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Council leader faces key vote to decide his future

by **Philippa Mings**
 philippa.mings@bullivantmedia.com

THE FUTURE of the leader of Warwickshire County Council hangs in the balance.

Nineteen year-old Coun George Finch, who was appointed to the top position at WCC last summer, is facing a vote of no confidence after being accused of bringing the authority into disrepute.

Green Party councillors have called for a vote on Coun Finch's position at the next full council meeting next Tuesday amid suggestions the Reform UK councillor has "abused the office of leader".

Warwickshire Green Party group leader Coun Jonathan Chilvers said the motion had been submitted due to incidents including a dispute with police over their handling of a case involving the rape of a 12 year-old girl by an Afghan asylum seeker in Nuneaton, and a row with the council's chief executive, Monica Fogarty, over Pride and other flags being flown at WCC's Shire Hall headquarters in Warwick.

Coun Chilvers continued: "George Finch has abused the office of leader of the council and time and again brought Warwickshire into disrepute."

"His repeated attacks on staff, partner institutions and use of his role for constant cheap and nasty political points scoring is unacceptable and violates rule of law, democratic norms and basic decency."

If the Liberal Democrats, Greens, Labour and Restore Britain councillors support the motion of no confidence as expected, Coun Finch's future will be in the hands of the Conservative group on

the council.

If they support the motion or abstain, Reform would not have the numbers necessary to keep Coun Finch in post.

Coun Finch responded saying the move was a political stunt with people more interested in removing him than in offering any serious alternative.

He continued: "We have already passed our budget and have also put forward our draft Council Plan through Cabinet, ready for engagement with the public. This administration has a direction, a programme for government and a clear focus on delivery."

"Those trying to remove me have offered no alternative Council Plan and no credible answer to what replaces the work already under way."

"Warwickshire does not need a coalition of chaos between the Liberal Democrats, Greens, Labour and Restore Britain. It needs stable leadership, a clear direction and an administration focused on delivery."

"I was elected to lead this council, and that is exactly what I will continue to



WCC leader George Finch faces a vote of no confidence next week. The vote could spell a change of leadership at Shire Hall.

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Boxer plans knockout bid for hospices

by Philippa Mingins
phillippa.mingins@bullivantmedia.com

A PROFESSIONAL boxer from Leamington is stepping back into the fundraising ring in aid of The Myton Hospices.

Lewis Williams has signed up for a new challenge this year, to raise another £20,000 for the charity close to his heart.

Following his successful '20 in 25' initiative last year, which raised £20,823, Lewis is continuing his commitment with a new campaign: '20 in 26'.

The new challenge aims to generate a further £20,000 to support Myton's vital services, bringing him closer to his long-term pledge of raising £1 million for the charity during his boxing career.

Lewis' motivation stems from personal experience of Myton's care through its Myton at Home

service. Witnessing, first-hand, the impact of compassionate hospice support on patients and their families has driven his ongoing commitment to ensuring others can access the same essential care.

Building on the momentum of last year's fundraising, Lewis' 20 in 26 drive will contribute towards specialist palliative and end-of-life care for people across Coventry and Warwickshire. Like many hospices nationwide, Myton is facing increasing financial pressures as well as growing demand for its services. Lewis' £20,000 target could fund a hospice bed at Myton for 45 days, providing comfort, dignity and expert care to patients and their loved ones.

Throughout 2026, Lewis plans to host a range of activities including auctions, participation in Myton events, collaborations with commercial sponsors and engagement with the local community through Cleary's Gym. One of the first opportunities to support the cam-



Stepping back into the fundraising ring: Lewis Williams with Sharon Kelly, left, ward manager at Warwick Myton Hospice, and Dr Anna-Marie Foly. s

paign will be an auction of signed shirts from Haas, Formula 1 team drivers Esteban Ocon and Oliver Bearman. The auction will take place at the Supercar Fest at Sywell Aerodrome in May.

Lewis said: "The support we received last year was incredible. We've got exciting plans for 2026, from auctions and events to working with sponsors and the amazing community at Cleary's Gym.

"What's really stood out is just

how many people have relied on Myton's support when families need it most. We're determined to raise these funds while bringing people together along the way. There's lots happening behind the scenes, and we'd love for everyone to get involved and support this wonderful charity."

Hospice spokesperson Jason Levy, added: "Everyone at Myton is incredibly grateful to Lewis, his team, sponsors and supporters.

Each year we care for thousands of patients and their families and we simply couldn't do this without the generosity of our community.

"Lewis embodies that community spirit. We are immensely proud of everything he does as our volunteer ambassador, to raise both vital funds and awareness of hospice care. We're excited to see what he achieves this year."

Visit www.mytonhospice.org/ Lewis to find out more and donate.

Heidi's cut will help others



Before and after: Heidi's first haircut raised more than £2,000 for The Little Princess Trust. s

A FOUR-year-old from Warwick has raised more than £2,000 for a special cause with a sponsored first haircut.

Heidi Webster, who had never had her hair cut before, was fundraising for The Little Princess Trust in February.

Heidi had her inaugural cut on February 28 and has raised £2,010.

The Little Princess Trust provides free, real-hair wigs to people aged up to 24 who have lost their hair through cancer treatment or other conditions.

Heidi has raised almost enough (£2,100) to cover the cost of making, fitting and styling three wigs free of charge for a child or young person.

The hair from her cut has also been donated to the charity, to make wigs from.

Heidi's mum Lydia, a former hairdresser, said: "We'd like to say a massive thank you to everyone who's sponsored Heidi and helped her to raise such a fantastic total.

"She took her first haircut in her stride and we're so pleased her hair can be put to good use by such a fantastic charity.

"Fundraising for The Little Princess Trust has been such a wonderful way to celebrate her first haircut while helping others."

The Little Princess Trust has helped more than 20,000 children and young people with its free wig service.

Wendy Tarplee-Morris, founder of The Little Princess Trust, said: "We know our wigs help to restore children's confidence and bring some normality back to their lives when so much is changing.

"But we can only provide this free wig service thanks to some very special people like Heidi, who donate their hair and raise valuable funds for us.

"We are so grateful to Heidi and all her friends and family for their fantastic support – and I would like to thank them all for their brilliant efforts."

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Cemex House (left) is set to be demolished to make way for a new Aldi store. s

Concrete plans for Cemex House

by **Andy Morris**
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A LONG-AWAITED plan to build a new supermarket on the site of a town centre high-rise office block has finally been given planning permission.

Rugby Borough Council has approved plans to build a new Aldi food store on the site of Cemex House, in Evreux Way.

The disused office building – the UK head office of Cemex until the cement company sold it in 2022 to move to Binley – will be demolished to make way for the new supermarket.

The £5million project, which was first announced in 2022, is expected to create up to 40 new permanent jobs at the supermarket, as well as around 100 roles during construction.

The new store will be accessed via Corporation Street, with an exit point onto Evreux Way.

The plan includes improved pedestrian links, a new crossing and a 93-space car park – including accessible and parent-and-child bays, and electric vehicle charging points – to offer 90 minutes of free parking.

Aldi has said that the project would help to support plans for the wider regeneration of the town centre and would create a ‘welcoming and attractive’

entrance to that side of the town. The council has outlined funding for 11 projects to support town centre regeneration in its budget for 2026-27, including exploring options for the local authority to take control of the Rugby Central shopping centre and the Brotherhood House site.

Positive

Council leader councillor Michael Moran said the decision was very positive news for the town centre.

He said: “It is so important that key sites within the town centre are brought back into active use. “Cemex House is one of the first major buildings people see

as they come into Rugby town centre and has been a derelict site for far too long, so getting it back in use again is a key part of regenerating the town as a whole.

“Aldi acquired Cemex House many years before my time as leader and it has been a challenging site to bring forward.

“Together with Coun [Jerry] Roodhouse, I have done my best to bring all the relevant parties together to find a workable solution.

“I’m delighted that the development will create new jobs and give residents more choice, including access to affordable food shopping in a convenient location.”
Coun Roodhouse, chair of RBC’s

town centre working group, said the decision reflected the council’s commitment to bringing redundant town centre sites back into use.

He added: “Making better use of under-used land and improving connections between different parts of the town centre will ensure it continues to meet the needs of residents and businesses now and into the future.”

The plan was supported by 85 per cent of those who took part in a public consultation survey when it was announced in 2022.

The *Observer* has asked Rugby Borough Council to confirm timescales for demolition, construction and completion of the project.

Cocaine dealer jailed for 39 months

A COCAINE dealer has been jailed after he was caught selling the drug in Rugby.

At Warwick Crown Court, Arian Varfaj, 53, of no fixed abode, pleaded guilty to being concerned in the supply of class A drugs and was jailed for 39 months.

In December, detectives were patrolling Rugby when they saw a suspicious car in Oxford Street.

After watching a suspected drugs deal, they detained the driver, Varfaj, and found cocaine, cash and the phone he was using to deal.

Det Cons Matthew Rapkins said: “These toxic drugs bring poverty, misery and crime wherever they go.

“We are constantly out



Cocaine dealer Arian Varfaj is behind bars. s

across the county on plain-clothed patrols and we will continue to target anyone who is willing to sow misery and harm in their community.”
Visit www.warwickshire.police.uk/ro/report

to report concerns about drugs or dealing. Information can also be provided anonymously to the independent charity Crimestoppers, on 0800 555 111.

Drugs seized

THOUSANDS of pounds worth of suspected cocaine has been seized after police raided four homes in Rugby.

Officers from Rugby Police’s serious and organised crime team seized suspected cocaine worth more than £25,000 when they executed three drug warrants in Hillmorton and one in Brownsover on Monday, March 2.

Ryan O’Neill, of Eskdale in Brownsover, was arrested and later charged with possession of cocaine with intent to supply.

A 36-year-old man from Rugby arrested on suspicion of possession of class A drugs with intent to supply, has been bailed until May while enquiries continue.

Det Cons Matt Rapkins said: “These warrants have led to a considerable amount of drugs being taken off the streets of Rugby.

“I’d like to reassure local communities



Suspected cocaine worth more than £25,000 was seized after police raided four homes in Rugby. s

that we are listening to your concerns. If you have any information about drug dealing, let us know and we’ll continue to act.”

Visit www.warwickshire.police.uk/report, or call 101, to report information about drug dealing to police.

Information can also be provided, anonymously, to Crimestoppers via www.crimestoppers-uk.org or on 0800 555 111.

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Sofia's story inspires cash for vital new research



Sofia on the day of her prom with proud dad Conor.

THE DETERMINED fund-raising efforts of the family of a Rugby woman who beat cancer against the odds when she was a child have helped two charities fund vital new research.

Sofia Dwyer's family started fund-raising after she was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukaemia (AML) in June 2017, when she was just 11.

Her dad Conor said Sofia was a 'normal, happy 11-year-old girl' before her diagnosis – but after she became unusually tired on a camping trip, blood tests showed that she had AML, a rare and aggressive form of blood cancer.

Conor said: "Sofia's cancer journey was incredibly tough. Her treatment lasted six months and included aggressive chemotherapy, alongside three life-threatening episodes of sepsis.

"There were moments where we didn't know if she would pull through. But throughout it all, Sofia showed remarkable courage. Even early on, she wanted to help others."

Sofia decided to donate her hair to make wigs for other children who lose their hair because of treatment.

And, in 2017, her family set up Super Sofia, a Special Named Fund at CCLG: The Children & Young People's Cancer Association which raises money for research into AML.

Conor said: "Because Sofia's leukaemia was rare, the medicine she received was only available as part of a clinical trial. We quickly realised that, without research funding, those treatment

options simply wouldn't exist.

"Fund-raising became our way of turning fear into action – and helping other children who might one day face the same diagnosis."

Now 20 and working in a pub, as well as volunteering in an RSPCA charity shop, Sofia has put her fund towards two new leukaemia research projects.

The funding is part of a £600,000 collaboration between CCLG and Blood Cancer UK, with the projects being led by Dr Samanta Mariani at the University of Edinburgh and Dr Karen Keeshan at the University of Glasgow.

Dr Mariani's project aims to develop more targeted and effective treatments, while Dr Keeshan's focuses on new and kinder treatments.

Conor said he was 'incredibly proud' to be part of the collaboration.

He said: "When Sofia was diagnosed, her survival odds were just 20 per cent. The only reason she survived was because research – and trial treatments – already existed. So, seeing two new leukaemia research projects funded gives us enormous hope."

Conor thanked Super Sofia's supporters, adding: "To the researchers, we want to say how much your work matters to families like ours. Behind every trial and breakthrough are real children relying on what you discover next.

"Sofia is here today because of research. That's the impact you're making."

Ashley Ball-Gamble, Chief Executive of CCLG, said: "By working together, we can accelerate funding for the most

promising childhood cancer research and move faster toward breakthroughs for these young patients."

Dr Richard Francis, Deputy Director of Research at Blood Cancer UK, added: "Funding innovative research like this is so vital. It's only possible because of the determination of families and supporters who refuse to accept that current treatments are good enough."

Visit specialnamedfunds.cclg.org.uk/super-sofia to support Super Sofia.

Sofia pictured at the end of her treatment in 2017.





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Officers from Coventry Police's new mounted unit visited Foleshill during Operation Regroup. s

Mounted police on the streets

by **Andy Morris**
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MORE than £3,000 worth of suspected cocaine has been taken off the streets of Coventry.

Officers from Coventry Police's north-east priority crime team confiscated the drugs when they stopped and searched a man in Shirley Road on Thursday, March 5.

The man was arrested on suspicion of possession of class A drugs with intent to supply and was taken into custody.

He has since been bailed with strict conditions while enquiries continue.

The arrest came as police teams in the northeast of the city joined Operation Regroup, a day of high-impact patrols aimed at addressing local priorities.

Reassurance and crime-prevention patrols took place around the Walsgrave, Gielgud Way and hotel car parks, aimed at tackling

thefts of, and from, vehicles in the area. Elsewhere, officers from the force's new mounted unit visited locations in Foleshill, including Gallagher Retail Park, and two drug warrants were carried out in and around Riley Square.

Two people were arrested and charged over the course of the operation, including a 28-year-old man arrested on suspicion of shop thefts in Broad Park Road and a 33-year-old man arrested in connection with a vehicle theft in Tennison Road in February.

More than 200 cars were caught driving above the speed limit during an enforcement operation in Jimmy Hill Way, with the fastest car clocked at 96mph.

Another car was found being driven without insurance. The driver was prosecuted and the vehicle seized.

Another car failed to stop for officers but the driver ended up in a dead-end where they were found to have a revoked licence. That car was also seized.



Attacker: **Anthony Russell. s**



Child murderer **Ian Huntley. s**

Coventry man suspected of murder

THE ATTACK which led to the death of notorious child-killer Ian Huntley is suspected to have been carried out by a triple murderer from Coventry.

Huntley, 52, who killed 10-year-old schoolgirls Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman in 2002, died on Friday when his life support equipment was switched off.

He had suffered significant head trauma when

he was attacked with a makeshift weapon at HMP Frankland, a high security prison in County Durham, on February 26.

Anthony Russell, formerly of Riley Square in Coventry, is reported to have been responsible for the attack on the Soham double murderer, according to reports by the BBC and the *Daily Mail*.

Russell, 43, is serving a whole life-term for murder-

ing Julie Williams, her son David Williams and Nicole McGregor in the space of seven days in October 2020.

Durham Constabulary is preparing a file for the Crown Prosecution Service for the consideration of charges.

A spokesperson for the force said a police investigation into the circumstances of the incident was ongoing.

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Council-house services criticised by the regulator

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

'SERIOUS failings' have been found in how Rugby Borough Council (RBC) manages its council homes.

The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) said 'significant improvement' was needed after it found areas in which the council has failed to meet consumer standards.

RBC was found lacking in its assurance around property condition, oversight of repairs performance, tenant engagement and

accessibility of service information. Inspectors found the council had identified 800 homes with electrical installation condition reports more than five years old – and 600 without smoke alarms.

The regulator also found the council could not fully analyse the results of stock-condition surveys it commissioned for 86 per cent of its homes, because it only held partial data.

The council was given a C3 grade, meaning it does not meet government requirements due to 'issues of serious regulatory concern', and must engage with RSH to address failings and weaknesses.

Inspectors highlighted strengths in the council's partnership work to tackle anti-social behaviour and hate incidents, confirmed homes were allocated in a fair and transparent way, and observed a respectful approach to tenants.

Gaps

Kate Dodsworth, the council's chief of regulatory engagement, said: "Our inspections continue to highlight significant gaps in some landlords' understanding of tenants and homes, reinforcing the need for accurate, up-to-date information to ensure safe, decent housing."

"We will continue to hold landlords to account and drive continuous improvement to ensure tenants live in good-quality homes and receive effective services."

The council said a stock condition survey had been 87 per cent completed, \$850,000 of additional funding has been approved for repairs and investment was made in a new asset management system since the inspection, in October.

A stronger performance management framework and new tenant engagement framework has also been introduced.

The council said it had referred itself to the regulator over the accu-

racy and completeness of repairs information ahead of the inspection.

Councillor Claire Edwards, RBC portfolio holder for communities, homes, safety and regulation, said: "When I became portfolio holder, it was clear that significant work was needed to ensure our housing services were operating at the standard our tenants deserve."

"Over the past 18 months, we have invested in our services, strengthened engagement with tenants and progressed major improvements to our repairs service."

"We welcome the regulator's assessment and see it as an important part of our improvement journey. We remain committed to investing in our workforce and systems and to working closely with tenants as we continue to strengthen our housing services."

The council will send all its tenants an overview of the RSH's findings in its tenant newsletter. Visit <https://tinyurl.com/3tyw2694> to read the full findings.

Fitness fanatics show their fundraising grit

ENERGETIC fundraisers at a Rugby gym have flexed their financial muscles for a life-saving charity.

Gym-goers raised £600 for the OurJay Foundation during a charity day at Fitness Worx Rugby.

The event featured a 'Hyrox' competition – a fitness challenge alternating between running and functional exercises – giving athletes the opportunity to test their endurance, strength and determination throughout the day.

A deadlift competition also brought out some impressive strength performances from competitors, with Declan Challoner and

Sophie Henry crowned the winners.

Representatives from Better Bodies were also present, helping support the day and connect with members of the fitness community.

A bake sale and raffle helped to top-up the fundraising total.

Gym manager Beth said: "The turnout, the atmosphere and the generosity shown by members and the local community were incredible."

"Events like this show what the Fitness Worx community is all about – people coming together to sup-

port each other and raise money for a fantastic cause. We're so proud to have hosted it at Rugby."

The OurJay Foundation was set up by Rugby woman Naomi Rees-Issitt following the tragic death of her 18-year-old son Jamie Rees from a cardiac arrest in the early hours of New Year's Day 2022.

The charity has so far installed more than 330 defibrillators across Warwickshire and beyond while raising awareness of their importance and providing training in life-saving skills.

Visit www.ourjay.org.uk for more information on the charity.



Gym-goers raised £600 for the OurJay Foundation during a charity day at Fitness Worx Rugby. s

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US academic joins lobby against plans for new town development

AN EMINENT American academic has added her voice to the growing opposition against plans to build a new town of up to 10,000 houses in south Warwickshire.

Professor Katherine Scheil - author of *Imagining Shakespeare's Wife: The Afterlife of Anne Hathaway*, and associate dean at the University of Minnesota - has condemned the proposed development between Bearley, Wilmcote and Pathlow as a threat to a landscape of global cultural significance.

The proposed development - part of the Stratford District Council's South Warwickshire Local Plan - would span some 329 hectares of green belt land - the size of some 460 football pitches - and include homes for some 16,000 potential residents. It would also require a new secondary school and up to four new primary schools as all nearby schools are at capacity.

After learning of the proposals from Wilmcote resident, Professor Ewan Fernie of the Shakespeare Institute, Professor Scheil wrote a letter in support of the Bearley Wilmcote Action Group.

Her words, say BWAG, are a reminder of what is at stake is not just housing numbers but

by **Philippa Miggins**
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the preservation of a landscape that continues to inspire people from around the world.

Professor Scheil leads annual study tours bringing American students to Stratford, and noted the impact on students of the walk from Stratford through Shotton and into the countryside around Wilmcote - countryside that remains largely unchanged from the world Shakespeare himself knew.

Professor Scheil warned that building on the scale proposed would permanently sever the existing connection between landscape and literature.

She even likened the plans to PT Barnum's 1847 attempt to dismantle Shakespeare's Birthplace and transport it to America as a commercial attraction - a scheme rejected at the time as cultural vandalism.

Particularly concerning, she noted, was the potential impact on the setting of Mary Arden's Farm in Wilmcote - a site of historical and symbolic importance. Increased traffic, urban sprawl, flood risk, and paved pathways she argued would erode the integrity of the landscape that allows visitors to imagine the lives of the women

who shaped Shakespeare's early world.

A BWAG spokesperson added it urged local councillors and planning authorities to reflect carefully before endorsing proposals that would irreversibly damage the countryside that inspired the world's most famous writer.

SDC has previously stated not all the proposed locations within the plan would ultimately be needed to meet the area's needs and the councils would be undertaking further analysis to conclude which locations should form part of south Warwickshire's growth strategy.

Stratford MP Manuela Perteghella has also spoken of her opposition. She attended a recent Wilmcote Parish Council meeting to outline her concerns, chiefly a disproportionate pressure on Wilmcote railway station.

She explained the village should not be treated as a major urban transport hub simply because it has a railway station. She highlighted several significant local constraints, including the single-track railway line, limited station facilities, absence of car parking, lack of step-free disabled access and limited funding for upgrades.



Residents gather at Mary Arden's House to protest against the proposed new town. Picture by Marcus Miggins 3525002MMR



Professor Katherine Scheil says the new town would destroy the south Warwickshire countryside that inspired Shakespeare.

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Sandra Smyth is presented with a bouquet of flowers, a box of chocolates, and a meal voucher by Cockshut Hill Principal Jody Clarke and students.

A BELOVED cook at a Coventry secondary school has hung up her apron after 36 years of serving up meals to students.

Sandra Smyth has retired from her role in the restaurant at Cockshut Hill School, having joined in September 1989 when Black Box and Jason Donovan were riding high in the charts.

To mark her retirement, the school presented Sandra with a bouquet of flowers, a box of chocolates, and a meal voucher so she could enjoy a well-deserved meal out.

Reflecting on her long tenure, Sandra said: "I have loved every moment of my time at Cockshut Hill.

"It has been a joy to serve meals to generations of children and watch them grow over the decades. Being part of their daily lives has meant so much to me, and I will always

treasure those memories."

A school spokesperson said Sandra had been a 'warm and familiar presence' during her time there.

They added: "Over more than three decades, Sandra has prepared and served meals to generations of learners, watching them grow from young children into adults.

"Her consistent kindness and reliability have made her an integral and comforting part of daily school life for countless children."

Principal Jody Clarke wished Sandra a 'long, happy, and fulfilling retirement'.

He added: "Sandra's extraordinary dedication and warmth have touched the lives of so many learners and staff over the past 36 years.

"She has been a true constant in our school community, and we are immensely grateful for everything she has given us."

All join in for a day of fun and games



Pupils from Cardinal Newman Catholic School in Coventry, Arnold Lodge School in Leamington, and Avon Park school in Rugby teamed up with University of Warwick students and staff for the 96th PowerHouseGames.

LIVELY students from schools in Coventry, Rugby and Leamington took part in a fun day of sports built around one simple motto: nobody left on the bench.

Pupils from Cardinal Newman Catholic School in Coventry, Arnold Lodge School in Leamington, and Avon Park school in Rugby teamed up with University of Warwick students and staff for the 96th PowerHouseGames.

The day featured a variety of inclusive sports including boccia, curling, seated volleyball, goalball, walking football, and kwik cricket, which made its debut this year.

It concluded with a huge seated netball game, which started with one ball and ended with three flying across the court – capturing the fun and collaborative spirit of the day.

The event was supported by

University staff, student volunteers, and the team from Warwick Sport. Warwick Sport Scholars were also on hand to present medals and certificates to every participant, celebrating their commitment and teamwork.

Jade Woodward, Active Programme Manager at Warwick Sport, said: "We believe physical activity should be accessible to everyone. The PowerHouseGames shows how simple adaptations can make sport fully inclusive without losing any of the excitement.

"Seeing students support one another, build confidence and try new activities is exactly why we are proud to deliver this event."

John Willis, Founder and Chief Ambassador of PowerHouseGames, said the event showed what is possible when schools, universities and communities put inclusion first.

He added: "To see participants

fully engaged, adapting, communicating and celebrating each other's success is exactly what the Games were created to achieve."

Andrew Todd, Director of Regional Strategy and Partnerships at the University of Warwick, said it was fantastic to see how sport can bring together teams of pupils from different schools and backgrounds.

He added: "This is now the fourth time the University has hosted the PowerHouseGames and it continues to grow and develop with new sports such as boccia and cricket being added this year.

"We were really pleased to include staff and student volunteers who fully embraced the wonderful spirit of the games again."

A spokesperson said the university was looking forward to welcoming the Games back for a fifth time in 2027.

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Standout performance in Qatar wins silver for Sara and Tango

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

A PARA dressage rider from south Warwickshire has brought home a silver medal.

Sara Bates, who lives in Alcester, has returned from Doha after an emotional runner-up finish representing Great Britain at the Chi Al Shaqab competition in Qatar.

Sara described the opportunity to travel to Doha with her 17-year-old home-bred mare Tango as a "dream come true".

The duo delivered a standout performance in Freestyle, finishing second to current FEI world number one Grade IV rider Kate Shoemaker (USA). Riding to music from Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Sara and Tango earned a score of 68.792 per cent, securing the runner-up ribbon and a memorable podium finish.

She said: "I came out of the arena in tears. I knew it was a good test, but when it was confirmed that we'd finished second behind the world number one, it was just overwhelming. To stand on that podium representing Great Britain is something I'll never forget."

The three-day competition consisted of two straight tests – set floor plans judged movement by movement – followed by the freestyle, where riders design their own choreography to music.



Sara placed fourth on the opening day and fifth on day two before climbing the leaderboard to secure second in the freestyle standings.

Her performance marked a strong early-season statement and earned valuable world ranking points as she continues her international campaign.

Sara, who manages multiple sclerosis alongside elite sport, said the experience in Doha was exceptional both on and off the arena surface.

She continued: "We were looked after so well. The whole atmosphere was supportive and uplifting – exactly what para sport should be. Everyone congratulates each other and celebrates good performances. It's competitive, but it's also respectful."

Now back home, Sara is already planning ahead. The Doha result strengthens her position in the world rankings and enhances her prospects for future international selection. She is also keen to use her platform to promote awareness of hidden disabilities and encourage others not to give up on their ambitions.

Sara will continue her 2026 season in the UK while exploring further international opportunities with Tango.

Sara and Tango show off their silver medal.

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Seasons

The 'Spring' edition of **Seasons** will celebrate everything uplifting, inspiring and quintessentially local across the three counties of Warwickshire, Worcestershire and the West Midlands.

The beautifully glossy A5 magazine will once again be freely available in print, from a major supermarket near you - and, the 'Spring' edition of **Seasons** will also be available 247 on line and will be showcased across all of our local Observer and Standard Newspapers, websites and social media platforms for the next 12 months.

So you'll be able to enjoy the exclusive, evergreen, editions of **Seasons** by logging on to www.seasons-magazine.com where you can browse the 'Winter' edition of **Seasons** 247 and soon, you'll be able to enjoy the 'Spring' edition of **Seasons** too!

If you'd like your business to be featured in the next edition of **Seasons**, or if you'd like more details - just call **01527 588688** and speak to Kelly, Caroline, Roisin, Paul, Gareth or Sharon.

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Some natural allies

ECO-minded groups came together in Rugby to celebrate ongoing environmental work across the borough.

Nature in Focus Community Networking, hosted by Rugby Borough Council and Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, celebrated the community's dedication to environmental preservation and laid the foundations for future initiatives.

Some 55 representatives of ten community groups and organisations showcased their initiatives, raising awareness about their ongoing efforts and achievements.

A dedicated networking hour gave participants a chance to discuss themes identified in feedback from last year, including collaboration, strategies for engaging with young people, outreach opportunities and upcoming events.

Attendees also talked about creating a community network to keep sharing ideas and supporting each other's work.

Coun Alison Livesey, Rugby Borough Council's Portfolio Holder for Operations and Traded Services and Chair of the Climate Emergency Working Group, said: "It has been fantastic to facilitate an event for individuals and groups who are dedicated to environmental preservation and sustainability.

"We hope that the connections



made here will help generate innovative projects and partnerships in the future."

Her Liberal Democrat counterpart Coun Sam Edwards, Deputy Chair of the Climate Emergency Working Group, added: "Giving local groups the opportunity to meet and network is incredibly important.

"The session has demonstrated a strong interest in people coming together, sharing common interests and goals."

The event was organised in response to feedback from attendees of the previous Nature in Focus event last July.

Coun Alison Livesey.

Chance to take a tour of the town

LANDMARKS, legacy and literary heritage in Rugby will be showcased by a series of local tours in celebration of English Tourism Week.

Rugby Visitor Centre will be offering a series of tours to mark the occasion, running from March 13 to 22.

The first guided tour on Friday (March 13) will take place in Rugby town, showcasing the history of local public artworks and the artists behind them.

Throughout the week, a variety of heritage tours will unveil facts about the borough's history, taking in stops including the Webb Ellis Rugby Football Museum, the Webb Ellis Statue, The Queen's Gates at Rugby School, and the historic St Andrew's Church.

A new guided tour through Bilton village will include a visit to the 14th-century St Mark's Church, where volunteers will discuss its history and lead a walk through its gardens.

The final tour on March 21 highlights Rugby's literary heritage and explores the lives of famous writers.

All tours will be led by expert guides who bring the town's history



know.

"The town guides have expert knowledge and offer exciting, memorable tours suitable for all ages."

Her Liberal Democrat counterpart Coun Neil Sandison, Rugby Borough Council's group spokesperson for partnerships and wellbeing, added: "Take this opportunity to learn about Rugby's heritage with a range of free tours around the town."

"Tours are available outside of English Tourism Week during spring and summer, enabling residents and visitors to learn more about Rugby's rich history."

Outside of English Tourism Week, guided Rugby town tours will continue every Saturday from April to October 17, starting at 11am.

All events are free to attend. Places must be booked in advance at www.therugbytown.co.uk/town-guides or by calling the Visitor Centre on (01788) 533217.

to life through its landmarks and buildings.

Coun Maggie O'Rourke, Rugby Borough Council's Labour group spokesperson for partnerships and wellbeing, said: "English Tourism Week is the perfect opportunity to celebrate Rugby's heritage and learn facts you might not yet

A series of tours of Rugby will take place in celebration of English Tourism Week.

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Courageous young boxers win praise



TWO young boxers from a club in Rugby showed 'courage, determination, and heart' at a regional event.

Jack Telford, 12, and Sienna Davies, 14, who both train at the Bradby Club's Rugby Boxing Academy, did themselves proud at a show hosted by Northampton Amateur Boxing Club.

Both took part in skills bouts – non-competitive, supervised matches designed for novice boxers to gain experience without the pressure of winning or losing.

Each boxer completed three rounds of one minute and 30 seconds, with a one-minute rest between rounds.

A Bradby Club spokesperson said: "In skills bouts, there is no declared winner – both competitors have their hands raised at the end.

"However, what cannot be measured on a scorecard is courage, determination, and heart – qualities both Jack and Sienna demonstrated in abundance.

"Both young athletes showed composure, resilience and skill beyond their years. Fighting hard until the final bell, they displayed the commitment and work ethic developed through

consistent training at Rugby Boxing Academy."

The event was particularly significant for Sienna, who became the first female boxer to represent Rugby Boxing Academy in a ring setting.

The spokesperson added: "Sienna's achievement marks an important moment for the club and for girls' participation in boxing locally.

"We hope Sienna's courage and success will inspire more young girls across Rugby to step into the gym and take up the sport.

"Everyone at the Bradby Club and Rugby Boxing Academy is immensely proud of both Jack and Sienna – not only for their performances in the ring, but for the example they set to other young people accessing Bradby's programmes. They have shown that dedication, discipline and bravery open doors to new opportunities."

For more information about Rugby Boxing Academy or to find out how young people can get involved, contact the Bradby Club at office@bradby.org.uk or on 01788 544344.

Sienna Davies and Jack Telford showed 'dedication, discipline and bravery' at the event.

Move to use empty homes

EMPTY homes are a 'missed opportunity' – that is the message from Rugby Borough Council (RBC) during Empty Homes Week (March 9-15).

The council is highlighting the action it is taking to bring vacant homes back into use – and is urging residents to report empty properties in their neighbourhoods.

RBC is introducing new Council Tax premiums on April 1 for properties that have been empty and unfurnished for a year or more, aiming to encourage owners to bring empty homes back into use.

The council also has a range of powers to tackle empty properties including enforcement action where necessary – but says its first approach is to work with owners.

Coun Claire Edwards, RBC's spokesperson for communities and homes, regulation and safety, said: "Empty homes are a missed opportunity for our borough. At a time when many people are looking for housing, it is vital that properties do not stand unused for years.

"We are committed to working constructively with owners to help them bring homes back into use. However, where properties are left empty long term and cause problems for neighbours, we will not hesitate to use the powers available to us.

"Empty Property Week is a chance to shine a light on the issue and remind residents that they can play a part by reporting homes they believe are standing empty."

Her Liberal Democrat counterpart Coun Noreen New added: "Bringing empty properties back into use benefits everyone. It improves neighbourhoods, reduces the risk of vandalism and anti-social behaviour and increases the supply of homes."

Visit www.rugby.gov.uk/w/empty-properties for more information, or to report an empty property.



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Hazel Pilling (Chamber), Keely Hancox (Chamber), Sandra Godley OBE (Chamber president), Julie McGarrigle (Alsters Kelley), and Indu Seshadri (Skewb).

Women urged to get involved

WOMEN in Coventry and Warwickshire have been told that the 'world needs what they have to offer' at an event in the region to mark International Women's Day.

Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce held a special Women in Business lunch on Sunday at Warwickshire Walton Hall Hotel.

The event – attended by more than 70 people – heard from chamber president Sandra Godley OBE, Taiwo Owatemi MP, Alsters Kelley director Julie McGarrigle and Skewb co-founder Indu Seshadri.

Sandra Godley OBE said: "Perhaps the most meaningful part of International Women's Day is remembering that there is someone at the beginning of their journey. And to those people I say: your voice matters; your ideas matter; your leadership matters; and the world needs what only you can bring."

Indu Seshadri told the audience that more than 55 per cent

of Skewb's core team are women – rare for a company in the utilities sector.

She said: "When you give someone an opportunity, you give them momentum. When you support someone, you give them strength. And when you invest in someone, you give them a second chance. That's what inclusion looks like in practice."

Taiwo Owatemi MP added: "It is inspiring to stand in a room full of women who are transforming their communities every single day. Women in business don't just build companies, they build opportunities, networks, and futures."

Julie McGarrigle said: "International Women's Day is a celebration of the achievements and contributions of women everywhere. But it's also a reminder that equality is still not universal. And that is why we must continue to push for change, not just today, but every day."

DJ Gary hopes to scoop top award

AN 'HONOURED' volunteer presenter on Rugby Hospital Radio has been nominated for a prize at this year's National Hospital Radio Awards.

Gary Skinner has been shortlisted in the Best Specialist Music Programme category for his show The Blues Experience.

The Hospital of St Cross DJ said it was an honour to be nominated, adding: "The judging panel contains industry professionals, so I'm humbled to have been included in the final ten."

Gary came up with the idea for his blues show – a recent addition to the station's line-up – to complement the Classic Rock Show which he presents every Thursday.

He said: "The idea was to complement my weekly show where I play popular rock classics. Blues is where all that music comes from."

"Hospital radio is mainly about familiar favourites, but we also like to have programmes where people can hear something a bit different. Without blues we wouldn't have rock and roll and everything that followed, and anyone who likes this kind of music will probably enjoy most of the tracks in the hour."

He said volunteering at the station was a way for him to give something back to the community.

He added: "We are as local as radio can get. Hospital radio is a welcome distraction from worry



Rugby Hospital Radio DJ Gary Skinner has been nominated for a prize.

and can help patients feel connected to the community.

"We have volunteers on the wards each week meeting patients and taking their requests for favourite tunes. Our stats for the last year show we play over 150 requests per month."

His colleagues are crossing their fingers for Gary to take home the prize at the awards ceremony, which takes place in Bolton on Saturday March 21.

Rugby Hospital Radio secretary Phil Smith said: "Gary has always had a natural talent as a broad-

caster and his passion for music really comes over on air.

"Over 150 hospital radio stations across the UK are members of the Hospital Broadcasting Association and eligible to enter these awards, so you can see what an achievement this is."

Rugby Hospital Radio operates as an independent charity, raising its own funds. It broadcasts from a studio within the St Cross building. Patients can hear the radio for free on their bedside media units.

Visit www.rugbyhospitalradio.co.uk for more information.

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Members of the Positive Youth Foundation Youth Club. s

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

A NEW partnership between the home of Coventry City and a charity aims to create opportunities for local young people.

Coventry Building Society Arena is teaming up with Positive Youth Foundation (PYF), which offers programmes to young people in Coventry and nearby.

The charity will become one of the venue's community partners, and staff from the venue will help upskill PYF staff and volunteers.

The venue will help the charity with staff development and food safety and will provide enrichment chances for young people.

To launch the partnership, the arena has donated furniture to refresh the space at Hillfields Young Peoples Centre.

Staff at the arena have also raised more than £1,350 to support the kitchen at the centre.

The partnership will initially focus on developing and training staff at PYF to operate the kitchen by offering advice about food safety, cleaning, and assisting the charity with any essential paperwork.

Coventry Building Society Arena's experts will also help the charity design a new kitchen and plan to deliver cooking lessons for young people, supported by PYF.

PYF is the venue's third community partner, joining Coventry &

Warwickshire Children's Charity. Mark O'Shea, catering and experience director at Coventry Building Society Arena, said: "We are committed to supporting all areas of our community and the work that PYF do is vital to support the positive futures of hundreds of young people across the city."

Expertise

"Our team has a huge amount of expertise in food safety, catering and operational standards and sharing that knowledge with PYF staff and volunteers will help strengthen the invaluable services they provide."

"This is all about creating opportunities and working with PYF to make a lasting impact and

real difference for young people in Coventry."

Krishan Singh, director of the Positive Youth Foundation, said: "PYF is excited to partner with Coventry Building Society Arena to improve outcomes for local young people."

"Already we have seen great benefit in working together and look forward to the next phases, where we will increase the skills of our staff, volunteers and young people, in particular in important areas such as food preparation and event management. We would like to thank Mark and the team for their commitment towards our work with young people from across the area."

Visit www.positiveyouthfoundation.org for more information on the PYF.

Council up for awards treble

COVENTRY City Council (CCC) has been shortlisted for three national awards recognising the impact of technology in helping people get virtual care at home.

The WM5G's Adult Social Care (ASC) Partnership, of which CCC is a partner, is shortlisted for the innovation and data-driven impact award at the International Technology Enablement Care (ITEC) Awards 2026.

The council is shortlisted for the *Local Government Chronicle* awards, in the public-private partnership category, and the *Municipal Journal* award for innovation in children's and adults' services.

Transformation

Councillor David Toulson, CCC deputy cabinet member for adult services, said: "Since November 2024, in Coventry, we have witnessed an incredible transformation, with 280 people benefiting from 1,100 technology-enabled care devices. Also, 38 individuals are using virtual care to support them in remaining independent and living in their own homes."

"We continue to be committed to use technology-enabled care to support people to live the lives they want, where they want and in the ways they want. Our success is testament to the hard work and innovation of occupational therapists, social workers and digital navigators in Coventry. This is a significant milestone and it's a testament to the dedication and innovation of our team."

Coun Toulson said he was proud to offer personalized digital assessments to residents with adult care needs, which help them identify technology for their needs – including activity sensors, wearables and smart homeware.

The ITEC awards are set to take place on Monday. The other awards will be held later this year.



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Training sparks staff delight

Staff at Croxford Electrical say the training is going to help them individually while pushing the business forward. s

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

PLUGGED-in staff at a Rugby electrical business are transforming thanks to support from a Warwickshire skills development scheme.

Five of the 13 staff at Croxford Electrical Contractors developed their skills and training using funding from the Skills Escalator Fund programme.

The employees, aged 22 to 72, took on new skills covering electrical inspection and testing, electric vehicle (EV) charging, sales and finance.

The Skills Escalator Fund, financed by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund

and delivered by Warwickshire County Council (WCC), supported the five staff with a £3,750 grant.

WCC's apprenticeship levy transfer also handed the Hillmorton Road business £21,492, to help it recruit an apprentice who will undertake an electrical installation apprenticeship.

Croxford Electrical operations manager Lorna Stanley said the support, accessed through Warwickshire skills hub and the Coventry and Warwickshire growth hub, has been of immense value to the business.

She said: "We only have 13 people working here, so for six of us to benefit is brilliant."

"Employees have benefited in such different ways. One member

of staff in finance has been with us for quite a long time and this has given her a great push to get back into learning. She has done one module, thanks to the funding, and will now do two more, so will get the qualification she started out towards 12 years ago.

Tytytyt

"Another member of staff, who is 72, had some EV charger training. He really engaged with it which just shows you are never too old to learn new skills."

"The younger lads did the electrical training and the great benefit there, is in retention. For a small business like us to be able to tell them they will get this training

meant they didn't have to look elsewhere, so we have been able to keep them."

"I knew we had a skills gap with sales and marketing so I have done some training there as I come from a HR [human resources] background, so this is the first time I have had broader responsibilities."

"Such a broad mix of training is really going to help us individually but also help push the business forward. We are very grateful and the process was very straightforward. I have done lots of these kinds of things in the past and they can be quite time-consuming, but this was very clear and easy, with good advice available."

The apprentice is also making a big contribution.

"He is a young man we knew about and who we felt was ready for full-time work but just needed some more direction," said Lorna. He is doing really well, enjoying college and we are very happy with him."

WCC economy spokesperson, councillor Rob Howard, said: "I'm delighted to see the Skills Escalator Fund and levy transfer programme supporting Croxford Electrical by enabling training and development opportunities."

"That this training will enable the business to retain talent so they can grow together is the perfect example of the value of the Warwickshire skills hub's varied support offering."

Visit <https://skillshub.warwickshire.gov.uk> for more information.



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Safety hints to protect loved ones as accidental poisoning cases on the rise

Accidental poisoning is fast becoming a hidden home safety crisis, according to RoSPA. Image by Jan, from Pixabay. s

by Sarah Mason
sarah.mason@bullivantmedia.com

ACCIDENTAL poisoning is fast becoming a hidden home-safety crisis, The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) has warned.

New figures show 5,770 people died from accidental poisoning in 2024, marking a 63 per cent rise over 10 years.

The data reveal older adults are bearing the brunt. Some 2,371 lives were lost among people aged 65 and over, making them more than twice as likely to die from accidental poisoning as the general population.

RoSPA has published new guidance highlighting how people living

with dementia are among those at particular risk.

The surge of cases saw English hospitals record 17,252 poisoning-related admissions last year – almost 5,000 of them involving older adults who were 55 per cent more likely to require urgent care.

RoSPA's guidelines help households protect vulnerable loved ones and include simple steps to help prevent dangerous chemicals being mistaken for everyday items.

Many domestic products can be opened and swallowed in moments, especially when confusion, memory loss or impaired visual recognition makes hazardous substances look harmless.

Rebecca Guy, senior policy manager at RoSPA, said: "Families with vulnerable relatives can often deal with genuinely frightening moments.

"Turning away for just a few seconds, and realising someone has swallowed a cleaning product is sadly a reality that some of the public have experienced.

"These aren't freak accidents. They are predictable, preventable events and our new guidance is designed to help people act fast to make their homes safer."

Tips

To reduce the risk of accidental poisoning, RoSPA suggests locking away cleaning and laundry products in high cupboards or secured storage and keeping medicines tightly controlled – use organisers, track doses and store them out of sight.

Other tips include ensuring harmful products stay in their original containers and removing 'confusion triggers', for example, keep

lookalike bottles – such as bright drinks and cleaning fluids – apart and supervise more closely when unfamiliar items, visitors or new products are around.

People can conduct weekly 'hazard sweeps' of kitchens, bathrooms and utility areas.

Paul Edwards, chief nursing officer at Dementia UK, said: "Laundry and cleaning products are often easily accessible in our homes, and many have brightly coloured packaging which can cause confusion for people with dementia, who may mistake them for other, edible items.

"One of the challenges of supporting someone with dementia is balancing the risk between an individuals' autonomy and their safety.

"It is impossible to eliminate risk completely but these guidelines offer simple steps people can take

to reduce the chance of accidents happening and provide a helpful checklist for both professional care environments and in the home."

Alzheimer's Society senior knowledge officer Simon Wheeler said: "Staying safe is important for people with dementia who want to keep living at home for as long as possible, as well as for those who support them.

"As a person's dementia progresses, they might have trouble telling the difference between something that's safe to eat and something that isn't.

"If you want to reduce the risk of accidents, make sure that you store your cleaning products, like laundry detergents, safely in a cupboard and out of sight. Don't leave them out on a worktop or near any food or drinks, especially if they might be mistaken for sweets or drinks."

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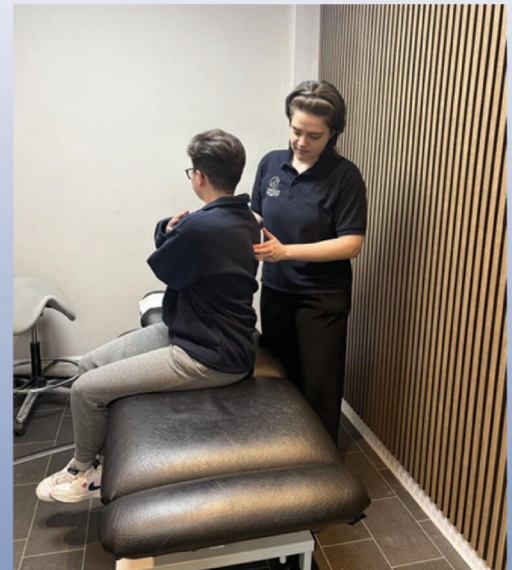
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Stratford-upon-Avon College will be welcoming visitors to its next open event on Wednesday 18th March, 5:00-7:30pm.

School leaver courses will be of interest to those seeking a practical route towards either university or the workplace. Level 3 courses - which can be worth up to the equivalent of 3 A-Levels - allow students to progress to university directly on completion. Courses also provide students with the necessary skills, knowledge and practical experience to head directly into the world of work.

The event will give local people the opportunity to explore the College's newly redeveloped campus. Visitors can experience the College's brand-new TV & Radio Studios where Digital Media Production students will

be demonstrating use of the industry-standard equipment, explore the refurbished theatre spaces, discover the new library, gym, construction workshops and more. The College's freshly landscaped 'green heart' will also be on display.

College Principal, Dr Rebecca Gater, comments: "This is an exciting time to be joining Stratford-upon-Avon College with our £13 million investment project now complete. It's always a pleasure to welcome prospective students to our open events and we look forward to showing visitors our brand-new state-of-the-art facilities!"

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OPEN EVENT:
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Hope at a tough time

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

'HOPE boxes' are being introduced at hospitals in Warwickshire to support mothers separated from their babies at birth due to safeguarding issues.

Warwickshire county and Coventry city councils have secured funding from NHS Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care Board to introduce the boxes at University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire (UHCW) and at Warwick Hospital.

An initial, one-year rollout will aim to improve the experience

of mothers and babies during an emotionally challenging and often traumatic time.

HOPE stands for 'hold on, pain eases'. Each box is offered as a compassionate gift to mothers whose babies cannot remain in their care while court proceedings determine long-term parenting arrangements.

Items in the box may include photographs, a blanket, a comfort toy and a baby record and communication book. Those items help mothers preserve memories, strengthen their sense of maternal identity and maintain an important emotional bond with their baby, following separation.

The contents of a box can be used during time spent together

on the maternity ward before separation takes place, as well as during supervised family-time sessions.

The initiative is being delivered locally as part of the Giving HOPE Project, a national non-profit organisation.

Created

The boxes were created by mothers for mothers, with input from women who have lived through similar experiences.

Staff from children's services in Coventry and Warwickshire, UHCW and Warwick Hospital have completed specialist training delivered by the Giving HOPE Project. The training helps profes-

sionals understand the purpose of each item in the boxes and how to introduce them sensitively and meaningfully to mothers.

Warwickshire County Council leader, councillor George Finch, said: "When it is not possible for a baby to remain with their mother or family, it is essential separation is handled with compassion, dignity and humanity."

"The HOPE Box initiative acknowledges the lasting impact of this experience and ensures mothers are supported with care, understanding and connection at an incredibly difficult time."

"These boxes serve as a reminder their role as a mother continues, even in separation and that they are not alone."

Forum to shape SEND services

YOUNG people with special educational needs and disability (SEND), and their families, in Warwickshire, are being invited to join a forum to share their experiences.

IMPACT gives young people with SEND a space to share views, influence decisions and help shape more accessible and supportive services.

Taking place on Monday, from 7pm until 8pm and via Microsoft Teams, the informal session will offer attendees the chance to discover what IMPACT does, how it represents people aged 13 to 25 and the many ways young people can get involved in shaping SEND services across the county.

The event will be led by Warwickshire's voice, influence and change team, alongside young people who are already part of IMPACT.

They will share their experiences, explain how the forum works and be available to answer questions from families and other young people interested in joining.

Warwickshire County Council education spokesperson councillor Wayne Briggs said: "Ensuring that young people with SEND have meaningful opportunities to share their experiences and shape the support they receive is incredibly important. IMPACT provides a powerful platform for young people to have their voices heard and to influence real change across Warwickshire. I would encourage any young person or family wanting to learn more, to join this event and see how they can get involved."

To reserve a free place, attendees are asked to complete a short online booking form. Once registered, a confirmation email will be sent with a Teams link to join the session.

Visit www.warwickshire.gov.uk/send getinvolved for more details.

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Playing host to some top class art

WORKS by Dutch and Flemish Old Masters, pioneering women artists, and contemporary creatives all featuring in a wide-ranging exhibition programme at Compton Verney this year.

From rarely seen drawings by Bruegel and Rembrandt, to the visionary textile works of Elizabeth Allen and a major new exhibition on Enid Marx, the 2026 season at the country house art gallery near Wellesbourne offers audiences a journey through both familiar, and overlooked, stories in art.

Visit www.comptonverney.org.uk for full details.

Modern Masterpieces: Paintings from the Barber Institute of Fine Arts (until September 6) - features six paintings by towering figures of modern art, including Vincent van Gogh, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Edouard Vuillard and Pierre Bonnard, with subjects that range from the domestic activities of a family eating dinner together, to the tangle, back-aching toil of digging heavy soil.

Bruegel to Rembrandt: Drawing Life, Sketching Wonder (March 14 to June 28) - an exhibition of Dutch and Flemish masterpiece drawings from the collection of Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium - most of which have never been seen in the UK before.

The exhibition consists of drawings from across the 16th and 17th centuries by 50 artists including world-renowned masters such as Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, Jacob Jordaens, Hendrick Avercamp, Jacob van Ruisdael and Peter Paul



British American artist Nancy explores the deep emotional and environmental significance of trees in exhibition The Lost Trees. Picture by Brynley Davies

From a sample of lace taken from her mother's wedding dress, a block-printed pattern and dress made for Lambert, to plush Tube seat upholstery, the exhibition will be the first to present Marx's life as a cultural history of the period through her fabrics.

Raqib Shaw (September 19 to February 2027) - Shaw's paintings are defined by an innovative and distinctive technique of drawing enamel with porcupine quills, through which he constructs intricately layered compositions that move between meditative calm and dynamic intensity. The exhibition will include many works which have not been exhibited in this country before.

Nancy Cadogan: The Lost Trees (October 2 to November 22) - The British American artist explores the deep emotional and environmental significance of trees as living landmarks in our lives. From iconic oaks and pears to unnamed local trees, each painting serves as a memorial to those lost, and a celebration of the role trees play in shaping memory, identity, and place.

Yulia Mahr: Residuals (Autumn 2026) - An installation tied inextricably to Compton Verney, and specifically the former cemetery which once served as a burial ground. This new work, part of Mahr's ongoing creative partnership with Compton Verney, responds to the site and the unseen within the landscape bringing the past into the present. The piece is made up of a quiet assembly of life-sized and anonymous figures.

Rubens.

The drawings will be complemented by important loans of paintings, prints and drawings from other UK collections including the National Gallery, the Royal Collection Trust, the Ashmolean, Dulwich Picture Gallery and Sir John Soane's Museum.

Troublemakers and Prophets: Elizabeth Allen and other visionary artists (March 28 to August 30) - the first contemporary exhibition of work by the late textile artist. The show marks the 60th anniversary of her debut exhibition at the age of 82, at the Crane Kalman Gallery.

Following eviction from her cot-

tage, Allen, who was also known as Queen, spent her later life living in poverty in a hut located near Biggin Hill, Kent, largely isolated from the rest of the world. Queen's work responds to stories she heard on the radio, as well as the Bible and Apocryphal books, from which she derived divine calculations and images.

This exhibition puts 12 of Queen's works in conversation with over 15 other modern and contemporary artists, including the first showing of a new film commission by Grace Ndiritu, and works by artists such as Helen Chadwick, Penny Slinger and Suzanne Treister stitching-together

diverse themes and subjects.

Enid Marx (July 18 to January 3, 2027) - this major exhibition will be the first ever to highlight the importance of Marx as a textile designer and showcase the influence of her community on the development of modern British design in the 20th century.

Marx is arguably best known as the designer of woven London Underground (Tube) seat moquette fabric and as an illustrator of children's books. However, she was also an extensive producer of hand block-printed textiles and later designs for fabrics woven for the public.

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Growth worries for businesses with new Middle East conflict

BUSINESSES in Coventry and Warwickshire are bracing themselves for rising costs and slower growth due to the conflict in the Middle East.

The latest British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) economic forecast suggests subdued growth in 2026, higher inflation due to the Middle East crisis, and rising unemployment as the labour market softens.

It also forecasts that interest rates will remain the same rather than falling, as previously forecast.

The BCC forecast is the first economic assessment by a business organisation since last week's Spring Statement and renewed conflict in the Middle East.

While the current geopolitical situation remains highly uncertain, and could change the economic outlook considerably, the key points in the forecast are that GDP in 2026 has been revised down to 1 per cent (from 1.2 per cent in the previous forecast), with growth forecast of 1.3 per cent in 2027, and 1.1 per cent in 2028.

Global uncertainty is expected to push UK inflation higher than expected, reaching 2.7 per cent, before easing to 1.9 per cent in 2027.

Unemployment is expected to increase to 5.5 per cent in 2026

(up from 5.1 per cent in the previous forecast), and stay at that rate through 2027, due to persistent high labour costs and hiring uncertainty.

The interest rate is expected to remain at 3.75 per cent this year, before cuts to 3.25 per cent by the end of 2027.

Exports are projected to grow by just 0.7 per cent in 2026 (down from 1.8 per cent in the last forecast), as global uncertainty hits UK trade.

Corin Crane, chief executive of Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce, said: "This is something of a downbeat reality check - with higher inflation and unemployment forecast, slower growth and a fall in exports and investments.

"It shows how quickly things can shift in the space of a week during such global uncertainty. The Chancellor presented a Spring Statement based on stability and, over the weekend, we've seen oil prices surging due to the conflict in the Middle East.

"Now, more than ever, businesses need to make sure they are working with organisations such as the Chamber to help them navigate through such unpredictable times."

The Chamber's latest Quarterly Economic Survey (QES) has just closed but its results will reveal how firms in the region were feel-



The latest British Chambers of Commerce economic forecast suggests subdued growth in 2026, higher inflation due to the Middle East crisis.

ing at the start of 2026. The QES is sponsored by Prime Accountants Group and director Steve Harcourt said the conflict would impact the regional economy.

He said: "The latest economic forecasts for 2026-27 are not great reading. In the budget last November the growth forecast for the UK was very low, which certainly gave cause for concern at the time.

"Therefore, any change in circumstance globally or for the local economy could lead to the position we now find ourselves in with the conflict in Iran leading to downgraded growth projection, leaving the economy in 2026 relatively stagnant.

"It now looks as though cost pressure from the rising price of fuel and energy will affect all businesses, leading to decisions to be

made on price increases, wages growth and investment plans.

"From what we are hearing, the government is constantly reviewing the situation in the Middle East and may need to step in with financial assistance if fuel and energy costs continue to rise due to supply side economics, so businesses may have to watch this space, with global events having more and more of an impact on business in the region."



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Your conversation could save a life

by Sarah Mason
sarah.mason@bullivantmedia.com

RAIL passengers are being urged to say hello and make small talk with fellow travellers – as figures reveal the number of life-saving interactions across the West Midlands has risen.

In 2024/25 115 lifesaving interactions were recorded by Samaritans, a significant increase on the 88 recorded four years earlier.

The number comes as new data reveals 52 per cent of Brits think small talk is a thing of the past, despite more than half of people saying they would appreciate the kind words of a stranger if they were visibly upset.

The data has been released as Samaritans, Network Rail and the British Transport Police, re-launched their partnership campaign Small Talk Saves Lives by unveiling Ticket to Talk, at London Waterloo station. The dramatic display of 2,284 tickets represented the small, everyday phrases used around the rail network in the last year to save a life.

The Small Talk Saves Lives campaign, which Samaritans has run in partnership with Network Rail and the British Transport Police since 2017, encourages the public to make small talk with someone they think could be in distress, as words could be a life-saving kit.

Dave Brown, Samaritans' head of rail, said: "We know people are often worried about saying the wrong thing to someone who is visibly upset but it's always better to say something than nothing at all.

"A brief chat, about the weather or asking someone where they can grab a coffee, can be all it takes to interrupt those negative thoughts.

"Your words are a life-saving kit."

A survey commissioned by Samaritans found more than three-quarters of Brits admitted to having avoided small talk in the past, despite 59 per cent of respondents stating they would appreciate kind words from a stranger if they were visibly upset.

Two-thirds of them said they would be more inclined to make small talk with a stranger if they knew it made a positive impact.

Louise McNally, Network Rail's principal suicide and trespass prevention specialist, said: "Ticket to Talk shines a light on the power of everyday conversation and its ability to make a huge impact on a stranger.

"Millions of people pass through the rail network each day and every single one of them could ask a simple question or say a friendly comment that could make all the difference.

"By encouraging colleagues and passengers to pause and start a conver-

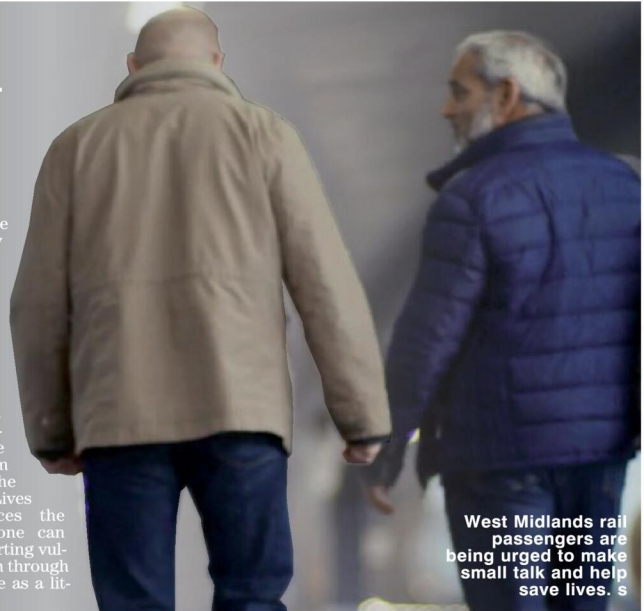
sation with someone that looks like they might need help, we're encouraging people to make looking out for one another second nature and reminding them that small talk really can save lives."

British Transport Police lead for protecting vulnerable people, Supt Sam Painter, said: "The Small Talk Saves Lives campaign reinforces the message that anyone can play a role in supporting vulnerable people, even through something as simple as a little small talk.

"We work closely with Samaritans and Network Rail to ensure those experiencing a mental health crisis receive timely and appropriate help.

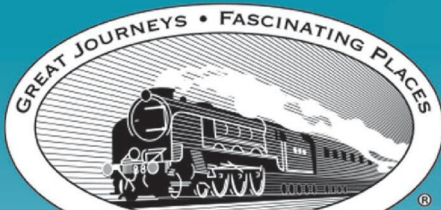
"While small talk could help someone feel less alone, we also encourage anyone who sees a person they believe is in distress on the railway network to report it to us by texting 61016, or calling 999 in an emergency."

Visit samaritans.org/smalltalk saveslives for more on the campaign.



West Midlands rail passengers are being urged to make small talk and help save lives. s

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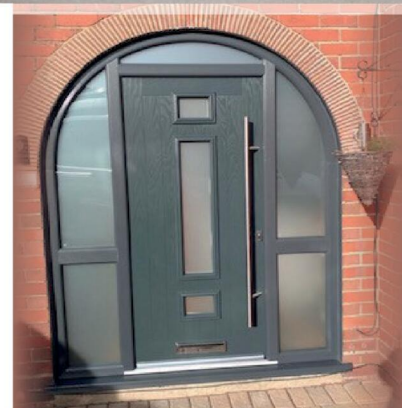
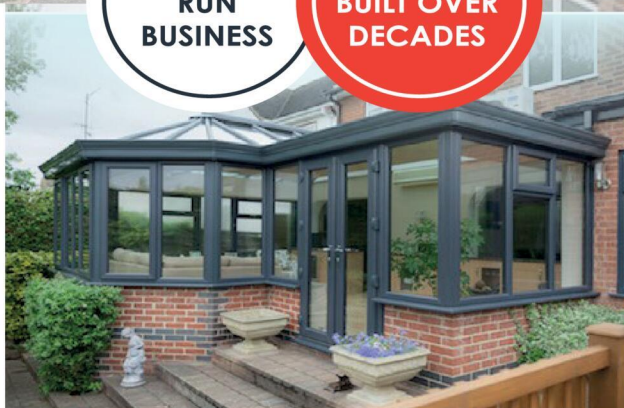


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Help is at hand for children affected who are concerned about a parent or carer's drug or alcohol use.

Help is at hand for children whose parents abuse substances

by Sarah Mason
sarah.mason@bullivantmedia.com

A CHILDREN'S charity says it has been contacted an average 25 times per day by people concerned about a parent or carer's drug or alcohol use.

The NSPCC revealed that, between April 2024 and last March, 9,192 calls were made to the helpline in the UK.

It added, in the same period last year, 73,250 children in England subject to a child in need assessment were identified as having a parent who misused alcohol.

That included 7,330 children in the West Midlands.

The National Association for

Children of Alcoholics (Nacoa), says one in five children is affected by a parent's drinking.

The NSPCC released its Helpline data to support Nacoa UK's children of alcoholics week, last week. Nacoa wants children affected by a parent or carer's substance misuse to know there is help available.

Support is also available for parents concerned about the impact of their own or another adult's substance misuse on a child.

Ashley, 15, opened up to her NSPCC practitioner about her mum's drinking and the impact it had on her and her family.

She said: "My mum used to drink every day, as far back as I can remember. Her drinking meant that I had to be the mum to my siblings and I didn't really have a life. I was responsible for making sure my sib-

lings all got fed, were dressed and bathed and in school. I cooked and cleaned around the house too.

"I didn't feel like I was a child, I felt like I was growing up too quickly. I didn't speak to anyone about what was going on at home because I didn't realise it was wrong. That was just my life and I thought it was normal."

Tytytyt

Among the adults who have contacted the NSPCC Helpline, one neighbour said: "I'm calling as I'm worried about three young children in our building.

"Both of the parents are heavy drinkers; they seem to be drunk all the time, even during the day; one time I witnessed the mother completely out of it, lying in the

front garden, whilst her kids were wandering around the street in their underwear.

"I'm really worried about the environment these kids are living in."

Parental substance misuse can have a devastating impact on children at different stages in their development.

During pregnancy, drinking and drug use can put babies at risk of birth defects, premature birth, being born underweight and of suffering withdrawal symptoms.

In later years, children are at risk of behavioural or emotional problems; poor attendance at school or low grades; physical and emotional abuse or neglect; and being exposed to criminal activity.

Kam Thandi, NSPCC Helpline director, said: "Most parents and carers who drink alcohol do so in

moderation, which doesn't present an increased risk of harm to their children.

"However, when they take it in large quantities over a long period of time, it can lead to abuse and neglect, with serious consequences for their children's future.

"We want children to know they are not alone and there is help and support available to them. Our Childline service is here to listen to any child and our NSPCC Helpline is there to provide advice and support to adults who are concerned about parental substance misuse."

Childline is on hand 24 hours a day and is free and confidential. The number is 0800 11 11.

Nacoa UK is available for everyone affected by a parent's drinking, on 0800 358 3456, or at helpline@nacoa.org.uk.

WHAT'S ON AT ARTRIX

LIVE MUSIC:

- 19TH MARCH: TINA TURNER EXPERIENCE
- 20TH MARCH: FLEETWOOD UNCHAINED
- 21ST MARCH: FEARLESSLY TAYLOR (TAYLOR SWIFT TRIBUTE)
- 28TH MARCH: THE ARMED MAN - BARNY GREEN CHORAL
- 2ND APRIL: SMOOTH CRIMINAL - MICHAEL JACKSON EXPERIENCE
- 4TH APRIL: ELECTRIK LIVE ORCHESTRA
- 9TH APRIL: K-POP SUPERSTARS
- 10TH APRIL: THE RADIOHEAD PROJECT
- 11TH APRIL: THE ANNIE LENNOX & EURYTHMICS SHOW
- 12TH APRIL: SHANIA TWAIN - BY SHANIA LIVE
- 17TH APRIL: ONE NIGHT OF ADELE - NAOMI JOHNSON
- 2ND MAY: GIVE ME THE NIGHT (GEORGE BENSON TRIBUTE)
- 3RD MAY: THE SABRINA CARPENTER TRIBUTE
- 4TH MAY: CASSIDY JOHNSON SINGS CAROLE KING
- 8TH MAY: AND FINALLY PHIL COLLINS
- 9TH MAY: OASISH
- 14TH MAY: ELTON'S SONG - BEYOND THE YELLOW BRICK ROAD
- 15TH MAY: THIS IS MERSEYBEAT
- 16TH MAY: CLASSIC ROCK REVIVAL
- 17TH MAY: CELEBRATING CELINE - A NEW DAY
- 22ND MAY: FRANKIE - THE CONCERT (FT THE FALSETTOS)
- 29TH MAY: RHINESTONE COWBOY: THE GLEN CAMBELL STORY
- 30TH MAY: BURN DEEP PURPLE TRIBUTE
- 5TH JUNE: THE CARPENTERS EXPERIENCE
- 6TH JUNE: EVERLY BROTHERS BY CANDLELIGHT
- 19TH JUNE: BEEGEES YOU SHOULD BE DANCING
- 26TH JUNE: I'M EVERY WHITNEY
- 4TH JULY: SOUND & VISION (TRIBUTE TO BOWIE)
- 10TH JULY: BLONDISH (THE MUSIC OF BLONDE)
- 11TH JULY: G2 DEFINITIVE GENESIS
- 23RD JULY: ULTIMATE ELVIS EXPERIENCE
- 24TH JULY: DESPERADOS EAGLES
- 6TH AUGUST: 50 YEARS OF FENDER
- 4TH SEPTEMBER: LUKE COMBS EXPERIENCE

EVENT CINEMA:

- 31ST MARCH: ROYAL OPERA LIVE: SIEGFRIED
- 20TH APRIL: NATIONAL THEATRE LIVE: ALL MY SONS
- 21ST APRIL: ROYAL OPERA LIVE: THE MAGIC FLUTE
- 5TH MAY: ROYAL OPERA LIVE: EUGENE ONEGIN
- 28TH MAY: NT LIVE: LIVE PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD
- 25TH JUNE: NT LIVE: LES LIAISONS DANGEROUS
- 12-14TH MARCH: THE GREAT BRITISH BAKEOFF THE MUSICAL
- 22ND MARCH: DISNEY NEWSIES JR.
- 2ND APRIL: KRAPP'S LAST TAPE

BOX OFFICE: BUY ONLINE, IN PERSON OR CALL 01527 361 324 // ARTRIXBROMSGROVE.CO.UK
BOX OFFICE OPENING HOURS:
MON: (6-8PM), WED: 10AM-12PM, SAT: 10AM-12PM

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19TH MARCH 2026
A TRIBUTE TO TINA TURNER

ELTON'S SONG: ARTRIX
BEYOND THE YELLOW BRICK ROAD
14TH MAY 2026
DOORS 19:00 | STARTS 19:30
TICKETS £22.00-£35
ARTRIXBROMSGROVE.CO.UK/ELTONSSONG

ARTRIX
DAN-BUDD "IS"
ROBBIE WILLIAMS
THE KISS AND THE HERBIE HITCHCOCKS (THEY ARE AWAY)
WITH HIS LIVE BAND 'THE ELEVENTH HOUR'
SUNDAY 25TH OCTOBER 2026
DOORS STARTS 19:30 | FREE PARKING | DON'T BE LATE

SUDOKU

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

EASY

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

HARD

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

PATHFINDER

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

Crisp flavours

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

Solutions opposite

CROSSWORD

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

ACROSS

- Aura (10)
- Engine (5)
- Unfold (7)
- Addressed abruptly (8)
- Just (4)
- Tumult (6)
- Vaporise (6)
- Supporter (4)
- Effigy of Christ on the cross (8)
- Ingredient (7)
- Guide (5)
- Excessively fussy (10)

DOWN

- Loft (5)
- Crack shot (8)
- Abrupt (6)
- Own (4)
- Trusting (7)
- Spotless (10)
- Doubt (10)
- Follower (8)
- Ease (7)
- Fault-finder (6)
- Silliness (5)
- Thin (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.

- Lofty
- Cash register
- Factory
- Gentle
- Brain



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.

- 45678 gives a flower;
- 4371237 gives another flower;
- 82571489 gives a plant.

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

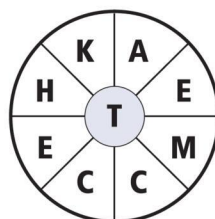
CODEWORD

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.

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

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.

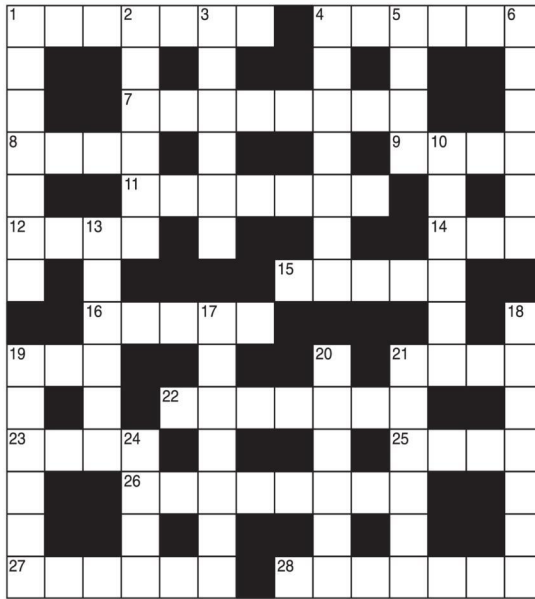


How you rate
 10 words: average 20 words: very good
 15 words: good 25 or more: excellent.

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- London underground station, on the Northern Line between Tufnell Park and Highgate (7)
- Monkey of the genus Papio, such as the hamadryas (6)
- Surname of the thriller-writer famous for *The Big Sleep*, *The Long Goodbye*, etc. (8)
- A sunken fence bounding a park or garden (2-2)
- Russian news agency (4)
- Any series or group of three related literary works (7)
- The longest river in Africa (4)
- 14 & 19 Dn. Dramatist and poet whose works include *The Alchemist*, and *Every Man In His Humour* (3,6)
- 5 & 3 Dn. Kingdom whose capital is Riyadh (5,6)
- Code in which each letter is represented by a combination of dashes and dots (5)
- See 21 Across
19. Famous novel by Joseph Conrad (4,3)
22. Harry ---, American escapologist and conjuror (7)
23. Very deep loch in the Highland region, south-west of Inverness (4)
25. Musical instrument of the woodwind family (4)
26. A flammable, waxy solid consisting of saturated hydrocarbons (8)
27. Surname of the natural philosopher who formulated the laws of motion and law of gravitation (6)
28. Region of low atmospheric pressure surrounded by rotating winds (7)



DOWN

- 1 & 18. Historical novel, by Hervey Allen, largely set in the Napoleonic era (7,7)
- Goddess regarded as presiding over witchcraft and magical rites (6)
- See 15 Across
- City of northern Italy at the foot of the Apennines on the Reno and Savena (7)
- See 21 Down
- Fridtjof ---, Norwegian explorer, scientist, and statesman (6)
- Animal with abnormally white skin and hair, and eyes with pink pupils (6)
- The feast of first fruits, on or near 1st August (6)
- Ornamental pouch worn in front of a kilt by Highlanders (7)
- See 1 Down
- See 14 Across
- River of the Republic of Ireland, rising in the Wicklow Mountains (6)
- 21 & 5. Composer and lyric-writer of *Oliver!* (6,4)
- Pointed rod thrust into meat for roasting over a fire (4)

SOLUTIONS

ACROSS: 1 Archway; 4 Baboon; 7 Chandler; 8 Ha-ha; 9 TASS; 11 Trilogy; 12 Nile; 14 Ben; 15 Saud; 16 Morse; 19 Jim; 21 Lord; 22 Houdini; 23 Ness; 25 Oboe; 26 Paraffin; 27 Newton; 28 Cyclone. DOWN: 1 Anthony; 2 Hecate; 3 Arabia; 4 Bologna; 5 Bart; 6 Nansen; 10 Albino; 13 Lamas; 17 Sporan; 18 Adverse; 19 Jonson; 20 Liffey; 21 Lionel; 24 Split.

General Knowledge Crossword

ACROSS: 1 Atmosphere; 7 Motor; 8 Develop; 10 Accosted; 11 Fair; 13 Uproar; 15 Distil; 17 Ally; 18 Cruffin; 21 Element; 22 Pilot; 23 Penicillin; Down: 1 Attic; 2 Marksman; 3 Sudden; 4 Have; 5 Reliant; 6 Immaculate; 9 Perplexity; 12 Disciple; 14 Relieve; 16 Critic; 19 Folly; 20 Lean.

Crossword

CHECKMATE: Cheese and Onion, Lamb and Mint, BBQ Beef, Prawns Cocktail, Flame-Grilled Steak, Marmite, Beef and Onion, Salt and Vinegar, Worcester Sauce, Paprika, Roast Chicken, Black Pepper, Smoky MONASTERY: Bacon, Sour Cream and Chive, Sweet Chilli, Pickled Onion, Branston Pickle, Ready Salted, Fanny Cheese.

Niner

Wordwheel Pathfinder: 24=K, 25=W, 26=O

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

Wind: Tail, Tall, Tilt, Mill, Mild, Mind,

Ladder Codeword

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

Easy Sudoku



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BREAKING NEWS
WHAT'S ON
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Spring at Avoncroft Museum March & April 2026



Miniature Train Rides
15 March 5 & 6 April

Mother's Day
Weekend

Discover about
Women's Trailblazers
#internationalwomensday



Easter At
Avoncroft

Vintage Fun Fair

Pre Book Mothers Day weekend
to include a Cream Tea & admission to
Avoncroft Museum
14 & 15 March

*Kids Go Free



Golden Egg Hunt & Easter Trail
28 & 29 March 1 to 6 8 to 12 April

Volunteer Open Day
22 March

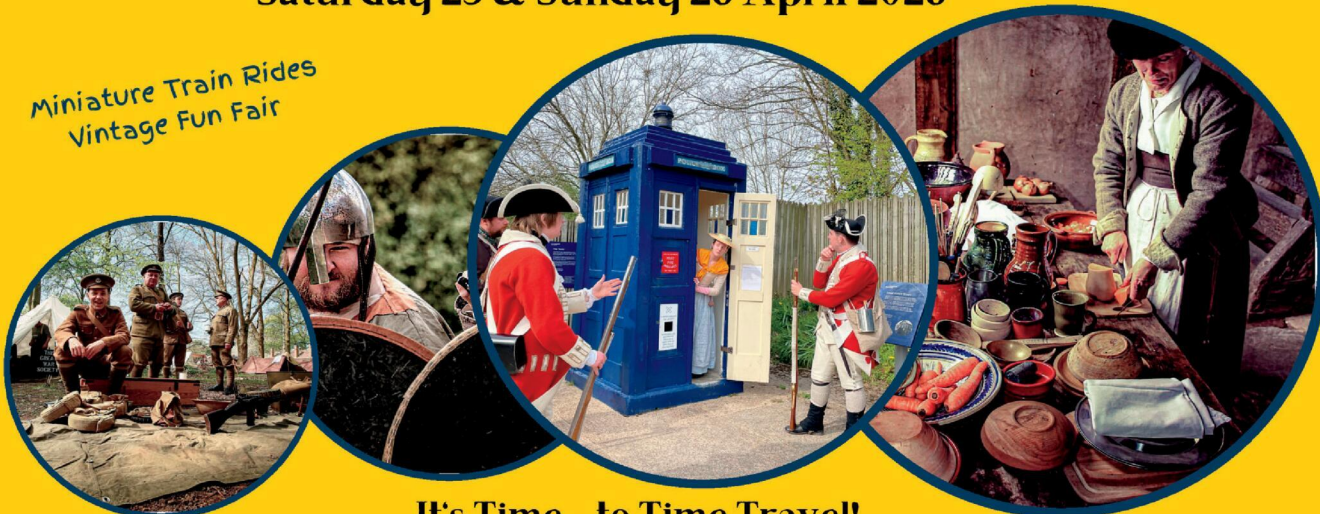


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PUBLIC NOTICES

PUBLIC NOTICES

Warwickshire County Council

ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984

Warwickshire County Council has made the following Temporary Traffic Orders:

MOUNT PLEASANT, BISHOPS ITCHINGTON

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic. Reason for Order: To safely enable works to install new water main. Order Commences: 16 March 2026 for up to 18 months. Anticipated Completion: 20 March 2026. Access & Diversion: No diversion available. Contractor: Chevron Traffic Management Ltd, Tel: 0330 008 0820.

C36 BYFIELD ROAD, PRIORS MARSTON

Order Effect: Road closed from Hardwick Road to County Boundary. Reason for Order: Carriageway patching works, closed 09.30hrs-15.30hrs. Order Commences: 16 March 2026 for up to 18 months. Anticipated Completion: 16 March 2026. Access & Diversion: Main Road, Hellidon Road, A361, Boddington Road, Byfield Road and vice versa. Vehicular access & egress will be maintained where possible and safe to do so for businesses and residents only. Contractor: Balfour Beatty, Tel: 03452 415302.

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

G210 OXFORD STREET, SOUTHAM

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic from Van Banbury Road/Pendick Street to Warwick Road. Reason for Order: Carriageway patching and associated works, 09.00hrs-15.00hrs. Order Commences: 30 March 2026 for up to 18 months. Anticipated Completion: 31 March 2026. Access & Diversion: Warwick Road, Leamington Road, Banbury Road and vice versa. Contractor: Balfour Beatty, Tel: 03452 415 302.

D0G LANE, NAPTON-ON-THE-HILL

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic. Reason for Order: To safely enable works to install boundary box. Order Commences: 2 April 2026 for up to 18 months. Anticipated Completion: 3 April 2026. Access & Diversion: Dog Lane, St Lawrence Close, Godsons Lane and vice versa. Contractor: Chevron Traffic Management Ltd, Tel: 0330 008 0820.

A425 SOUTHAM ROAD/UFTON HILL, UFTON

Order Effect: Roads closed between B4455 Fosse Way and Ufton Fields Roundabout. Reason for Order: Carriageway patching works, closed 08.00hrs-16.00hrs. Order Commences: 28 March 2026 for up to 18 months. Anticipated Completion: 28 March 2026. Access & Diversion: B4455 Fosse Way, A423, A425 and vice versa. Vehicular access & egress will be maintained where possible and safe to do so for businesses and residents only. Contractor: Balfour Beatty, Tel: 03452 415302.

STOCKTON ROAD, STOCKTON

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic. Reason for Order: To safely enable tree trimming works. Order Commences: 30 March 2026 for up to 18 months. Anticipated Completion: 30 March 2026. Access & Diversion: Stockton Road, Southam Road, Coventry Road and vice versa. Contractor: GTM Ltd, Tel: 0800 6783 105.

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.

THE WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984, SECTION 35C THE WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL (CONTRIBUTOR PARKS) (OFF-STREET PARKING PLACES) ORDER 2024 NOTICE OF INCREASE OF PARKING CHARGES

Notice is hereby given that Warwickshire County Council, in exercise of its powers under section 35C of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, has resolved to vary the charges for parking within the Council's Country Parks, as outlined in the Schedule below. The new charges will come into force on 6 April 2026. Any enquiries relating to this Notice may be made by email to parks@warwickshire.gov.uk or by calling 01827 872660.

SCHEDULE Daily Parking Charges

Table with 3 columns: Parking Place, Current Charge for Parking*, Charge for Parking** from 1 April 2026. Rows include Burton Dassett Hills, Hartshill Hayes Country Park, Stratford Greenway.

**Except of Minibus and Coaches

Annual Permit Charges

Table with 3 columns: Permit Type, Current Annual Permit Cost (*denotes discounted cost for Blue Badge Holders), Annual Permit Cost from 1 April 2025 (**denotes discounted cost for Blue Badge Holders). Rows include Burton Dassett Hills, Hartshill Hayes Country Park, Pooley Country Park, Stratford Greenway.

S Duxbury, Director of Strategy, Planning & Governance, Shire Hall, Warwick CV34 4RL

Classified

TELEPHONE 01527 588688 FACSIMILE 01527 584371

PUBLIC NOTICES

GOODS VEHICLE OPERATOR'S LICENCE

Alumet Ltd of: Senator House, Bourne End, Southam, Warwickshire. CV47 0NA is applying for a licence to use: Senator House, Bourne End, Southam, Warwickshire. CV47 0NA as an operating centre for up to 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

Warwickshire County Council

ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984

Warwickshire County Council has made the following Temporary Traffic Orders:

BUTLERS LEAP, RUGBY

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic at the junction of Clifton Road. Banned right turn from Clifton Road onto Butlers Leap whilst works are in progress. Reason for Order: To repair/replace a manhole frame and cover. Closure overnight 19.00hrs-06.00hrs. Order Commences: 18 March 2026 for up to 18 months. Anticipated Completion: 19 March 2026.

Access & Diversion: Vicarage Hill, Rugby Road, Main Street, Church Street, Newton Road, Newton Manor Lane, Leicester Road, Boughton Road, Butlers Leap and vice versa. Contractor: CSP, Tel: 07918 389363.

D3442 DUNCHURCH ROAD (SERVICE ROAD), RUGBY

Order Effect: Road closed in its entirety between A426 Dunchurch Road and Shakespeare Gardens. Reason for Order: Carriageway patching works, closed 09.30hrs-15.30hrs. Order Commences: 16 March 2026 for up to 18 months. Anticipated Completion: 16 March 2026.

Access & Diversion: No suitable diversion - vehicular traffic use A426 Dunchurch Road for access/egress to/from Shakespeare Gardens. Vehicular access & egress will be maintained where possible and safe to do so for businesses and residents only. Contractor: Balfour Beatty, Tel: 03452 415302.

SCHOOL LANE, STRETTON-ON-DUNSMORE

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic. Reason for Order: To repair/replace a manhole frame and cover. Order Commences: 17 March 2026 for up to 18 months. Anticipated Completion: 17 March 2026. Access & Diversion: Pilot Lane, Freeboard Lane, Oxford Road, Finescre Lane, Church Hill, Brookside and vice versa. Contractor: CSP, Tel: 07918 389363.

ALWYN ROAD, RUGBY

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic. Reason for Order: Works to replace defective manhole frame and cover, closed 09.30hrs-15.30hrs. Order Commences: 16 March 2026 for up to 18 months. Anticipated Completion: 16 March 2026. Access & Diversion: Main Street, Magnet Lane, The Green, Bawnmore Road, Longroad Road and vice versa. Contractor: CSP, Tel: 07918 389363.

MOOR FARM CLOSE, STRETTON-ON-DUNSMORE

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic. Reason for Order: To safely enable the repair or replacement of a manhole frame and cover. Order Commences: 16 March 2026 for up to 18 months. Anticipated Completion: 16 March 2026. Access & Diversion: No diversion is available. Contractor: GO TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT, Tel: 0161 351 5370.

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

B4453 LEAMINGTON ROAD, PRINCETHORPE

Order Effect: Road closed between A423 Oxford Road to Princethorpe College Science Centre. Reason for Order: Carriageway resurfacing works. Closed 09.00hrs-15.30hrs, weekdays only. Order Commences: 1 April 2026 for up to 18 months. Anticipated Completion: 13 April 2026. Access & Diversion: B4453 (Leamington Road, Rugby Road), Kenilworth Road, A445, A423 and vice versa. Access/Egress to be maintained where possible to businesses and residents only. Contractor: Balfour Beatty, Tel: 03452 415302.

BUTLERS LEAP, RUGBY

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic at the rail bridge. Reason for Order: To safely enable removal of vegetation and brickwork repairs to railway structure. Closure to stay in place for the duration due to curing time required for brickwork repairs. Order Commences: 28 March 2026 for up to 18 months. Anticipated Completion: 3 April 2026.

PUBLIC NOTICES

NOTICE

High Commission of India, London has received a notice of intended marriage from Mr. Bharathesh Shambhu Shetty, S/o Shambhu Shetty, holder of Indian Passport No. Z4797702 and Miss Nncy Thazhath Dixon, D/o Dixon, holder of Indian Passport No. U6385619 under the Foreign Marriage Act, 1969 of India.

Objection, if any (along with valid reasons), to the intended marriage may be conveyed to the High Commission of India, London within 30 Days of publication of this notice at the following address:

Second Secretary, High Commission of India, India House, Aldwych, WC2B 4NA

PUBLIC NOTICES

PAULINE MARGARET CHADWICK (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 Trewoice, 285 Livingstone Avenue, Long Lawford, Rugby, CV23 9BU, who died on 10/02/2026, are required to send written particulars thereof to the undersigned on or before 14/05/2026, after which date the Estate will be distributed having regard only to the claims and interests of which they have had notice.

Angelo Solicitors LLP, 117-119 New Union Street, Coventry, CV1 2NY (Ref:EK/RT/Chadwick/44596)

PUBLIC NOTICES

Warwickshire County Council

ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984

Warwickshire County Council has made the following Temporary Traffic Orders:

STONELEIGH ROAD, STONELEIGH

Order Effect: A 30mph speed restriction will be imposed on Stoneleigh Road, Stoneleigh from the crossroads of Stoneleigh Road/B4115 to the County Boundary. Reason for Order: For the safety of all road users and of the contractors working on or near to the carriageway during road bridge construction. Order Commences: 16 March 2026 until the works to which it relates are completed and the Order revoked.

Contractor: Colas Siac Ltd, Tel: 07415 245 295.

STONELEIGH ROAD, BUBBENHALL

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic from the entrance to Goldacre for approx. 125m westwards. Reason for Order: To provide new service to customers. Closure 09.30hrs-15.30hrs. Order Commences: 20 March 2026 for up to 18 months. Anticipated Completion: 20 March 2026.

Access & Diversion: Stoneleigh Road, Main Street, Spring Hill, Pyton Road, Leamington Road, Watery Lane, Bubbenthal Road and vice versa. Contractor: Sunbelt Rentals, Tel: 03700 500792.

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

B4428 LUTTERWORTH ROAD, PAILTON

Order Effect: Road closed between Montio Lane and B4112 Rugby Road/B4428 Coventry Road. Reason for Order: Carriageway patching works, closed 08.00hrs-16.00hrs. Order Commences: 2 April 2026 for up to 18 months. Anticipated Completion: 2 April 2026. Access & Diversion: Montio Lane, B4112 Rugby Road and vice versa.

Vehicular access & egress will be maintained where possible and safe to do so for businesses and residents only. Contractor: Balfour Beatty, Tel: 03452 415302.

STONELEIGH ROAD, STONELEIGH

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic between 446 Northbound off and on slip roads and Southbound off and on slip roads, weekends only as follows: 28-29 March 2026, 25-26 April 2026, 30-31 May 2026, 27-28 June 2026, 25-26 July 2026, 27-28 March 2027. Reason for Order: To safely enable works for new parapet fence, new street lighting modification and TVCS removal.

Order Commences: 28 March 2026 for up to 18 months. Anticipated Completion: 28 March 2027. Access & Diversion: Stoneleigh Road, Warwick Bypass, A46, Leamington Road, A46 and vice versa. Contractor: Colas Siac Ltd, Tel: 07415 245 295.

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 March 2026

PUBLIC NOTICES

MICHAEL ROGER PERKS (also known as Roger Perks) (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 70 Newbold Road, Rugby, CV21 2NG, who died on 26/11/2024, are required to send written particulars thereof to the undersigned on or before 14/05/2026, after which date the Estate will be distributed having regard only to the claims and interests of which they have had notice.

Brethertons LLP, Franklins House, Manorsfield Road, Bicester, OX26 6EX

PUBLIC NOTICES

FRANCIS GORDON (Deceased)

Pursuant to the Trustee Act 1925 anyone with a claim against or an interest in the Estate of the deceased, late of 6 Leys Lane, Kenilworth, CV8 2DD, who died on 19/10/2025, must send written details to the address below by 14/05/2026, after which the Estate will be distributed with regard only to claims and interests notified.

The Will Associates Asset Management Limited, Old Magistrates Court, Chesire Street, Market Drayton, TF9 1PH. Ref: 2025/0565

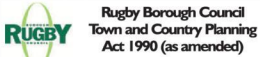


Classified

TELEPHONE 01527 588688 FACSIMILE 01527 584371

PUBLIC NOTICES

PUBLIC NOTICES



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

**Application Number R25/0912
PLOT 4, PROSPERO ANSTY PARK, EAST
OF PILOT WAY AND WEST OF COMBE
FIELDS ROAD, RUGBY**

Demolition of existing building and erection of one commercial unit for flexible use within Use Classes B2 (General Industrial) and B8 (Storage and Distribution) of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) and associated development including drainage, earthworks, highways, car parking, HGV parking, service yard and landscaping.

This development may affect a Listed Building. This development may affect a Conservation Area. This development may affect a Public Right of Way. This is a major development

**Application Number R26/0117
LAND SOUTH OF LILBOURNE ROAD,
CLIFTON UPON DUNSMORE, RUGBY**
Outline planning application with all matters reserved except for access for up to 180 residential dwellings (Use Class C3) including public open space; access from Lilbourne Road; landscaping; suitable drainage systems and associated infrastructure and ancillary community uses.

This development is a departure from the Development Plan. This development may affect a Listed Building. This development may affect a Conservation Area. This is a major development

**Application Number R26/0132
1 CALDECOTT STREET, RUGBY,
CV21 3TH**

Ino. replacement dwellinghouse on the footprint of a previously existing lawful residential property and other associated works

This development may affect a Conservation Area

**Application Number R26/0144
BROWNSOVER HALL HOTEL,
BROWNSOVER LANE, RUGBY, CV21 1HU**
Single storey rear glazed infill extension
This development may affect a Listed Building. This development may affect a Conservation Area

**Application Number R26/0145
BROWNSOVER HALL HOTEL,
BROWNSOVER LANE, RUGBY, CV21 1HU**
Listed Building consent for a single storey rear glazed infill extension

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

**Application Number R26/0210
PARCEL D (MULBERRY HOMES), KEY
PHASE 3, HOULTON (RUGBY RADIO
STATION), WATLING STREET, RUGBY,
CV23 0AS**

Variation of Condition 1 of R21/0873 of reserved matters approval R21/0873 (Key Phase 3 Parcel D - Submission of reserved matters comprising access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale for the erection of 147 dwellings, access roads, garages and parking, landscaping, open space and associated works pursuant to planning permission R17/0022 dated 28th June 2017.) for design changes including surface treatments, bin collection points, handing of house types and landscaping.

This is a major development
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 4 April 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: The 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 householders 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 - Strategic Director for Place

PUBLIC NOTICES

I, Arjun, S/o. Kumaran, Born on 16/11/2006 (Place of birth: Bangalore, Karnataka, India), Residing at 5, Alveston Mews Alveston Place, Leamington Spa, United Kingdom, CV32 4UE have changed my name to Arjun Kumaran by Deed Poll dated 19/02/2025 and shall henceforth be known as ARJUN KUMARAN.

Arjun

PUBLIC NOTICES

Goods Vehicle Operator's Licence
Meron Andom Temnewo of: SNR Transport Ltd, 34 St Georges Road, Coventry CV1 2DL is applying for a licence to use: ASA Contracting Limited, Unit 1 to 3 Leoric House, Waterman Road, Coventry CV6 5TP as an operating centre for 3 Units and trailer.

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.

Representors 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



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....

ANNOUNCEMENTS

DEATHS

JENNER
Philomena

Passed away at home on 10th February 2026, aged 86 years.

Beloved wife of Billie and loving mum to John and Julie.

A wonderful Grandma to Isabel, Maddie, Danny, Adam and Sam.

Philomena's funeral service will take place on Friday 20th March at 10.30 am at Sacred Heart Church,

followed by the committal at Rainsbrook Crematorium at 12pm.

Family Flowers only.

Donations if desired can be made to Marie Curie via the following link- Philomenajenner.muchloved.com

Will Smith and son funeral services, 25 Main Street, Bilton, Rugby, CV22 7NQ.

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BATH tub with taps
Ex cond FREEE 07719695685

SMALL mahogany
chair in ex cond £25 07719695685

SOOTY cookie jar
or biscuit barrel £25 07719695685

CHILDRENS Garden
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LADIES bicycle,
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Electric Cooker good working order £50 07873265083

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Brakes 13 points from safety after shipping five goals at Hereford

LEAMINGTON shipped five goals in a chastening 5-1 defeat away at relegation rivals Hereford in midweek despite taking an early lead.

The Brakes stunned the home side on two minutes when Frank Tatum put the bottom side ahead at Edgar Street.

However, a hat-trick from George Munday and further goals from Harrison Sohna and Andy Williams condemned Leamington to a heavy defeat.

The result means the Brakes remain bottom of the National League North table, 13 points from safety with just 10 matches left to play.

Hosts Hereford returned to Edgar Street for the first time in two months after the weather caused damage to the playing surface.

However, Leamington looked to spoil Hereford's home return when Tatum swept a powerful low effort into the net after just two minutes after the ball broke kindly into the scorer's path.

Hereford equalised on 15 minutes as Munday stroked Aaron Skinner's low ball in from the right past Brakes goalkeeper Eddie Brearey.

And the Bulls completed the turnaround in first-half injury time when Munday turned the ball home after Keziah Martin's powerful strike hit the underside of the crossbar.

Hereford extended their lead after the break on 67 minutes as Sohna followed up Lewis Hudson's initial strike to drive a shot through defender Dan Meredith and

Brearey into the net.

And Munday completed his hat-trick on 77 minutes with a cool finish past Brearey from substitute Mikey Lane's pass.

The Bulls added a fifth goal in injury time when substitute Williams broke through and lifted the ball over a helpless Brearey.

That came after the Brakes rescued an injury-time point in a 1-1 draw against 10-man AFC Fylde last weekend.

Tatum levelled the game five minutes into injury time after Danny Ormerod put Fylde ahead at the Your Co-op Community Stadium.

However, Fylde played the majority of the game with 10-men after Corey Whelan received a straight red card on 20 minutes.

Fylde broke the deadlock on 18 minutes when Ormerod turned the ball home at the near post from close range after Jon Ustabasi jinked his way into the box down the left.

However, the visitors had Whelan sent off just two minutes later after he bundled Owen Farmer to the ground just outside the penalty area which denied the Brakes a goalscoring opportunity.

The home side could not make the extra man count until deep into injury time when Tatum bundled the ball home from close range with Fylde appealing for a handball in the build up.

Leamington are next in action against Darlington on Saturday, March 14 with kick-off at 3pm at Blackwell Meadows.

Easterlow signs off from Racers with draw

RACING Club Warwick earned a hard-fought point in a goalless draw away at play-off chasing Belper Town in what proved to be manager Scott Easterlow's final game in charge of the club.

The Racers have now failed to score in their last three matches following the stalemate at the Raygar Stadium and have not won any of their last seven games.

And the result means the Racers sit 11th in the Northern Premier League Midlands table, nine points outside of the play-off places.

Boss Easterlow has since resigned from his role at the Racers to take up the vacant manager's position at local rivals Leamington.

The visitors spurned an early chance as Aaron Opoku saw his goalbound effort from close range blocked by Louis Keenan after Reece Blackmore floated a free-kick into the box.

Belper responded with a chance at the other end when Tom Allsopp tipped Jacob Gratton's shot from 25-yards out around the post.

And the home side went close again as Liam Moran looped a header onto the roof of the net following a cross into the box from the right.

Warwick almost broke the deadlock from a corner later in the first half as the ball bounced around the Belper box before Opoku saw his acrobatic effort go wide of the post.

And Archie Hamp then fired wide from 15-yards out after Jordan Hayward burst down the left and picked out the forward in the box.

Belper went close from a corner of their own after the break as Allsopp reacted sharply to keep out Luke Shaw's strike at the back post.

The Racers had one final chance to break the deadlock when Hamp looked to pounce on Keenan's weak backwards header but could only shoot straight at Kieran Preston as he attempted to lob the Belper goalkeeper.

Racing Club Warwick are next in action against Wellingborough Town on Saturday, March 14 with kick-off at 3pm at Townsend Meadow.

Blaze put to the sword by Panthers ahead of Challenge Cup final



by Aaron Sutcliffe
aaron.sutcliffe@bullivantmedia.com

ICE HOCKEY: COVENTRY Blaze suffered a heavy 6-1 home defeat against Nottingham Panthers in a dress rehearsal of the upcoming Challenge Cup final between the two teams.

Blaze conceded three goals in the first period before Nottingham established a six-goal lead as Grant Mismash netted a late consolation for Coventry at the Skydome Arena.

That came after Coventry lost in a penalty shootout against Sheffield following a 3-3 draw at the end of overtime at the Utilita Arena.

The results mean Coventry sit eighth in the Elite League table with a play-off spot now confirmed.

Blaze slipped to a fourth straight league defeat against the Panthers with the two teams to face off in the Challenge Cup final later this month.

Coventry failed to recover from conceding twice in the space of 24 seconds in the first period after Blaze were

unable to capitalise on a powerplay opportunity.

Nottingham took the lead at 12.02 when Chase Pearson batted the puck out of mid-air and fired past Blaze netminder Mat Robson.

And the Panthers struck again 24 seconds later as Nolan Volcan converted on a two-on-one breakaway.

The visitors remained on top and extended their lead at 15.42 when Pearson scored his second of the game as he tipped Mitch Fossier's shot from the point into the net.

Blaze struggled to generate any momentum in the second period before Nottingham scored a fourth goal at 29.07 when Fossier fired home Pearson's feed.

And the Panthers made sure of the points in the third period as Tim Doherty struck at 46.07 on the powerplay.

Nottingham scored another powerplay goal at 47.32 as Matthew Marcinew made it six for the Panthers to compound Coventry's misery.

Blaze scored a consolation goal at 54.51 when Mismash found the net after good work from Adam Robbins and Grayson Constable.

Tempers boiled over in the closing

stages as Coventry's Connor Russell and Nottingham's Cooper Zech received 10-minute penalties for unsportsmanlike conduct following an awkward hit by Marcinew on Mike Pelech.

That came after Blaze pushed title-chasing Sheffield all the way only to suffer a shootout defeat on the road.

Coventry took the lead at 7.04 when Matthew Gleason scored his 18th goal of the season after defenceman Jordan Power jumped into the offence.

The Steelers equalised at 12.30 as Patrick Watling scored at the back post after Reece Kelly's stretch pass found Joona Huttula who provided the assist.

Blaze almost reclaimed the lead only for Eamon McAdam to deny Mismash on a breakaway before Constable's redirected effort struck the crossbar.

At the other end, Robson produced a stunning double save to keep out efforts from Kevin Tansey and Mitchell Heard.

Coventry went ahead for a second time at 22.09 when Robbins converted a loose puck on the powerplay after Gleason kept the chance alive.

Sheffield responded at 23.46 as Dominic Cormier forced a loose puck home at the third attempt after Robert Dowd's initial effort rebounded off Robson.

Blaze took the lead for a third time at 25.02 when Pelech took credit for a play in tight past a sprawling McAdam.

A back-and-forth second period continued at 26.03 as Evan Jasper fired past Robson to level the scores again.

A goalless third period sent the game to overtime with neither side able to strike in a cagey extra period.

However, the Steelers triumphed on penalty shots after Kim Tallberg lost control of his attempt in the final round.

Coventry are next in action against Manchester Storm on Friday, March 13 with the face-off at 7.30pm at Planet Ice Altrincham.

Blaze then host Glasgow Clan on Saturday, March 14 with the face-off at 7pm at the Skydome.

Coventry Blaze shipped six goals against Challenge Cup final foes Nottingham. Picture by Scott Wiggins.

Rallying cry from Valley boss with club locked in relegation battle after home Rushden defeat

FOOTBALL: GRANT Joshua has urged Rugby Town supporters to 'not give up' on his players with the club four points from safety in the relegation zone.

Valley saw their winless run stretch to seven matches following a 3-0 home defeat against AFC Rushden and Diamonds at Butlin Road last weekend.

An early goal from Joel Nketia put Rushden ahead before Tyler Winters struck either side of half time to inflict another defeat on Valley.

And to compound the home side's misery, Kobi Bivens saw an injury-time penalty saved to leave Rugby in relegation trouble.

However, despite the club's struggles on the pitch, Joshua recognised the faith shown by the club's supporters through the side's recent adversity.

Joshua said: "I have nothing but admiration for the way they [the supporters] have been.

"They really haven't had it easy over



the past few seasons, but they find a way to dig deep and they are still as loud as they have ever been.

"I used to hate managing against Rugby because I knew those boards would start banging and the momentum in the ground would shift.

"You've stuck with these lads all season, so please don't give up on them now when they really need that 12th man."

Rushden broke the deadlock on 11 minutes when Nketia glanced in Bruno Andrade's free-kick from the right against the run of play.

And the Diamonds doubled their lead on 36 minutes as Winters controlled a pass in the box and finished through the legs of a defender and into the bottom right corner.

Winters sealed the points for the visitors on 53 minutes with another smart finish on the turn after Nathan Kabeya lost possession inside his own penalty area.

The home side had a chance to score a consolation goal at the death only for Dan Jezeph to save Bivens' penalty diving low to his right.

Rugby host Long Eaton United on Saturday, March 14 with kick-off at 3pm at Butlin Road.

A massed Rushden defence denies Rugby a scoring chance from a corner. Picture by Martin Pulley.

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Gold medals galore for swimmers

SWIMMING: RUGBY Swimming Club's artistic swimmers made a sensational start to the 2026 season after winning 11 gold medals at the Regional Age Groups event.

More than 60 swimmers represented the club across 13 of the 18 category events at the Walsall Gala Baths.

Rugby won 15 medals overall including 11 gold, three silver and one bronze medal competing against teams from Walsall, Rykneld, Birmingham, Bramcote and Nottingham.

The club's first medal came in the 12-and-under competition as Alice Danielson won bronze in the technical figure competition.

In the youth event, Frankie Klym and Victoria Sharashkina won gold and silver respectively.

Rugby's medal run continued in the combination events.

The 12-and-under Division One team of Eliza Danila, Mila Colledge, Florie Hughes, Erin Bloomfield, Olivia Reid, Darcie Gallagher, Alice Payne, Ella Martin, Elizabeth Silk and Ema



Rugby's artistic swimmers won 15 medals at the Regional Age Groups competition. s

Kiac performed to Jive Bunny.

The team had to perform twice due to a technical issue with the music but rose to the challenge to win gold.

Rugby's 12-and-under Division Two team of Emily Secher, Lily

Bartholomew, Payton Gaskin, Jessie Slater, Esme Ravenhall, Elsa Gaskin, Katerina Myronova and Maisie Austin-Robertsthen won silver behind Birmingham with an upbeat routine.

In the 13 to 15-year-old age group,

Rugby's Division Two 'Beetlejuice' team took gold with a bold performance.

The team of Charlotte Wilkins, Catherine Yu, Mellinda Bogdanova, Aaron Lee, Sophie Croft, Ruby Shepherd, Isobelle Watkins, Amelie Jeary, Darcy Townsend and Caitlin-Rose Smith (reserve) stood on top of the podium.

Rugby's 'Gladiators' team of Mabel Chapman, Kara Duckett, Saranne Black, Sophie Henry, Daisy Clark, Ruth Ho, Beatrice Banks, Alice Pavlova, Jemima Parkinson and Isabella Franks dominated the 15-plus Division Two category.

The swimmers channeled the fighting spirit of the 90s TV show to win another gold for Rugby.

And Rugby's 13 to 18-year-old Division One 'Team Six' squad of Anika Reddy, Katie Green, Daniel Rodrigues, Esther Tovey-Keane, Holly Biddulph, Amelia Storr, Elise Kelly, Izzy Rycroft, Sophia Myronova and Seren Humphry also won gold.

The team swam to music from Six

the musical and ended the combination team events in style with a confident performance.

In the youth solo category, Sharashkina and Keva Ennis won gold and silver respectively while Izzy Maglione finished just outside the medals in the 12-and-under event.

In the duets, sisters Alice and Florence Danielson took gold in the 12-and-under category while Lee and Christina Kapiris won gold in the youth mixed duet and Lola Huett and Klym stormed to gold in the youth duet.

And Rugby also won gold medals in the 12-and-under and youth free team categories.

Swimming to 'Jump', the 12-and-under squad of Secher, A Danielson, F Danielson, Myronova, E Gaskin, Maglione, Slater, Austin-Roberts and Bartholomew (reserve) confidently took the gold medal.

And the youth team of Klym, Ennis, Sharashkina, Jeary, Lee, Huett and Kapiris showcased a new routine to seal the club's 11th gold medal of the competition.

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