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Your opportunity to help shape the town centre

by **Andy Morris**
 andy.morris@bullivantmedia.com

RUGBY residents are being asked to share their views on the future of Rugby Central Shopping Centre.

Rugby Borough Council (RBC) has opened a consultation into the future of the centre – formerly known as Clock Towers.

The council wants residents' views on a draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which will guide the site's redevelopment.

The consultation comes as the council considers whether to purchase Rugby Central outright, enter into a joint venture with the current owner, or use compulsory purchase powers to buy the site and have greater control over its future.

The council has previously indicated its intentions to demolish the centre's empty Northway Mall to kickstart redevelopment plans in the area, and bring an NHS hub and new retailers to the remaining part.

If adopted, the SPD will have a strong influence on whether planning permission for certain elements of Rugby Central will be approved.

RBC leader Coun Michael Moran, said: "The SPD will ensure only high-quality redevelopment will take place at what is one of the most important sites in the whole of the town centre.



An artist's impression of an existing plan to replace Rugby Central's Northway Mall with apartments, ground-floor shops and a public space with seating.

"Once expectations for Rugby Central's future design are established, it will be difficult for planning applications that go against those designs to be given permission.

"The redevelopment Rugby Central will play a major part in our wider ambition to improve the town

centre for the benefit of existing residents and businesses.

"All businesses who currently occupy Rugby Central will be key stakeholders throughout this process, and we will be keeping them updated from start to finish.

"We would encourage anyone with an interest in Rugby Central's

future to look at the SPD and share their views with us."

Coun Jerry Roodhouse, Chair of the council's Town Centre Working Group, added: "The future of Rugby Central is a crucial part of the council's ambitions to improve the town centre, so adopting a robust SPD is very important.

"Ensuring the public have their say will enable us to include their views and experiences in the final version of the SPD and make it as good as it can be.

"Whatever the council decides on how best to acquire Rugby Central, the design of it has to be right if it is going to improve Rugby for both residents and businesses."

Rugby Central, formerly Clock Towers Shopping Centre, first opened in 1979 and is currently home to 29 shops.

In 2015, it was bought by CT Properties after previous owners CBRE Global Investors failed to attract retailer backing to its expansion plans.

Two years ago, RBC approved a planning application to replace the Northway Mall with two apartment blocks and ground-floor shops, and expand pedestrian access in North Street into a public space with seating. The approval expires next February.

The consultation is now open, and runs until Friday March 6. Visit www.rugby.gov.uk/RugbyCentralSPD to take part.



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Help shape how policing works

VICTIMS of crime across Warwickshire are being urged to share their experiences to shape future support.

Warwickshire police and crime commissioner Philip Seccombe has launched a survey asking how well services support victims and survivors of crime. It will look at what is working effectively, where improvements are needed and how services can be strengthened for the future.

The commissioner is asking victims, survivors and professionals who work in victim services, to share their experiences to help shape future commissioning decisions and ensure local support remains accessible, responsive and able to meet demand.

Mr Seccombe said: "As commissioner, I want to ensure that every victim in Warwickshire receives the right help at the right time. To do that, we need to hear directly from those who have experienced crime about what has helped them and what still needs to improve."

"Victims' voices are essential in shaping the future of services in our county. This assessment is a key opportunity to understand what is working well, where there are gaps and how we can ensure support is consistent, accessible and focused on people's real needs."

"I urge anyone who has been affected by crime, whether recently or in the past, to share their experience. Your views will make a meaningful difference to services across Warwickshire."

Visit www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/warkvna to complete the survey.



'HS2 is back on target'

A record first was achieved by engineers when they slid a 14,500-tonne box structure under the A46 Kenilworth Bypass in April. The structure, believed to be the heaviest of its kind in Europe, will enable trains to pass under the dual carriageway.

by Ian Hughes
ian.hughes@bullivantmedia.com

HS2 is almost back on track, says chief executive Mark Wild.

Transport secretary Heidi Alexander vowed, during the summer, to address years of mismanagement and restore public trust in the controversial high speed rail line.

The minister also accepted all the recommendations made in the James Stewart Review, commissioned by the government in October 2024.

That report set out evidence of historic mishandling of the rail line, including a lack of ministerial

oversight and scrutiny, inadequate control of the project by HS2 Ltd and a lack of effective incentives for the supply chain, which would collectively cost the taxpayer billions more than planned.

CEO Mr Wild, reflecting on a year at the helm of the project, said HS2 had made significant headway above and below ground throughout 2025 on the 140-mile London-to-Birmingham route.

He said: "I made a commitment to the transport secretary that I would address the failures of the past and get HS2 on track. It's clear that we can only do so with a fundamental reset."

"Over the last year, we've been through the programme with a fine-tooth comb and we're now

very close to establishing a clear path forward.

"However, we've not stood still."

"We had to deliver a safe and productive year while HS2 was reset and I want to thank the 34,000 people working on the project every day for their tremendous hard work. The solid progress they've made in the last year gives us strong foundations to build upon. We've shown what can be done and I expect that to continue throughout 2026 and beyond as we deliver HS2 as safely and efficiently as possible, and for the lowest reasonable cost."

Mr Wild has already stated that, owing to the previous 'mismanagement of the project', there is no possibility of trains running by

2033, as was previously planned.

In June, the government's spending review confirmed funding of £25.3 billion to deliver HS2 between London Euston and the West Midlands over the next four years.

Mr Wild said that provided greater certainty to the project's delivery, with a clear focus on completing tunnels, viaducts, embankments and cuttings along the route.

Some 54 kilometres of the 190km track between London and Birmingham will cut through Warwickshire, with a new station also being built near Birmingham Airport. Swathes of the county's landscape has already been transformed by work on the line.



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Bid to restore speedway track



The stadium has fallen into disrepair since its closure in 2016. s

by **Andy Morris**
andy.morris@bullivantmedia.com

A RALLYING cry has gone out to motorsports fans to get behind a council policy backing the restoration and protection of Coventry Stadium, in Brandon.

Rugby Borough Council's (RBC's) new local plan – which is out for consultation after gaining council approval – includes a policy endorsing the restoration of the stadium for speedway, stock car racing and other motorsports.

The policy would also protect

the site – the former home of the Coventry Bees speedway team – from future redevelopment.

The Save Coventry Speedway and Stox (SCS) campaign group is calling on supporters to back the policy by responding to the consultation exercise.

An SCS spokesperson said RBC voting in favour of the local plan was a 'very significant milestone' in the effort to restore the stadium.

They added: "It's another huge boost to the campaign to return the site to its rightful motorsports use."

"Last year, an amazing 1,530 people submitted a response supporting a section of the draft

local plan relating to the restoration and reopening of Coventry Stadium.

"Everyone who previously submitted a response will have received details of the new six-week consultation and it is important to stress that this is a new stage of the process.

Critical

"This is another critical moment in the campaign and every expression of support is really important – whether you were one of the original 1,530 respondents or are able to offer support at this stage, having not done so before."

Stadium owners Brandon Estates first proposed to demolish the stadium and build homes on the site in 2014, with the venue closing in 2016.

RBC's planning committee refused a revised planning application in 2022, with a subsequent appeal against that refusal rejected by the Planning Inspectorate in 2024.

In November, the company said it would be submitting a revised proposal for up to 115 new homes alongside a 'fully restored' speedway track.

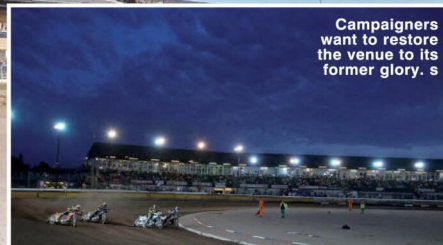
That plan came in response to the announcement that the Midlands International Raceway Limited (MIRL) consortium –

backed by SCS – was planning to buy the stadium and restore it for racing.

The SCS spokesperson said further updates on the consortium's bid would be provided 'in due course'.

SCS and MIRL intend to submit a joint response to the consultation in support of the local plan this month. Email info@savecoventryspeedway.com to contribute, including full names and addresses.

Visit www.rugby.gov.uk/proposed-submission-local-plan, for more information on the local plan and to take part in the public consultation, which runs until Friday, March 13.



Campaigners want to restore the venue to its former glory. s



Police believe these two people might be able to help them with their enquiries into a theft in Barby. s

Appeal to trace pair over card thefts

POLICE are looking for two people they would like to speak to in connection with a theft in Barby.

Bank cards were stolen from a car in the area of Manor Farm Close between Saturday, December 13 and Sunday, December 14.

Officers have released

CCTV images of two people they believe might have information which could help with their investigation.

Witnesses, anyone with information, or anyone who recognises the people pictured should contact Northamptonshire Police on 101 or, alternatively, call

Crimestoppers, anonymously, on 0800 555 111.

Information can also be submitted online, at www.northants.police.uk/RO and at <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/give-information>.

Quote incident number 25000739292 when providing details.

Witnesses call after serious crash

DETECTIVES are appealing for witnesses after a serious collision on the A426 between Rugby and Lutterworth on Saturday evening.

A red Peugeot Partner van and a black Hyundai i20 collided near Cotesbach at 7.50pm.

The Peugeot was travelling along the A426 Rugby Road from the A5 towards Lutterworth with the Hyundai travelling in the opposite direction.

The drivers of the vehicles, both men,

and a female passenger in the Hyundai, were all taken to hospital with serious injuries. The passenger's injuries have been described as life-threatening.

Police would like to speak to anyone who may have witnessed the collision or who saw either vehicle beforehand.

Anyone with any information or dashcam footage should contact DC 4224 Anna Andrew, at Leicestershire Police, by visiting www.leics.police.uk or by calling 101, quoting incident 644, of February 7.

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New junction promises to ease traffic

'Frictionless' driving pledged

by **Andy Morris**
andy.morris@bullivantmedia.com

A CONGESTION-busting multi-million pound project to upgrade the A46 Walsgrave junction, on the outskirts of Coventry, has been given the go-ahead.

The government has approved a development consent order (DCO) for the project, which is part of the 'trans-Midlands trade corridor' between the M5 and Humber Ports.

The junction, which connects the A46 to the B4082, is currently a three-arm, priority roundabout, which causes substantial congestion in the area.

The new-look junction is intended to enable a free-flowing A46 carriageway while permitting drivers to enter and exit local roads.

National Highways project manager Emma Winter said: "Motorways and major A-roads play a key role in keeping the UK economy moving, carrying a third of all traffic and two-thirds of freight."

"The A46 is a major trade corridor between the South West, the Midlands and the North, which is

why we need to remove this bottleneck on the outskirts of Coventry.

"The new-look Walsgrave junction will reduce delays by delivering much-needed additional capacity, better connectivity and safer journeys for the 57,000 drivers using the road every day."

Construction on the Walsgrave junction is expected to begin in the autumn, with the £112million scheme to open to traffic in 2028.

James Barwise, policy lead for the Road Hauliers Association, said: "The A46 is a vital strategic road for hauliers, coaches and vans, connecting businesses and ports either side of the country."

"Schemes such as this are critical to ensuring this route supports the frictionless movement of goods and unlocks economic growth for businesses across the Midlands."

The scheme is categorised as a nationally-significant infrastructure project under the Planning Act 2008, meaning it required an application for a DCO to obtain the equivalent of planning permission to move into the construction phase.

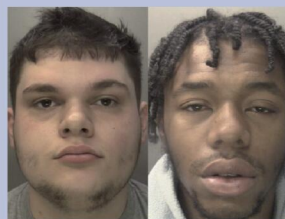
There is now a six-week period in which legal challenges to the planning decision can be announced.



The new junction is intended to enable a free-flowing A46.

How the proposed junction should look.

Crimestoppers reward for tracking pair



Brady Winterburn, left, and Tyrese Thomas.

A REWARD of £1,000 is on offer to anyone who can help police locate two men with links to Rugby and Coventry.

The reward, from independent charity Crimestoppers, is available for information which leads to police locating Brady Winterburn, 21, and Tyrese Thomas, 22.

Officers want to speak to the pair in connection with an aggravated burglary at a flat in Rugby on Monday, January 19.

The reward is for information given exclusively to Crimestoppers

and which helps police to locate the pair.

Anyone with information should contact Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 and cite incident 349, of January 19.

To claim the reward, complete a form on the charity's website at <https://crimestoppers-uk.org> and type 'reward request' in any text box. Then create a 'keep in contact' account. When calling the charity's UK-based contact centre, callers must request a code or themselves.



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Shire Hall, the headquarters of Warwickshire County Council. Picture by Marcus Mingins 4520005MMR3

Failed Reform county budget would 'store up crisis' say rivals

by Andy Morris
andy.morris@bullivantmedia.com

COUNTY councillors have failed to agree how much to charge residents for the authority's share of council tax in the next fiscal year.

Warwickshire County Council's (WCC) Reform leadership was unable to pass its budget - which proposed a tax rise of around £71 per year for an average band D home - after it was voted down by Conservatives, Liberal Democrats and Greens.

Reform proposed a 3.89 per cent

rise in WCC's share of council tax but the other parties favoured larger increases, to protect services from cuts and reduce future financial pressure.

In December, WCC's board said anything below a 4.99% council tax rise - the maximum permitted by law - would threaten the council's medium-term sustainability.

WCC's opposition Liberal Democrat Group said Reform's proposals would put WCC's future financial ability 'at serious risk'.

The Lib Dems' alternative budget, which proposed a 4.99 per cent rise - adding around £91 a year to a band D property - was narrowly voted down despite support from

the Greens and Labour. The Lib Dems said their budget would have delivered more than £28million in investment, in areas such as child poverty, family hubs, school transport and youth clubs.

Lib Dem group leader councillor Jerry Roodhouse said: "Reform's budget would have closed 25 youth clubs, cut support for domestic abuse and relied on £4.7million in magical 'transformation' savings they couldn't even describe.

"For just 39p per week - literally the cost of a Freddo - we could have protected youth services serving 4,000 young people, invested in preventing child poverty, and built £28million worth of infrastructure

for Warwickshire's future. Reform chose to save 39p and create the conditions for family breakdown, youth disengagement, and community decline.

"We will continue fighting for a budget that invests in Warwickshire's future, not one that cuts services today and stores up a crisis for tomorrow."

WCC's Conservative group, which proposed a 4.89 per cent rise, said Reform's decision not to take the maximum 4.99 per cent increase would leave the council in a vulnerable position by removing money from financial reserves.

Coun Chris Kettle said: "The council's reserves are there to

protect services from unplanned increases in cost, not to fund unfunded political aspirations. The people of Warwickshire will see through this reckless approach."

Speaking to *The Guardian* newspaper ahead of the council meeting, WCC leader, Coun George Finch, said: "We want low tax, low spend, and we were always committed to that. It's just national pressures that the government is not solving. The people understand that taxes do have to go up now. I am dead against increasing taxes and I will do as much as I can to lower that bill and that burden."

The budget has been deferred until a meeting on Tuesday.

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Bringing artistic vision to life



Charmaine Watkiss says she is looking forward to benefiting from the university's expertise to realise her ideas. s

AN ACCLAIMED artist will create her latest sculpture with help from students and staff at Coventry University.

Charmaine Watkiss will work alongside students from the university's fine art course to bring the artwork to life before it takes pride of place in a solo exhibition entitled *The Things we Hold Sacred*, which opens in October at The New Art Gallery in Walsall.

Charmaine, best known for her research-based drawing practice, which focuses on plant knowledge passed through generations of Caribbean families, has work in collections in venues such as the British Museum, in London.

She will be a resident artist at Coventry University, where students will witness the development of the commission, which will help prepare them for life as an artist after graduating.

Charmaine said: "I am super-excited and thankful to be afforded this opportunity to create new, ambitious works that would not be possible otherwise."

"I am really looking forward to experimenting with materials and benefiting from the university's expertise to realise my ideas for the work."

Dr Sam Vale, curriculum lead for creative practice at Coventry University, said: "This is an exceptional opportunity for our staff and students to collaborate with such an innovative and exciting artist as Charmaine. By being actively involved in the commissioning process - from early development through to production and exhibition - our students gain invaluable insight into contemporary approaches to making work, helping to prepare them for future careers in the creative industries."



A burning passion

Alessia Gentilini carries the Olympic Torch into the town of Baselga di Pine. Picture by Teresa Frisinghelli @frisi_photo s

by Andy Morris
andy.morris@bullivantmedia.com

AN AMBITIOUS Coventry University sports scholar with dreams of competing at the 2028 Olympics, has described the unbelievable experience of taking part in the Olympic Torch relay.

Alessia Gentilini, who is studying for a master's in sports journalism, was cheered on by crowds of onlookers when she carried the Olympic flame to the town of Baselga di Pine, within her home province of Trento.

A talented athlete, Alessia is a 400m hurdler who has regularly competed at regional, national and international competitions, winning prestigious titles.

She took up a sports scholarship

at Coventry University last year and balances her studies with professional training.

Alessia, 24, said: "Carrying the torch was an unbelievable experience for me. It was incredible, especially as an athlete myself. It just means so much to me."

"There were so many people cheering and clapping me, taking their pictures with me - it was an emotional experience and I feel like I'm a part of the history of the games now."

"I applied to take part in the torch relay because I feel very passionately about raising the profile of female athletes and, as someone studying sports journalism, I also want to see more women represented in sports media."

"In my application, I also talked about the challenges sports people can face: having to fit their training around their jobs or studies, and

the injuries they might have to overcome and the sacrifices they make."

"I started doing athletics when I was five years old. I was a sprinter first but when I was about 14 or 15, I began specialising in the hurdles."

"My goal is to compete at the LA Olympics in 2028 - it is my dream."

"Sport really is my passion and I would love to become a sports reporter or sports presenter in the future. I have already had the chance to report from a major ski event and wearing that media pass felt fantastic."

"I'm really enjoying the sports journalism course here in Coventry."

"It's very practical, which was just what I was looking for and you get a broad experience with a number of different sports. I chose to come to Coventry University specifically for the course and because of the high-quality sports coaching in the area."

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Stratford is known for its swans. Picture by Marcus Mingins 0526007MMR

Petitioners bid to save swans

by Philippa Mingins
 philippa.mingins@bullivantmedia.com

A PETITION has been launched to get the swans of Stratford vaccinated against bird 'flu.

Current legislation only allows birds kept in zoological settings to be vaccinated against avian influenza.

Petition creator Gaynor Irwin, however, believes that protection should be extended to static populations of swans and wildfowl, to prevent flocks being wiped out this winter. Stratford has such a flock of swans at risk.

Referring to avian influenza, Gaynor said: "Swan populations in the UK are being decimated by the H5N1 virus.

"These populations are static, live in localised areas that they don't usually stray from and, as such, should be treated like birds in zoological collections.

"In Stratford, dozens of swans have died in recent years. At least 20 have died of suspected avian influenza since autumn 2025, out of a population of around 80 birds. The population could be wiped out by a virus they could be vaccinated against."

Some 185 people have signed the petition to date. At 10,000 signatures, the govern-

ment will be required to respond and, at 100,000, the petition will be considered for debate in parliament.

The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) have confirmed bird 'flu is in circulation in Warwickshire, with cases found in geese along the River Avon in Stratford in December.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), Warwickshire County Council and Stratford District Council is working with APHA to manage the situation and protect public health and the risk to other birds.

Cases have also been confirmed at Ryton Pools Country Park, near Ryton-on-Dunsmore.

The A(H5N1) strain is highly infectious to other birds but the risk to human health is considered very low.

It is vital people do not touch sick or dead birds, to avoid the need to introduce further infection-control measures.

People are also being urged to stick to footpaths and keep dogs on leads, not to handle feathers or any surfaces that may be contaminated by droppings and to thoroughly wash hands after visiting affected places.

People can visit petition.parliament.uk/petitions/755292, to sign the petition.

High sheriff backs guide-dog appeal

A DESPERATE call for homes for 'guide dog mums' has received the backing of the High Sheriff of Warwickshire.

Having heard sight-loss charity Guide Dogs has been facing its worst ever shortage of breeding dog volunteers – for 18 months – Karen Lynch wants county folk to consider undertaking the role in 2026.

Volunteers provide loving homes for guide dog mums and help them give birth, at home, to the next generation of guide dogs.

Volunteers enjoy a litter of guide dog pups for around seven weeks before they move out to start the early stages of training.

To qualify, people need to live within an hour's drive of the charity's breeding site just outside Leamington.

Following a visit to the guide dogs site, Karen said: "Seeing behind the scenes was both inspiring and eye-opening and I have learnt more about the volunteers who provide homes for guide dogs before they go on to change the lives of people with sight loss.

"However, without more homes for guide dog mums – where they can live as part of a family and raise their litters – the whole system is undermined.

"I urge everyone in Warwickshire to consider taking up this vital role."

Karen is now calling on the other 54 high sheriffs across England and Wales to use their voices to encourage people to sign up to be guide dog mums.

Guide Dogs spokesperson Kelly Newton said: "The need for breeding dog volunteers has never been greater and in the last 18 months, we have seen a significant drop in applicants coming forward.

"Without our guide dog mums, we wouldn't be able to produce life-changing pups that go on to transform the lives of people living with sight loss.

"Potential volunteers don't need any experience of owning a dog or raising a litter as we provide ongoing support and training on all aspects of the role."

Visit www.guidedogs.org.uk/how-you-can-help/volunteering/ for more details.

Planning for Spring

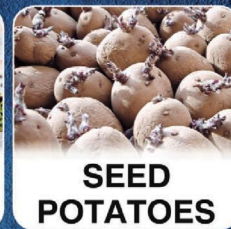
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Prescription meds drive

PATIENTS in Coventry and Warwickshire are being encouraged to request only what they need when ordering repeat prescriptions.

The NHS has launched a campaign to reduce the estimated 1.6 million medicine items wasted in Coventry and Warwickshire each year. They cost £13.3million annually, enough to fund 2,300 knee replacements, 39,000 chemotherapy rounds or 345,000 GP appointments.

The health service wants people to 'only order what you need'.

Dr Imogen Staveley, GP and chief medical officer at NHS Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care Board, said: "Stockpiling medicines can be dangerous. Expired medicines might not work as intended and keeping lots of medicines at home could be a risk to children and pets. That's why we're encouraging people who are on repeat prescriptions to only order what they need, so we can reduce waste and keep them and their loved ones safe."

The campaign aims to dispel a myth medication may not be available in future, if not ordered on repeat prescription. It also urges people to check which medicines they have at home when ordering prescriptions.

Furthermore, patients are being reminded that unused medicines expire and may not work as intended; that keeping stocks of medicines at home can be a danger to pets and children; and that prescribed medicines should not be shared with others.

Visit www.happyhealthylives.uk/yourmeds, for more information.



Specialist interventional radiographer Leah Simeone with one of the VR headsets. s

by Andy Morris
andy.morris@bullivanmedia.com

A HI-TECH trip to the beach, forest or mountains is helping alleviate pain and anxiety for patients undergoing interventional radiology procedures.

University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire (UHCW) NHS Trust is running a trial offering patients virtual reality (VR) headsets throughout their treatment.

The equipment offers the choice of listening, in any language, to a meditative soundtrack that can include targeted breathing exer-

cises and talks users through procedures which can sometimes last up to four hours.

Specialist interventional radiographer Leah Simeone said: "We've had lots of good feedback.

"People often come in a bit worked up and that anxiety just increases, the longer the procedure goes on. We find it helps to manage that. We have to reach the area we are trying to treat. If we get an hour in and have not reached the area and the patient says 'I'm done' then we have to abandon with no treatment.

"Vascular patients tend to have cramping-type pain in their lower limb and lying down flat on the couch just makes that pain worse.

It just turns into a numbness that then turns into an ache and excruciating pain. So having their headset helps them to keep that distraction up, and on the treatment table for longer. Those that have fibroid embolisation are in huge amounts of pain after the procedure so we can then give them the headset when they're sat in the ward, to calm them down."

The headset is the only one registered as a medical device and is used by people needing vascular, biliary, oncology or renal minimally-invasive procedures lasting longer than 20 minutes.

Anyone under 18, or with a history of vertigo, dizziness or epilepsy is excluded from the trial. Patients

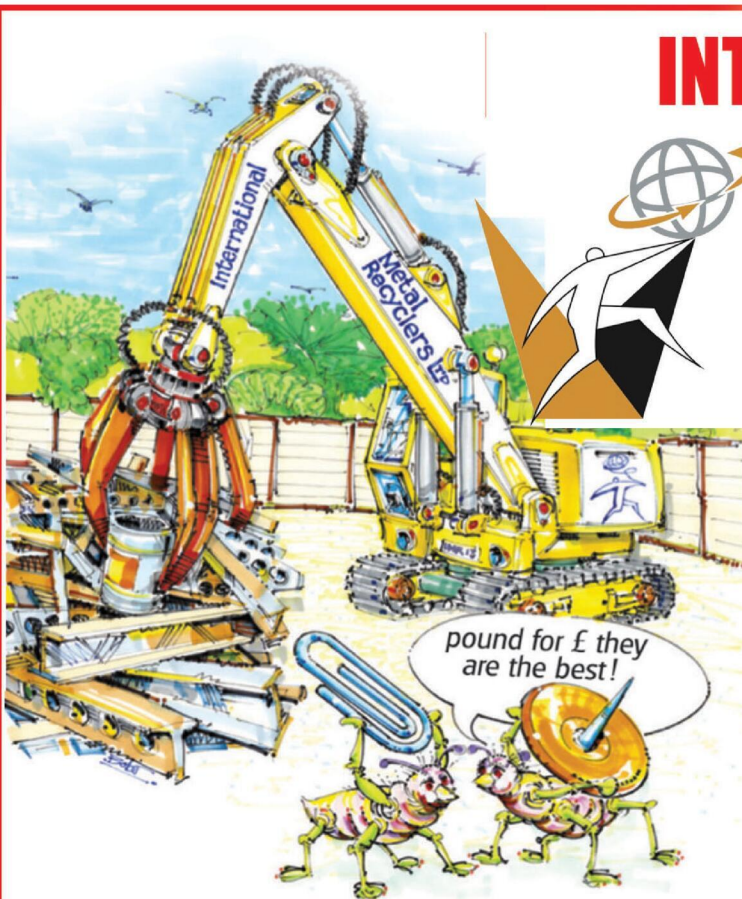
lie on their back and can remove the headset at any time.

Leah added: "What we're trying to do is prove, retrospectively, that we're reducing the amount of room time and sedation that we need and the radiation time that we use.

"We're looking to get 100 patients, and it will take several more years.

"In some cases, we've found patients asking for less top-up sedation. It's something we are noticing but we've not been able to prove, so that's why we're hoping to get more data.

"Some patients are coming to us because they're contra-indicated for general aesthetic. We're trying to treat them in a safer way."



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Hospices get a £335,000 boost

by **Andy Morris**
andy.morris@bullivantmedia.com

A VITAL government funding boost will help two hospices continue to deliver crucial care and support to people with life-limiting conditions.

The Myton Hospices, which has sites in Coventry, Rugby and Warwick, has received \$227,545 for digital innovation and capital upgrades.

Zoe's Place, in Coventry, is set to receive £108,964 of additional funding.

Both investments come as part of a \$25million funding package for 158 UK hospices, confirmed by minister for care Stephen Kinnock.

The money, allocated by Hospice UK, will help fund urgent building repairs, better facilities and patient rooms, new outdoor spaces and improved IT equipment.

The investment follows a government commitment to a multi-year settlement of \$80million for English children's hospices over three years.

Rugby MP John Slinger said: "This announcement will make such a difference to both Myton and

Zoe's Place hospices, which provide such invaluable care and support for people with life-limiting conditions and their loved ones, in our community.

"I had a really worthwhile visit to the Rugby Myton support hub, where I met Holly and Tracey and heard about the incredible work the staff and volunteers do for local people and families at one of the hardest times in life.

"Their support goes far beyond medical care. They help people live with dignity, provide vital assistance to families and offer emotional, practical and compassionate

support when it's needed most. I've seen, first-hand, the exceptional care Myton delivers and this funding boost will help ensure that patients continue to receive the highest quality end-of-life care.

"Zoe's Place – the specialist baby hospice in Coventry – is also used by many families in Rugby and I'm pleased to see they're receiving much-needed support too. I recognise hospices face a challenging environment and I will continue to raise their concerns with ministers"

Care minister Kinnock thanked Hospice UK for distributing the funds so quickly, enabling chari-

ties to proceed with vital work and upgrades.

He said: "I am determined to transform palliative and end-of-life care by implementing a modern services framework.

"This will reduce the postcode lottery so every patient and family can get the high-quality care they deserve."

With only 17 per cent of its funding coming from the NHS, The Myton Hospices needs to raise \$12.7million each year to provide its services free of charge. Visit www.mytonhospice.org, for more information or to donate.

For charity's latest fundraising appeal alotl depend on Freya's skill

A KIND, and creative youngster has used her crocheting skills to help a family charity's annual fundraising appeal.

Freya, 11, has lovingly crocheted a snowdrop-themed axolotl, which is now at the centre of a heartwarming fundraising campaign for Home-Start South Leicestershire.

The charity, which helps families with young children in the Lutterworth area, is inviting the community to guess the axolotl's name, in return for a minimum-£2 donation to its annual Snowdrop Appeal.

Freya said: "I spend a lot of time crocheting at home and wanted to use my hobby to help other children and make them smile.

"A little boy at my old primary school asked me to make an axolotl so I made up my own pattern. I was really pleased with

how it turned out so I have made a few more. Axolotls are very cute and smiley amphibians and lots of children love them so I thought this would be a good thing to do for a charity that helps children."

Supporters can also back the appeal by buying packs of snowdrop-themed greetings cards at Northamptonshire's Lamport Hall, during this weekend's Snowdrop Walks, or at local businesses in South Leicestershire.

Visit @homestarts1, on Facebook, to see a list of potential axolotl names. Email info@home-startsouthleicestershire.org, or call 01858 467982 to enter, and visit <https://localgiving.org/fundraising/Snowdrop2026> to donate.

Visit <https://home-startsouthleics.org.uk/snowdrop-appeal-2026>, for more information about the charity and the appeal.



Freya, 11, has crocheted a cute axolotl which is now at the centre of Home-Start South Leicestershire's heartwarming fund-raiser. s



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A purple celebration of town's women

Warwick Castle will be lit up purple for International Women's Day. Inset: The host and speakers at the Ladies First event. s

by Philippa Mingins
 philippa.mingins@bullivantmedia.com

WARWICK Castle is set to turn purple for international women's day (IWD).

For one night only, on March 4, the medieval landmark will be lit up in the IWD colours in honour of a special evening organised by the Ladies First Professional Development Network Group.

The event, which celebrates female resilience, will feature a line-up of speakers who will all share their personal stories, insights and journeys to success; offering motivation, empowerment and inspiration. Companies are being invited to sponsor tickets for those who would otherwise be unable to attend.

Ladies First director Tracey McAtamney said: "We are seeking support to ensure this event is accessible to women who would otherwise be unable to attend.

"This includes women facing financial hardship, and school-girls who would benefit from exposure to positive role models and empowering messages at a formative stage in their lives.

"We are inviting companies to sponsor a ticket, or tickets, to enable these women to attend.

"In recognition of your support, all sponsoring companies will be acknowledged on the night, fea-

tured in our event brochure and promoted across our social media platforms.

"Your support will help provide guidance, inspiration and hope to women who need it most."

Tracey added: "My focus has always been to create a supportive community that offers mentorship through both the good times and the challenging ones.

"Over the years, I am proud to say that we have worked alongside many charities; raising funds, helping to shine a light on the incredible work they

do and amplifying their impact. On a personal level, this journey has introduced me to some truly remarkable people – many of whom I now call friends. It has reinforced my belief that choosing your 'tribe' and your business network carefully is essential, not only for professional success but for personal growth and resilience."

The occasion will also raise funds for Leamington-based organisation The Esther Project – a gender-specific initiative dedicated to supporting women experi-

encing domestic abuse, recovering from addiction, transitioning from prison or facing homelessness. That initiative is named after Esther House, a seven-bed supported-living centre.

Esther Project founder Lianne Kirkman said: "We are so grateful to Ladies First for choosing to support The Esther Project through this international women's day celebration. When women stand together, transformation happens.

"Ladies First's support through this event will fuel our work to

give the women we work with the safety, stability and empowerment they deserve. We're proud to walk alongside such a dedicated community of inspirational women."

The evening is being hosted by TV presenter and producer Arti Halai and the speakers will be broadcast journalist Suzanne Virdee; chief superintendent of the West Midlands Kim Madill; Sarah Hosking MBE; former MP Colleen Fletcher; and Elinor Perry, MD of Pentlands Accountants and Advisors.



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Born out of healthcare and based on the pressure relieving materials used in medical beds on spinal injury units, Mammoth's secret ingredient is Medical Grade™ foam – a naturally cooling, pressure-relieving but supportive material that's shown to be far superior to standard memory foam.

Unlike memory foam, Medical Grade™ foam doesn't require heat to become pliable, nor does it lock sleepers in place where they may seize up with aches and pains. Instead, Medical Grade™ foam instantly contours to the body and provides a supportive yet flexible surface that aids natural spinal alignment.

This is complemented by Mammoth's innovative PostureCells® – independently moving castellations in the foam that provide even support but reduce partner disturbance. Importantly, the air channels between each PostureCell® also serve to wick away the moisture and allergens that typically build up through the night.

Testing excellence

Under laboratory conditions, Medical Grade™ foam mattresses have been found to provide **46% greater pressure relief** and **69% faster cooling** than standard 50kg memory foam. For sleepers that means:

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- Faster recovery and healing
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Determined to go further, Mammoth also put its mattresses through testing at Northumbria University's Centre for Sleep Research. In clinical trials it was shown that Mammoth's mattresses helped sleepers **fall asleep 29% quicker**, experience a **7% increase in sleep efficiency** and report a **21% increase in sleep enjoyment**.

Award wins

Mammoth's unique technologies helped the brand to win a Bright Ideas in Health award for pressure relief and temperature regulation – awards usually reserved for teams working within the NHS.

These impressive results are among the reasons why Mammoth has become the go-to name for elite athletes and professional sports stars – as can be seen through partnerships with the Rugby Players' Association, British Athletes Commission and Professional Cricketers' Association over the years, as well as relationships with Premier League football teams and Olympians.

Combatting back pain

The unique properties of Mammoth's sleep and comfort technologies have made it the go-to mattress range for health professionals. By improving pressure relief, enhancing postural support and increasing circulation, physiotherapists in particular love the positive patient outcomes offered by Mammoth. With over 50% of adults now estimated to suffer from back pain in their lives, it's never been more important to invest in the very best sleep surface to ease pain and discomfort.

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Putting focus on business

BUSINESSES in the Lutterworth area are invited to a support event aiming to give clear advice and practical help during challenging times.

Harborough District Council (HDC) is hosting the Let's Talk Business event at Lutterworth Town Hall on Tuesday (February 17), from 4-6.30pm.

It is open to businesses of all sizes, from sole traders upwards, based in the Harborough district.

Businesses will be able to access subsidised Federation of Small Businesses membership and receive updates on changes to employment law.

Information will also be provided on how eligible employers can access £2,000 towards the cost of employing an apprentice, alongside guidance on recruitment and ongoing support.

Businesses will also be able to access the Harborough District Business Advice Service, a council-funded service that provides one-to-one advice and practical workshops to support businesses at different stages of growth.

Both the free FSB membership and the £2,000 apprentice funding are subject to terms and conditions.

Coun Jo Asher, HDC's Cabinet lead for Culture, Leisure, Economy and Tourism, said: "Many local businesses are under real pressure, and it is vital they know what support is available and how to access clear, practical advice."

"Let's Talk Business brings that support together in one place, helping businesses navigate change and plan their next steps with confidence."

Places are free, but booking is required. Visit <https://forms.office.com/e/UHXUBSQCc> to register.

Canal charity opens the lock gates for volunteers

by **Andy Morris**
andy.morris@bullivantmedia.com

A BUOYANT boating charity based near Rugby is seeking new volunteers to help introduce community groups and organisations to the delights of local canals.

LNBP Community Boating invites community groups to enjoy residential short breaks and holidays on its two full-sized canal boats based at Braunston.

The not-for-profit charity, which has been running for over 45 years, relies on volunteers to run the organisation and the canal boat experiences it provides – and is keen to welcome new members to its ranks ahead of another busy season.

Roles are available for people of all ages and backgrounds, including boat handling and skippering, fund-raising, general admin and welcoming guests.

LNBP's Chairperson Paul Iverson said: "We continue to have a great team at LNBP but, as with all things, we would love to have even more people involved to distribute the duties canalside, on the boats and behind the scenes more evenly."



"As well as the opportunity to make new friends, there is a lot to gain from volunteering with us with chance to learn new skills or further develop existing ones, gain practical work experience or work towards other qualifications such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award."

"We are always looking towards the future and, with our 50th anniversary being not that far away, it would be great to have more younger members join us and to potentially take us forward into the future."

"Could this be your year, your time and opportunity to give something back to your local community or a charitable organisation?"

The charity welcomes interest from all ages, but is particularly keen to hear from people aged 16 to 25, or anyone with social media graphic design skills or an interest in photography and videography.

Visit www.lnbp.co.uk/volunteering for more information, or contact Paul at chair@lnbp.co.uk or on 07854 577454 to apply.

Volunteering with LNBP Community Boating at Braunston.

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Summer events set to replace Godiva Festival

THE GODIVA Festival will not take place this year after organisers revealed the Coventry music weekend would be put 'on pause' and replaced by a programme of summer events in the city centre.

Coventry City Council said the War Memorial Park festival, which has been running for over 25 years, has been cancelled for 2026 due to 'rising costs and industry challenges affecting festivals across the UK'.

The council says the hiatus will allow for a full review of how the festival can be 'delivered sustainably in the future'.

In its place, a new programme of music, culture and creative events will take place in Coventry city centre this summer.

The programme will be centred around Godiva in the City, a two-day event on Saturday 4 and Sunday 5 July showcasing local musicians and creative talent.

Other free and low-cost events will focus on music, culture, sport and Coventry's heritage to support the city's creative sectors and represent its values and heritage.

Coun Abdul Salam Khan, Deputy Leader of Coventry City Council and Cabinet Member for Events, said: "Godiva Festival has been

part of Coventry for over 25 years and we recognise its importance to residents, artists and wider audiences.

"However, like many festivals across the country, we are facing rising costs and industry challenges, and it is important that we carefully review how the festival can be delivered in a sustainable and cost-effective way that is affordable for Coventry's residents. This time will allow us to explore future options.

"While the festival will not take place this year, our support for Coventry's creative sector and community events continues.

"We'd like to thank everyone who has supported Godiva Festival over the years, and we remain committed to supporting local music and creative talent.

"Our programme of exciting free and low-cost city centre events will be taking place for residents to enjoy this summer, and we can't wait to tell you more about our plans."

More details about the summer events programme will be released over the coming months.

The much-loved Godiva Festival will not take place this year.



Pupils and staff at Knightlow C of E Primary School celebrate their Makaton Friendly status.

Success in any language

A PROUD primary school near Rugby has become the first in Warwickshire to be officially recognised for embracing a special form of sign language.

Knightlow C of E Primary School has achieved Makaton Friendly status – a significant milestone for the whole school community.

Makaton is a UK-based language programme using British Sign Language signs, symbols, and speech to aid communication for people with learning or communication difficulties, often used by people with autism or Down syndrome.

The Makaton Charity grants Makaton Friendly status to schools, health centres, heritage sites and eateries to create environments where everyone feels valued, supported, and able to connect meaningfully with others.

To achieve the status, Knightlow staff and

pupils have worked together over the past two years to embed Makaton signs and symbols into everyday school life, helping all children to communicate effectively, make choices and express themselves with confidence.

Each class has two dedicated Makaton Ambassadors who attend weekly meetings to learn new signs, including the popular Sign of the Week, which they model in class and share with families through the school newsletter.

The much-loved Makaton Choir, open to pupils and staff, adds an extra layer of fun, offering opportunities to rehearse and perform at school events.

A school spokesperson said: "Knightlow C of E Primary is delighted to be recognised as a Makaton Friendly School and looks forward to continuing to work with local schools and the wider community to promote the power of inclusive communication."



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Shortlisted for work on violence

POLICE working to tackle violence against women and girls (VAWG) have been shortlisted for national awards.

Teams from across West Midlands Police were nominated for the National Centre for Violence Against Women and Girls and Public Protection (NCVPP) awards for the work carried out to keep women and girls safe, reduce the risk of offences, and ensure those who do commit such crimes are arrested and charged.

The Major Crime Unit, alongside Coventry Local Policing Area staff, were shortlisted within the 'collaborative working leading to victim-centred approaches' category.

At the awards held in London, staff were praised for their courage, innovation, and compassion.

West Midlands Police said: "We certainly know the importance of our role in helping women and girls, and our wider communities, to feel safe and we're here for you. We won't tolerate any form

of violence.

"The aim was to recognise outstanding work across policing, and those we work in partnership with, to showcase excellence in investigating crimes and making sure a victim and their loved ones are at the forefront of everything we do."

Teams from across West Midlands Police were shortlisted for NCVPP awards.

Midlands mayor sets out plans to double funding for potholes

FUNDING to fix potholes across the region is set to double.

West Midlands Mayor, Richard Parker, set out the plans to double the amount of money given to councils for fixing potholes and resurfacing the region's crumbling roads.

He wants to make £240million available to six councils - Solihull, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton - to cover their highway maintenance over five years from April 2027.

That is double the £120million awarded to the councils for the current five-year period.

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Board will be asked to approve the £240million funding when it meets today (February 13).

Last year the Mayor secured an additional £20million from the Department for Transport to top up council road repair budgets for 2025-27 - helping councils fill thousands more potholes while awaiting the new funding.

Mr Parker said: "This winter has been brutal on our highways forcing drivers to navigate thousands of potholes, cracks and deep craters. They aren't just an inconvenience, they are costing motorists a fortune in repairs and putting



cyclists at serious risk.

"People across the West Midlands tell me that the lack of investment in our roads is one of their top frustrations - and I share that frustration. So we're making road repairs a top priority by doubling our investment, providing our councils with the funding they need to ensure smoother, safer journeys for everyone."

There are also plans to give councils additional funding for smaller projects, such as crossings, pathways and junction upgrades with a focus on improving road safety and encouraging more people to walk, wheel and cycle.

The increase in pothole

funding is part of a wider review of transport investment to make sure the region gets maximum benefit from the £2.4billion Transport for City Regions funding secured by the Mayor last summer.

This includes making sure that tram, train, bus, road and cycling and walking investment supports jobs, business growth and new housing as well as improving journeys.

Birmingham City Council's road repairs are funded through a separate private finance initiative process.

Funding to fix potholes is set to double across the region.

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A neighbourly idea

We all need good neighbours. s

by **Philippa Mingins**
 philippa.mingins@bullivantmedia.com

EVERYBODY needs good neighbours – as The Myton Hospices' latest venture demonstrates.

The charity has trained 14 volunteers to be 'compassionate neighbours' to provide vital emotional and social support to people living in the community.

The volunteers will support people in Coventry and Warwickshire, offering friendship, companionship and regular contact to reduce loneliness and isolation for those living

with, or caring for someone with a life-limiting illness.

Compassionate neighbours is a national initiative designed to ensure people with life-limiting illnesses, and their carers, are supported socially and emotionally. Volunteers form meaningful connections with people in their communities, making home visits, group meet-ups or attending community hubs, and tailoring support to the unique needs of each person.

Ruth Freeman, chief executive at The Myton Hospices, said: "We are delighted to be the first hospice in the Midlands to join the network of compassionate neighbours. Further expanding our services in the com-

munity is an essential part of our strategy to extend our reach and ensure all those who need our support can access it, when and where they need it.

"We know that social isolation can have a significant impact on a person's wellbeing. Our compassionate neighbours volunteers will provide regular companionship, helping people maintain confidence, independence and a sense of belonging within their local community.

"We are excited to see our first team of volunteers ready to make a real difference across Coventry and Warwickshire."

Visit www.mytonhospice.org/compassionate, for more details.

Hospice's wills week

HELP is at hand for people looking to write their will.

Myton Hospice's Make a Will Week will take place from March 2 to March 6.

Writing a will is the only way to ensure people's wishes are followed after death and that friends and causes people care about are still supported when they are no longer around.

During Myton's Make a Will Week, the hospice is teaming up with local solicitors who have agreed to give their basic will writing services free of charge in return for a donation.

To take part, all people have to do is find their nearest participating solicitor, online at www.mytonhospice.org/MAWW, and make an appointment with them.

Appointments are limited and allocated on a first come, first served basis so it is advisable to

contact a chosen solicitor as soon as possible.

Con McHugh, who took part in a previous Make a Will Week, said: "Our family were fortunate to experience the very best of what Myton offers our community. We hope you will consider taking part in Make a Will Week and help raise the vital funds Myton needs so others can also access the incredible support they provide."

"When we were at our lowest, Myton were there for us. After discussions with the oncologist, we were told no more could be done and that James' chemotherapy would be stopped. Our son was given weeks to live and we were told to prepare for the worst. We turned to Myton and we were fortunate to secure a transfer for him to Coventry Myton Hospice. From the moment we arrived, nothing was too much for them."



James McHugh's family took part in a previous Make a Will Week. s



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Ambulance service enjoys an apprenticeship milestone

WEST Midlands Ambulance Service (WMAS) is celebrating 16 years of apprenticeships at the Trust this National Apprenticeship Week.

Since their introduction, the Trust has seen over 1,850 apprentices past and present, employed by WMAS.

National Apprenticeship Week, which began on Monday and runs until Sunday, February 9 to 15, shines a light on the amazing work being done by employers and apprentices across the country.

WMAS was one of the first ambulance trusts approved as an Apprenticeship Main Training Provider with the Education and Skills Funding Agency for Higher Level Apprenticeships.

The trust currently has 11 apprenticeship programmes and works in collaboration with six partner universities and eight apprenticeship training providers and colleges to facilitate staff's progression.

The Trust first introduced apprenticeship programmes in 2010, when it introduced the very first apprenticeship which still runs at the trust today - the Motor Vehicle Apprenticeship.

In October 2012, the trust announced its Non-Emergency Patient Transport Scheme and over the 13 years it has recruited 500 apprentices onto this scheme.

To date, the Trust currently has several apprenticeship routes to offer, ranging from level 2 to level 7 apprenticeships.

The Trust has now started a

planning submission for Office for Students to further its internal position and educational development and to continue progress for the delivery of its higher education apprenticeships for paramedic sciences.

Recruitment manager, Louise Jones, said: "We're delighted to be marking National Apprenticeship Week and shining a spotlight on the apprenticeships we have available."

"There's a common misconception we only recruit paramedics, but that couldn't be further from the truth."

"We offer a diverse range of apprenticeship opportunities, from student paramedic training and motor vehicle apprenticeships to business administration and many more."

The trust said it was actively leading at a national level to ensure it was both sighted on sector development and actively involved in writing legislation to meet the needs of educational programmes for apprenticeships.

And, this year, it has been invited by Ofsted to act as part of their pilot scheme for the new improved education inspection framework.

Director of people at WMAS, Carla Beechey said: "Apprenticeships play a vital role in building our future workforce."

"I'd like to thank everyone involved in supporting our apprenticeship programmes and helping our staff to grow, develop and succeed."



Driver age dropping

DURING National Apprenticeship Week, the Government is reminding school leavers the legal age for people to start training to become a train driver will soon be lowered from 20 to 18.

The law change, which comes into force on June 30, will give school-leavers new opportunities to enter rail industry with fantastic chances for progression.

It comes at a pivotal time for the industry, as the government establishes Great British Railways.

The move will open doors for younger people to enter a highly skilled profession at a pivotal time for the industry - by 2030, a quarter of all train drivers are expected to reach retirement age.

With half of train operators now back in public ownership, this new

generation of train drivers will help unlock the railway's full potential for passengers and businesses - including freight - that use the network.

This is a key step ahead of the creation of Great British Railways.

Legislation has been laid in Parliament during National Apprenticeship Week, reaffirming the Government's plan to get young people into rewarding industries while tackling youth unemployment and driving economic growth.

There is a lack of diversity within the rail industry, fewer than four per cent of train drivers are under 30 and only 11 per cent are women.

Rail Minister, Lord Peter Hendy, said lowering the minimum age for train drivers was a 'significant step forward'.

"This change will open doors for those wanting to move straight into the workplace, giving a younger generation the chance to build rewarding careers in the railway, whether that's in freight or passenger services."

"It's a move that will help secure the future of Great British Railways and the wider rail industry and ensure the workforce reflects the energy, talent and ambition of the next generation."

Less than 13 per cent of train drivers are from a minority ethnic background.

It is also hoped lowering the age will create opportunities for young people from different backgrounds.

And it brings the UK in line with other countries, such as Switzerland, Germany and Australia.

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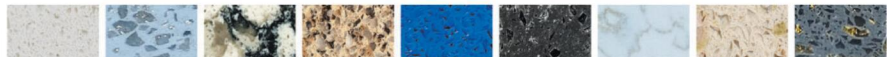
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Young voters get the chance to make their choice online

THE POLLS are now open for young people, aged 11 to 17 years-old, across the county to vote for their peers in the 2026 Warwickshire Youth Council elections.

Voting takes place online until February 27, with over 50 young candidates standing for election this year. Each candidate has created a manifesto based on the issues that matter most to them - from mental health, public transport and climate action to safety, equality, and opportunities for young people.

Once again, this year's applications were inspiring, thoughtful and filled with hope. Many young people spoke passionately about wanting to make a difference in their communities.

Their referenced experiences such as volunteering, mentoring, student leadership, advocacy work, public speaking as well as achievements in areas including arts, technology, debating and youth programmes.

They expressed a strong desire to be heard, to support their peers, and to help shape a brighter future for Warwickshire. Their commitment, creativity and ambition shone through every submission, showing

just how incredible Warwickshire's young people are.

Warwickshire County Council is encouraging young people across all communities to get involved and cast their vote, supported by teachers, parents and carers.

Every voter gets three votes and the voting process is easy. Simply visit the Child Friendly Warwickshire website to read through the candidate's manifestos, make a note of those that stand out and follow the steps to complete the voting process.

WCC leader Coun George Finch said: "Being a child-friendly county means we must listen to children and young people and we take every opportunity to involve them in real decision-making offering the chance to make a difference."

"The Youth Council elections provide a platform for them to talk about what matters to them and a genuine say in issues that affect their lives. The voting process allows them to choose who represents them and who will advocate for their concerns and interests."

"The candidates have put themselves forward and we hope that many of their friends and classmates will take part in the voting process this month."



Minister for School Standards Georgia Gould with headteacher Laura Richards, deputy headteacher Neerun Hothi and pupils from Southam St James C of E Academy

MINISTER PAYS A VISIT: PUPILS at St James C of E Academy in Southam were on their best behaviour when they welcomed a special visitor.

Minister for School Standards, Georgia Gould, dropped into the school to see the huge improvements made over the past 12 months.

During her visit, the minister joined headteacher and deputy headteacher, Laura Richards and Neerun Hothi, for a tour of the school where she was struck by the top teaching spaces and spoke with children about their learning.

The school has benefited

from the Government-led RISE (Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence) programme which supports schools across England to improve the quality of education they provide. St James C of E Academy has been provided with additional resources, an increase to its capacity and improvements to its curriculum.

Ms Gould said: "A year on from the launch of the government's RISE programme, this is an opportunity to recognise the collective work happening in schools around the country and to reaffirm our shared ambi-

tion: improving outcomes for every child, in every school.

"It was an absolute pleasure to see first-hand the impact the programme has had on children at Southam St James C of E Academy. The school's vision of letting children's light shine truly comes through in everything they do."

"I heard about the improvements in attendance, behaviour, inclusion and attainment the school were seeing and the commitment of teachers and leaders to embrace support for the school, and to go the extra mile to ensure all their pupils achieve and thrive."

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Strengthening ties with Europe could bring us all benefits

A STRONGER trading relationship with the EU would boost business in Coventry and Warwickshire, according to a trade expert.

New survey data of over 2,000 exporters from the British Chambers of Commerce Insights Unit has laid stark the impact of Brexit, Covid, war, and tariffs on the UK's exports.

The Trade Confidence Outlook results also underline the urgency for the EU Reset to deliver, six years on from Brexit.

The Insights Unit found that overall, 21 per cent of exporters reported an increase in export sales, while 28 per cent reported a fall, and 50 per cent reported no change.

Micro-exporters with fewer than 10 employees are faring worse – only 17 per cent reported increased export orders in Q4, 30 per cent reported a fall, and 53 per cent reported no change.

In contrast, 39 per cent of large exporters, with more than 250 staff, saw a boost in overseas orders, 14 per cent reported a decrease, and 47 per cent said they'd seen no change.

The figures depict worse business performance than the results in Q2 2018, when 31 per cent of all firms saw increased orders (21 per cent in Q4 2025), 55 per cent no change (50 per cent in Q4 2025) and 14 per cent a decrease (28 per cent Q4 in 2025).

Since Q2 2018, the number of firms reporting increased orders has never been higher than 28 per cent, not even when the global economy reopened after the pandemic. Since Q3 of 2024 it has averaged just 22 per cent.

Tim Cooper-Cocks, international trade adviser at the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce, said: "For businesses across Coventry and Warwickshire, particularly SMEs in manufacturing, professional services and advanced engineering, exporting has become significantly harder over the past seven years."

"Many firms locally have the capability and ambition to grow overseas, but rising trade friction, costs and complexity are holding them back."

"A stronger UK-EU trading relationship, alongside practical support on customs, regulation and market access, would make a real difference to exporters in our region in 2026 and beyond."

"When businesses do look to trade overseas, we see fantastic results not only for them but for the regional economy and we have some great examples of that on the back of the support we've given. It's just vitally important that as many barriers are removed as possible."

William Bain, Head of Trade Policy at the BCC, said: "For smaller businesses, the last

seven years have been some of the most challenging ever to try and grow exports."

"Things started to take a turn for the worse as the trade implications of Brexit became clear in 2018 and they have been in the doldrums ever since."

"A succession of further shocks on top of that – from Covid, wars, supply chain disruption and tariffs – have turned exporting into an uphill slog where the path keeps getting steeper."

"The Prime Minister's trip to China and the real progress made on trade deals with the US, EU and India last year show the Government understands the difficulties."

"But we need to see a real focus in 2026 on delivering what has been agreed. The BCC's EU reset report sets out very clearly the big issues that must be tackled before the year is out."

The BCC's EU reset report has 25 recommendations to improve UK-EU trade in the short, medium and long-term.



Tim Cooper-Cocks, international trade adviser at the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce.

THE top five proposals for discussions in 2026 are:

- Negotiate a deep SPS (animal and plant products) agreement to remove export health certificates
- Finalise UK and EU Emissions Trading Scheme linkage to exempt goods from Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanisms

- Establish a youth mobility scheme
 - Secure full UK participation in SAFE – the EU's Defence Finance Initiative
 - Enhance VAT cooperation and customs simplification to reduce trade costs
- Contact the Chamber on 024 7665 4321 for more information on overseas trade.



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Gardening

A humble idea which could save you money

WITH spring planting season beginning in March and the cost of living still at the forefront of people's minds, British Garden Centres has valuable advice to help families grow their own potatoes and reduce household food costs.

The humble spud remains the nation's favourite vegetable due to its versatility in the kitchen, as it is great for mashing, baking, frying, and roasting, making a tasty addition to any meal. British Garden Centres is encouraging gardeners across the UK to discover the joy of growing their own potatoes. Potatoes are an excellent crop for both beginner gardeners and experienced vegetable growers, as they're easy to grow and produce a bumper harvest every time. They can be grown in allotments, home gardens, and even small containers, buckets, or bags on balconies and on patios if you are short of space.

There are four types of seed potatoes: first and second earlies, main crop, and autumn second crop, so called due to the time they are harvested.

First Early: First earlies can be planted around late March or early April and are ready to harvest 10 to 12 weeks after plant-

ing in May or June. Popular first early varieties include Arran Pilot, Orla, Red Duke of York, Pentland Javelin, Rocket, and Swift.

Second Early: Second earlies can be planted in mid-April for harvests 14 to 16 weeks later from July onwards. Common second early varieties include Charlotte, Maris Peer, Nicola, Kestrel, and Estima. These varieties produce small, flavoursome new potatoes that are ideal for boiling, steaming, and salads, and are best eaten soon after harvest.

Maincrop: Maincrop potatoes should be planted from mid-April and harvested after 15 to 20 weeks, from late August to October. Popular maincrop varieties include Maris Piper, King Edward, Desiree, and Cara.

Step by step guide to growing your own potatoes

Chitting: Seed potatoes will need to be prepared and chitted before they go in the ground. Stand them in an eggbox with the end with the most eyes pointing up so they will sprout naturally. The tubers are ready to plant in the ground, container or potato bag when the sprouts are a couple of centimetres long.



British Garden Centres has valuable advice to help families grow their own potatoes and reduce household food costs.

Planting: Potatoes thrive in nutrient-rich soil, so the growing media is best treated with a high potash fertiliser before planting. It's important to make sure the soil is not too wet or frozen, so plant after the last frost around Easter. If planting in the ground, place the tubers approximately 15cm and 30cm apart with the eyes facing upwards. For container planting, we recommend you use a bag or pot that is at least 18in wide to provide the tubers with the space to grow. When shoots start to appear, and they are about 6in tall, begin earthing up your potatoes and keep covering the new shoots with compost as they grow. This will reduce the risk of light exposure, which turns potatoes green.

Harvesting: Harvesting potatoes depends on their planting time and the varieties you

have bought. First and second earlies are usually ready for harvest from May to July when the flowers are open, whilst the main crop can be harvested from September, once the leaves have yellowed. Cut the foliage to the ground, then gently lift the potatoes out of the ground with a fork. Dig up the potatoes as and when you need them to provide an all year round supply for cooking and salads.

Julian Palphramand, Head of Plants at British Garden Centres, said: "Growing your own potatoes is rewarding as you get something that is fresh, flavoursome, more nutritious, and satisfying to put on your plate at the end of the process.

"And with the cost of living continuing to rise, one of the biggest advantages of growing your food is that it can save you money."

Browse the Winter Edition of Seasons



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

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

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

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

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

EASY

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PATHFINDER

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

Illustrators

R N D T O V A N E I M A N D R
 A O B S G E J S C N G C I N S
 Y M R I G H T S U R E K S S E
 A H R Y N O N O R B L A H S U
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Solutions opposite

CROSSWORD

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ACROSS

- 7. Soil (5)
- 8. Small field (7)
- 9. Rice cooked with cheese and onions (7)
- 10. Pungent (5)
- 12. Infirmary (10)
- 15. Voters (10)
- 18. Perpendicular (5)
- 19. Take prisoner (7)
- 21. Hopelessness (7)
- 22. Move unobtrusively (5)

DOWN

- 1. Go back (10)
- 2. Forward (5)
- 3. Close (4)
- 4. Self-possession (6)
- 5. Lying near (8)
- 6. Messenger (7)
- 11. Lawless (10)
- 13. Outside (8)
- 14. Opposite (7)
- 16. Register (6)
- 17. Odd (5)
- 20. Be approved (4)

Scribble pad

LADDER

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

- Gap
- Spy
- Masculine
- Brewing grain
- Pole



NINER

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

- 782 gives a female bird;
- 3546 gives a young horse;
- 75129 gives a dog.

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

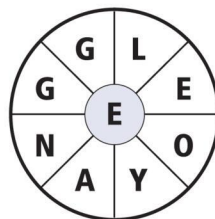
CODEWORD

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

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

WORDWHEEL

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

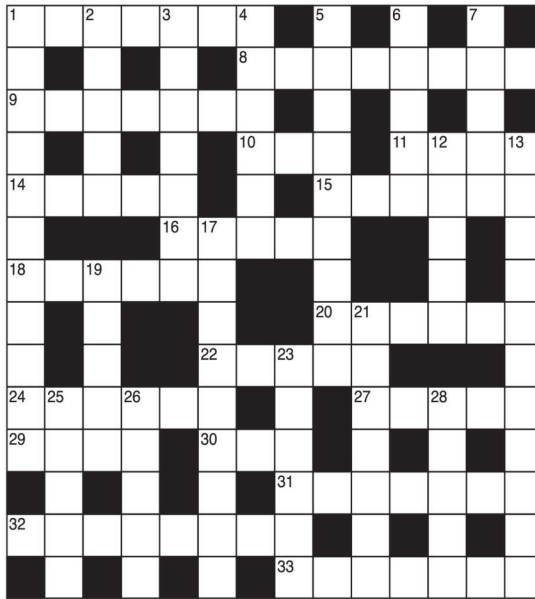


How you rate
 10 words: average 20 words: very good
 15 words: good 25 or more: excellent.

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- A type of mechanical keyboard instrument also called a player piano (7)
- Crossbred dogs, especially of greyhounds with collies (8)
- Country of north-west Africa, bounded on the north and west by the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean (7)
- Small block of metal, etc., for adjusting or tightening a bolt (3)
- A straw or wicker beehive (4)
- Humpless, woolly-haired beast of burden related to the camel (5)
- Gilded bronze used for the mounts of furniture, etc., especially in 18th century France (6)
- The powerful current caused by conflicting tides around Shetland and the Orkneys (5)
- Groups of notes sounded together (6)
- Alkaline substance, e.g. crude potassium carbonate (6)
- A turntable used to traverse a heavy gun (5)
- City of Portugal chiefly famous for the export of fortified wine (6)
- Latin poet whose unfinished epic Pharsalia deals with the civil war between Caesar and Pompey (5)
- French military cap with horizontal peak (4)
- A type of rummy in which a player whose unmatched cards count ten or less may stop a game (3)
- Fishing net consisting of fine net hung loosely between vertical walls of coarser net (7)
- Large crested parrot of the Australian region (8)
- Italian dish of rice cooked with onions and cheese, or in savoury stock (7)



DOWN

- Joe Gargery's uncle in Great Expectations (11)
- The main vessel in the arterial network (5)
- "While the chaffinch sings on the --- bough in England -- now!" (Home-thoughts, from Abroad by Browning) (7)
- In The Tempest, the king of Naples and father of Ferdinand (6)
- The original model from which anything is copied (9)
- A deep fissure, cleft or gap (5)
- Large, wicker basket for containing fish (5)
- Tailless arboreal marsupial of Australia, feeding almost exclusively on the leaves of the gum tree (5)
- Full name of the hooked-nosed, hunched-backed hero of countless puppet shows (11)
- A member of a branch of an East Germanic people who in the 5th century overran Italy under their leader Theodoric the Great (9)
- Lowest deck of a ship which has four or more decks (5)
- Capital of the Loiret departement on the Loire river, France (7)
- The leader of the singing in a church choir (6)
- Superior kind of scented, black tea picked when the leaves are young (5)
- Stacks of hay, corn, etc., especially those regularly built and thatched (5)
- Celestial body with star-like nucleus and "tail" of light (5)

SOLUTIONS

ACROSS: 1 Flanola; 8 Lurchers; 9 Morocco; 10 Nut; 11 Skip; 14 Lama; 15 Omoju; 16 Root; 18 Chords; 20 Potash; 22 Racer; 24 Oporto; 27 Luan; 29 Kelp; 30 Gin; 31 Tammie; 32 Cockatoo; 33 Risotto. DOWN: 1 Pumblechook; 2 Aorta; 3 Orchard; 4 Alonso; 5 Prototype; 6 Chasm; 7 Creel; 12 Koala; 13 Punchinello; 17 Ostroth; 19 Orlop; 21 Orlean; 23 Cantor; 25 Peko; 26 Ricks; 28 Comet.

General Knowledge Crossword
 ACROSS: 7 Earth; 8 Paddock; 9 Risotto; 10 Aard; 12 Feebleness; 15 Electorate; 18 Sheep; 19 Capture; 21 Despair; 22 Steal; Down: 1 Retrogress; 2 Brash; 3 Shut; 4 Plomb; 5 Adjective; 6 Courier; 11 Disorderly; 13 External; 14 Reverse; 16 Record; 17 Queer; 20 Pass.

Crossword
 UNCLOTHED
 Nine
 Dr Seuss, Nick Sharratt, Quentin Blake, Kate Greenaway, Shirley Hughes, Chris Riddell, Babette Cole, Kory Paul, Beatrix Potter, Raymond Briggs, Tove Jansson, Anthony Browne, Roger Hargreaves, Maurice Sendak, Axel Scheffler, Bruce Ingman.

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

Codeword

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

Easy Sudoku

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



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WE'RE *hiring*

We're a family run, independent business and looking for hard-working, reliable people to join our friendly team. Come along to our walk-in interviews on **Thursday 19th February, 3.30pm – 6.30pm.**

Lime Tree Restaurant vacancies:

Catering Staff (part time and full time)

Weekend Pot Washer
(part time – every Saturday and Sunday)

Garden Centre vacancies:

Till Assistants (part time and full time)

Outdoor Sales Assistant (full time)

Please note: hours will include working alternate weekends.

We look forward to meeting you!



WARWICKGARDENCENTRE.CO.UK/VACANCIES

Hatton Bank Lane, Warwick Road, Black Hill, Stratford-upon-Avon CV37 0QW

Keep in touch: Warwick Garden Centre



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We have a vacancy for Head of Money Management

Location: 7 Warwick Row, Coventry, CV1 1EX (covers Coventry & Warwickshire areas through travel).

Hours of work: 37 hours per week, Monday to Friday in person.

Salary: £45,000 (FTE based on 37 hours per week).

Essential criteria include:

- Full driving licence and access to own transport for work purposes.
- This position is subject to an enhanced DBS check.

About the role:

Age UK Coventry & Warwickshire are seeking to recruit a highly organised and detail driven Head of Money Management. The service includes a regulated corporate appointeeship service and financial support services. This new role will lead the service, ensuring full compliance with contractual and regulatory requirements.

The postholder will be responsible for ensuring the service operates effectively and to a consistently high standard, delivering person-centred, high-quality support to our clients. Reporting to the Director of Services and working closely with the service's steering groups, the postholder will be pivotal in overseeing, supporting, and managing the controlled and sustainable expansion of the service. This will include strengthening governance frameworks, enhancing operational systems, and ensuring complete transparency across the service.

We are seeking a highly experienced individual with a proven track record in managing complex legal, regulated, financial, statutory, or governance matters, where accuracy, accountability, transparency, and professional integrity are paramount.

Additionally, the successful candidate will:

- Demonstrate a proven track record of leading teams and delivering high-quality services in line with contractual or commissioner requirements.
- Confidently interpret and apply policies, contracts, and regulatory frameworks, exercising sound judgement and analytical thinking
- Communicate complex information clearly and professionally, both in writing and verbally, with excellent attention to detail.
- Build strong effective relationships with internal and external stakeholders.
- Maintain meticulous organisation and record keeping supported by strong digital literacy and the ability to learn new systems.

Apply here: bit.ly/head-money-management

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- WorcesterObserver.co.uk

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IRONING SERVICE WANTED

CV35 7LD

SELF-EMPLOYED person required to carry out ironing for a family each week, ironing to be carried out in the owner's home, delivering high-quality ironing services, ensuring garments and linens are pressed quickly and to a professional standard and ensuring all items are handled with care to prevent damage or creasing.

Organise laundry items efficiently for pressing and folding

Maintain cleanliness and organisation of the ironing area and equipment

Follow health and safety guidelines at all times during work procedures

Assist with additional laundry tasks as required

Additional cleaning hours may be available

Local to Warwick CV35 at times to suit, amount of hours and hourly rate negotiable

To apply please provide

- a CV and confirmation of self-employment expected hourly rate
- your availability each week
- your ironing experience
- confirm you have your own transport as the location is rural with no public transport.

CV application to Gill Bloxham
gbloxham@hattonworld.com



HOLY TRINITY • ALL SAINTS LUDDINGTON • ST HELEN'S CLIFFORD CHAMBERS

Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon is seeking an enthusiastic and organised

Shop Manager to lead our busy retail outlet.

Part-Time: 20 hours per week

Salary: £17,000 per annum

Permanent contract

You will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the shop, managing a small team of staff and volunteers, delivering excellent customer service, overseeing stock control, merchandising, and financial procedures. The role also involves promoting the shop through social media and working closely with church colleagues to support business growth in line with Christian values.

The ideal candidate will have retail experience, strong leadership and organisational skills, and a passion for creating a welcoming customer experience.

Closing date: Sunday 1st March 2026

Interviews: Tuesday 10th March 2026

To apply, please email your completed application form to hr@stratford-upon-avon.org

or post to: **Hon HR Officer, Holy Trinity Parish Centre, Old Town, Stratford-upon-Avon CV37 6BG.**

Application forms and further details are available here: <https://www.stratford-upon-avon.org/staff-vacancies>



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PUBLIC NOTICES

PUBLIC NOTICES

Warwickshire County Council

ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984
Warwickshire County Council has made the following Temporary Traffic Orders:

D2142 LIMESTONE HALL LANE, CHURCH LAWFORD

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic from A428 Coventry Road to Ling Lane.
Reason for Order: Carriageway patching and associated works, 08.00hrs - 16.00hrs.

Order Commences: 15 February 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 15 February 2026.

Access & Diversion: A428 Coventry Road, Coronation Road, Ling Lane and vice versa.

Contractor: Balfour Beatty, Tel: 03452 415 302.

A426 LEICESTER ROAD & D6971 CENTRAL PARK DRIVE, RUGBY

Order Effect: Leicester Road closed, both northbound and southbound carriageways, including all roundabouts, closed from M6 junction 1 to D2571 Junction One Retail Park - 1900 - 0500 hrs all days. Central Park Drive closed from its junction with the A426 Leicester Road to Castle Mound Way/Coton Park Drive, including roundabout joining Castle Mound Way and Coton Park Drive - Sundays: 2000 - 0600 hrs. In addition, a 30mph speed limit will be imposed effective 24 hrs all days on A426 Leicester Road northbound and southbound carriageways, including all roundabouts, from M6 junction 1 to D2571 Junction One Retail Park.
Reason for Order: Closures to enable carriageway resurfacing and associated works. Temporary 30 mph speed limit is required for the safety of all road users and workforce whilst works are in progress.
Order Commences: 15 February 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 30 March 2026.

Access & Diversion: Non-HGV Traffic - A4071, A45, B4429, A45, A361, A5, A426 and vice versa. HGV Traffic - A4071, A45, M45 from A45 (No access for HGVs through Dunchurch), A45, A361, A5, A426 and vice versa. D6971 Central Park Drive - no suitable diversion.
Contractor: Balfour Beatty, Tel: 03452 415 302.

MONTELO LANE, PAULTON & MONTELO LANE, HARBOROUGH MAGNA

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.
Reason for Order: To safely enable renewal of water mains within carriageway & verge.

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

Anticipated Completion: 22 March 2026.

Access & Diversion: Lutterworth Road, Rugby Road and vice versa.
Contractor: Severn Trent Water, Tel: 08007 834 444.

EDGECOTE CLOSE, RUGBY

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.
Reason for Order: To safely enable the laying of underground ducting.

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

Anticipated Completion: 18 February 2026.

Access & Diversion: No diversion is available.

Contractor: Core Highways, Tel: 07979 296 733.

LANCASTER ROAD, RUGBY

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic. In addition, vehicular traffic will be prohibited from making a Right Turn from Newbold Road into Lancaster Road.

Reason for Order: To enable repair/replacement of defective manhole covers and frame.

Order Commences: 21 February 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 21 February 2026.

Access & Diversion: Newbold Road, Wood Street. Park Road and vice versa.

Contractor: CSP, Tel: 07918 298 599.

B4109 HINCKLEY ROAD, WOLVEY

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic from B4114 Lutterworth Road roundabout to Hinckley Road leading to Burton Hasting.

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

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

Anticipated Completion: 20 February 2026.

Access & Diversion: B4114 Lutterworth Road, Smockington Lane, A5 Watling Street, B4019 Hinckley Road and vice versa. There will be no access/egress to/from Gipsy Lane via Hinckley Road whilst works are in progress.

Contractor: Balfour Beatty, Tel: 03452 415 302.

CALVESTONE ROAD, RUGBY

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic at the junction of Calvestone Road and Brocket Place.

Reason for Order: To safely enable the repair or replacement of a manhole frame and cover.

Order Commences: 17 February 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 17 February 2026.

Access & Diversion: Gold Avenue and vice versa.

Contractor: CSP, Tel: 07918 389 363.

SCHOOL LANE, HILL, RUGBY

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.
Reason for Order: Sewer lining works, closed 07.00hrs - 19.00hrs.

Order Commences: 19 February 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 19 February 2026.

Access & Diversion: No diversion available.

Contractor: Sapphire Utility Solutions, Tel: 07775 714 473.

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

ROWSE CLOSE, RUGBY

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.
Reason for Order: To enable duct laying works.

Order Commences: 2 March 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 4 March 2026.

Access & Diversion: No diversion available.

Contractor: Quantum TM, Tel: 01724 786 286.

OVAL ROAD, RUGBY

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.
Reason for Order: To enable boundary box renewal and meter installation.

Order Commences: 3 March 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 4 March 2026.

Access & Diversion: Percival Road, Sidney Road, Oval Road and vice versa.

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

MAIN STREET, HARBOROUGH MAGNA

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.
Reason for Order: To safely enable boundary box and meter renewal.

Order Commences: 5 March 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 6 March 2026.

Access & Diversion: Back Lane, Pailton Road and vice versa.
Contractor: Chevron Traffic Management Ltd, Tel: 03300 080 820.

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

To report any problems with these works or for further details of our current & planned roadworks visit our website warwickshire.gov.uk/roadworksmap or call us 01926 412515. S Duxbury, Director of Strategy, Planning & Governance, Shire Hall, Warwick CV34 4RL. Date 12 Feb 2026

PUBLIC NOTICES

Rugby Borough Council Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)

Application Number R26/0020
THE ALMSHOUSES, BROCKHURST LANE, MONKS KIRBY, RUGBY, CV23 0RA
Proposed demolition of conservatory and replacement single storey store.
This development may affect a Conservation Area

Application Number R26/0029
2-6, ALBERT STREET, RUGBY, CV21 2RS
Retrospective application for Listed Building consent to display a 1x illuminated advertisement above the entrance door and 2x non-illuminated signs on the fascia and an internally illuminated projecting sign

This development may affect a Listed Building. This development may affect a Conservation Area

Application Number R26/0030
2-6, ALBERT STREET, RUGBY, CV21 2RS
Retrospective application for advert consent for illuminated 1x sign board above the entrance of the shop and 2x non illuminated advertisement on the fascia board at the front of the premises and an internally illuminated projecting sign

This development may affect a Listed Building. This development may affect a Conservation Area

Members of the public may inspect copies of the application, the plans and documents submitted with it online at: www.planningportal.rugby.gov.uk or in an electronic form at: Town Hall, Evreux Way, Rugby, CV21 2RR between the hours of 9.00 am and 5.00 pm Monday to Friday until **06 March 2026**. Please note a planning officer would not be present. If you wish to make an appointment to discuss the application, please contact the case officer.

Any person who wishes to make representation to the above mentioned Council about the applications should make them online - www.planningportal.rugby.gov.uk (search for application number and select comment) - or in writing by that date to Chief Officer - Growth and Investment, Town Hall, Rugby, CV21 2RR.

If an application is determined by the Planning Committee, members of the public may have the opportunity to speak at the meeting. More details about public speaking are available from the Council or on-line at: www.rugby.gov.uk/speakingatplanning

For household or minor commercial applications, in the event of an appeal against a refusal of planning permission, dealt with on the basis of representations in writing, any representations made will be sent to the Secretary of State, and there will be no further opportunity to comment at the appeal stage.

Nicola Smith
Chief Officer - Growth and Investment
MRTPI

PUBLIC NOTICES

Goods Vehicle Operator's Licence

AVON HILL REGENERATION LIMITED trading as **MERLIN EARTHMOVERS / NEXUS AGGREGATES OF SPRING HILL FARM, PRIORS MARSTON, WARWICKSHIRE CV47 7SA**, is applying for a licence to use **UNIT 8, WHITE HOUSE FARM, OXFORD ROAD, PRINCETHORPE, RUGBY, WARWICKSHIRE, CV23 9QD** as an operating centre for 5 goods vehicles and 0 trailers
Owners or occupiers of land (including buildings) near the operating centres who believe that their use or enjoyment of that land would be affected, should make written representations to the Traffic Commissioner at Quarry House, Quarry Hill, Leeds, LS2 7UE, stating their reasons, within 21 days of this notice. Representatives must at the same time send a copy of their representations to the applicant at the address given at the top of this notice. A Guide to Making Representations is available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-guide-to-making-representations-objections-and-complaints-goods-vehicle-operator-licensing

PUBLIC NOTICES

Goods Vehicle Operator's Licence

D42 Limited trading as **D42 Car Logistics of Holly Grange, Holly Lane, Balsall Common, Coventry, CV7 7EB** is applying to change an existing licence as follows to keep an extra 1 goods vehicles and 1 trailers at the operating centre at **Listers PDI Centre, Unit 3, Lawford Heath Industrial Estate, Lawford Heath Lane, Rugby, CV23 9EU**
Owners or occupiers of land (including buildings) near the operating centre(s) who believe that their use or enjoyment of that land would be affected, should make written representations to the Traffic Commissioner at Quarry House, Quarry Hill, Leeds, LS2 7UE, stating their reasons, within 21 days of this notice. Representatives must at the same time send a copy of their representations to the applicant at the address given at the top of this notice. A Guide to Making Representations is available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-guide-to-making-representations-objections-and-complaints-goods-vehicle-operator-licensing

PUBLIC NOTICES

Goods Vehicle Operator's Licence

Marian Pavalasc trading as **Alessia Prime Transport LTD of 68 Bective Close, Northampton, NN2 7FE**, is applying for a licence to use **Mitchell Potatoes Ltd & Boots Farm Ltd, Bourton on Dunsmore, Rugby, CV32 9QQ** as an operating centre for 1 goods vehicles and 1 trailers
Owners or occupiers of land (including buildings) near the operating centre(s) who believe that their use or enjoyment of that land would be affected, should make written representations to the Traffic Commissioner at Quarry House, Quarry Hill, Leeds, LS2 7UE, stating their reasons, within 21 days of this notice. Representatives must at the same time send a copy of their representations to the applicant at the address given at the top of this notice. A Guide to Making Representations is available from the Traffic Commissioner's office.

PUBLIC NOTICES

TRACEY FONA NORTH (Deceased)

Pursuant to the Trustee Act 1925 any persons having a claim against or an interest in the Estate of the above named, late of Lillington House 93 Lillington Road Leamington Spa, CV32 6LL, who died on 15/08/2025, are required to send written particulars thereof to the undersigned on or before 14/04/2026, after which date the Estate will be distributed having regard only to the claims and interests of which they have had notice.
LDJ Solicitors,
29 Dugdale Street
Nuneaton CV11 5QN

PUBLIC NOTICES

Warwickshire County Council

ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984
Warwickshire County Council has made the following Temporary Traffic Orders:

HEATHER ROAD, BINLEY WOODS

Order Effect: Road Closed to vehicular traffic.
Reason for Order: To safely enable the repair or replacement of a defective manhole frame and cover.

Order Commences: 17 February 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 17 February 2026.

Access & Diversion: Ferndale Road, Rugby Road, Woodlands Road and vice versa.

Contractor: CSP, Tel: 07918 389 363.

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

D2096 HEATHER ROAD, BINLEY WOODS

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic from Oakdale Road to Birchwood Road.
Reason for Order: Carriageway patching and associated works, 08.00hrs - 16.00hrs.

Order Commences: 5 March 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 5 March 2026.

Access & Diversion: Oakdale Road, A428 Rugby Road, Birchwood Road and vice versa.

Contractor: Balfour Beatty, Tel: 03452 415 302.

A45 BIRMINGHAM ROAD WESTBOUND STONEBRIDGE OFF SLIP ROAD, GREAT PACKINGTON

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic from A45 Birmingham Road to County Boundary (N Stonebridge Roundabout).
Reason for Order: Carriageway resurfacing and works, 20.00hrs - 06.00hrs.

Order Commences: 3 March 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 6 March 2026.

Access & Diversion: Vehicular traffic to stay on the A45 Coventry Road to M42 Junction 6 Roundabout rejoin A45 Eastbound off slip road for Stonebridge Roundabout. Vehicular access & egress will be maintained where possible and safe to do so for businesses and residents only.

Contractor: Balfour Beatty, Tel: 03452 415 302.

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

To report any problems with these works or for further details of our current & planned roadworks visit our website warwickshire.gov.uk/roadworksmap or call us 01926 412515. S Duxbury, Director of Strategy, Planning & Governance, Shire Hall, Warwick CV34 4RL. Date 12 Feb 2026

PUBLIC NOTICES

NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR A NEW PREMISES LICENCE UNDER THE LICENSING ACT 2003

Notice is hereby given that **Mr Umesh Panchal** has applied to Coventry City Council for a **NEW PREMISES LICENCE for Welcome Banqueting Suite Ltd, 657-659 Foleshill Road, Coventry, CV6 5JQ**. The applicant proposes to carry out the following licensable activities **To provide Sale of Alcohol and Regulated Entertainment, Monday to Sunday 12.00pm till 02:00am**
Any person wishing to lodge a representation concerning this application may write to: Licensing Authority, Coventry City Council, PO Box 7097, Coventry CV6 9SL. Or send an email to: licensing@coventry.gov.uk.
The application may be viewed during normal office hours at the above address and further information may be available at www.coventry.gov.uk on the public register.
Any Representation relating to this application must be made in writing to the Licensing Authority by **26th February 2026**
Please note it is an offence to knowingly or recklessly to make a false statement in connection with an application. The maximum fine on summary conviction for this offence is Unlimited

PUBLIC NOTICES

BARBARA MARY SHEDLEY Deceased

Pursuant to the Trustee Act 1925 anyone with a claim against or an interest in the Estate of the deceased, late of 3 South View Road, Long Lawford, Rugby, Warwickshire, CV23 9BP, who died on 20/11/2025, must send written details to the address below by 14/04/2026, after which the Estate will be distributed with regard only to claims and interests notified.
New Leaf Solicitors,
St Peters Road, Rugby,
CV21 3QP
Ref:AALEWIS/2398

PUBLIC NOTICES

Licensing Act 2003

Notice of application for a new Premises Licence
Name of Applicant: Mohan Jasinthan. Notice is hereby given that Mohan Jasinthan has applied to Coventry City Council for a New Premises Licence. Postal Address of Premises: SPS News and Wine, 848 Dawlish Drive, Coventry, CV3 5NA, Sale of Alcohol (OFF SALES) Monday to Sunday, 06.00 to 22.00. Any person wishing to lodge a representation concerning this application may write to: Licensing Authority, Coventry City Council, PO Box 7097, Coventry CV6 9SL or send an email to: licensing@coventry.gov.uk. The application may be viewed during normal office hours at the above address and further information may be available at www.coventry.gov.uk on the public register. Any Representation relating to this application must be made in writing to the Licensing Authority by 09/03/2026.
Duly Authorised Agents
Licensing Hub,
info@licensinghub.co.uk

PUBLIC NOTICES

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

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PUBLIC NOTICES

PUBLIC NOTICES

Warwickshire County Council

ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984
Warwickshire County Council has made the following Temporary Traffic Orders:

MILL STREET, HARBURY
Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic between numbers 6 and 16 Mill Street.
Reason for Order: To safely enable works to underground gas services.
Order Commences: 16 February 2026 for up to 18 months.
Anticipated Completion: 20 February 2026.
Access & Diversion: Chapel Street, Park Lane, Temple End, Farm Street and vice versa.
Contractor: Cadent Gas, Tel: 0800 111 999.

STOCKTON ROAD, STOCKTON
Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.
Reason for Order: Tree works on overhanging branches.
Order Commences: 16 February 2026 for up to 18 months.
Anticipated Completion: 20 February 2026.
Access & Diversion: Stockton Road, Southam Road, Coventry Road and vice versa.
Contractor: Shire Forestry and Fencing Ltd, Tel: 07584 132 926.

D6379 LADBROKE ROAD, BISHOPS ITCHINGTON
Order Effect: Road Closed to vehicular traffic from Fisher Lane to The Greaves Way.
Reason for Order: Footway reconstruction and associated works, 08.00hrs - 17.00hrs.
Order Commences: 16 February 2026 for up to 18 months.
Anticipated Completion: 20 February 2026.
Access & Diversion: Fisher Road, Chapel Street, Poplar Road, Old Road, Central Drive, Ladbroke Road and vice versa.
Contractor: Balfour Beatty, Tel: 03452 415 302.

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

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

WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984
(A423 SOUTHAM BYPASS, SOUTHAM)
(50 MPH SPEED LIMIT) ORDER 2026
Warwickshire County Council has made the above-named Order under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, which reduces the existing National Speed Limit on the A423 Southam Bypass, Southam, to 50mph, on the length of road described in the Schedule below.
The Order commences on Monday 16th February 2026.
A copy of this notice, the Order, a statement of the Council's reasons for making the Order and plans showing the location, can be inspected at Warwickshire County Council, Shire Hall, Market Place, Warwick during usual opening hours and are available to view on the website at: www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/20209/stratford-avon-district.
Any enquiries relating to the Order may be made to Mark Salt, Communities Directorate, Warwickshire County Council (marksalt@warwickshire.gov.uk).
Any person who desires to question the validity of the Order or of any provision contained in it on the grounds that it is not within the powers conferred by the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, or on the grounds that any requirement of that Act or of any instrument made under it has not been complied with in relation to the Order may within six weeks from the date of the making of the Order apply to the High Court for this purpose.
SCHEDULE
50mph Speed Limit
(i) A423 Southam Bypass, Southam
From a point 78 metres north-east of the centre of the A423 Southam Bypass/A425 Leamington Road Roundabout to a point 104 metres south-west of the centre of the A423 Southam Bypass/Daventry Road Roundabout (a total distance of 826 metres).
S Duxbury, Director of Strategy, Planning & Governance,
Shire Hall, Warwick CV34 4RL Date 12 Feb 2026

PUBLIC NOTICES

Department for Transport
THE A46 COVENTRY JUNCTIONS (WALSGRAVE) DEVELOPMENT CONSENT ORDER 2026 ("The Order")
THE INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) REGULATIONS 2017
NOTICE OF A DECISION ON AN ORDER GRANTING DEVELOPMENT CONSENT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT DEVELOPMENT
The Secretary of State for Transport ("the Secretary of State") gives notice under regulation 31(2) of the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 that a determination has been made on an application made by National Highways ("the Applicant") for development consent under the Planning Act 2008 ("the 2008 Act") for Environmental Impact Assessment development. The Order grants development consent for alterations to the existing Walsgrave roundabout junction on the A46 (east Coventry), providing a new grade separated junction including new slip roads, and the realignment of the existing B4082 to connect the local road network to the new grade separated junction. It also allows for associated works which overall will improve traffic flows and congestion on the A46 around Coventry.
In addition, the Order contains compulsory acquisition powers in relation to land and rights that would be required for the purposes of the development.
The Secretary of State has determined, following consideration of the report of the Examining Authority who conducted an examination into the application, that development consent should be granted and has decided, therefore, to make an Order under section 114 (115 and 120) of the 2008 Act.
The statement of reasons for deciding to make an Order granting development consent, which has been prepared by the Secretary of State under section 116 of the 2008 Act and regulation 31(2) of the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, containing the content of the decision, the requirements imposed in connection with the development, the main reasons and considerations on which the decision is based including relevant information about the participation of the public, a description of the main features to avoid, reduce and offset any major adverse effects of the development and information regarding the right to challenge the decision and the procedures for doing so, is published on the Planning Inspectorate's website at: <https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/TR010066>. It is also available at the following location:
The Planning Inspectorate, National Infrastructure Directorate c/o Quadrant, 69 Buckingham Avenue, Slough SL1 4PN
To make an appointment for inspection of the documents contact the Planning Inspectorate on 0303 444 5000 or email NIEnquiries@pins.gov.uk

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LEAF wins award on reliability

THE NISSAN LEAF has again been named the UK's most reliable used electric car, following a comprehensive study of electric vehicle (EV) repairs across the country.

The analysis by Warranty Solutions Group took in a sample of 1,000 real-world repair claims paid by the company on EV warranties issued between January and December 2025.

The resulting data highlights significant differences in both fault rates and repair costs across the UK's most popular electric models – offering valuable insights for drivers and dealers alike.

The Nissan LEAF topped the reliability rankings with an impressively low claim rate of just 1.52 per cent, making it a reassuring choice for EV buyers seeking peace of mind.

James Taylor, managing director of Nissan GB, said: "This survey uses feedback from real-world customers about the reliability of their cars, and it shows consistently strong performance from the Nissan LEAF.

"For customers new to this technology and perhaps considering an electric vehicle purchase for the first time, knowing it is going to be reliable is very reassuring.

"We know our customers love

LEAF, so it's great to see this reflected in this reliability survey too."

The ground-breaking Nissan LEAF was first launched in the UK in 2011, with UK production starting in Sunderland in 2013.

The second-generation model, featuring more technology and increased range, arrived in 2018. This means there's plenty of choice of used models for customers, making it an accessible route into EV ownership.

Meanwhile, the all-new model – featuring a range of up to 386 miles on a single charge – arrives in Nissan showrooms across the UK imminently.

Proudly built in Britain, the new car also qualifies for the full Electric Car Grant discount of £3,750.

Martin Binnee, Operations Director of Warranty Solutions Group comments: "The LEAF's long-established electric drivetrain, straightforward engineering and proven track record for durability have all contributed to its standout reliability, continuing to translate into dependable ownership and fewer faults."

Warranty Solutions Group (WSG) is the UK's fastest-growing warranty and aftersales specialist, providing bespoke warranty, insurance and data solutions for dealer groups, independent dealers and OEMs.

Martin added: "While some EVs are proving extremely reliable, when faults do occur the cost of repair can be significant – particularly for premium models and vehicles with advanced electrical and thermal systems."

"For consumers, this means looking beyond fuel savings and factoring repair severity into the total cost of ownership.

"For dealers and warranty providers, it reinforces why EV-specific warranty cover is no longer optional, but essential to protect customers and maintain confidence as electric adoption continues to grow."

Cov edged out by runaway leaders

RUGBY UNION: COVENTRY Rugby pushed Ealing Trailfinders all the way in a narrow 36-34 defeat against the unbeaten league leaders.

Tries from Dan Green, David Opoku-Fordjour and Senitiki Nayalo saw the visitors take a 14-point lead with 25 minutes played at Trailfinders Sports Club.

However, Ealing staged a comeback with four unanswered tries as Api Bavadra's late score saw Coventry come away from the contest with two bonus points.

And the result means Alex Rae's side sit fifth in the Champ Rugby table as Coventry slipped to a third successive defeat.

The visitors made the worst possible start as Connor Oliver dotted down the game's first try inside 60 seconds after the hosts created an overlap down the left wing.

However, Coventry responded on 12 minutes when Green pounced on a handling error to touch down and Josh Thomas kicked the extras.

And the visitors crossed again four minutes later as Ealing failed to deal with Thomas's chip kick and Morgan Adderley-Jones offloaded to Opoku-Fordjour who dotted down.

Coventry stunned the leaders with a third try on 24 minutes as Nayalo placed the

ball over the line from close range after Thomas broke the line and Opoku-Fordjour produced a strong carry.

However, Ealing hit back four minutes later when Michael Dykes scored in the corner only for Thomas to kick a penalty on the stroke of half time and extend Coventry's lead to 12 points at the break.

The home side reduced the deficit four minutes after the break as Mike Willense scored Ealing's third try from a lineup maul.

And Ealing crossed for a bonus point try on 65 minutes when former Coventry player Tobi Wilson finished in the corner as the home side edged into a two-point lead.

The league leaders dotted down again on 71 minutes as Scott Buckley profited from another powerful driving maul following a lineup.

Replacement Tommy Mathews kicked a penalty to reduce the gap to six points late on only for Dan Jones to kick a penalty of his own for Ealing on 79 minutes to extend the home side's winning run to 16 matches.

However, there was still time for Bavadra to cross for Coventry's bonus point try with the final play of the game.

Coventry are next in action against Richmond on Friday, February 13 with kick-off at 8pm at Butts Park Arena.

Red and Greens edge closer to Wembley with FA Vase victory

by **Aaron Sutcliffe**
aaron.sutcliffe@bulivantmedia.com

FOOTBALL: TERRY Anderson praised his 'brave' Coventry United side after the Red and Greens reached the FA Vase quarter-finals for the first time in their history.

United won 2-1 against former Vase winners North Shields as goals from Charlie Faulkner and Nehemia Zazi sealed Coventry's place in the last eight at Butts Park Arena.

Coventry overcame their fellow Step Five opponents to move one step closer to Wembley.

And United boss Anderson insists the Red and Greens have as good of a chance of winning the FA Trophy as any of the sides left in the competition.

Anderson said: "It was a battling performance. North Shields were favourites for a reason, they put us to the sword in the second half and we had to stick in."

"We've been brave, all the lads have

worked their socks off. I'm over the moon, I'm absolutely buzzing.

"It was a team performance, every single one of them was absolutely top drawer.

"We've got as a good a chance as anybody [of winning it]."

United broke the deadlock on 28 minutes when Faulkner pressured a North Shields defender into an error and curled a shot past Callum Elliott from 15-yards out.

Coventry doubled their lead on 79 minutes when substitute Zazi fired a loose ball into the top-right corner from 12-yards out with the referee playing advantage for a foul on Faulkner in the box.

North Shields halved the deficit nine minutes into injury time as Ben Sampson squeezed a shot past Dan Moore from the left edge of the six-yard box.

However, the visitors had no time left to stage a comeback as United continued their fairytale run in the competition.

Assistant manager, Luke Morton added: "It was a whole club effort. It's massive to go through against North Shields who

put it on us.

"We were brilliant in the first half and soaked up a lot of pressure in the second half.

"Charlie has been brilliant for us ever since he's come back from his injury.

"He gives everything on the pitch all the time and if anyone deserved a goal it was Charlie Faulkner."

Coventry will play either Haywards Heath Town or AFC Stoneham in the quarter-finals of the competition.

The Red and Greens will travel to Haywards Heath or Stoneham on Saturday, February 28.

Haywards Heath host Stoneham in their fifth round tie this weekend.

Both teams sit top of their respective leagues with Haywards Heath at the summit in the Southern Combination League Premier Division.

And Stoneham lead the way in the Wessex Football League Premier Division.

Both teams play at Step Five which is at the same level as Coventry.

Winning clubs will receive £4,125 while losing clubs will take home £1,300.

Sky Blues not feeling 'nerves' of title race

JOEL Latibeaudiere felt Coventry City did not take enough 'risks' with the ball in their goalless draw against Oxford United.

The centre-back made just his fifth league start of the season against the U's and helped the Sky Blues record a first clean sheet since Boxing Day.

Coventry now trail leaders Middlesbrough by two points at the top end of the Championship table.

However, Latibeaudiere insists the Sky Blues are not feeling any anxiety or nerves in their quest to achieve promotion.

Latibeaudiere said: "It's always frustrating when a game like that happens. You put so much pressure on the opposition and the ball won't drop for you.

"You have to take the positives away from it. The positive we can take is a clean sheet. We created chances, we just couldn't put it to bed.

"That's for us to go and look at and focus on getting better and better, especially as this time of the season.

"We want to be winning, winning and winning. We'll go back, look at the game and move on.

"I wouldn't say there's anxiety or nervousness in the group. We've gone

through a patch where the results haven't been as good as at the start of the season.

"We started the season flying and took off, it's settled out a bit and it's just about digging through these rough patches and sticking together."

Chances were at a premium throughout as Oxford failed to register a single shot on target while Coventry managed just five efforts on target from 24 attempts on goal.

And Latibeaudiere felt the Sky Blues did not take enough risks when in possession but acknowledged Oxford's resolute defensive display.

Latibeaudiere added: "Something I think we could have done better is risk the ball.

"Just keep putting it in to those danger areas and when it drops being around those ricochets and that's how you get your goal.

"For me, we didn't risk the ball enough. It isn't always as easy as you think when a team goes down to 10-men.

"Especially a team like Oxford who are fighting to stay in the league. They've got a lot of tough players and they defended well in the end."

Blaze battle to first leg win against Giants

ICE HOCKEY: COVENTRY Blaze made the most of home advantage to take a 3-2 lead in the first leg of their Challenge Cup semi-final against Belfast Giants.

Goals from Jack Hopkins, Kim Tallberg and Grayson Constable earned Blaze a first-leg victory at the Skydome Arena.

The second leg takes place on Wednesday, February 18 with the face-off at 7pm at SSE Arena Belfast.

Coventry made the perfect start when Hopkins found the net at 1:54 as he squeezed a shot past Alexis Gravel from a tight angle.

Belfast equalised at 8:41 as Ben Lake produced a clinical finish against the run of play.

However, the home side reclaimed the lead at 13:28 when Tallberg finished on the rebound after Alessio Luciani's fierce shot came off the backboards.

The Giants drew level for a second time at 29:46 as Scott Conway reacted quickest to turn a rebound past Mat Robson in the second period.

However, Coventry took the lead for a third time against the run of play at 36:57 when Constable controlled David Clements' pass and faked Gravel before finding the net.

A heroic goaline block from Colton Saucerman kept Blaze's lead intact while Robson made 42 saves to earn Coventry a second-leg advantage.

That came after Blaze saw their winning run in the Elite League halted at eight matches following a dramatic 5-4 overtime defeat against Belfast Giants last weekend.

Blaze led by four goals against league leaders Belfast early in the second period at the Skydome.

Belfast staged a stunning comeback to take the game to overtime and then took the extra point in the additional period.

Coventry also battled to a 2-1 shootout victory against Nottingham Panthers at Motorpoint Arena.

Red-hot Coventry made a blistering start against Belfast as former Giant Elijah Barriga found space in front of the net and finished neatly at 3:52 from Matthew Gleason's feed.

And Gleason turned from provider to scorer at 15:55 when he skated almost the full length of the ice before producing a backhand finish past Jackson Whistle.

Another former Belfast player haunted his old side at 16:41 as Grant Mismash hammered a one-timer past the away side's substitute netminder Jake Kupsky.



Blaze beat Belfast in the first leg of their Challenge Cup semi-final. Picture by Scott Wiggins.

Blaze added a fourth goal early in the second period at 21:51 when Adam Robbins found the net to leave the visitors with a mountain to climb.

However, Belfast responded at 23:18 as Jordan Kawaguchi struck to keep the Giants in the contest.

And the league leaders further reduced the deficit at 30:17 when Mike Lee jumped into the play from the blue line and finished from in tight.

Belfast closed the gap between the teams to a single goal less than a minute later at 31:10 as Jake Gaudet capitalised on a two-on-one rush.

The visitors remained on top in the third period and took the game to overtime at 50:36 when JJ Piccinich scored on the powerplay with a speculative shot through traffic.

And Belfast ended Blaze's winning run just 26 seconds into the extra period as Conway scored the away side's fifth unanswered goal.

That came after Coventry claimed a penalty shootout victory against Nottingham to extend their winning run to eight matches.

Nottingham lost Matt Alfaro to the box for cross-checking while Zsombor Garat followed his teammate soon after for high-sticking.

This presented Blaze with a five-on-three powerplay chance as Mismash fired narrowly wide in the best chance of a goalless

first period.

However, Blaze broke the deadlock at 23:35 when Constable finished on the rebound after Mismash's heavy shot fell kindly into the scorer's path.

Constable spurned a golden chance to double Blaze's lead moments later on a breakthrough while Jarod Hilderman took a slashing penalty to deny William Boysen a chance on goal.

Nottingham equalised at 30:49 when Brendan Harris converted a six-on-five play from Mitch Fossier's feed.

Blaze netminder Robson then made a stunning save late in the second period to keep the scores level.

The visitors spurned a three-on-one chance early in the third period while the Panthers failed to capitalise on two late powerplay opportunities.

Neither side could find a winner in regulation time or overtime as the game ended with a penalty shootout.

And Robson saved all five of Nottingham's efforts while Robbins scored the winner for Blaze in the fifth round of penalties.

Coventry host Dundee Stars on Saturday, February 14 with the face-off at 7pm at the Skydome.

Blaze then travel to Sheffield Steelers on Sunday, February 15 with the face-off at 4pm at the Utilita Arena.

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BRINGING YOU ALL THE LATEST SPORTS NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE AREA

Valley slide down table after three-goal defeats

by Aaron Sutcliffe
aaron.sutcliffe@bullivantmedia.com

FOOTBALL: RUGBY Town paid the price after making a number of defensive errors in a 4-1 home defeat against high-flying Belper Town in midweek.

Valley found themselves three goals behind at the break following efforts from Curtis Burrows, Liam Moran and Louis Keenan at Butlin Road.

Rugby reduced the deficit early in the second period when Rivel Mardenborough found the net only for Kevin Bastos to complete the scoring for play-off chasing Belper late on.

The result means Valley sit 18th in the Northern Premier League Midlands table, one point above the relegation zone.

Rugby made the worst possible start when Burrows saw his header from the edge of the penalty area bounce into the net with Jonathan



Wafula's presence enough to put off home goalkeeper Charlie Woods.

And Belper doubled their lead on 25 minutes as Moran turned home Bastos's cross at the back post after the latter controlled goalkeeper Kieran Preston's long pass.

Belper scored a third goal on 36 minutes when Keenan's whipped free-kick from the touchline bounced off the turf and deceived

Woods at the goalkeeper's near post.

Rugby responded one minute after the break as Mardenborough fired a low effort into the net from just outside the penalty area.

However, Belper completed the scoring on 84 minutes when Bastos saw his free-kick from 25-yards out squirm beyond Woods.

That came after goalkeeper Woods saw red after just 20 minutes in a 3-0 defeat away at Coleshill Town last weekend.

Woods's dismissal proved costly with defender Josh Thomas forced to play in goal for the remaining 70 minutes at Pack Meadow.

Stand-in stopper Thomas saved a penalty but goals from Michael Gyasi, Theo Rowe and Mason Rees condemned Valley to defeat.

Rugby are next in action against Sutton Coldfield Town on Saturday, February 14 with kick-off at 3pm at Butlin Road.

Stand-in goalkeeper Josh Thomas saved a penalty against Coleshill. Picture by Martin Pulley.

Bethell impresses at T20 World Cup

CRICKET: WARWICKSHIRE'S Jacob Bethell blasted a half-century to help England avoid a shock defeat against Nepal in their T20 World Cup opener.

Bethell top scored for England with 55 runs from 35 deliveries to help his country close on 184-7 at the end of their 20 overs.

However, minnows Nepal pushed England all the way and took the game to the last delivery of the match.

Nepal needed 10 runs from the final over only for Sam Curran to limit them to five runs as England claimed a four-run victory to avoid a potentially embarrassing start to the tournament in Mumbai, India.

England batted first and reached 57-3 before Bethell and Harry Brook (53) combined for a 71-run stand.

Bethell blasted four fours and four sixes before he eventually fell to the bowling of Dipendra Singh Airee (2-23)

Nepal responded well with the bat as Singh Airee (44), Lokesh Bam (39 not out) and Rohit Paudel (39) put Nepal in contention for a shock victory.

However, England survived an almighty scare to claim a four-run victory.

Bethell could not save his country against the West Indies in their next group fixture however as England suffered a 30-run defeat.

The Warwickshire all-rounder scored 33 runs from 23 balls with England all out for 166 in 19 overs.

West Indies closed on 196-6 as Sherfane Rutherford (76 not out) smashed seven sixes in a blistering 42-ball innings.

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