mitoma, who has been ruled out with a hamstring injury.

Sweden must rank as one of the luckiest-ever qualifiers after failing to win any of their six group games - losing four of them - but progressing to the play-offs due to their Nations League ranking, before emerging successful. There they beat Ukraine 3-1 and Poland 3-2 to clinch their place.

Tunisia have yet to make it past the group stage, so their mission this year is clear under new head coach Sabri Lamouchi.

Perhaps one of the biggest talking points of Group G surrounds Iran, with external factors casting a major shadow over the nation's World Cup ambitions.

Iran are scheduled to play two games in Los Angeles and then in Seattle, but there will be an uneasy atmosphere at all three with the US at war with the nation.

Belgium are no longer burdened by the pressure felt by their golden generation, and head to the World Cup seeking a new identity. And superstar Jeremy Doku said: "We want to do our best for those players who are reaching an age where they're thinking about retiring."

Despite an injury-hit season with Nottingham Forest, Chris Wood is set to lead out New Zealand, and with it, become their outright appearance maker.

In Group H, current European champions Spain are the favourites to repeat their 2010 success and bounce back from three mediocre World Cup campaigns.

They failed to progress past the group stage when defending champions in 2014, and were dispatched by Russia and then Morocco in the round of 16, the next two editions, so will be looking to redress the balance this summer.

Luis de la Fuente, though, has a few injury concerns, with star man Lamine Yamal picking up a hamstring strain, while Nico Williams and Mikel Merino are also struggling for fitness.

Two-time winners Uruguay again head to the tournament with high hopes, while you have to go back to 1994 to find Saudi Arabia's best performance in a World Cup, when they reached the round of 16. Cape Verde will put themselves on the footballing map when they take part in their first-ever World Cup.

## GROUP G

	<b>BELGIUM</b>	
Manager	.....Rudi Garcia	
Captain	.....Youri Tielemans	
FIFA ranking	.....9	

	<b>EGYPT</b>	
Manager	.....Hossam Hassan	
Captain	.....Mohamed Salah	
FIFA ranking	.....28	

	<b>IRAN</b>	
Manager	.....Amir Ghalehnei	
Captain	.....Ehsan Hajsafi	
FIFA ranking	.....21	

	<b>NEW ZEALAND</b>	
Manager	.....Darren Bazeley	
Captain	.....Chris Wood	
FIFA ranking	.....85	

## GROUP H

	<b>CAPE VERDE</b>	
Manager	.....Bubista	
Captain	.....Ryan Mendes	
FIFA ranking	.....69	

	<b>SAUDI ARABIA</b>	
Manager	.....Georgios Donis	
Captain	.....Salem Al-Dawsari	
FIFA ranking	.....61	

	<b>SPAIN</b>	
Manager	.....Luis de la Fuente	
Captain	.....Rodri	
FIFA ranking	.....2	

	<b>URUGUAY</b>	
Manager	.....Marcelo Bielsa	
Captain	.....Josa Maria Gimenez	
FIFA ranking	.....17	



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Groups I-L

FIFA World Cup 2026 7

# THE LAST DANCE

GROUP I

**FRANCE**  
 Manager ..... Didier Deschamps  
 Captain ..... Kylian Mbappe  
 FIFA ranking: ..... 1

**IRAQ**  
 Manager ..... Graham Arnold  
 Captain ..... Jalal Hassan  
 FIFA ranking: ..... 57

**NORWAY**  
 Manager ..... Stale Solbakken  
 Captain ..... Martin Odegaard  
 FIFA ranking: ..... 31

**SENEGAL**  
 Manager ..... Pape Thiaw  
 Captain ..... Kalidou Koulibaly  
 FIFA ranking: ..... 14

GROUP J

**ALGERIA**  
 Manager ..... Vladimir Petkovic  
 Captain ..... Riyad Mahrez  
 FIFA ranking: ..... 29

**ARGENTINA**  
 Manager ..... Lionel Scaloni  
 Captain ..... Lionel Messi  
 FIFA ranking: ..... 3

**AUSTRIA**  
 Manager ..... Ralf Rangnick  
 Captain ..... David Alaba  
 FIFA ranking: ..... 44

**JORDAN**  
 Manager ..... Jamal Sellami  
 Captain ..... Musa Al-Taamari  
 FIFA ranking: ..... 63

In Group I, France head coach Didier Deschamps will step down after this World Cup, but he has every reason to believe his tenure can end on a high. The 57-year-old is seen as Les Bleus' all-time greatest boss after a 14-year tenure which has seen him lead the nation to three major finals, winning the 2018 World Cup. PSG's Desire Doue, Bradley Barcola and Warren Zaire-Emery are all set for World Cup debuts alongside Michael Olise, who has enjoyed a stunning domestic season with Bayern. The biggest headache Deschamps will have is how to knit it all together.

Though stripped of their AFCON triumph pending a CAS appeal process, Senegal could be Africa's best hopes of making a real impression. They will no doubt be out to prove a point and have enough talent at their disposal to suggest they can reach the round-of-32 stage.

A perfect qualifying campaign, spearheaded by Erling Haaland, saw Norway end a 28-year World Cup absence and expectations are high. The Manchester City striker plundered 16 goals in eight qualifiers as the Landslaget booked their spot with consummate ease.

Having waited almost 40 years to return to the World Cup stage, Iraq must be cursing their luck being drawn into the 'Group of Death'. Graham Arnold's face the tough task of trying to better their group-stage exit of 1986.

Over in Group J, defending champions Argentina are only fifth favourites to lift the World Cup trophy again, but will they be inspired once more by superstar Lionel Messi?

An injury scare saw him limp off in Inter Miami's 6-4 win over Philadelphia Union with



the severity of the hamstring strain unknown. It's been 28 years since Austria last appeared at the World Cup and optimism abounds this time around following an impressive qualification for UEFA Group H.

There are always a couple of 'dark horses' and Algeria could well be filed in that particular school of thought especially as Vladimir Petkovic has only suffered only three defeats in nearly 30 games in charge of the Greens.

Another team making their World Cup debut are Jordan, who have been trying since 1986 to get to football's top table. Managed by Moroccan Jamal Sellami, they recently reached the final of the Arab Cup, losing to Morocco, but this represents a much tougher challenge.

In Group K, Portugal are full of optimism that this will be their year having assembled a squad they believe can finally realise their World Cup ambitions. They have a squad depth that can cope with the demands of going deep in tournament football with Cristiano Ronaldo

embarking on his sixth and final World Cup. Famous qualification wins over Brazil and Argentina in their own backyard showed Colombia can mix it with the powerhouses - now the challenge is to replicate it on an even bigger stage now. Still guided by James Rodriguez, they will lean heavily on Luis Diaz.

Few nations can lean upon the experience of a 136-time capped, World Cup-winning manager, but Uzbekistan will need all of Fabio Cannavaro's insight on their big debut. More than half a century has passed since the Democratic of Congo last dined with football's elite and with an experienced squad the Leopards may spring a few surprises.

In Group L, England once again head into an international tournament with lofty ambitions as boss Thomas Tuchel attempts to end 60 years of hurt, but fans' confidence has already been drained a little after Cole Palmer, Harry Maguire and Morgan Gibbs-White were all left at home.

Not many teams have a better record at the World Cup without winning it than Croatia, who have finished runners-up once and third twice in just six appearances. They will be hoping the talismanic figure of Luka Modric, who turns 41 soon, will be fit to lead his side out.

Ghana have flattered to deceive since the quarter-finals of 2010, but they will be intent on making a statement under Carlos Queiroz, not least after failing to qualify for AFCON 2025.

For their second appearance at the World Cup, Panama have once again been drawn in a group with England and will be looking at avoid a similar 6-1 thrashing at Russia 2018.

They came through CONCACAF qualification, despite only winning half of their six matches.

GROUP K

**COLOMBIA**  
 Manager ..... Nestor Lorenzo  
 Captain ..... James Rodriguez  
 FIFA ranking: ..... 13

**DR CONGO**  
 Manager ..... Sebastien Desbrea  
 Captain ..... Chancel Mbemba  
 FIFA ranking: ..... 46

**PORTUGAL**  
 Manager ..... Roberto Martinez  
 Captain ..... Cristiano Ronaldo  
 FIFA ranking: ..... 5

**UZBEKISTAN**  
 Manager ..... Fabio Cannavaro  
 Captain ..... Eldor Shomurodov  
 FIFA ranking: ..... 50

GROUP L

**CROATIA**  
 Manager ..... Zlatko Dalic  
 Captain ..... Luka Modric  
 FIFA ranking: ..... 11

**ENGLAND**  
 Manager ..... Thomas Tuchel  
 Captain ..... Harry Kane  
 FIFA ranking: ..... 4

**GHANA**  
 Manager ..... Carlos Queiroz  
 Captain ..... Jordan Ayew  
 FIFA ranking: ..... 74

**PANAMA**  
 Manager ..... Thomas Christiansen  
 Captain ..... Anibal Godoy  
 FIFA ranking: ..... 33

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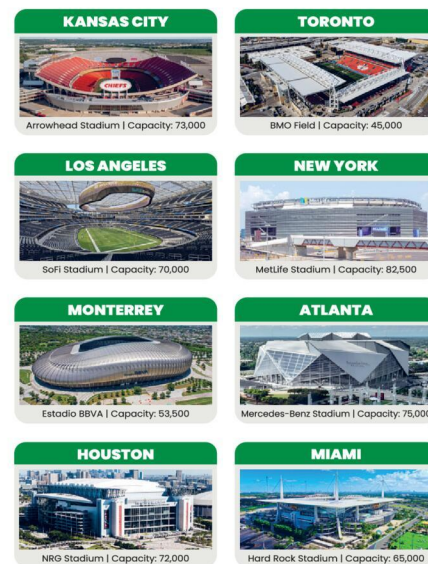
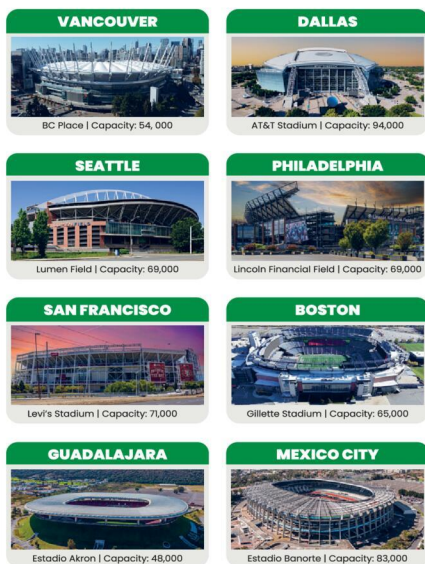
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