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Friday, June 5th 2026 Week 23

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

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2 FIFA World Cup 2026

Overview

The greatest show on turf just got bigger

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

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

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

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

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

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

■ **Jamie Barwick**

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



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

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

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

reaching the knockout stages, adding unpredictability and fresh energy.

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

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

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

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

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Groups A-D

FIFA World Cup 2026 3

IT'S WIDE OPEN

GROUP A

CZECH REPUBLIC
 Manager Miroslav Koubek
 Captain Ladislav Krejci
 FIFA ranking 41

MEXICO
 Manager Javier Aguirre
 Captain Edson Alvarez
 FIFA ranking 15

SOUTH AFRICA
 Manager Hugo Broos
 Captain Ronwen Williams
 FIFA ranking 60

SOUTH KOREA
 Manager Hong Myung-bo
 Captain Son Heung-min
 FIFA ranking 25

GROUP B

BOSNIA & HERZ
 Manager Sergej Barbarez
 Captain Edin Dzeko
 FIFA ranking 65

CANADA
 Manager Jesse Marsch
 Captain Alphonso Davies
 FIFA ranking 30

QATAR
 Manager Julien Lopetegui
 Captain Hassan Al-Thayadi
 FIFA ranking 55

SWITZERLAND
 Manager Murat Yakin
 Captain Granit Xhaka
 FIFA ranking 19

GROUP C

BRAZIL
 Manager Carlo Ancelotti
 Captain Marquinhos
 FIFA ranking 6

HAITI
 Manager Sebastien Migne
 Captain Johny Placide
 FIFA ranking 83

MOROCCO
 Manager Walid Regragui
 Captain Achraf Hakimi
 FIFA ranking 8

SCOTLAND
 Manager Steve Clarke
 Captain Andy Robertson
 FIFA ranking 43

GROUP D

AUSTRALIA
 Manager Tony Popovic
 Captain Mathew Ryan
 FIFA ranking 27

PARAGUAY
 Manager Gustavo Alfaro
 Captain Gustavo Gomez
 FIFA ranking 40

TURKEY
 Manager Vincenzo Montella
 Captain Hakan Calhanoglu
 FIFA ranking 22

USA
 Manager Mauricio Pochettino
 Captain Christian Pulisic
 FIFA ranking 16

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

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

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

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

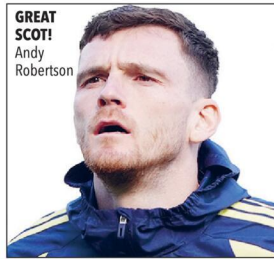
That yielded a group-stage exit, but it has been barren on the world stage ever since. Managed by Hugo Broos, South Africa recently went on a 27-match unbeaten run and that consistency and unity will be key for them.

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

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

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

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



GREAT SCOT!
 Andy Robertson

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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4 FIFA World Cup 2026

ROUND OF 32

GROUP E WINNER vs **3RD GROUP A/B/C/D/F**
Match 1: June 29, 9.30pm - Boston, USA

GROUP I WINNER vs **3RD GROUP C/D/F/G/H**
Match 2: June 30, 10pm - New Jersey, USA

GROUP A RUNNER-UP vs **GROUP B RUNNER-UP**
Match 3: June 28, 8pm - Los Angeles, USA

GROUP F WINNER vs **GROUP C RUNNER-UP**
Match 4: June 30, 2am - Monterrey, Mexico

GROUP K RUNNER-UP vs **GROUP L RUNNER-UP**
Match 5: July 3, 12am - Toronto, Canada

GROUP H WINNER vs **GROUP J RUNNER-UP**
Match 6: July 2, 8pm - Los Angeles, USA

GROUP D WINNER vs **3RD GROUP B/E/F/I/J**
Match 7: July 2, 1am - Santa Clara, USA

GROUP G WINNER vs **3RD GROUP A/E/H/I/J**
Match 8: July 1, 9pm - Seattle, USA

ROUND OF 16

WINNER OF GAME 1 vs **WINNER OF MATCH 2**
Match 17: July 4, 10pm - Philadelphia, USA

WINNER OF GAME 3 vs **WINNER OF MATCH 4**
Match 18: July 4, 6pm - Houston, USA

QUARTER-FINAL 1

WINNER OF GAME 17 vs **WINNER OF GAME 18**
July 9, 9pm - Boston, USA

QUARTER-FINAL 2

WINNER OF GAME 19 vs **WINNER OF GAME 20**
July 10, 8pm - Los Angeles, USA

SEMI-FINAL 1

WINNER OF QF 1 vs **WINNER OF QF 2**
July 14, 8pm - Dallas, USA

THIRD PLACE

LOSER OF SF 1
July 18, 10pm - Philadelphia, USA

ROUND OF 16

WINNER OF GAME 5 vs **WINNER OF MATCH 6**
Match 19: July 6, 8pm - Dallas, USA

WINNER OF GAME 7 vs **WINNER OF MATCH 8**
Match 20: July 7, 1am - Mexico City, Mexico

GROUP A

MEXICO vs SOUTH AFRICA
June 11, 8pm - Mexico City, Mexico - ITV

SOUTH KOREA vs CZECH REP
June 12, 3am - Guadalajara, Mexico - ITV

CZECH REP vs SOUTH AFRICA
June 18, 5pm - Atlanta, USA - BBC

MEXICO vs SOUTH KOREA
June 19, 2am - Guadalajara, Mexico - BBC

SOUTH AFRICA vs SOUTH KOREA
June 25, 2am - Mexico City, Mexico - BBC

CZECH REP vs MEXICO
June 25, 2am - Monterrey, Mexico - BBC

	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1						
2						
3						
4						

GROUP B

CANADA vs BOSNIA & HERZ
June 12, 8pm - Toronto, Canada - BBC

QATAR vs SWITZERLAND
June 13, 8pm - Santa Clara, USA - ITV

SWITZERLAND vs BOSNIA & HERZ
June 18, 8pm - Los Angeles, USA - ITV

CANADA vs QATAR
June 18, 11pm - Vancouver, Canada - ITV

SWITZERLAND vs CANADA
June 24, 8pm - Vancouver, Canada - ITV

BOSNIA & HERZ vs QATAR
June 24, 8pm - Seattle, USA - ITV

	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1						
2						
3						
4						

GROUP C

BRAZIL vs MOROCCO
June 13, 11pm - New Jersey, USA - BBC

HAITI vs SCOTLAND
June 14, 2am - Guadalajara, Mexico - BBC

SCOTLAND vs MOROCCO
June 19, 11pm - Boston, USA - ITV

BRAZIL vs HAITI
June 20, 2am - Philadelphia, USA - ITV

SCOTLAND vs BRAZIL
June 24, 11am - Miami, USA - BBC

MOROCCO vs HAITI
June 24, 11am - Atlanta, USA - BBC

	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1						
2						
3						
4						

GROUP G

BELGIUM vs EGYPT
June 15, 8pm - Seattle, USA - BBC

IRAN vs NEW ZEALAND
June 16, 2am - Los Angeles, USA - BBC

BELGIUM vs IRAN
June 21, 8pm - Los Angeles, USA - ITV

NEW ZEALAND vs EGYPT
June 22, 2am - Vancouver, Canada - ITV

EGYPT vs IRAN
June 25, 4am - Seattle, USA - BBC

NEW ZEALAND vs BELGIUM
June 27, 4am - Vancouver, Canada - BBC

	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1						
2						
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4						

GROUP H

SPAIN vs CAPE VERDE
June 15, 5pm - Atlanta, USA - ITV

SAUDI ARABIA vs URUGUAY
June 5, 11am - Miami, USA - ITV

SPAIN vs SAUDI ARABIA
June 21, 5pm - Atlanta, USA - BBC

URUGUAY vs CAPE VERDE
June 21, 11pm - Miami, USA - BBC

CAPE VERDE vs SAUDI ARABIA
June 27, 1am - Houston, USA - ITV

URUGUAY vs SPAIN
June 27, 1am - Guadalajara, Mexico - ITV

	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1						
2						
3						
4						

GROUP I

FRANCE vs SENEGAL
June 16, 8pm - New Jersey, USA - BBC

IRAQ vs NORWAY
June 16, 11pm - Boston, USA - BBC

FRANCE vs IRAQ
June 22, 10pm - Philadelphia, USA - BBC

NORWAY vs SENEGAL
June 23, 1am - New Jersey, USA - ITV

NORWAY vs FRANCE
June 26, 8pm - Boston, USA - ITV

SENEGAL vs IRAQ
June 26, 8pm - Toronto, Canada - ITV

	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1						
2						
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4						



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Your **FREE** edition - just pick one up and keep up with the news

Petition calls for action in hospital parking row

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

THOUSANDS of 'disgusted' people have signed a petition calling for University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire to end car parking charges which have been likened to 'a tax on the sick'.

The petition, presented to University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire (UHCW) NHS Trust by Coventry Socialist Party, has now passed 16,000 signatures.

Organiser Adam Harmsworth said signatures had been gathered from across the region – some from workplaces including UHCW hospital wards.

He said: "We have spoken to thousands of people who are disgusted with the parking charges at our hospital.

"We have met patients and visitors who have struggled with the costs, including relatives of patients terminally ill at the hospital, who have been forced to cut short the time they have left with their loved ones.

"We have met staff who struggle with the costs, especially combined with their low wages. Some told us they quit working at the hospital because it was cheaper to take a pay cut and work elsewhere."

The car park charges £13.50 for over six hours, meaning staff with-

out a pass working three shifts a week would pay £2,106 every year.

A staff pass costs £57 a month or £684 a year, described by Mr Harmsworth as 'a horrendous price to park at your own workplace'.

He added: "There is no excuse to make profit from a hospital car park, especially not in a cost-of-living crisis that only adds to the financial stress of many."

A party spokesperson added: "The car park, which is run by ISS Facilities under a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract, has made millions of pounds in profit every year.

"NHS digital data shows the trust made £10.1million in the 2024-25 financial year, when parking costs for the PFI were just £425,582. That's \$9.7million profit made out of our hospital car park."

But a spokesperson for the trust said those figures reflected gross income and did not 'fully represent the complexity of costs and contractual obligations associated with the PFI arrangement'.

They added: "A large proportion of our car parks form part of a PFI contract and, as a result, we generate minimal car park revenue directly from staff, patients or visitors.

"Income generated from car parking contributes to the operational management, maintenance, and infrastructure of the hospital estate.

"Any changes to parking charges or contractual arrangements must be carefully considered within the



Members of Coventry Socialist Party present the petition to the board of University Hospital Coventry.

legal and financial framework in which the Trust operates.

"UHCW is committed to supporting those who may be most affected by parking costs. Existing measures

include concessions and free parking for certain patient groups, discounts and permit schemes for staff, and free parking in specific circumstances – for example, for dis-

abled patients, frequent outpatient attenders, and certain carers.

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City bids farewell to a cherished dean

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

THERE was a fond farewell as John Witcombe led his final services as dean of Coventry Cathedral.

Over the past month, services and other gatherings and celebrations have been held to give thanks for Revd Witcombe's 13 years of service and to mark his retirement.

Events included live music and dancing alongside a number of smaller gatherings that included staff and deanery meetings – all described as being full of song and laughter.

Revd Witcombe's final sermon as dean was preached at choral evensong, during which he reflected on the importance of imagination and the arts as vital tools in the ministry of reconciliation and commissioned the people who remain at the cathedral to continue that important work, choosing forgiveness over revenge.

In his final week, Revd Witcombe and Bishop of Coventry Sophie

Jelley spent time together in the Cathedral ruins, reflecting on the arts, culture and the future.

Bishop Sophie said: "I'm grateful to John for the wholehearted way he has embraced the ministry of reconciliation, not only here in Coventry and at the cathedral but across the world in the name of Coventry. This is a remarkable ministry and a deeply important gift that we share with the world."

"It is important that I place on record my deep and profound thanks to John as he prepares for his retirement."

A new dean is expected to be appointed in the autumn, with the Revd Canon Kate Massey serving as acting dean until then.

■ **LADY Godiva** also said a memorable goodbye to Revd Witcombe.

A giant Godiva puppet, created for the London 2012 cultural Olympiad, joined a service on the steps of Coventry Cathedral.

A performance curated by members of the original Imagineer Team, and volunteers who made the puppet, saw Godiva thank Revd Witcombe for his service, celebrating all he has achieved



Revd Witcombe and Bishop of Coventry Sophie Jelley spent time together in the cathedral ruins, reflecting on the arts, culture and the future. s

supporting cultural organisations in the city.

A spokesperson for the Imagineer Team said: "It is hoped Godiva will one day have a permanent home in Coventry where she can be seen and enjoyed by local people. She will be a permanent reminder of what Coventry is today and, in future, a world centre for peace and reconciliation, promoting equality, fairness and social justice."



The Very Reverend John Witcombe was joined by Lady Godiva during a service on the steps of the cathedral, accompanied by the congregation and choirs. Picture by Andrew Moore. s


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27th Windsor	£30.00	£24.00
July		
4th Weston-Super-Mare	£29.50	£24.50
11th Chester	£29.00	£24.00
18th Hunstanton	£31.00	£25.00
22nd Cambridge	£29.00	£24.00
25th Wellesbourne Market	£16.00	£11.00
28th Cheshire Oaks	£29.00	£24.00
August		
1st Llandudno	£31.00	£25.00
6th Liverpool	£29.00	£22.00
11th York	£29.00	£24.00
13th Telford	£27.00	£22.00
15th Mystery Seaside	£30.00	£24.00
19th Southport	£29.00	£24.00
21st Blist Hill	£43.00	£30.00
25th Cotswolds & Diddley Squat Farm	£29.00	£24.00
20th Skegness	£29.50	£24.00
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Blackpool - Grand Hotel 30th October-1st November 26 3 Days/2 Nights	£195 Adult, £99 Child	
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26

Wherever you look, there's something to Love about this festival



THE PROGRAMME of events for this year's Love Rugby Festival has been announced.

Live music, art, sport, culture and family entertainment events will take place across the town and surrounding villages from June 20 to July 5.

Across the two-week festival, which coincides with Rugby School's Festival on the Close, event highlights include:

Week 1 (June 20-27)

June 20 onwards – Rugby Artists and Makers Summer Exhibition, a month-long celebration of

artistic talent in Rugby

June 20 onwards – Gizmobots, featuring robot sculptures

June 22 – Paddlesport taster session, allowing residents to try out kayaks, canoes and paddleboards

June 27 – Salsa in the Park, a free dance class in Whitehall Recreation Ground, with no partner or experience required

Week 2 (June 28-July 5)

June 28 – Live and Loud, a full

day festival of local bands and artists performing in the Benn Hall

June 28 – Art in Dunchurch, a showcase of 2D and 3D work by local artists

June 30 – Rugby Triathlon Club will host a free swim taster session

July 4 – New Directions Rugby Multicultural Celebrations will host performances and workshops

The festival concludes on July 5

at Whitehall Recreation Ground, where residents can take part in the 'Couch to 5K' fun run.

The new 1K fun run offers families and children aged 11 and under to take part in a shorter run.

Participants should sign up early to secure their place in the fun runs at rugby.gov.uk/loverugby

Coun Maggie O'Rourke, Rugby Borough Council's spokesperson for partnerships and wellbeing, said: "I am looking forward to the variety of events that the council, local businesses and community groups have to offer.

"Love Rugby Festival will bring together residents and visitors, giving

them the opportunity to enjoy their current hobbies and interests, as well as try something new."

Her coalition colleague Coun Neil Sandison added: "There is something for everyone at this year's festival.

"It's a great opportunity to get out, get involved and experience everything Rugby has to offer."

Visit www.rugby.gov.uk/loverugby for more information and the full festival programme.

Coun Neil Sandison and Coun Maggie O'Rourke are encouraging residents to support this year's Love Rugby Festival.

Move puts 'vital' service at risk

AN 'ESSENTIAL' anti-discrimination service in Warwickshire is at risk.

Warwickshire County Council has proposed to end its contract with the Equality and Inclusion Partnership (EquiP), the county's pan-equalities and hate-crime partnership charity.

The council's Reform UK administration says commissioning and funding the charity – which supports people facing discrimination, promotes inclusion and community cohesion, and helps tackle hate incidents – is 'not a priority for the council'.

A 16-week consultation will consider whether to terminate the contract with EquiP, which is worth £135,000 a year – less than three pence in every hundred pounds the council spends.

The council has acknowledged ending the contract would mean 'reduced specialist expertise', reduced 'capacity to support community safety and cohesion', damage to voluntary-sector trust, and 'foreseeable equalities impacts' on vulnerable groups.

The Liberal Democrat opposition group is urging residents to defend the charity in the upcoming consultation.

Group leader Coun Sarah Boad said: "Our group stands with disabled residents, with our LGBTQ+ community, with vulnerable people impacted by the cost-of-living, with ethnic minority families, with older people living alone, and with those in temporary or insecure housing.

"They are our neighbours and our constituents, and they deserve a council that has their back."

She described Reform's proposal as a political decision rather than a financial one – 'exactly the wrong judgement to make' when Warwickshire Police recorded 897 hate-crime

offences in the year ending March 2025.

She added: "I urge every resident who has ever experienced discrimination or hardship to take part when the consultation opens in June.

"Tell the council what EquiP means to you. Tell them what an independent reporting route, 20 years of trust with our communities, and a single county-wide partner across every protected characteristic is worth.

"The Reform administration has set out the bar for what counts as a priority, so let's give them the answer."

Labour councillors said the cut would 'cause real harm'.

WCC Labour group leader Coun Sarah Feeney said: "We are deeply concerned that Reform has chosen to invest time and money to make a case for cutting such an important service.

"There is a strong case for investing in early intervention and inclusion work that helps prevent discrimination, reduce tensions and support stronger communities. It is essential to building a fairer and safer Warwickshire."

Rugby Borough Council's Labour leader Coun Louise Robinson said the proposal was a false economy.

She said: "Any short-term savings are likely to be cancelled out by consultation costs, legal work and the wider consequences of cutting preventative support.

"If Reform is genuinely looking to save money, they could save nearly £200,000 by ending their contracts with political advisers."

The Reform group did not respond to a request for comment.

A WCC spokesperson said the consultation was due to be launched in 'mid-June'.

Visit <https://ask.warwickshire.gov.uk> for updates.



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Two voices aiming to be heard



Lauren: "It's the best feeling!"

THE SPOTLIGHT beckons for two gifted young writer-performers from a Rugby stage school who have reached the final of a prestigious national competition.

Lauren Rogers and Ela Bahceci, who are learning how to tread the boards at the Pauline Quirke Academy of Performing Arts (PQA) in Rugby, have progressed to the final of the National Youth Monologues Competition after impressing judges by performing their own works at a regional qualifier.

Triumphing over thousands of entrants nationwide, Lauren and Ela have respectively made it to the last five and four in their age groups for the Original Monologue Award.

They are now preparing to take to the stage at the Trafalgar Theatre in London on Sunday June 14, where they will compete alongside some of the country's most talented young performers.

Lauren said: "I can't believe that something that I care about and wrote got acknowledged - it's just the best feeling!"

"My monologue is about the fact that our world is changing into a terrible place, and it's up to the young people to either change it for the better or be forced to live in it."

Ela said: "I am really grateful for this experience and that I got chosen for the finals. I can't wait to perform in the final round in London at the West End!"

More than 4,000 young performers entered the competition, which challenges young performers to write and perform their own monologues.

Earlier in the competition, 26 students from PQA Rugby were either commended or progressed to the regional and national stages, placing the academy within the top 10-15 per cent of the North Region Category.

And at the regional finals at the Lyceum Theatre in Crewe last month, PQA Rugby was also crowned Best School.

PQA Rugby Principal Olivia Medlock said: "The effort and enthusiasm poured into each self-tape was remarkable."

"Students took ownership of their ideas, refined their performances, and committed themselves fully to the process."

"To see that dedication recognised at a national competition is incredibly rewarding for everyone involved."



Ela: "I can't wait to perform at the West End!"

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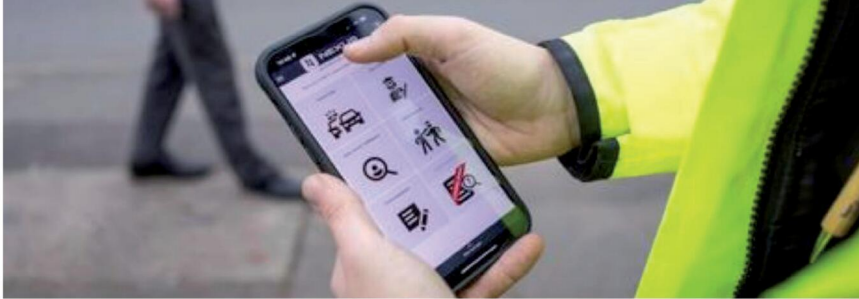
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Tech-savvy force



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

WARWICKSHIRE Police has been voted the most tech-savvy force in the country.

The force ranked top for digital, data and technology satisfaction in the national UK police digital experience survey of frontline officers and staff.

Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Warwickshire, Philip Seccombe, said the result demonstrates the impact of continued investment and a clear focus on practical improvements made over several years.

"This is a strong result for Warwickshire and I am pleased that officers and staff are recognising the progress that has been made," said the PCC. "Good technology

should make policing simpler and more effective, reducing bureaucracy and supporting better decision making so officers can spend more time in our communities."

The national report highlighted that many of the challenges identified in previous surveys remained widespread across policing, including systems that are difficult to use, duplication of data entry and gaps in training and support.

While Warwickshire now ranks highest nationally, Mr Seccombe said the findings underline the need for continued improvement across the service.

"Topping the national table is a positive milestone but it is clear that policing as a whole is still grappling with significant technology challenges.

"For Warwickshire, this is part of a longer journey. We have made

important progress but we know there is more to do to ensure our systems consistently support officers in the way they should."

Ben Smith, temporary deputy chief constable at Warwickshire Police, said he was also pleased to see the results.

He added: "To ensure we serve and protect all who live, work and visit Warwickshire, we invest heavily in ensuring that our officers and staff have the right technology to be able to do their job effectively and efficiently.

"It is great to see that this is working and our teams appreciate the strides forward we have taken.

"We aren't resting on our laurels, though, and continue to drive forward to maximise the many opportunities that technology gives us, always with the mind set of improving the way we police."

■ Apps, built in-house by Warwickshire Police, have enabled officers and staff to complete operational tasks easily on mobile devices. s

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Get ready for Love Rugby Festival, a celebration of arts, culture, sports and family entertainment.

Enjoy local musicians and get creative with hands-on arts and crafts activities.

For sports lovers, get involved with a variety of open days and taster sessions, where you can try something new.

The festival will end on 5 July with a 'Couch to 5K' fun run suitable for all skill levels, alongside a new 1K fun run for families and children aged 11 and under.

See the festival guide and sign up for the fun runs at rugby.gov.uk/loverugby



LOVE RUGBY FESTIVAL

20 JUNE - 5 JULY 2026

A celebration of arts, culture, sports and entertainment

Talented kids are wanted for panto

OH YES they are! Coventry and Warwickshire kids are being invited to audition for this year's pantomime at the Belgrade Theatre.

The theatre has begun its search for the junior chorus of this year's pantomime, *Beauty and the Beast*.

Youngsters aged nine to 16 from across Coventry and Warwickshire are invited to an open audition on Sunday, June 21.

A total of 32 children will be selected to be part of

the show, making up three teams of eight plus a full team of reserves.

Parents of young hopefuls are asked to bring their children to the Belgrade Theatre foyer for registration at 9.30am on the day. From 10am, children will be taught a dance routine which they will perform in front of writer, director and panto dame, Iain Lauchlan.

No prior experience of performing is necessary. Chosen performers and

their parents or guardians will be asked to stay after the audition, until no later than 7pm.

Iain said: "I am excited to see the wonderful talent we have in Coventry. Please come and show me what you can do and enjoy the day. You know how amazing you are."

The show will run from November 18 to January 2.

Visit <https://tinyurl.com/2zvryuu9> for more information.



Writer, director and panto dame Iain Lauchlan, performing in the Belgrade Theatre's 2025 panto, *Sleeping Beauty*. Picture by Nicola Young Photography. s

Council's children's services staff complete 12-year turnaround

by Andy Morris
andy.morris@bullivantmedia.com

CHILDREN'S services in Coventry have been awarded an outstanding rating by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted).

The verdict was announced nearly four years after the services – run by Coventry City Council – were rated good, eight years after they were assessed as needing improvement and 12 years after being described as inadequate.

Inspectors this time focused on

the experiences and progress of children in need of help and protection and of children in care and of care leavers; as well as the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families; and overall effectiveness.

The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection was judged good, with all other areas rated outstanding.

The report read: "Impressive, outward-looking leaders have demonstrated an unwavering ambition and commitment to children in Coventry."

"They have continued to strengthen the quality and impact of services despite considerable external chal-

lenges of the number of children living in poverty and a significant rise in demand for services."

The inspectors praised features including family hubs, the fostering service, a 'virtual school', the life-long links scheme and the children and family court advisory and support service.

Praised

Ofsted staff also highlighted work with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, describing them as "highly-valued"; the house project, that supports care leavers as they move into adulthood; the safe spaces scheme, designed to keep chil-

dren safe when out and about in the city; and staff training to reduce reliance on temporary workers.

The report also found workforce morale was high, children's wishes and feelings were sensitively gathered and the vast majority of children lived in loving, stable homes.

Coventry City Council leader, Coun George Duggins, said: "We knew we had to make great changes and that it would be a long journey and to have come this far in 12 years is testament to the work of all involved."

"Now the work continues and we renew our vow to the children, young people and families of the city that Coventry will be a safe,

loving and caring home for them."

Sukriti Sen, the council's director of children's and education services, said the findings reflected the work that had been carried out in the city over recent years and the determination of everyone involved to put the welfare of children, young people and families at the heart of all the council does.

Sukriti said: "Thank you to everyone who has helped on this incredible journey over the years and to all who dedicate themselves to improving the lives of Coventry's children and giving them the best possible start in life."

Visit <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk> to read the full report.

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Front, from left: OurJay Foundation trustee Tracey Brand, founder Naomi Rees-Issitt and outgoing Malvern mayor Marilyn Birks, with representatives from Platform Housing Group and local band Molly Gone Mad. s

Defibrillator charity extends Jay's legacy

by Andy Morris
andy.morris@bullivantmedia.com

A TIRELESS Rugby mum's campaign to make life-saving equipment available to the public, in memory of her son, is spreading far and wide across the Midlands.

The OurJay Foundation, founded by Naomi Rees-Issitt, has teamed up with Platform Housing Group to install public defibrillators and bleed kits across the region.

Working with Platform Property Care, the housing association has been installing the life-saving equipment at housing schemes and new developments.

One of the latest installations took place at Clarence Park retirement village, in Malvern, where the equipment was unveiled at an event attended by residents, board members, local representatives, charity ambassadors, local band Molly Gone Mad and outgoing Malvern mayor Marilyn Birks.

Naomi set up the charity following the death of her 18-year-old son Jamie Rees from a cardiac arrest, in the early hours of New Year's Day 2022.

A defibrillator was located nearby at the time but was inaccessible.

Since its foundation, the charity has installed 355 defibrillators and raised awareness of their importance as well as providing training in life-saving skills.

Naomi has appeared on national TV and radio to spread her message.

Speaking at the Malvern installation, Naomi said: "Every second counts in a cardiac emergency and having a defibrillator nearby can make all the difference. We are incredibly

proud to be working with Platform to make these devices more accessible in communities. This partnership means more people have a chance of survival and it ensures Jay's legacy continues to make a real, lasting difference."

Coun Birks – who played a leading role in installing defibrillators across Malvern and ensuring people are trained to use them – said the investment in community safety was "fantastic".

The outgoing mayor added: "Having accessible defibrillators and bleed kits in residential areas provides reassurance for residents and could ultimately save lives.

"This is a great example of organisations working together to support and protect local communities."

Sarah Sutton, director of new customers and specialist housing at Platform, said the partnership with the OurJay Foundation was about making a difference in communities.

She said: "By installing defibrillators and bleed kits in our neighbourhoods, we're helping to create safer places to live and giving residents greater confidence that support is there in an emergency.

"It's also about working together – with organisations like the OurJay Foundation – to raise awareness and ensure more people have the knowledge and tools to act when it matters most."

Platform, the first housing association to partner with the charity, has committed to installing defibrillators across its homes and any future developments.

Some 15 have currently been installed – nine of them having already been used – with plans to install another seven.

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

A great big kids' nature contest

NATURE nurturers in Rugby borough are being invited to demonstrate green-fingered credentials in a competition to mark next week's 'Great Big Green Week'.

Rugby Community Champions, part of sustainable gardening charity Garden Organic, wants to see how residents are taking action for nature – whether creating rewilded

lawns, pollinator-friendly window boxes, 'bug hotels', hedgehog houses, mini ponds, bird feeding stations, or school and community nature projects.

The competition is open to all, with children's categories for schoolchildren age up to 10 and 11-16 plus non-school and local-groups awards for the same age groups.

The winners will receive

a prize to help them continue helping nature.

To take part, email pictures and up to 100 words explaining how an idea will help nature to rugby@gardenorganic.org.uk.

The competition closes on June 12, with the winners to be announced on June 25. Visit www.greatbiggreenweek.com for more information about Great Big Green Week.

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WHERE THINGS FOR YOUR GARDEN WON'T COST YOU THE EARTH

Young visitors enjoy looking for clues to the art of detection

HUNDREDS of primary school pupils have hit the detective trail at Rugby Art Gallery and Museum to investigate the Rugby Collection.

The junior sleuths visited the venue's Unveiled exhibition to join eccentric art critic Art E Britain in a hunt for hidden clues to discover the meaning of art.

The primary school sessions saw the debut of Rugby Art Gallery and Museum's new education workshop, Stepping into the Frame.

Devised by the venue's learning and engagement team, the workshop encourages pupils to record observations, experiment with different artistic techniques, and learn about famous artists, architects and designers – all elements of the key stage 1 and 2 curriculum.

During the workshop, pupils took a deep dive into three pieces from the Rugby Collection of contemporary art – LS Lowry's Monday Morning, Paula Rego's The Bride's Secret Diary, and Standing Figure by Claudette Johnson.

The workshop explored the stories behind each painting, encouraging pupils to step inside the pictures through narrative immersion drama techniques.

More than 400 pupils from six primary schools in the borough attended the workshops, with the cost and coach travel funded through the council's Corporate Strategy Delivery Fund.



Primary school pupils have hit the detective trail at Rugby Art Gallery and Museum during the Unveiled exhibition, celebrating the 80th anniversary of the Rugby Collection.

Phoebe Hilton, Rugby Art Gallery and Museum's senior learning and engagement officer, said Stepping into the Frame had been developed to celebrate this year's 80th anniversary of the Rugby Collection – with Unveiled bringing together the collection's 257 artworks in one gallery for the first time in decades.

She added: "The new workshop encourages pupils to explore the creative process, reflecting on the

stories and ideas behind the brush strokes by experimenting with drawing, drama and creative writing.

"It has been designed to complement key stage 1 and 2, using bodily learning to help pupils forge a deeper understanding of art – what it means and why it matters.

"We were delighted with the positive reaction from pupils.

"We're now looking forward to formatting Stepping into the Frame

to support future exhibitions at the gallery."

The Rugby Collection was founded in 1946 with the aim of making art accessible to all.

Unveiled: The Rugby Collection in Full has had rave reviews from visitors since opening at the Little Elborow Street venue in February – with the exhibition hailed as 'world-class', 'beautifully curated' and a source of 'great civic pride'.

In addition to the primary school workshops, Rugby Art Gallery and Museum hosted a tour of Unveiled for secondary school students, followed by a talk on creative careers.

The venue's learning and engagement team also visited Rugby College to talk about careers in the creative industries.

Unveiled runs until Saturday (June 6). Visit education@rugby.gov.uk for more information on learning opportunities at Rugby Art Gallery and Museum.

Advice on offer

SUPPORT is available in Warwickshire for children or young people waiting for an ADHD assessment.

Dr Will Taylor, Chief Medical Officer for NHS Coventry and Warwickshire ICB, said: "There is a range of advice, early intervention and community support available locally to help manage symptoms and support day-to-day functioning.

"We would encourage families to access these resources at the earliest opportunity. Early support can play a key role in improving wellbeing, reducing escalation of need, and supporting better longer-term outcomes."

Visit tinyurl.com/4b68cdzb for more information.

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Josephine Rugg



Peaceful living is Mayor's aim

THE NEW Mayor of Rugby aims to champion the theme of peaceful coexistence during her year in office.

Coun Nooria Sayani was appointed Mayor at Rugby Borough Council's annual meeting.

She has represented Newbold and Brownsover Ward since 2023.

A broadcast journalist, Coun Sayani enjoys travel and her interests include poetry, philosophy and collecting Islamic artefacts, with her collection exhibited at Rugby Art Gallery and Museum.

Coun Sayani has chosen 'pluralism' as her Mayoral theme, embracing community, compassion and cohesion to build a strong, civil society.

Coun Sayani says she wants to strengthen civic partnerships across the borough to foster greater compassion and community cohesion, and ensure Rugby remains a place where people from all backgrounds feel connected and valued.

She has chosen to support three charities during her term - EquIP, RoSA and the Aga Khan Foundation.

EquIP - the Warwickshire equality and inclusion partnership - works to eliminate discrimination by providing support, advice and training across the county.

RoSA, formed in 1991, offers an independent support service for survivors of rape, sexual violence and sexual abuse living in and

around Rugby.

And the Aga Khan Foundation, founded in 1973, works to tackle the root causes of poverty and improve the quality of life for communities in Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

Coun Sayani said: "As the historic birthplace of rugby football, the town has developed a strong community identity centred on co-operation, volunteering and public engagement, working in partnership through the decades.

"These organisations are the lifeblood of Rugby and each Mayoral year celebrates and recognises these contributions, while adapting and building upon an inclusive vision that strengthens community participation, social responsibility and civic pride.

"This inclusive tradition reflects Rugby's enduring values of teamwork, respect and service to the wider community."

Coun Neil Sandison, who represents Eastland Ward, was appointed Deputy Mayor of Rugby at the council's annual meeting.

Visit www.equipequality.org.uk, <https://rosasupport.org> and <https://akf.org/country/united-kingdom> for information on the Mayor's charities.

Call 01788 533523 or email the.mayor@rugby.gov.uk to support the charities.

Coun Nooria Sayani has been appointed Mayor of Rugby.



It's in for the long haul

THE LONGEST ever payload escorted by Warwickshire Police passed through Rugby last month.

On May 16, the force's Abnormal Loads team escorted a 430 tonne, 81 metres long, and nearly seven-metre-wide package through the middle of the town.

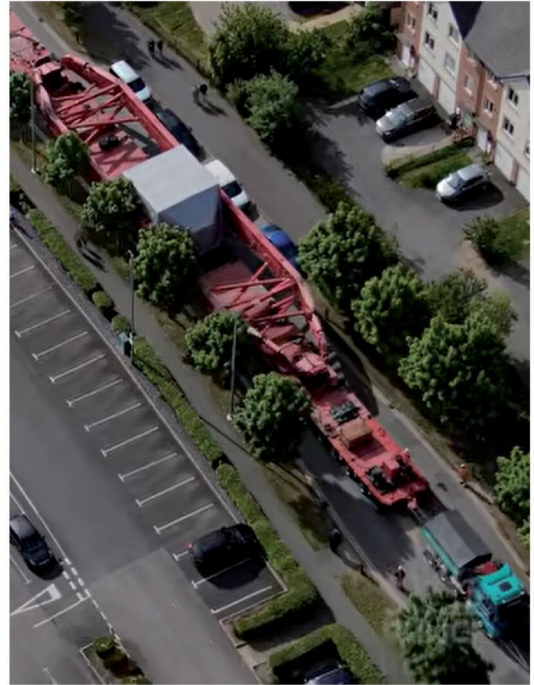
The item itself was a rotor stator to be used as part of the national electricity grid - one of several due to be taken through the county.

It also holds the honour of being the largest item the team has ever escorted.

A Warwickshire Police spokesperson said: "Our Abnormal Loads team are an essential part of moving anything oversized through the road network, where there might be a requirement for traffic management or even road closures to keep things moving.

"There is a limit to how large a vehicle can be before it's required to travel with a police escort.

"Other items that you've transported over recent years have included some enormous tunnel borers, and they're currently moving massive concrete bridge beams daily."



Visit www.rugbyobserver to watch a video of the transport vehicle as it threads its way through Rugby.

Drone footage shows the 430 tonne payload being escorted through Rugby.

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Branagh makes spellbinding return

Theatre review

The Tempest
RSC Stratford

ONE robed figure controlling, with the deft flick of his baton, all the human and orchestral forces massed around him, the success or failure of the project seemingly resting entirely on his shoulders.

It's an image which perhaps serves for more than just the opening salvo in this much-anticipated return to the RSC of Kenneth Branagh, acting giant and a man quite used to leading from the front.

As performances go, Branagh's Prospero is almost exactly what most audiences would be expecting and hoping for.

His ability to make Shakespeare's text appear both fresh and unexpectedly clear still works. While occasional drops in pace to make every word pellucid can grate after a while, this is acting which is a joy to watch and a lesson in less-is-more.

If there is one criticism it could be that in this case less might be a little on the light side.

This Prospero is affable and conciliatory but with scant evidence of rage or threat, a hint at the chance of wielding such power in anger is absent. The tendency, however controlled, to act the tyrant when it suits is certainly present in most of the world's more successful conductors.

Any maestro, no matter how forceful his or her personality may be, still needs every musician in the



Kenneth Branagh as Prospero. Picture by Johan Persson (RSC).

ranks to play well and this is where doubts and cracks appear.

Elsewhere there are a few reasons to relish this production, but many more which leave a feeling,

once the now ubiquitous overpowering tech is set aside, of a rather one-paced, perhaps even pedestrian offering.

Ruby Stokes as Miranda certainly

shines. Full of wonder while retaining a decent sprinkle of the sassiness modern audiences like to see in all female characters, this is a performance which sits comfortably

alongside the presence of Branagh without ever being in danger of becoming overshadowed.

The quartet of washed-up Italian nobles look like a slightly misplaced chorus from *The Yeomen of the Guard* and drift through the action never quite getting out of second gear. A bit more differentiation and a lot more menace might help.

Amara Okereke's flying Ariel certainly cuts it on the singing front but seems ironically hampered by the freedom flight allows her. The gradual but telegraphed move toward liberty with a Michelangelo 'touch of God' moment is, it has to said, heavy-handed.

Comedy is there in Richard Eyre's production but, like much else, it struggles to get any momentum going. The comic pairing of Stephano and Trinculo are simply too lacking in snap and pace to make any impression.

The music from Akintayo Akinbode and Stephen Warbeck is good and the songs are pleasingly handled. There is a decent array of fine stage pictures and storm effects to dazzle.

Most eyes in the house will inevitably be focussed throughout this run on the central performance and the confident technique it undoubtedly brings. Whether in a few years time any other memories of this production survive in the mind is far less certain.

Matthew Salisbury

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Show will go on

ARE YOU ready to rock? A feelgood musical featuring Queen's biggest hits, is next up at Rugby Theatre.

We Will Rock You features more than 20 of Queen's biggest songs, including *Bohemian Rhapsody*, *Somebody to Love*, *Don't Stop Me Now* and *We Are the Champions*.

With a story and script by comic Ben Elton, the show is set in a dystopian future where musical instruments are banned and rock music is dead. The evil Killer Queen has crushed creativity and only computer-generated sounds remain.

Enter outcasts Galileo and Scaramouche, who join a group of rebel 'Bohemians' searching for the one true riff that will set the world free.

The show's director, Emma Bright, says audi-

ences can expect high-octane choreography, futuristic costumes and impressive guitar solos from a live band.

She added: "Join us for this electrifying musical, that is a celebration of individuality, rebellion and the power of live music – it's packed with iconic hits."

"We've got larger-than-life characters, powerhouse vocalists and a cast ready to bring the house down so we guarantee audiences will leave buzzing."

"Tickets will sell out but the show must go on – don't miss your chance to experience the ultimate rock musical."

We Will Rock You will run from June 20 to 27, including a matinee on Saturday, June 27. Visit www.rugbytheatre.co.uk or call 01788 541234 for tickets.



Those about to rock, from left: Libby Lowe as Scaramouche, Natalie Van Spelde as Killer Queen and Wil Neale as Galileo. s



Year 4 children at The Crescent School with Sam Melia, from Bwengu Projects Malawi. s

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

KIND kids at a Rugby primary school put the 'fun' into fundraising to help a Rugby charity improve education in one of the world's least-developed countries.

Year 4 children at The Crescent School raised £2,120 for the Bwengu Projects Malawi charity, which Rugby couple Sue and Tony Melia set up in 2005, after they witnessed terrible conditions at a Malawi school where they taught as volunteers.

Year 4 children at The Crescent study Africa, Malawi and the work of the charity each year, and organise fundraising.

This year, pupils raised money through activities including a sponsored bucket fundraising challenge which gave the

children an insight into what it is like to carry a bucket for miles to fetch water every day.

Other fundraising initiatives have included a non-uniform day, a day of activities and games and collections at the school's Easter Service and spring concert.

The Crescent was one of the Bwengu Projects Malawi's first supporters, in 2007, when it donated books in one of the charity's first projects.

Crescent deputy head Bryony Forth said: "Supporting Bwengu Projects is a highlight of my teaching year, something which I am personally very proud to be a part of."

"Over the years, we must have raised nearly £20,000 for this charity and helped pay for renovating schools, building a women's development centre, providing sewing machines, classroom furniture, a teacher's salary and nearly 60,000

meals for orphans. The children worked incredibly hard this year, organising lots of events. They smashed their fundraising target, raising a total of £2,120, and pupils have chosen to support projects that include funding 12 months of orphan food, a school-block renovation and adult education and equipment.

"I am really proud of the children's engagement with Bwengu Projects and their work to empower communities in Malawi."

Sue and Tony's daughter, Sam Melia, who works with the charity, visited The Crescent to receive a cheque during the school's morning assembly.

Sam said: "There are so many different people in need across the world and we are so grateful that, every year, the pupils at Crescent School choose to support Bwengu Projects and help unlock the opportunity of education for the children of Malawi."

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Volunteers helping to preserve a chance to reflect on those lost



Sir Jeremy Wright talks with volunteers who dedicate time to maintaining graves at Kenilworth Cemetery.

KENILWORTH and Southam MP Sir Jeremy Wright remembers those who served during a visit to Kenilworth Cemetery

RECENTLY had the privilege of visiting war graves at Kenilworth Cemetery – a reminder that the visible history of loss in two world wars is not confined to the beaches of Normandy or the fields of Flanders, but is present in our own communities, and in communities across the country and the world.

I visited during War Graves Week,

the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's annual invitation to discover the stories behind the men and women commemorated at their sites worldwide.

It was a chance to reflect not just on our nation's history, but on the local lives cut short and the families left behind.

I was joined by CWGC volunteers Sarah and Mark Hann, who dedicate time to maintaining graves in our area, and by Sarah Moody, the CWGC's local Public Engagement Coordinator, who brought the history of Kenilworth's war dead to life with remarkable knowledge and care.

The CWGC commemorates personnel who died in service during the First and Second World Wars, as well as those who died after discharge if their death was caused by wartime service.

Military casualties buried in a grave are commemorated with a CWGC headstone, engraved with their military details, and some also carry a religious emblem and personal inscription chosen by their family.

Those with no known grave are recorded on Memorials to the Missing. In total, the Commission cares for the records of 1.7 million men and women of the

Commonwealth who died during the world wars.

For anyone who would like to explore the stories behind those commemorated, I would encourage you to download the free CWGC War Graves app. It allows you to search for war graves at more than 23,000 locations across more than 150 countries, using your phone's location to find sites near you, with maps, cemetery photos and guided tours of key sites.

You can also contribute to For Evermore, the CWGC's online portal where personal stories of the fallen are shared and preserved – ensuring that those we commemo-

rate are remembered not just as names on stone, but as real people whose loss was felt deeply by those who knew them.

The graves in Kenilworth are so well cared for because local volunteers give their time so generously. I'm grateful to Sarah, Mark and everyone who makes that possible. These sites, often set in beautiful surroundings, are well worth visiting with family and friends and taking a moment of quiet reflection.

Find out more at cwgc.org and discover For Evermore at cwgc.org/stories

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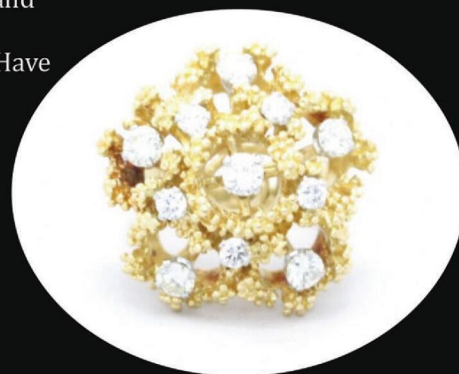
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Nominate your community heroes

by Sarah Mason
sarah.mason@bullivantmedia.com

NOMINATIONS are open for the 2026 Outstanding Citizens Awards.

West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Simon Foster has officially opened nominations for this year's honours.

The annual awards event aims to shine a light on everyday heroes across the region – those who go above and beyond to keep their communities safe, support victims of crime and act as positive role models for others.

Mr Foster, said: "These awards are about celebrating the unsung heroes from across our region who work tirelessly behind the scenes to make our communities safer.

"Whether it is a young leader or a community group supporting the vulnerable, we want to hear their stories. I urge everyone to nominate and help us give these outstanding citizens the recognition they deserve."

The 2026 ceremony will take place at the Coventry Boys and Girls Club, in Coventry city centre, on September 28.

The club is a fitting venue for this year's awards, having been named runners-up in the Outstanding Community Group category of last year's prizes.

As a recipient of the PCC's My Community Fund, the club has used vital funding to support young people in Coventry's most disadvantaged areas, providing a safe haven and addressing critical issues affecting the city's youth.

Leah O'Loughlin, youth service

manager at Coventry Boys and Girls Club, said: "Being recognised at last year's awards meant a great deal to our team and the young people we support.

"This recognition motivates us to keep expanding our work, reaching more young people and continuing to be a trusted and empowering presence in the community.

"We are honoured to host this year's ceremony and celebrate the positive impact being made across the city."

The five nomination categories for 2026 are Outstanding Citizen; Outstanding Young Citizen (aged 18 or younger); Outstanding Community Group; Outstanding Contribution to Supporting Victims of Crime; and Outstanding Campaign.

Nominations close at 11.59pm on Friday, July 3.

New service means support is there for male victims

HELP is on hand for male victims of domestic abuse across the West Midlands.

A new male Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA) service has been set up to provide dedicated support for men aged 16 and over assessed as being at high risk of domestic abuse in the region.

The region's Police and Crime Commissioner Simon Foster has commissioned Black Country Women's Aid to run the service as part of its Ask Marc programme, which supports men affected by domestic abuse and sexual violence and brings significant expertise in working with male victims with complex needs.

The new IDVA will work with the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) processes to provide intensive, person-centred support from the point of crisis.

This includes providing guidance on civil and criminal justice options, supporting victims to attend court and assisting with access to safe accommodation.

Practitioners will use recognised tools, including the Respect Toolkit, to ensure safe and accurate identification of primary victims.

The service recognises the experiences and risks faced by male victims, including coercive and controlling behaviour, counter-allegations, forced marriage and so-called 'honour-based' abuse, as well as the intersection between domestic abuse, cultural background, sexuality and other complex needs.

Mr Foster said: "Domestic abuse can affect anyone, and it is vital that male victims know they will be believed, supported and protected.

"This new service ensures that men at the highest level of risk have access to specialist advocacy and tailored support at the point they need it most.

"By embedding a dedicated Male IDVA within MARAC arrangements across the West Midlands, we are strengthening our multi-agency response and ensuring no victim falls through the gaps."

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Following on from the fantastic response to our debut 'Winter' edition of Seasons, we're delighted to announce that Seasons 'Spring' edition has now Sprung.

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The 'Spring' edition of Seasons is a celebration of all things 'local'. It's uplifting, inspiring and quintessentially local across the three counties of Warwickshire, Worcestershire and the West Midlands.

The beautifully glossy A5 magazine is freely available in print, from a major supermarket near you - and, the 'Spring' edition of Seasons is also available 24/7 on line and...it's being showcased across all of our local Observer and Standard Newspapers, websites and social media platforms, and will continue to be so, for the next 12 months.

Enjoy the exclusive, evergreen, 'Spring' edition of Seasons by logging on to www.seasons-magazine.com

You can still browse the 'Winter' edition of Seasons 24/7 and now, you can 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, Debra, Paul, Gareth or Sharon.

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Monty offers a chance to find out more about care

MONTY The Myton Hospices' AI Chatbot has been showing off his skills.

He took centre stage at the recent panel discussion at the British Medical Association.

Myton's digital marketing manager Dan Brown joined the discussion exploring the growing role of artificial intelligence within the charity sector and how organisations are using AI to improve access to information, support decision-making and streamline services.

During the discussion, which brought together sector experts, Dan presented Monty, The Myton Hospices AI chatbot, which launched on the charity's website last summer.

Monty was developed to help patients, loved ones, healthcare professionals and members of the public quickly access clear and accessible information about hospice care and The Myton Hospices. The presentation highlighted how AI can be used in practical and meaningful ways to improve accessibility and support service users, while keeping people at the centre of innovation.

Dan said: "It was a valuable opportunity to be part of a wider discussion on how AI is evolving. Presenting Monty allowed us to show a practical example of how this technology can help more



people access the right information, at the right time, in a way that works for them."

Since launching, Monty has been consistently used, with the most common enquiries relating to how to get a Myton referral (34 per cent), volunteering and work experience opportunities (23 per cent), and donation

enquiries (20 per cent).

The chatbot is also helping people access support more efficiently, with 70 per cent of sessions fully resolved within the chatbot itself, 20 per cent resolved through signposting to forms or phone support, and only ten per cent requiring human follow-up.

Following the conference, The Myton Hospices has also been invited to write an article about Monty and the development of the AI chatbot for the July edition of Governance and Leadership magazine.

SKY Blues fans can literally set their sights on the FA Cup at the Myton Hospices Summer Fayre.

Following Coventry City Football Club's recent promotion to the Premier League, attendees to the event at Coventry Myton Hospice tomorrow (Saturday) will have the opportunity to have their photograph taken with an official replica of the iconic FA Cup trophy won by the Sky Blue sin 1987.

The fayre, running from 10.30am until 1pm, promises a fun-filled morning for all ages, with stalls, games, hot food and refreshments. Visitors will also be treated to live performances from the Myton Choir and the Coventry Crew Girls.

Entry and parking are free, although donations are welcomed and will go directly towards supporting Myton's essential services.

Visit www.mytonhospice.org/Fayre for more details.

Monty the AI Chatbot is ready to answer a host of common enquiries.

Testing time for hopefuls

REGISTRATION is now open for the 11+ entrance test for Warwickshire grammar school places in 2027.

Parents who would like their child to be considered for a Year 7 place at one of the county's grammar school in September 2027 are reminded they must register their child for the 11+ test by June 30.

The 11+ test is used to assess whether a child is eligible for a place at one of Warwickshire's grammar schools. The test is open to all children who will be starting secondary school in September 2027 (those currently in Year 5).

The deadline to register is 4pm on Monday June 30. Any registrations submitted after this date will not be classed as being 'on time'.

The test itself will take place on September 12 and 13, and parents will receive their child's results in October, before the deadline to apply for a secondary school place on October 31.

Warwickshire County Council's education spokesperson Coun Wayne Briggs said: "Grammar school places in Warwickshire continue to be in high demand, so it's important that families are aware of the key dates for the 11+ test. Registering before the deadline is essential if they want their child to sit the test in September.

"During registration, families can also share details of any special educational needs, medical considerations or access requirements, allowing us to put appropriate support in place for their child on the day of the test."

Visit www.warwickshire.gov.uk/grammar-schools-11-test to register.

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- Return coach travel from Rugby
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- Entertainment some evenings
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Libraries just miss out on a national accolade

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

WARWICKSHIRE Libraries has just missed out on being declared Library of the Year.

It was one of six library services in the UK to be shortlisted for the accolade at the prestigious British Book Awards.

The shortlisting was in recognition of its successful Book Bingo initiative which, in 2025, saw 860 residents participate in the challenge.

Open to all Warwickshire Libraries members aged 16 and over, the challenge was to read or listen to 12 books from 12 different categories to complete a bingo card.

Those who finished the challenge were entered into a prize draw to win National Book Tokens.

The Library of the Year award was ultimately won by

Edinburgh Libraries for their impactful work with prisoners.

Warwickshire County Council's customer spokesperson Coun Mike Bannister said: "We are incredibly proud that Warwickshire Libraries' dedication to inspiring a love of reading across our communities has been recognised on a national stage through their shortlisting at the British Book Awards.

"Initiatives like Book Bingo create opportunities for all by making reading accessible.

"Research shows that regular readers are more likely to progress in education and employment so it's wonderful that we have made a difference with such a popular scheme.

"As we celebrate the National Year of Reading in 2026, let's hope the brilliant events we have planned mark the start of a lifelong love of learning for many of our residents."



Author Lee Child proved an inspiration to the next generation of readers and writers on his visit to Leamington Library.

Author's visit a thriller

BESTSELLING author Lee Child drew a packed crowd at Leamington Library.

The internationally renowned writer and library champion, best known as the creator of the Jack Reacher series, talked about his books, reflected on his path into writing, and spoke about the lasting importance of libraries in his life and career.

Ahead of the main event, he also joined members of the library's Youth Advisory Board for a filmed interview, answering questions and inspiring the next generation of readers and writers. A recorded Q&A session will be released on the library's YouTube channel in the coming weeks.

Warwickshire County Council's customer spokesperson Coun Mike Bannister said: "Events like this

highlight the vital role libraries play as vibrant community spaces, bringing people together through a shared love of reading and storytelling and setting many people on the path to learning and improved opportunities in life.

"It was wonderful to see such enthusiasm from those who joined us, and we are proud to host occasions that inspire and connect our communities.

"But, maybe, best of all was the interaction with our young people who will be inspired to make reading part of their lives.

"In this National Year of Reading, we are thrilled to attract a writer of this calibre and it's a testament to the service's growing reputation that we did so."



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A classic summer scented plant is the sweet pea – colourful and easy to grow in containers or in the ground.



Flowering gardens can bring joy to June's list of jobs

by Andy Morris
andy.morris@bullivantmedia.com

JUNE is a lovely month to be in the garden and although there are still plenty of jobs to do, gardeners can sit back and smell the roses, as they will be in full bloom.

Fragrant gardens really come into their own at this time of year and the key to success is to balance scents, shapes, foliage and colours.

For stronger-smelling plants, find a place away from the house or building that gets early-evening sun. Jasmine is perfect for this as it has a sweet musky scent that grows stronger in the evening and

makes sitting outside a joy. Roses are the crème de la crème of a scented flower bed and containers and can be planted in most places. Combining fragrances can produce an amazing, mood enhancing outdoor space that attracts bees and butterflies. For a tranquil haven, a mix of mild-scented flowers – such as lily-of-the-valley, lilac and rose – can be perfect. For a calming, relaxing feel, plant chamomile, scented geraniums and lavender too.

A classic summer-scented plant is the sweet pea – colourful and easy to grow in containers or in the ground. Sweet peas have different strengths of fragrance but the super-scented ones tend to be creamy or have bluish tints and their scents are distinctive – sweet, citrus, musk or spice.

The scent of sweet peas is strongest on warm, sunny days and in newly opened flowers. They like to be in open sunny locations with supports before planting. Make sure to guide developing shoots in the right direction and tie them in, if needed.

If flowers are picked or dead-headed frequently, they will flower through to around September.

If there is one job to be done this month it's to feed plants. Feeding is an easy thing to forget to do and not all plants benefit from being fed in the same way so tailoring feeding to suit different plants will give the best results. Add controlled-release plant food to the compost when planting new pots – it releases nutrients throughout the growing season. Sprinkling rose food around

the base of rose bushes this month will help promote a second flush of flowers. Dilute liquid tomato feed in a watering can and apply to damp compost – this will give a bumper crop if given to veg plants in containers, such as tomatoes and peppers.

For fruit and veg growers, now is the time to plant out the last of the tender crops including tomatoes and courgettes. Make sure anything planted out is watered and given support, if needed. Continue sowing salad crops, such as beetroot, lettuce, pak choi and radish and there's still time to sow French and runner beans, peas, squash, sweet-corn and outdoor cucumbers directly into prepared beds outside.

Other garden jobs for June that

are suggested by the RHS, include:

- Planting up summer hanging baskets and containers;
- Using water wisely to keep plants thriving;
- Pinching out sideshoots on tomatoes;
- Harvesting lettuce, radish, other salads and early potatoes;
- Hoeing borders regularly, to keep down weeds;
- Mowing lawns once per week – but consider leaving some areas uncut, for wildlife;
- Planting out summer bedding;
- Staking tall or floppy plants;
- Pruning many spring-flowering shrubs; and
- Shading greenhouses to keep them cool and prevent scorch.

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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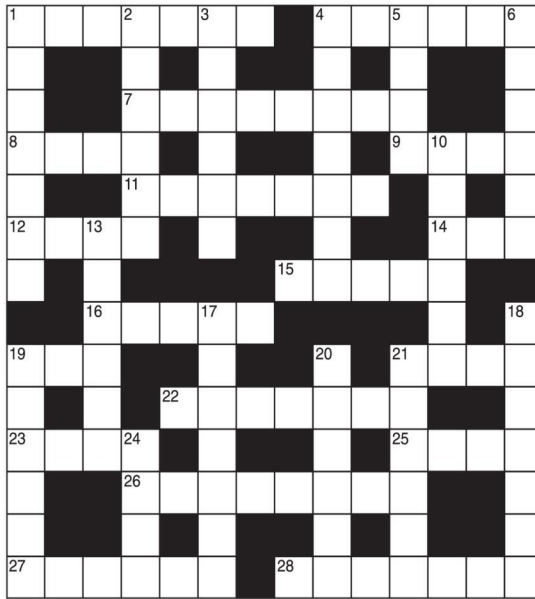
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GENERAL KNOWLEDGE CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 1, 16 & 14. Whig politician who was the first British foreign secretary (7,5,3)
- 4 & 25. Satirical fable by George Orwell (6,4)
- 7. Mineral commonly called blacklead or plumbago (8)
- 8. The colour of unbleached linen (4)
- 9 & 11. Novelist whose best-known work is Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus (4,7)
- 12. --- Tindall, daughter of the Princess Royal (4)
- 14. See 1 Across
- 15. See 10 Down
- 16. See 1 Across
- 19. Name applied to several species of poisonous snakes (3)
- 21. One of the chief gods of the ancient Germanic tribes (4)
- 22. A fabulous Arabian bird (7)
- 23. Daughter-in-law of Naomi, in the Old Testament (4)
- 25. See 4 Across
- 26. The golden city imagined by the Spanish conquerors of America (2,6)
- 27. Domesticated animal related to the llama (6)
- 28. Fresh greenness (7)



DOWN

- 1. In music, a flourish for a solo instrument at some important stage of a movement (7)
- 2. Italian town on Sicily, south-west of Syracuse (6)
- 3. Calcified substance forming the glossy coating on teeth (6)
- 4. Fruits of anise used for flavouring, etc. (7)
- 5. Latin word meaning "the same" (4)
- 6. The upper part of the windpipe (6)
- 10 & 15. Austrian who founded the school of individual psychology (6,5)
- 13. A high-caste Hindu of India (6)
- 17. Another name for the spiny anteater (7)
- 18. Plant genus in the crowfoot family, including the Pasque flower (7)
- 19. The Roman goddess of the dawn (6)
- 20. Breathe in air into the lungs (6)
- 21. City on the Thames, and seat of a famous university (6)
- 24. The sister and wife of Zeus (4)

SOLUTIONS

General Knowledge Crossword

ACROSS: 1 Charles; 4 Animal; 7 Graphite; 8 Ecu; 9 Mary; 11 Shelley; 12 Zara; 14 Fox; 15 Adler; 16 James; 19 Asp; 21 Odin; 22 Phoenix; 23 Ruth; 25 Farm; 26 El Dorado; 27 Alpacas; 28 Verdure. DOWN: 1 Cadenzas; 2 Ragusa; 3 Enamel; 4 Aniseed; 5 Idem; 6 Larynx; 10 Alfred; 13 Rajput; 17 Echidna; 18 Anemone; 19 Aurora; 20 Inhale; 21 Oxford; 24 Hera.

Crossword

ACROSS: 7 Stocks; 8 Caller; 10 Regular; 11 Terse; 12 Cove; 13 Vital; 17 State; 18 Syc; 22 Brine; 23 Curial; 24 Switch; 25 Slogan. DOWN: 1 Ostrich; 2 Forgive; 3 Skill; 4 Partial; 5 Alert; 6 Greet; 9 Armistice; 14 Stretch; 15 Strange; 16 Telling; 19 Abuse; 20 Rigid; 21 Doll.

Wordwheel Pathfinder

Des O'Connor, Michael Parkinson, Fern Britton, Graham Norton, Michael McIntyre, Davina McCall, David Letterman, Lily Allen, Charlotte Church, Paul O'Grady, Ellen DeGeneres, Alan Titchmarsh, Melanie Sykes, Jonathan Ross, Frank Skinner, Oprah Winfrey, Jack Docherty, Patrick Kielty.

Niner

SUNFLOWER

Codeword

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

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

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

Long, Lone, Lose, Lost, Most.
Moat, Boat.
Easy
Sudoku



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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:

PUBLIC FOOTPATH HAWLANDS ROAD, RUGBY

Order Effect: Footpath closed to all traffic opposite to property number 52 to a point opposite to property number 110.

Reason for Order: Water mains renewal works.

Order Commences: 10 June 2026 for up to 6 months.

Anticipated Completion: 24 July 2026.

Access & Diversion: Hawlands, Lloyd Road, Rydal Close, and vice versa.

Contractor: Severn Trent Water, Tel: 0800 783 4444.

CRITCHLEY DRIVE, DUNCHURCH

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.

Reason for Order: To enable duct laying & associated works.

Order Commences: 8 June 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 10 June 2026.

Access & Diversion: No diversion available.

Contractor: Quantum TM, Tel: 01724 786286.

OVAL ROAD, RUGBY

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.

Reason for Order: Boundary box renewal and meter installation.

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

Anticipated Completion: 11 June 2026.

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

Contractor: Chevron Traffic Management Ltd, Tel: 0330 008 0820.

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

LEICESTER ROAD, CHURCHOVER

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic south wards only from Gibbet Roundabout.

Reason for Order: To safely enable roundabout surveys, overnight 20.00hrs - 06.00hrs.

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

Anticipated Completion: 22 June 2026.

Access & Diversion: Leicester Road, M6 Junction 1 to M1 Junction 19 On Slip, Newbold Road, Rugby Western Relief Road, Lawford Road, Warwick Street, Corporation Street, Lawrence Sheriff Street, Dunchurch Road, Rugby Road, Southern Road, Southern By Pass, Daventry Road, Shuckburgh Road, Napton Road, Main Street, Park Hill, A425 Daventry Road, A425 Staverton Road, Leamington Way, Stefan Way, A361 Badby Road West, London Road, Weedon Road, A45 Daventry Link Road, Watling Street, A5 and vice versa.

Contractor: H W Martin, Tel: 07785 541692.

MERE LANE, COPSTON MAGNA

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.

Reason for Order: Water mains renewal works.

Order Commences: 22 June 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 6 July 2026.

Access & Diversion: Cloudesley Bush Lane, Lutterworth Road, Smockington Lane, Watling Street, A5, Coventry Road, Fosse Way and vice versa.

Contractor: Severn Trent Water, Tel: 0800 783 4444.

LUTTERWORTH ROAD, PAILTON & MONKS KIRBY

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.

Reason for Order: To enable water mains renewal works.

Order Commences: 22 June 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 9 August 2026.

Access & Diversion: Lutterworth Road, Rugby Road, Pailton Road, Harborough Road, Main Street, Newbold Road, Leicester Road, Watling Street, A5 and vice versa.

Contractor: Severn Trent Water, Tel: 0330 008 0820.

MAIN STREET, BRANDON

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.

Reason for Order: To enable sluice valve renewal works.

Order Commences: 23 June 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 26 June 2026.

Access & Diversion: Station Road, Main Street and vice versa.

Contractor: Chevron TM Ltd, Tel: 0330 008 0820.

MOOR FARM CLOSE, STRETTON ON DUNSMORE

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.

Reason for Order: Repair/replacement of defective manhole covers and frame.

Order Commences: 22 June 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 22 June 2026.

Access & Diversion: No diversion available.

Contractor: Go TM, Tel: 01611 351 5370.

AMBLESIDE, RUGBY

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.

Reason for Order: To enable duct laying works.

Order Commences: 23 June 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 25 June 2026.

Access & Diversion: Helvellyn Way, Bow Fell, Hawlands, Buttermere, Ambleside and vice versa.

Contractor: Openreach, Tel: 03700 500792.

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 04 June 2026

PUBLIC NOTICES

Warwickshire County Council

ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984

Warwickshire County Council has made the following Temporary Traffic Orders:

MERIDEN ROAD, FILLONGLEY

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.

Reason for Order: To enable telegraph pole replacement.

Order Commences: 8 June 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 8 June 2026.

Access & Diversion: Meriden Road, Ousterne Lane, Coventry Road, Tamworth Road, Rock Lane, Tamworth Road Service Road, Hollyfast Lane, Long Lane, Coundon Wedge Drive, Holyhead Road, Pickford Way, Dunchurch Highway, Birmingham Road, Henry Bosstock Road, Coventry Road, Maxstoke Lane, Fillongley Road and vice versa.

Contractor: Quantum TM, Tel: 01724 786286.

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

RYTON ROAD (ACCESS ROAD), BUBBENHALL

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.

Reason for Order: To enable new duct laying works, 09.30hrs - 15.30hrs.

Order Commences: 24 June 2026 for up to 18 months.

Anticipated Completion: 26 June 2026.

Access & Diversion: Ryton Road.

Contractor: Openreach, Tel: 03700 500 792.

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 04 June 2026

PUBLIC NOTICES

GOODS VEHICLE OPERATOR'S LICENCE

Mark Boon trading as Boon Automotive Transport Limited of 45 Spitfire Road, Southern, CV47 1AB, is applying for a licence to use Fullers Fulfillment, Harrison Way, Leamington Spa, CV31 3HJ as an operating centre for 10 goods vehicles and 10 trailers.

Owners or occupiers of land (including buildings) near the operating centre(s) who believe that their use or enjoyment of that land would be affected, should make written representations to the Traffic Commissioner at Quarry House, Quarry Hill, Leeds, LS2 7UE, stating their reasons, within 21 days of this notice.

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 from the Traffic Commissioner's office

PUBLIC NOTICES

GOODS VEHICLE OPERATOR'S LICENCE

NETWORK TRANSPORT SOLUTIONS LIMITED of 10, Bassett Court, Leake Close, Grange Park, Northampton, NN4 5EZ, is applying to change an existing licence as follows:

To keep an extra 5 goods vehicles at the operating centre at EDDIE STOBARTS LTD, WATLING STREET, CLIFTON UPON DUNSMORE, RUGBY, CV23 0AE 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

DAVID GEORGE FORREST (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 13 Winyates Road, Lighthowse Health, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, CV33 9TU, who died on 13/01/2026, are required to send written particulars thereof to the undersigned on or before 06/08/2026, after which date the Estate will be distributed having regard only to the claims and interests of which they have had notice.

MAX ENGL & CO LLP,

21-27 Tudor Court, Wootton Hope Drive, Wootton, Northampton, NN4 6FF

PUBLIC NOTICES

PHILIP DAVID PETER BOND (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 5 Chaffinch Road, Coventry, CV4 8NG, who died on 14/01/2026, are required to send written particulars thereof to the undersigned on or before 06/08/2026, after which date the Estate will be distributed having regard only to the claims and interests of which they have had notice.

Pennans Solicitors LLP,

17A Queens Road, Coventry, CV1 3DH

PUBLIC NOTICES

PATRICIA PARKES (Deceased)

Pursuant to the Trustee Act 1925 anyone with a claim against or an interest in the Estate of the deceased, late of 286-290 Dunchurch Road, Rugby, CV22 6JA, who died on 06/04/2026, must send written details to the address below by 06/08/2026, after which the Estate will be distributed with regard only to claims and interests notified.

Talbots Law,

Morgan House, 25-27 Hagley Road, Stourbridge, DY8 1QH. Ref: STUW/336006-0001

PUBLIC NOTICES

MARY MCLEOD (Deceased)

Pursuant to the Trustee Act 1925 anyone with a claim against or an interest in the Estate of the deceased, late of 44 Graywood Avenue, Coventry, West Midlands, CV5 8HN, who died on 04/11/2025, must send written details to the address below by 06/08/2026, after which the Estate will be distributed with regard only to claims and interests notified.

The WJL Associates Asset Management Limited,

Old Magistrates Court, Cheshire Road, Market Drayton, TF9 1PH. Ref: 2025-0677

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Blake Angliss on the track at Oulton Park. Picture by Jakob Ebrey, Photography.



Top-five double for Angliss in loan car at Oulton Park

MOTORSPORT: BLAKE Angliss overcame significant car issues to salvage two top-five finishes in the second round of the British GT Championship.

The Coventry driver narrowly missed out on a podium finish in both races, driving with teammate Revie Lake for Mahiki Racing in a loan car at Oulton Park.

Despite starting both races from the pit lane, Angliss and Lake found themselves in podium contention only to fall just short in the closing stages of both races.

Angliss said: "Considering how the weekend was going, to salvage a couple of top-five finishes and a decent haul of points from the races is pretty great.

"It's all down to the brilliant efforts of the Mahiki Racing team, who worked so, so hard to get the event back on track for us.

"It had probably been my toughest weekend in the British GT Championship so far. We were absolutely nowhere, watching cars just pull away from us on the straights, and it's pretty demoralising when there is nothing you can do as a driver to improve it.

"The team did a phenomenal job to change almost everything inside the car, and you instantly felt the improvement when we shook the car down in warm up.

"That gave us some confidence, but we knew we still had a huge mountain to climb starting both races from the pit lane.

"We gave it everything we had though and it was good fun getting to pull off some overtakes and fight our way up the order in both.

"We'll absolutely take the results we achieved though. We've got some points on the board now and we roll into Spa-Francorchamps

next determined to get a big result."

Angliss challenged for a podium finish in the opening round of the British GT Championship at Silverstone only for contact from another car to derail his top-three hopes.

And the young driver headed to Oulton Park alongside British GT newcomer Lake in a Mahiki Racing-prepared McLaren Artura GT4.

However, an incident in testing prior to the event meant the team had to loan a different car with a lack of power evident in the new Artura.

The car ran slowest through the speed traps in qualifying which led to the team replacing important components including the engine and gearbox.

This meant the car would start both of the two one-hour sprint races from the pit lane.

Angliss sat behind the wheel at the start of race one and went on the offensive as he gained three positions in the GT4 field before the mid-race pit stop.

And Lake continued the momentum in his stint but slipped to fourth in the closing minutes of the race as the team just missed out on a podium.

Lake then produced another strong stint at the start of race two as the teenager fought his way into the top-10.

Angliss took over for the second half of the race and emerged from the pit stop window in sixth place.

He found himself in fourth owing to issues with other cars and battled with two other cars for the final GT4 podium spot.

However, Angliss had to settle for fifth place despite a valiant effort.

Godiva Harriers athlete Speeds to marathon victory

by Aaron Sutcliffe
aaron.sutcliffe@bullivantmedia.com

ATHLETICS: COVENTRY Godiva Harriers athlete Harvey Speed won the Market Harborough Half Marathon in a field of almost 1,000 runners.

Speed won the race in a time of 1 hour 13 minutes and 29 seconds, almost five minutes ahead of Isaac Walter who took second place.

The inaugural Market Harborough Half Marathon attracted runners from Leicestershire and neighbouring counties to run a 13.1-mile route.

Race sponsors Snap Fitness led an exuberant warm-up for the runners assisted by the team at Harborough FM who provided the soundtrack to the event throughout.

Speed and Walter, the latter running for Northampton Road Runners, led the field from the off with the route interspersed by a team of pacers.

And after 73 minutes of running, Speed came into view first down Gallow Field Road - the home straight - as he flew down the last stretch to break the ribbon and cross the line in first place in the men's race.

Speed opened up a significant gap to race rival Walter at the finish line as the latter runner finished four minutes and 36 seconds after Speed crossed the line while Chris Hardy completed the podium in the men's race.

Race Harborough also deployed a team of 95 volunteers across the course with a large traffic management team in place in key locations.

Harvey Speed crossed the line in first place. Picture © Race Harborough.



Quartet of players make senior academy leap

RUGBY UNION: COVENTRY Rugby have confirmed four of the club's young players will make the step up to the senior academy next season.

The quartet of Elefio Vulimai-Igiladi, Charlie Stallard, Cornelius Nartey and Will Dorrell will all progress to the senior academy.

Vulimai-Igiladi became the first player to sign for the club from college partner St Regis School.

The strong ball carrier joined Coventry's senior academy as an under-17 player 18 months ago and offers a serious physical presence.

Stallard proved a standout performer in the National Schools Vase final at Twickenham representing The King's School in Gloucester.

The Bredon Star RFC product currently plays for Cheltenham Tigers and has impressed as a utility back at under-18 level.

Nartey becomes the latest second row to emerge from Coventry's academy pathway.

Following in the footsteps of 2025 academy graduate Sam Harding, Nartey has established himself as a physical forward with ability at the lineout and the ruck.

Under-18 captain Dorrell joins the senior academy after attending an England under-20 training camp and representing the first team against Cornish Pirates this season.

Dorrell will continue his development with Coventry on a dual-career pathway alongside club sponsors Bromwich Hardy.



Coventry Rugby's senior academy players for the 2026/27 season. Picture courtesy of Coventry Rugby.

Coventry have confirmed 2025 academy intake players Taio Varnndell, Sam Gibson, Drew Johnson and Harding will all continue into the second year of their academy contracts.

Varnndell is currently taking part in the Shute Shield with Southern Districts Rugby Club in Australia.

He scored a try for England under-19s against Japan earlier this season and also scored a memorable try for Coventry against London Scottish from 50-metres out.

Gibson made two senior appearances for Coventry at tighthead prop against Cambridge and Bedford Blues.

The 18-year-old also spent time on loan

at Newport Salop RUFC and Macclesfield RUFC in National League Two.

Back rower Johnson gained experience on loan with Oxford Harlequins and Syston in the National Leagues.

He made more than 20 appearances in National League rugby this season alongside training with Coventry's first team.

Harding missed a large part of the season with a hamstring injury which also interrupted his loan spell as Oxford Harlequins.

However, he returned from injury for Coventry against Cornish Pirates and featured in Alex Rae's final five Champ Rugby matchday squads.

City star in World Cup call-up

FOOTBALL: COVENTRY City forward Brandon Thomas-Asante has earned a place in the Ghana squad for the upcoming 2026 FIFA World Cup this summer.

Thomas-Asante scored 12 goals in 31 appearances for the Sky Blues last season as Coventry won promotion to the Premier League.

And the forward has now received a call-up to the Ghana squad for the World Cup as he looks to add to his total of one goal in eight caps on the inter-

national stage.

The 27-year-old received his first call-up to the Ghana squad in 2023 and made his international debut in June 2024 against Central African Republic.

His only goal for Ghana came in a Unity Cup defeat against Nigeria in May 2025.

This summer's World Cup will take place in the United States of America, Mexico and Canada.

Ghana will play Panama, England and Croatia in the group stages of the World Cup.

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Valley in signing spree

by Aaron Sutcliffe
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FOOTBALL: RUGBY Town have bolstered their squad ahead of the 2026/27 after confirming the arrival of seven new players.

Ryan Boothe, Jamie Ashmore, Jake Wormleighton, Devonn O'Sullivan, Ben Richards, Jake Duffy and Ash Bodycote have all made the move to Butlin Road.

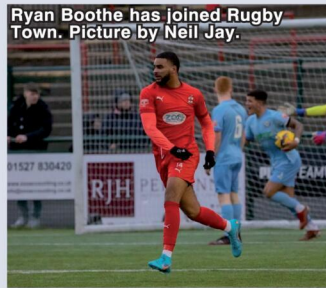
Experienced striker Boothe joins Valley following spells with Shifnal Town, Bedworth United and Coleshill Town last season.

The 30-year-old has plenty of experience at Step Three and Step Four and scored nine goals in 14 games for Redditch United at the end of the 2024/25 campaign.

Experienced defender Ashmore won promotion from Step Five under Valley manager Grant Joshua at Lye Town in 2023.

The 30-year-old also won promotion from the United Counties League Premier Division South with Racing Club Warwick in 2024.

He helped Northfield Town win the Midland



Ryan Boothe has joined Rugby Town. Picture by Neil Jay.

Football League Division Two title last season.

Centre-back Wormleighton moves to Butlin Road following a long spell with Aylestone Park where he progressed from the club's youth team to the senior side.

Young midfielder O'Sullivan will return to Butlin Road next season following a previous stint with Valley on dual registration from Stratford Town in 2023/24.

The 19-year-old went on trial at Coventry

City following his loan spell at Valley and spent most of last season at Coventry Sphinx before ending the campaign at Hinckley.

Towering defender Richards spent time at Bedworth, Redditch, Heanor Town and Shepshed Dynamo last term before ending the season at Nuneaton Town.

The 27-year-old previously played for Kidlington at Step Four and finished as the club's top scorer in 2023/24 with 10 goals from defence.

Veteran midfielder Duffy has also made the move to Rugby with the 37-year-old the latest outfield player to arrive at Butlin Road.

Duffy was named in the Step Four team of the season for three years in a row from 2021/22 to 2023/24.

He helped Stamford win the Northern Premier League Midlands in 2022/23 and then helped Harborough Town secure promotion the following season.

Goalkeeper Bodycote returns for a third spell at Butlin Road from Northampton Sileby Rangers.

The 27-year-old came through Valley's youth academy and made his debut for the club as a teenager in the FA Cup.

Desai stars in home win against Stratford

CRICKET: DARSHAN Desai started with bat and ball as Rugby CC battled to a four-wicket victory against Stratford-upon-Avon chasing a 200-plus score.

Opener and captain Desai (43) and Manan Bhardwaj (41) led the run chase as Rugby secured victory in the 45th over of their reply at Webb Ellis Road.

Stratford managed 203 all out in their innings as visiting captain Gareth Langman (85) top scored while Desai (3-33) took three wickets.

Rugby won the toss and elected to field as Tyrese Karelse (2-36) took a couple of early wickets.

However, Henry Hopkins (23) and Langan combined at the crease to rebuild the Stratford innings.

The Stratford skipper eventually fell to the bowling of Noah Massey (2-43)

while Daanyal Sadiq (1-37) had Matthew Warren (17) stumped.

Rugby made a strong start with the bat in reply.

Desai and Danny De Souza (23) put on 57 runs for the first wicket.

And De Souza and Bhardwaj enjoyed a 61-run second-wicket stand.

Angus King (3-52) removed both De Souza and Bhardwaj and also trapped Suhas Thyagaraj (0) while James Harrison (1-19) accounted for Karelse (5).

And Harrison ran out Massey (1) as a flurry of wickets left Rugby on 127-6.

However, Ishan Fernando (33 not out) and Harry Gedye (31 not out) combined for a match-winning 77-run partnership to guide the home side to a four-wicket victory.

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FINAL

WINNER OF SF 2
New Jersey, USA

SEMI-FINAL 2

WINNER OF QF 3 WINNER OF QF 4
Atlanta, USA

PLACE MATCH

LOSER OF SF 2
Miami, USA

ROUND OF 16

WINNER OF MATCH 9 WINNER OF MATCH 10
Match 21: July 5, 9pm - New Jersey, USA

WINNER OF MATCH 11 WINNER OF MATCH 12
Match 22: July 6, 1am - Mexico City, Mexico

QUARTER-FINAL 3

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

QUARTER-FINAL 4

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

ROUND OF 16

WINNER OF MATCH 13 WINNER OF MATCH 14
Match 23: July 7, 5pm - Atlanta, USA

WINNER OF MATCH 15 WINNER OF MATCH 16
Match 24: July 7, 9pm - Vancouver, Canada

ROUND OF 32

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GROUP D

UNITED STATES PARAGUAY
June 13, 2am - Los Angeles, USA - BBC

AUSTRALIA TURKEY
June 14, 5am - Vancouver, Canada - ITV

UNITED STATES AUSTRALIA
June 19, 8pm - Seattle, USA - BBC

TURKEY PARAGUAY
June 20, 5am - Santa Clara - ITV

TURKEY UNITED STATES
June 26, 3am - Los Angeles, USA - ITV

PARAGUAY AUSTRALIA
June 26, 3am - Santa Clara, USA - ITV

	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1						
2						
3						
4						

GROUP E

GERMANY CURACAO
June 14, 6pm - Houston, USA - ITV

IVORY COAST ECUADOR
June 15, 12am - Philadelphia, USA - BBC

GERMANY IVORY COAST
June 20, 9pm - Toronto, Canada - ITV

ECUADOR CURACAO
June 21, 1am - Kansas City, USA - BBC

CURACAO IVORY COAST
June 25, 9pm - Philadelphia, USA - BBC

ECUADOR GERMANY
June 25, 9pm - New Jersey, USA - BBC

	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1						
2						
3						
4						

GROUP F

NETHERLANDS JAPAN
June 14, 9pm - Dallas, USA - ITV

SWEDEN TUNISIA
June 15, 3am - Monterrey, Mexico - ITV

NETHERLANDS SWEDEN
June 20, 6pm - Houston, USA - BBC

TUNISIA JAPAN
June 21, 5am - Monterrey, Mexico - BBC

JAPAN SWEDEN
June 26, 12am - Dallas, USA - BBC

TUNISIA NETHERLANDS
June 26, 12am - Kansas City, USA - BBC

	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1						
2						
3						
4						

GROUP J

ARGENTINA ALGERIA
June 17, 2am - Kansas City, USA - ITV

AUSTRIA JORDAN
June 17, 5am - Santa Clara, USA - BBC

ARGENTINA AUSTRIA
June 22, 6pm - Dallas, USA - BBC

JORDAN ALGERIA
June 23, 4am - Santa Clara, USA - ITV

ALGERIA AUSTRIA
June 28, 3am - Kansas City, USA - BBC

JORDAN ARGENTINA
June 28, 3am - Dallas, USA - BBC

	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1						
2						
3						
4						

GROUP K

PORTUGAL DR CONGO
June 17, 6pm - Houston, USA - BBC

UZBEKISTAN COLOMBIA
June 18, 3am - Mexico City, Mexico - BBC

PORTUGAL UZBEKISTAN
June 23, 6pm - Houston, USA - ITV

COLOMBIA DR CONGO
June 24, 3am - Guadalajara, Mexico - ITV

COLOMBIA PORTUGAL
June 28, 12.30am - Miami, USA - BBC

DR CONGO UZBEKISTAN
June 28, 12.30am - Atlanta, USA - BBC

	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1						
2						
3						
4						

GROUP L

ENGLAND CROATIA
June 17, 9pm - Dallas, USA - ITV

GHANA PANAMA
June 18, 12am - Toronto, Canada - ITV

ENGLAND GHANA
June 23, 9pm - Boston, USA - BBC

PANAMA CROATIA
June 24, 12am - Toronto, Canada - BBC

PANAMA ENGLAND
June 27, 10pm - New Jersey, USA - ITV


CROATIA GHANA
June 27, 10pm - Philadelphia, USA - ITV

	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1						
2						
3						
4						



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Group E-H

GROUP E	
	CURACAO Manager Fred Rutten Captain Leandro Bacuna FIFA ranking 82
	ECUADOR Manager Sebastian Beccacece Captain Enner Valencia FIFA ranking 23
	GERMANY Manager Julian Nagelsmann Captain Joshua Kimmich FIFA ranking 10
	IVORY COAST Manager Emese Fae Captain Franck Kessie FIFA ranking 34
GROUP F	
	JAPAN Manager Hajime Moriyasu Captain Wataru Endo FIFA ranking 18
	NETHERLANDS Manager Ronald Koeman Captain Virgil van Dijk FIFA ranking 7
	SWEDEN Manager Graham Potter Captain Victor Lindelof FIFA ranking 38
	TUNISIA Manager Sabri Lamouchi Captain Elyes Skhiri FIFA ranking 44

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

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

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

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

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

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



NAGELSMANN'S LAST HURRAH?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Egypt are flush with continental success, having won the Africa Cup of Nations seven times, and they will never have a better chance to advance and will be intent on sending Mo Salah into international retirement on a high. Despite an injury-hit season with Nottingham Forest, Chris Wood is set to lead out New Zealand, and with it, become their outright appearance maker.

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

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

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

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

GROUP G	
	BELGIUM Manager Rudi Garcia Captain Youri Tielemans FIFA ranking 9
	EGYPT Manager Hossam Hassan Captain Mohamed Salah FIFA ranking 28
	IRAN Manager Amir Ghalehnoei Captain Ehsan Hajsafi FIFA ranking 21
	NEW ZEALAND Manager Darren Bazeley Captain Chris Wood FIFA ranking 85
GROUP H	
	CAPE VERDE Manager Bubista Captain Ryan Mendes FIFA ranking 69
	SAUDI ARABIA Manager Georgios Donis Captain Salem Al-Dawsari FIFA ranking 61
	SPAIN Manager Luis de la Fuente Captain Rodri FIFA ranking 2
	URUGUAY Manager Marcelo Bielsa Captain Josa Maria Gimenez FIFA ranking 17

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Groups I-L

FIFA World Cup 2026 7

THE LAST DANCE

GROUP I

FRANCE
 Manager Didier Deschamps
 Captain Kylian Mbappe
 FIFA ranking: 1

IRAQ
 Manager Graham Arnold
 Captain Jalal Hassan
 FIFA ranking: 57

NORWAY
 Manager Stale Solbakken
 Captain Martin Odegaard
 FIFA ranking: 31

SENEGAL
 Manager Pape Thiaw
 Captain Kalidou Koulibaly
 FIFA ranking: 14

GROUP J

ALGERIA
 Manager Vladimir Petkovic
 Captain Riyad Mahrez
 FIFA ranking: 29

ARGENTINA
 Manager Lionel Scaloni
 Captain Lionel Messi
 FIFA ranking: 3

AUSTRIA
 Manager Ralf Rangnick
 Captain David Alaba
 FIFA ranking: 44

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ghana have flattered to deceive since the quarter-finals of 2010, but they will be intent on making a statement under Carlos Queiroz, not least after failing to qualify for AFCON 2025. For their second appearance at the World Cup, Panama have once again been drawn in a group with England and will be looking at avoid a similar 6-1 thrashing at Russia 2018.

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

GROUP K

COLOMBIA
 Manager Nestor Lorenzo
 Captain James Rodriguez
 FIFA ranking: 13

DR CONGO
 Manager Sebastian Desamba
 Captain Chancel Mbemba
 FIFA ranking: 46

PORTUGAL
 Manager Roberto Martinez
 Captain Cristiano Ronaldo
 FIFA ranking: 5

UZBEKISTAN
 Manager Fabio Cannavaro
 Captain Eldor Shomurodov
 FIFA ranking: 50

GROUP L

CROATIA
 Manager Zlatko Dalic
 Captain Luka Modric
 FIFA ranking: 11

ENGLAND
 Manager Thomas Tuchel
 Captain Harry Kane
 FIFA ranking: 4

GHANA
 Manager Carlos Queiroz
 Captain Jordan Ayew
 FIFA ranking: 74

PANAMA
 Manager Thomas Christiansen
 Captain Anibal Godoy
 FIFA ranking: 33

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