YOUR FREE MONTHLY COMMUNITY MAGAZINE

EDITION NO. 23 DEC 2026

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Could you Become a Mentor and Change a Young Persons Life?

A local children's charity is appealing for people across the Wyre Forest to come forward and become volunteer mentors, offering a helping hand to children and young people who may be facing difficult times in their lives.

Stourport-based charity Mentor Link is looking for caring, understanding adults who can spare just one to two hours a week to support a young person who needs someone to talk to.

The charity provides one-to-one mentoring for vulnerable and distressed children and young people experiencing social, emotional and family difficulties. These challenges can include bullying, bereavement, family breakdown and anxiety, all of which can have an impact on confidence, relationships and engagement with education.
Sometimes, having somebody outside their immediate family or school circle who is willing to listen without judgement can make a huge difference.

Mentor Link believes that every child deserves to feel valued, supported and encouraged to reach their full potential. Its mentoring programme gives young people the opportunity to build confidence, develop positive relationships and become more engaged with learning and everyday life.

Volunteers don't need to be experts or have professional qualifications. What matters is having life experience, an interest in helping the next generation and the ability to offer a listening ear, encouragement and a positive role model.

The commitment is a minimum of six months, volunteering for one to two hours each week. Mentor Link also provides a dedicated team of staff to support volunteers throughout their role.
As part of its safer recruitment process, all prospective mentors will need to complete an application form, provide references and undergo an Enhanced DBS check.

If you've ever thought about giving a little of your time to help somebody else, this could be a wonderful opportunity to make a lasting difference.

As Mentor Link says, you never know just how much difference simply being there for someone can make.

To find out more about becoming a volunteer mentor, contact Mentor Link on 01299 822336, email enquiries@mentorlink.org.uk or visit www.mentorlink.org.uk.

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Young Gloves Founder Receives

British Empire Medal



A Kidderminster martial arts instructor who has spent more than 27 years supporting people and bringing communities together has received the British Empire Medal (BEM).

Justin Thomas, founder and Senior Instructor of Young Gloves Karate (YGK), was presented with the honour on Friday, 30 October, by Worcestershire's Lord-Lieutenant, Mrs Beatrice Grant. The award was announced in the 2026 New Year Honours List in recognition of his services to the community.

Since founding Young Gloves Karate in 1999, Justin and his team have helped more than 5,000 people through martial arts, education and community projects.
The club's work goes well beyond the karate mat, with anti-bullying education, knife crime awareness, women's self-defence workshops, First Aid training and disability karate sessions among its activities.
YGK has also supported people experiencing mental health difficulties and alcohol addiction, welcomed blind and visually impaired participants and visited Birmingham Children's Hospital to bring encouragement to young patients. During the Covid pandemic, the team organised online activities to help people stay connected and tackle isolation.

Fundraising has also played a major part in the club's work, with more than £90,000 raised for charities and good causes. Justin has personally taken on challenges including half marathons, the Three Peaks Challenge and sponsored cycle rides. The club now hopes to reach £100,000 by the end of 2027.

Sporting achievements have also followed. Justin achieved his 6th Dan Wado Ryu black belt in 2025, while six club members represented England at the 2026 ICO World Championships in France, bringing home an impressive 24 medals, including 13 gold.
Speaking after receiving his BEM, Justin said: "I'm incredibly proud and humbled to receive this honour, but I see it as recognition of what so many people have achieved together over the years.

"The real value is in the people, the friendships, the support and the sense of belonging that can develop along the way. "I'm grateful to our instructors, students, families, volunteers, community partners and everyone who has supported us over the years. None of this happens alone."

Justin's previous recognition includes Hero of Worcestershire and the Mayor's Achiever Award. He was also invited to a Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace earlier this year.
To find out more about Young Gloves Karate, visit: younggloves.co.uk.





Wyre Forest Communities Come Together

To Honour and Remember the Fallen

Hundreds of people gathered across Wyre Forest on Sunday, November 8, to pay their respects to the servicemen and women who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

Remembrance Sunday services and parades took place in Kidderminster, Bewdley and Stourport, with residents, veterans, community groups and local organisations coming together to honour those who gave their lives in conflicts past and present.

In Kidderminster, large crowds lined the streets as the annual Remembrance parade made its way from New Road to St Mary and All Saints Church.



Veterans, civic dignitaries, military and police cadets, scouts and representatives from numerous community organisations took part, with residents turning out in large numbers to watch the procession and pay their respects.

A moving service was held at the church, where tributes were paid to the 650 men from Kidderminster who lost their lives during the First World War and a further 150 who died during the Second World War.

The names and sacrifices of those who never returned home remain an important part of the town's history, and the service provided an opportunity for the community to reflect and remember.

In Bewdley, residents also turned out in force for the town's Remembrance Sunday parade and service.

Local groups and organisations gathered at Bridge House on Riverside North before making their way through the town to the War Memorial at St Anne's Church.

The procession was followed by the traditional two-minute silence, giving those gathered an opportunity to pause and remember the fallen. A church service followed, bringing the formal commemorations to a close.

Stourport also marked the occasion with its annual Remembrance Sunday parade and service at the War Memorial on Vale Road.

The parade assembled at the Royal British Legion on Lichfield Street before setting off at 10.35am, travelling along Severn Road, Mitton Street and Vale Road to the war memorials.

Wreaths were laid during the service, followed by the Act of Remembrance. The Last Post was sounded before residents, veterans and members of the community observed the two-minute silence.

Following the service, the parade reassembled and marched back towards the Royal British Legion Headquarters via Lion Hill and Lichfield Street, where it was formally dismissed.
Across all three towns, the strong turnout was a reminder of the importance local communities continue to place on Remembrance Sunday.

From the veterans and serving personnel taking part to the young cadets, scouts and families standing along the parade routes, people of all ages came together to ensure that the sacrifices made by previous generations are never forgotten.

As the wreaths were laid and the familiar sound of the Last Post echoed across Wyre Forest, the message remained the same: we will remember them.



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Elizabethan Christmas

at Harvington Hall

Christmas at Harvington Hall is a chance to step back in time and discover what the festive season would have looked like more than 400 years ago.

Over two weekends in December, this beautiful Tudor manor house will be brought to life with costumed reenactors, giving visitors the chance to experience the sights, sounds and smells of an Elizabethan Christmas.

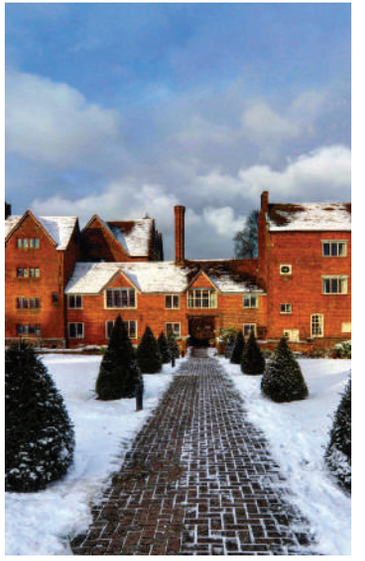
As you wander through the Hall, you'll find the Great Kitchen full of activity, with the cook preparing traditional Tudor dishes over the roaring fire. There will be musicians playing, traditional festive greenery decorating the rooms and members of the household dressed in their finest clothing as they get ready for Christmas.

With flickering fires, festive decorations, music, cooking and plenty of characters from the past, there's something to discover around every corner.

Visitors can explore the Hall at their own pace, rather than following a formal guided tour. Stewards will be on hand throughout the house to answer questions, share stories and point out some of Harvington Hall's fascinating features, including its famous priest hides.

It's a wonderful opportunity to experience Christmas as it might have been celebrated during Elizabethan times, soak up the atmosphere and perhaps even catch a glimpse of the Lord of Misrule!

For dates, times and further information, visit
www.harvingtonhall.co.uk



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New Wyre Forest Rotary Club Brings

Christmas Cheer to the Community

A new Rotary club has launched in Wyre Forest, bringing people and local businesses together through a shared desire to make a positive difference in the local community.

Rotary is a worldwide organisation dedicated to bringing people together to help others and make a difference.

Wyre Forest Rotary members are currently meeting twice a month to discuss various projects and how as people and local businesses, they can assist within the local community whether that be raising funds for a defibrillator or volunteering to tidy a communal garden. The easiest way to support the new club is to follow Wyre Forest Rotary Club on Facebook, where you can find details of upcoming events, volunteering opportunities and the latest club news. Whether you or your business wants to become a member, lend a hand or simply support what the club is doing, everyone is welcome.

With Christmas fast approaching, the club is already preparing its first festive treat for local families.

Santa Claus is coming to town! One of the club's first major community events will be its Santa's Sleigh Tour, with Santa and his elves visiting neighbourhoods across Wyre Forest over 12 evenings between December 4 and 20.

Taking place between 6 pm and 8 pm, the tour will give children and families the chance to meet Santa, enjoy some festive cheer and get into the Christmas spirit as well as raise money for various local charities.

Families are encouraged to follow Wyre Forest Rotary Club on Facebook for details of when Santa will be visiting their neighbourhood, including routes, how to access the live tracker and how to donate.

If you're a local business looking to make a difference, or simply interested in supporting your community, Wyre Forest Rotary offers a wonderful opportunity to connect with like-minded people and help make a positive difference locally. New faces, fresh ideas and enthusiastic supporters are always welcome.

Why not come along and find out more? We meet at 7.00pm on the first Tuesday of each month at Hopley's Rustic Kitchen, Cleobury Road, Bewdley, DY12 2QL or visit our Facebook page for more details "Wyre Forest Rotary Club".





Autumn walks to enjoy around

Wyre Forest and Stourbridge

Autumn is bringing vibrant shades of red, orange and gold to woodlands and countryside across the region. With cooler days and colourful views attracting walkers, families and photographers, it's a lovely time to explore the trails around Wyre Forest and Stourbridge.

One of the area's best-known walking destinations is Clent Hills. The routes climb through open hillsides and woodland, with panoramic views across the Black Country and Worcestershire. On a clear day, walkers may even be able to see as far as the northern edge of the Cotswolds. The changing leaves add a seasonal backdrop to the views, whether you're taking a short stroll or setting out for a longer walk. A short drive from Stourbridge, Kinver Edge offers woodland paths, striking sandstone formations and the National Trust's historic Rock Houses. The wider Kingsford Forest Park has plenty to explore too, with wooded trails that take visitors beyond the well-known hilltop views. It's a popular spot for a brisk autumn walk, with different routes to suit a range of abilities.

For a longer woodland adventure, Wyre Forest has miles of trails beneath a canopy of trees. One of England's largest ancient woodlands, it offers plenty of space to wander and enjoy the changing colours. Visitors can stop at the café, while parking is available for a fee.

Closer to Dudley, Saltwells Nature Reserve offers quieter woodland paths and habitats rich in wildlife. Baggeridge Country Park is another favourite, especially with families, thanks to its lakeside routes and accessible trails.

Further north, Cannock Chase combines extensive woodland with open heathland. Its varied landscape draws visitors throughout the year, and walkers may spot deer and other wildlife along the way.

For sweeping countryside views near Stourbridge, Wychbury Hill is well worth a visit. The hill is home to the distinctive Wychbury Obelisk, a landmark that can be seen from across the surrounding area.

With autumn colours expected to develop over the coming weeks, now is a good opportunity to discover the region's parks, nature reserves and countryside trails before winter arrives. From a peaceful woodland path to a hilltop walk with far-reaching views, there's a route to suit every kind of autumn outing.





Brinton Park Pavilion and Café

Now Open After Restoration

Brinton Park's restored pavilion and new café are now open to visitors, marking a new chapter for the Kidderminster park following a £2.4 million restoration project.

The work has brought the park's ornamental pool, bridge and surrounding landscape back into use, with improvements designed to help people enjoy the site and its heritage for years to come.

The project was celebrated at an official opening on Saturday, October 31. Visitors gathered for live music from noon and a ribbon-cutting ceremony at 1pm. Little Al's Kitchen also served drinks and ice cream during the event.
Temporary barriers that had surrounded parts of the restoration were removed ahead of the opening, allowing visitors to explore the park as a whole again. The completed work includes restored historic features and improvements to habitats for wildlife.

An exhibition of photographs at the park traces how Brinton Park has changed since it first opened. The project has also created opportunities for people to learn about the park's history and get involved through volunteering.

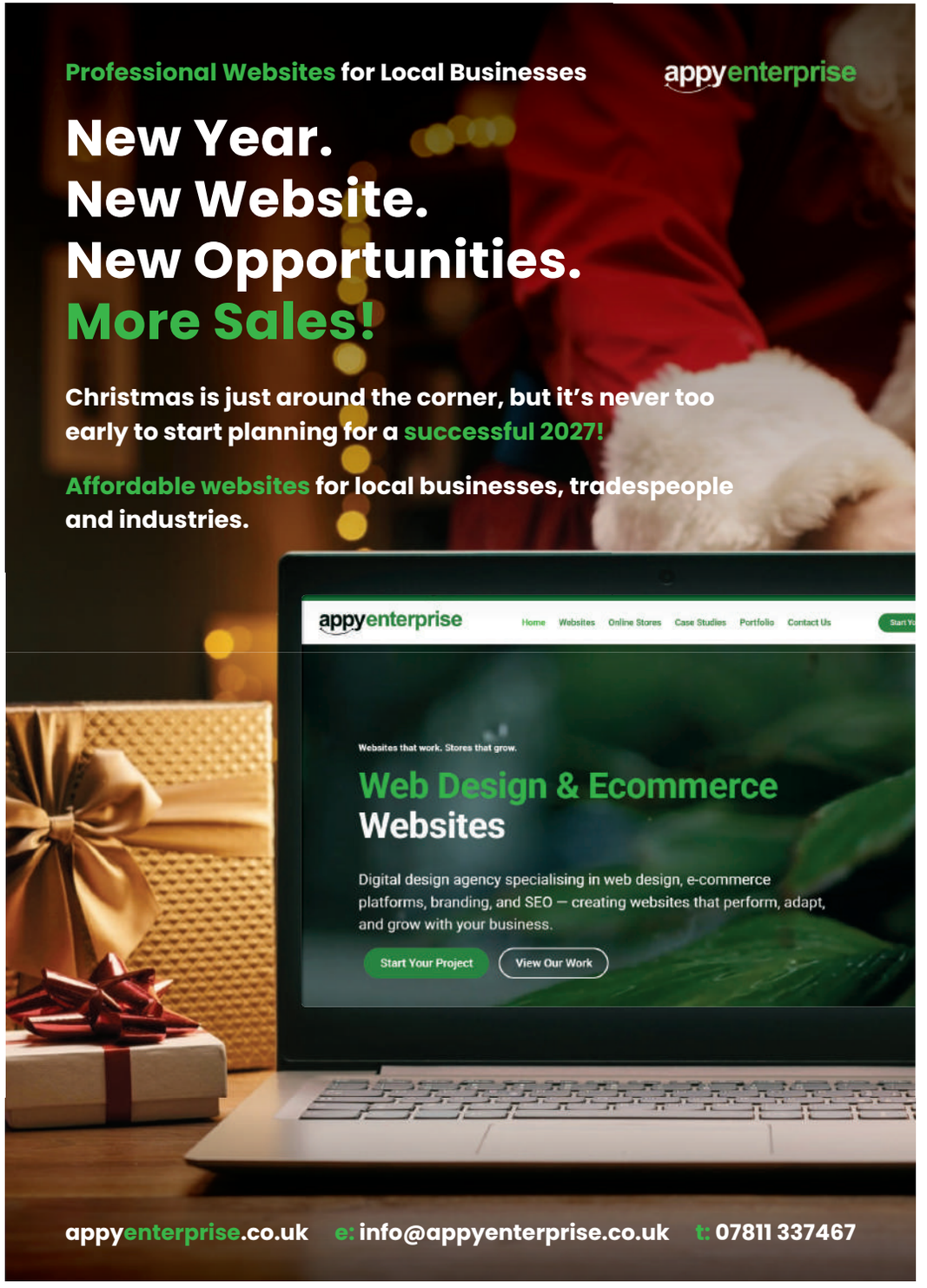
Wyre Forest District Council said the restoration was intended to help more people connect with Brinton Park and enjoy it in the years ahead.

The £2.4 million project was delivered through a partnership involving Wyre Forest District Council, The National Lottery Heritage Fund, The National Lottery Community Fund, McPhillips Wellington Limited and Be Bold Media.

The pavilion and café add new facilities for people visiting the park, while the restored pool, bridge and landscape bring important features back into view. Together, the changes aim to preserve Brinton Park's character while making it a welcoming place to spend time.

Visitors can now explore the restored areas, stop at the café and see the photographic exhibition charting the park's development. The reopening marks the end of a major restoration effort and the beginning of the next chapter for one of Kidderminster's best-known green spaces.







Life with Currency in our Digital World

By Nigel Reid

Digital currency is a phrase we hear more and more, and it exists in several forms. Cryptocurrencies include Bitcoin, Ethereum and Solana. Stablecoins, such as USDT, USDV and PYUSD, are issued by private companies. Central bank digital currencies (CBDCs) are digital versions of national currencies. Digital bank money and tokenised deposits are issued by commercial banks. Digital bank money is what we use when we access our bank accounts online.

This article focuses on the cryptocurrencies used today.
Bitcoin is a decentralised cryptocurrency that enables digital payments without a central bank or payment processor. Launched in 2009, it introduced the first widely adopted blockchain-based monetary system. It remains the largest cryptocurrency by market capitalisation and is used by many as both a payment network and a store of value.

Blockchain is best known as the technology underpinning many cryptocurrencies. Its main strengths are transparency, tamper evidence and shared trust between people or organisations that may not fully trust one another. If you use cryptocurrency, it helps to understand how your crypto, personal details and private key are handled. Your crypto is recorded on the blockchain; there is no central account holding your coins. A company through which you bought crypto may keep your name, identity-verification information, transaction history and account records. Your private key gives you control over your crypto. You may hold it in a hardware or software wallet, or an exchange may hold it for you through a custodial account.

Your Bitcoin is not stored inside your phone or hardware wallet. The wallet holds the private key that proves you are authorised to move it. In simple terms, the blockchain records ownership, the wallet holds or controls your keys, and the private key or seed phrase gives access to your funds.
What are the risks in this digital world?

A major risk is losing access to your wallet or private key, which may be stored on a mobile device, USB drive or computer. If the device or recovery information is lost, you may be permanently locked out of your funds. In one widely reported case, a man accidentally discarded a hard drive containing access to Bitcoin then worth close to £3 million. He searched a local landfill but did not recover it.
For now, cash remains in use. The Bank of England reported that 9% of UK payments by volume were made using cash in 2024. Cash use may continue to fall, but its disappearance is not expected for many years. Around 2.6 million people in the UK are still heavy cash users, so eliminating physical money would create significant problems.

Looking ahead to 2030–2036, cash may be less common but still available, while cards are likely to remain widely used. Account-to-account payments may grow in importance, alongside stablecoins, particularly for international payments. Tokenised deposits may increasingly be used behind the scenes, and a digital pound may become available. Bitcoin is likely to remain primarily an asset rather than everyday money.

The future could increasingly look like this: digital money → instant payment network → recipient.

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Monday Night Group Celebrates
60 Years with Aladdin



Monday Night Group will mark its 60th anniversary with a traditional pantomime favourite: Aladdin. The local group brings its celebratory production to The Civic Hall in Stourport-on-Severn from Friday 22 to Saturday 30 January 2027.

Audiences can expect the familiar story of Aladdin, a young man whose fortunes change when he discovers a magical lamp. When a powerful genie appears, Aladdin is given the chance to make his wishes—but the scheming Abanazar has plans of his own. With Princess Jasmine, a daring rescue and a battle between good and evil, the tale is full of twists, surprises and opportunities for pantomime fun.

As ever, the story is made for audience participation. Expect comedy, colourful characters and the chance to cheer the heroes, boo the baddie and join in the familiar call-and-response moments. The production promises an entertaining outing for families and anyone who enjoys the lively atmosphere of a traditional British pantomime.

This performance is especially significant for Monday Night Group, which is celebrating six decades of putting on pantomimes. The group is a registered charity, number 510879, and its anniversary production offers a chance to support its work while enjoying a much-loved seasonal tradition.

Aladdin will be staged at The Civic Hall, Stourport-on-Severn, DY13 8UJ. The production runs from 22 to 30 January 2027. For ticket information and performance details, visit the Monday Night Group Pantomime Events page or the group's website at

www.mondaynightgroup.org.

Gather the family and get ready for a magical adventure, plenty of laughs and a celebration of 60 years of Monday Night Group pantomime.



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Don't Let Scammers Spoil Your Christmas

By Nigel Reid

Christmas is almost upon us. Many of us look forward to this period as a time of joy, re-union with families. Sadly there are also those amongst us who will not celebrate Christmas having experienced the horror of being violated by a SCAM. An estimated £630 to £650 million could have been lost to scammers and fraudsters in the UK during the 1st 6 months of 2026. This is £245.55 EVERY MINUTE in the UK alone. This figure is slightly up on the confirmed total for the 1st half of 2025 at £629.3 million. Reports of 220,000 fraud cases were received in the first half of this year. We know from evidence that this number does not represent the full picture as there are still many victims who do not report loss due to various reasons, including embarrassment, even ignorance of loss or reluctance to disclose their true financial position to the authorities.

English speaking people are among the main, but not exclusive, targets of international scam operations: The UK, USA, Canada and Australia have substantial online populations and relatively high levels of disposable income, and one English-language scam can potentially reach millions of people. Additionally scam call centres run by organised criminal groups recruit people who speak English to impersonate Banks, Police officers, Government departments and Investment advisers. However, a recent study of 15 countries established that approx. 6% of UK adults experienced fraud compared to 10.5% of adults in the USA.

We could put this down to the increase of awareness programs in the UK, but we cannot afford to sit on our laurels. This December 2025 the UK population spent £13.5 Billion in one month alone. Averaging £18.1 Million per hour and of this, £5.12 million was online sales per hour. In military terms, this is a 'target rich' opportunity.

So, what can we all do to avoid being a target? In short, make yourself a difficult, low-value target and make it harder for criminals to contact, deceive or extract money from you. The following 6 steps will help. 1. Reduce your online exposure. 2. Protect your telephone number. 3. Protect your email address. 4. Protect your money. 5. Shop more safely on line. and 6. Establish personal anti scam rules.
Here are some simple rules to adopt. Never rush into spending money, Never disclose security codes, Never trust an unexpected caller, Always verify payment requests independently and if in doubt, stop and speak to someone you can trust.
If you create a personal scam-prevention system covering your phone, email, social media, online shopping and banking, you're going a long way to spotting scams and you're putting barriers in place before scammers get the opportunity.

There are good sources of information I would recommend you look at. If you have access to the internet on your phone or tablet or computer, the best information is available at: Which, Take Five to Stop Fraud, Friends Against Scams, Get Safe Online, Stop! Think Fraud and a local Facebook Group named SCAMS & How To Stop Them

Have a great and safe Christmas, and please be careful. Merry Christmas everyone.



Power to the People!

Keeping the Lights on at a Price we can Afford

Keeping the lights on, our homes warm and cutting carbon pollution at a price we can afford is one of the big challenges we face in Wyre Forest.

The good news is that a combination of local action, government policy and private sector investment is starting to solve the energy challenge.
However, we do need to understand the scale of the issue we have just over 45,000 households in the district of which, according to the Office of National Statistics, 75% are heated by mains gas and less than 10% from electricity and other potentially renewable sources. Only 4,500 of our 64,000 vehicles are electric. Only 2% of the energy consumed in Wyre Forest is generated locally. We have a lot to do.
The good news is that the Government's Great British Energy working with the private sector is investing in local community energy as well as large scale renewable generation.

At a national level a few major changes may have slipped your notice. The National Energy System Operator is now back in public ownership. Last year no coal was used to generate electricity and only 27% of electricity was generated from the burning of gas, the rest was from wind, sun and nuclear. Great British Grid is also being set up to invest in the sub stations and cables required to connect renewable energy sources to our homes and communities.

The Government has also announced a major new programme to help us insulate existing homes, with the priority being the homes of those on low incomes and the disabled.

High standards have been reintroduced by the current Government to make sure all new homes are built to use as little energy as possible. Not using energy is the best way to save money and cut pollution. Locally, Bewdley Community Energy are developing projects to generate electricity from solar panels installed on community buildings and over carparks.

However, we all have our part to play insulate your home, whenever practicable install a heat pump and solar panels, buy or lease an electric car if you can and be part of the energy revolution.
Editorial supplied by Wyre Forest Labour Party.





JHAC

Jelleyman's Mill and the surrounding site on Puxton Lane are one of the last remaining vestiges of the industrial heritage of Kidderminster, and here at Jelleyman's Heritage Arts Charity we are devoted to conserving the character of that heritage whilst also bringing the site back to life as a modern, flexible, community asset. Our aim is to build a sustainable link between the past, present, and future of this beautiful region, engaging local people, groups and businesses to create a thriving hub of activity and opportunity. The site offers offices and function rooms for private hire, spaces for community group use, a community cafe, a wellbeing craft centre, and work has begun on a community garden.



WHAT'S ON DOWN THE MILL IN DECEMBER!

5th&6th Victorian Market 10am-4pm

7th - Andy's Man's Club 7pm-9pm
7th - Brew Monday 10am-2pm
9th - Emergency First Aid at Work 09.30-16.30 booking required
14th - Andy's Man's Club 7pm-9pm
21st - Andy's Man's Club 7pm-9pm

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Free Festive Parking Returns

Across The Wyre Forest



Christmas shoppers in Wyre Forest can enjoy a little extra festive cheer this December, with free afternoon parking returning to council-owned car parks across the district.

Wyre Forest District Council has announced that motorists will be able to park for free between 3pm and 6pm on weekdays from Tuesday, December 1, until Thursday, December 24.

The scheme is designed to encourage residents to shop locally, support independent businesses and enjoy the festive atmosphere in Kidderminster, Stourport and Bewdley without worrying about the cost of parking.

The offer applies to all council-owned car parks, including short-stay car parks, where the maximum stay remains two hours. Drivers will still need to obtain and display a ticket from the parking machine, even when parking for free.

The festive parking offer is in addition to the council's existing free hour parking scheme at Batemans Yard in Kidderminster, Gardners Meadow in Bewdley and Vale Road in Stourport.
Whether you're picking up Christmas presents, popping into town for a festive treat or supporting your favourite local shops, the free parking provides an opportunity to make the most of the district's town centres during the busy Christmas shopping period.
However, shoppers should be aware that the offer does not apply to Weaver's Wharf car park in Kidderminster, which is privately owned and operates separately from the council's parking arrangements.

The scheme is a welcome boost for local businesses, particularly during the run-up to Christmas, when many independent retailers rely on the festive shopping season.
With free parking available during weekday afternoons, residents are being encouraged to make the most of their local high streets and discover the range of shops, cafés and businesses on their doorstep.
So, if you're planning a bit of Christmas shopping this December, why not leave the car park charges behind and enjoy a festive visit to one of Wyre Forest's town centres?
Remember, the free parking applies from 3pm to 6pm on weekdays only, and a ticket must still be displayed.

For further information about council car parks and parking arrangements, visit the Wyre Forest District Council website at www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk.



Kidderminster Dressage Star Celebrates

Championship Victory

A rising dressage star from Kidderminster is celebrating another impressive competition success after securing an overall championship victory at a prestigious equestrian event.

Grace Brighton, 18, claimed second place in the Preliminary 6 class before being crowned the overall winner of the Silver section at the D&H Associated Championships, held at Addington Equestrian in Buckingham.
Riding Bernstein, a 12-year-old Haflinger stallion owned by Victoria Smith, Grace achieved the pair's highest score together to date, recording an impressive 68.6 per cent.

Based at Coverdale Equestrian in Chaddesley Corbett, Bernstein is cared for with the support of Mark Lawson Walters and Nick Lawson Walters.

Grace said she was delighted with the result and particularly pleased with how Bernstein performed at championship level.
"I'm delighted with his victory and how Stein performed at a championship show," she said.
"I'm so grateful to Victoria for giving me this opportunity."
The latest success adds to what has been a fantastic year for the young rider, who has now achieved more than 10 first-place finishes during 2026.

Among her highlights was a particularly special victory on her 18th birthday in September, when she won the Novice Silver class at the Petplan Area Festival, held at Bury Farm Equestrian Village.
Her latest championship result is further recognition of the hard work, dedication and partnership she has developed with Bernstein.

At just 18, Grace is already making a name for herself in the dressage world, and with such an impressive run of results behind her, there will be plenty of excitement about what she can achieve next.



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KEMP Hospice Opens New-look

Charity Shop on Stourport High Street

KEMP Hospice has opened the doors to its newly refurbished shop on Stourport High Street, welcoming shoppers to discover a fresh new space, filled with pre-loved items helping to raise vital funds for the hospice charity.

The new shop which was officially opened by Mayor of Stourport Tim Berry on Thursday 5 November, marks the relocation of KEMP's former shop on Tan Lane to a more prominent High Street location. The move offers an exciting opportunity to welcome more shoppers, attract new supporters and raise funds for the local hospice charity.

Following a full refit, the shop offers a varied selection of donated items, including clothing, accessories and a selection of pieces from KEMP Hospice's Boutique range. Shoppers can enjoy discovering pre-loved finds while supporting a cause that makes a difference to people in their local community.
Every item in the shop has been kindly donated to KEMP Hospice, and all profits raised will support the charity's work. They provide free-of-charge care and support to local people living with life-limiting conditions and their families across the Wyre Forest.

Gary Barnes, Head of Retail at KEMP Hospice, said: "We're delighted to open our new-look shop on Stourport High Street and welcome the community into our new space. Moving the shop gives us an exciting opportunity to reach more shoppers and supporters, and we're looking forward to seeing the shop become part of the local High Street."

Alongside welcoming shoppers, KEMP Hospice is also looking for volunteers to help run the new shop. "Volunteering is a great way to meet people, learn new skills and make a valuable contribution to a local charity." Gary continues "Whether helping customers, sorting donations or keeping the shop looking its best, volunteers play a vital role in helping KEMP Hospice raise funds for our services."

Anyone interested in volunteering at the new Stourport shop is encouraged to get in touch with KEMP Hospice to find out more.
The shop is located at 32 High Street, Stourport-on-Severn. The team looks forward to welcoming the local community through its doors.

To find out more about KEMP Hospice, its charity shops or volunteering opportunities,
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Winter Gardening

Preparing For Winter and Planning Ahead

As winter settles in and frosty mornings become the norm, the garden may seem quiet, but there's still plenty to do to prepare for the year ahead. December is a time to take stock, tidy up, and give nature a helping hand while it rests.

Start by clearing fallen leaves from lawns and pathways to prevent slippery surfaces and mould growth. Compost healthy leaves to enrich next year's soil, but discard any that are diseased. Borders benefit from a good mulch of compost or well-rotted manure now, helping to insulate roots against the cold and improve soil structure.

It's also the perfect moment to prune dormant trees and shrubs. Apple and pear trees, in particular, can be shaped and thinned while they're leafless, encouraging healthy growth and better crops come spring. Roses can be lightly trimmed to prevent wind rock, while any dead or damaged wood should be removed entirely.

For those who like to stay busy, December offers the chance to plan next year's planting scheme. Take a moment by the fire with a notebook or seed catalogue and think about what worked – and what didn't – over the past year. Ordering seeds early ensures the best selection and avoids the spring rush.

Birds will be grateful for extra support now. Keep feeders topped up with seeds, suet, and peanuts, and make sure fresh water is available even when temperatures drop below freezing. A simple act like this not only helps wildlife survive the winter but also brings colour and life to the garden when little else is stirring.

If you grow vegetables, hardy winter greens such as kale, Brussels sprouts, and leeks can still be harvested, offering a rewarding taste of home-grown produce at Christmas time.

Finally, take a moment to enjoy the stillness of the season. Frosted seed heads, evergreen structure, and low golden light bring a quiet beauty to the garden in December – a reminder that rest is an essential part of nature's cycle, and spring will return before you know it.

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Festive Kitchen

Create a Warm Festive Feel This Christmas

The kitchen is often the heart of the home at Christmas, filled with the scent of baking, good food and conversation. Make it feel festive with a few simple touches that bring warmth without getting in the way of cooking.

Start with the surfaces you use every day. A small vase of eucalyptus or pine, a bowl of clementines and a favourite candle can add seasonal colour to a worktop or island. Keep decorations away from food preparation areas, and choose pieces that are easy to move when you need extra space.

Open shelves and dresser tops are ideal for a little festive styling. Display ceramic mugs, glass jars filled with treats, or a stack of patterned plates alongside sprigs of greenery. A simple garland above a doorway or along a shelf adds texture; warm white lights can make the room feel cosy on darker evenings.

For the dining table or breakfast bar, bring in natural materials such as linen napkins, wooden boards and brass candleholders.

Add a ribbon to a napkin or tie a small sprig of rosemary around each place setting for an easy finishing detail.

Deep green, cranberry and gold accents work beautifully with neutral kitchens, while a bowl of oranges or seasonal pears adds a fresh pop of colour. Scent helps complete the atmosphere. Notes of orange, cinnamon and clove feel welcoming, especially when something delicious is in the oven. Choose a diffuser or candle and place it well away from heat and busy cooking areas.

The best festive kitchen feels inviting and practical. A little greenery, soft lighting and thoughtful table details can make everyday moments feel special, whether you're preparing a Christmas feast, sharing a mug of tea or enjoying a quiet winter morning.



Natural Beauty Indoors:
Winter's Organic Charm

As nature sleeps under frost and snow, winter brings its own unique beauty, and more homeowners are finding ways to reflect that indoors. The trend for natural materials continues into December, blending sustainability with seasonal warmth.

Wood, stone and wool form the foundation of this look. A rustic oak coffee table, woven jute rug or slate candle plate can instantly ground a space and bring that sought after organic texture. Pair these with earthy tones such as mushroom, sand, sage and soft cream to create calm and balance.

Add in greenery to keep your home feeling alive. Sprigs of pine, mistletoe and holly make charming decorations that celebrate the season's simplicity. Bundle them into vases, hang a wreath on an interior door, or lay a garland across your dining table for a natural centrepiece.

Warmth is key, so layer in knitted throws, sheepskin rugs and thick curtains to insulate and soften. Lighting should feel gentle, choose warm lamps, fairy lights, or even clusters of tealights to mimic the glow of a winter fire.
A few well chosen accessories such as ceramic vases, wooden bowls or woven baskets will enhance the look without overpowering it, keeping the focus on texture and tone. Even a simple display of dried flowers or twigs can add understated charm and a sense of connection to the season.

This look isn't about perfection, it's about embracing the beauty of nature in its raw, honest form. By bringing the outdoors in, you can create a winter home that feels authentic, calming and wonderfully connected to the world beyond your windows.



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Seasonal Sparkle

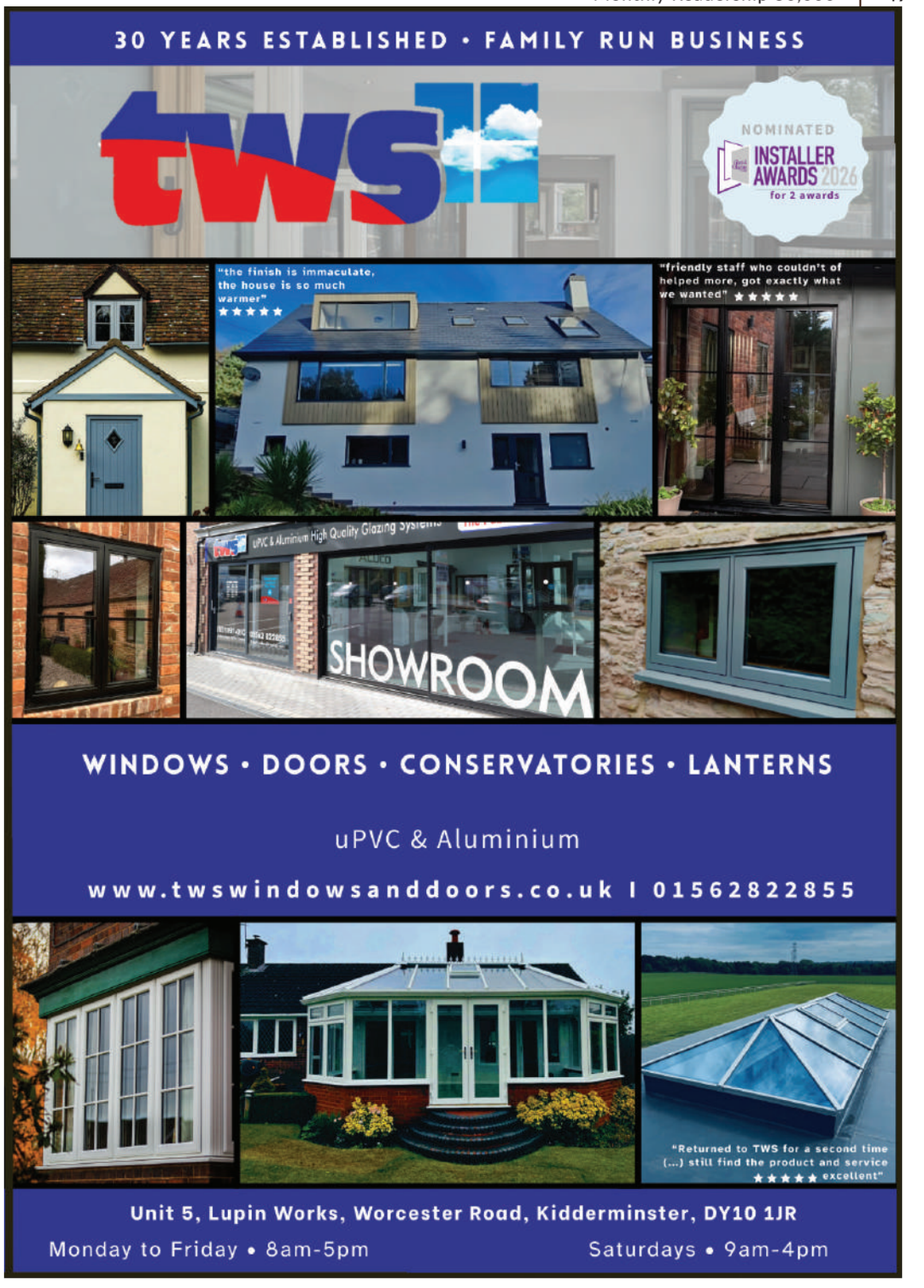
Elegant Touches for a Festive Home

When it comes to festive interiors, a little sparkle goes a long way. December is the time to embrace warmth, light and a touch of glamour, not just for Christmas Day, but for the whole winter season. Start by introducing metallic accents into your decor.

Brass candleholders, gold edged glassware, or a silver framed mirror can elevate your space with subtle shine. Pair metallics with deep seasonal hues such as emerald, plum or navy for an elegant contrast that feels luxurious yet timeless. Layer in texture for richness: velvet cushions, satin ribbons, or soft wool throws create depth and comfort. Fairy lights aren't just for the tree; drape them along mantels, shelves or stairways to bring gentle, ambient light that transforms the atmosphere on dark evenings.

If you prefer a natural look, opt for a woodland luxe theme. Mix greenery such as eucalyptus, pine and ivy with candles, pinecones and rustic ceramics. The result feels festive yet calm, perfect for relaxing nights by the fire. Finally, scent completes the mood. Fragrance your home with notes of orange, clove, cedarwood and vanilla to evoke that classic Christmas feeling. Add glass baubles to a bowl, or tuck sprigs of greenery into napkin rings for a simple finishing touch. Keep the palette consistent from room to room, allowing each detail to feel considered rather than crowded.

A few carefully chosen pieces can make everyday spaces feel special, while still leaving plenty of room to unwind and enjoy the season. This winter, balance elegance with comfort: create a home that glows softly, sparkles subtly, and feels joyful all season long.



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Start with your living areas. Introduce plush throws and soft cushions in rich tones like mulberry, forest green and burnt orange. These colours not only reflect the season but bring a sense of warmth that instantly transforms a room. Soft, tactile fabrics such as velvet, wool and faux fur make everything feel more luxurious.

Lighting is crucial during darker days. Replace cool white bulbs with warm amber tones and add a few candles to create a soft flickering glow. If you have a fireplace, make it the focal point; a neatly stacked pile of logs or a glowing wood burner instantly signals winter comfort.

In the dining room, layer your table with natural textures such as linen runners, wooden serveware and sprigs of evergreen. Simple touches like cinnamon sticks tied with ribbon or pinecones as place settings make for beautiful, effortless decoration.
This December, embrace a slower pace and make your home a true winter sanctuary, somewhere to retreat from the cold, recharge, and savour the season's simple pleasures



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Seasonal Spotlight

Chestnuts & Cranberries

December brings a wonderful array of seasonal produce perfect for hearty winter dishes and festive feasts. As the days grow shorter and colder, our kitchens fill with the comforting aromas of slow cooked stews, roasted vegetables, and freshly baked treats.

Root vegetables truly shine this month. Carrots, parsnips, and swedes are at their sweetest, developing rich flavours after the first frosts. They're ideal for roasting with herbs or blending into warming soups. Brussels sprouts, the traditional Christmas staple, are also at their peak, delicious when roasted with chestnuts or tossed with crispy bacon. Don't overlook red cabbage, which adds both colour and a touch of sweetness to festive plates when braised with apple and spices.

Few things capture the spirit of December like the smell of roasted chestnuts on an open fire. Whether you're enjoying them while out Christmas shopping or roasting them at home, they bring a nostalgic warmth to the season. Simply score each nut before roasting to prevent them from bursting, then cook over gentle heat until the shells crack and the insides turn golden and tender. Served warm with a sprinkle of salt, roasted chestnuts are the perfect winter treat sweet, smoky, and wonderfully comforting. December also offers vibrant fruits to brighten dark days. Clementines, satsumas, and oranges are juicy and fragrant, perfect for snacking, garnishing puddings, or infusing a mulled wine.

Apples and pears are still plentiful too, wonderful baked into crumbles or paired with cinnamon for a cosy dessert.

For something truly seasonal, try adding chestnuts or cranberries to your festive cooking.

Fresh chestnuts bring a nutty depth to stuffings or winter salads, while cranberries add a sharp burst of flavour in sauces and bakes.

Buying local, in season produce this month not only supports nearby growers but also ensures maximum freshness and flavour.

So, whether you're preparing a comforting midweek meal or planning your Christmas dinner, December's produce offers plenty of inspiration for warming, wholesome dishes.



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- 2½ tbsp wholegrain mustard
- 1½ tbsp Dijon mustard
- 100g light brown soft sugar
- 100ml apple juice
- 200ml dry cider
- 75ml apple cider vinegar
- 3 tbsp English mustard
- 2-3 echalion shallots

For the gammon

- 2.5kg unsmoked, boneless gammon
- 2 tbsp English mustard powder
- 10 cloves
- small bunch of sage
- 5 bay leaves

Method

Step 1
Put the gammon in the largest, deepest saucepan you have and pour over enough cold water to cover it by at least 5cm. Add the mustard powder, cloves, sage and bay, then cover and bring to the boil. Simmer for 1 hr 20 mins, skimming off any foam. Turn off the heat and leave to rest, covered, for 1 hr. Carefully remove the ham from the liquid (you can strain and freeze the cooking liquid to use in soups, stews or for cooking dried beans)

Step 2
While the ham is cooking, make the glaze. Tip the wholegrain and Dijon mustards, sugar, apple juice, cider and vinegar into a saucepan and bring to a simmer. Cook over a medium heat until the sugar has dissolved, then turn up the heat and bubble for 15-20 mins until the mixture is reduced and syrupy

Step 3
Heat the oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6. Remove any rind from the ham, then score the fat in a criss- cross pattern using a sharp knife. Put in a roasting tin, fat-side up, then brush over the English mustard. Halve the shallots and add to the tin around the ham along with a few more bay leaves, if using. Pour half the glaze over the ham and roast for 30-40 mins, basting every 10 mins using the remaining glaze, until sticky and cooked through.

Remove and rest the ham for 5 mins before lifting onto a serving board. Surround with the sticky shallots and bay for a festive garnish, if you like, and more mustard on the side.



WARMING FESTIVE DRINKS:

COMFORT DRINKS

As the festive season rolls in and the chill bites a little harder, nothing lifts the spirits quite like a warming Christmas drink. Whether you're gathered with family, hosting friends, or simply enjoying a quiet evening by the fire, these festive favourites bring comfort, cheer, and a touch of indulgence to December days.

A classic choice is mulled wine, the ultimate winter warmer. Simmer red wine gently with slices of orange, cinnamon sticks, cloves, and a hint of star anise. Add a splash of brandy or port for extra depth, and let the fragrant spices fill your kitchen with Christmas aromas. For a nonalcoholic alternative, mulled apple juice or spiced cranberry punch offers the same cosy feel without the kick.



For those who prefer something creamy, Baileys hot chocolate is hard to beat. Rich, velvety, and utterly indulgent, it's perfect topped with whipped cream and chocolate flakes. If you fancy a twist, try stirring in a shot of peppermint liqueur or hazelnut syrup. A sprinkle of crushed candy cane or grated nutmeg on top adds an extra festive flourish.

Another favourite is hot spiced cider, a wonderful balance of sweetness and spice. Heat cloudy apple cider with cinnamon, nutmeg, and a few apple slices for a drink that tastes like Christmas in a cup. And for coffee lovers, a gingerbread latte brings café style comfort to your own kitchen. Just mix espresso with steamed milk, gingerbread syrup, and a sprinkle of nutmeg on top for a comforting winter pick me up.

Finally, for something truly traditional, serve eggnog, a creamy blend of milk, eggs, sugar, and a dash of rum or bourbon. It's smooth, sweet, and feels like a festive hug in a mug.

Whether it's mulled wine at a Christmas market or hot chocolate after a frosty walk, these warming drinks make the season sparkle and fill even the coldest day with a little Christmas magic.



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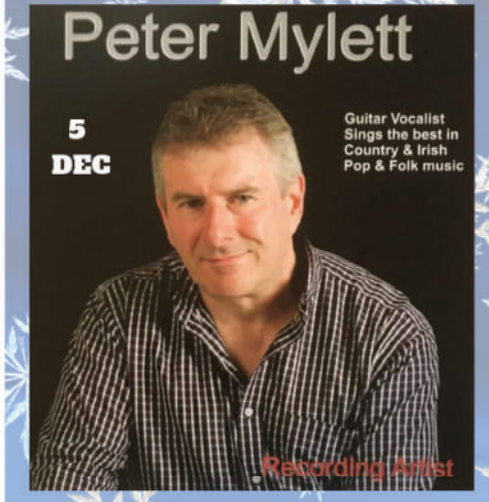







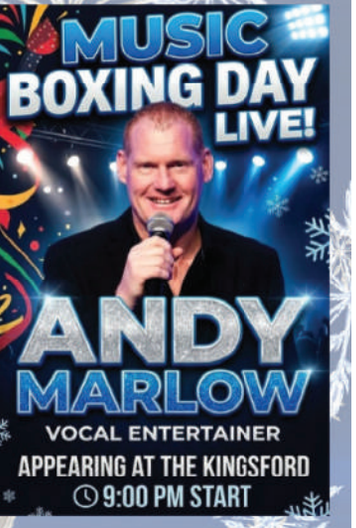

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ABBA Alike this December

At The Stourport Civic

Get ready to sing, dance and celebrate the music of ABBA as the acclaimed ABBA Alike returns to The Civic in Stourport this December.

Known for recreating the distinctive sound and style of the Swedish pop supergroup, ABBA Alike brings a full live cast and band to the stage. Expect sparkling costumes, carefully choreographed performances and a lively atmosphere packed with familiar hits. The show is designed to get audiences joining in, whether you're ready to sing along to every word or would rather sit back and enjoy the performance. The setlist features much-loved ABBA favourites, including "Mamma Mia" and "Voulez-Vous", alongside more songs from the band's celebrated catalogue. With the music, costumes and choreography combining to capture ABBA's unmistakable feel, the performance offers a chance for fans to enjoy the songs live and share the fun with friends and family.

There's room to get involved as much or as little as you like. Expect a fun evening with plenty of laughter, a touch of cheekiness and an invitation to hit the dancefloor. The show has built a following, with audiences returning year after year to see ABBA Alike perform.

The event takes place at The Civic, Stourport, on Saturday 12 December 2026. Doors open at 7.30pm, with the show starting at 8pm. Tickets cost £20.

Whether you're a lifelong ABBA fan or simply fancy a feel-good night of live music, ABBA Alike promises an entertaining evening celebrating some of pop's best-known songs. Gather your friends, warm up your singing voice and get ready for a night of glittering costumes, big choruses and classic tunes in Stourport.

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Step Into Christmas

at Kidderminster Town Hall

Get ready to celebrate the festive season as Step Into Christmas returns in 2026 with a spectacular show packed with seasonal favourites, dazzling performances and plenty of feel-good Christmas spirit.

Promising to be bigger and brighter than ever, this festive concert is designed to get audiences singing along from the first song to the last. The show brings together much-loved Christmas classics, from heartwarming ballads to upbeat festive anthems, creating a soundtrack for the season.

A sensational live band will accompany the performances, while festive visuals help bring the magic of Christmas to life. Whether you're looking forward to an evening of familiar songs, a chance to get into the festive mood, or a new seasonal tradition to enjoy with friends and family, Step Into Christmas offers an uplifting way to celebrate. The show returns after a successful run, inviting audiences to step away from the usual Christmas preparations and enjoy an evening filled with music and celebration. Sing along to the songs that make this time of year special and share the excitement with fellow festive fans.

Step Into Christmas takes place on Sunday 13 December 2026, with the performance starting at 7.30pm. It's an ideal date for anyone looking to add a musical highlight to their December plans.

Gather your family and friends and make an evening of it. With classic Christmas songs, a live band and a joyful atmosphere, the show promises a festive night out for audiences ready to welcome the season.

Event details
Sunday 13 December 2026, 7.30pm

Make Step Into Christmas part of your festive celebrations and enjoy an evening of Christmas music, singalong favourites and seasonal sparkle.

TICKETS
Tickets are available now from boxoffice.kidderminstertownhall.org.uk



December Motoring

Getting Winter Ready

As winter settles in, December can be one of the most challenging months for motorists. With shorter days, plummeting temperatures, and unpredictable weather, a bit of preparation can make the difference between a safe journey and a stressful one.

Start with a thorough winter check. Tyres are your first line of defence, so make sure they have at least 3mm of tread and are inflated correctly, as cold weather can cause the pressure to drop. Consider switching to all season or winter tyres if you regularly drive in icy or rural conditions. Check your lights too, clean lenses and replace any faulty bulbs to ensure you can both see and be seen on dark mornings and misty evenings. Your windscreen is another key area. Top up your washer fluid with a winter grade mix that will not freeze, and make sure your wipers are free from cracks or smears. A quick spray of silicone lubricant on your door seals and locks can also prevent them from freezing shut overnight.

Cold weather can take a real toll on batteries, especially if yours is over three years old. Many garages offer a free battery test, and it is worth taking advantage before the mercury drops further. Keep your fuel tank at least half full to avoid condensation building up inside, and check that your antifreeze is at the correct strength. For longer journeys, particularly over the festive season, pack a small winter survival kit. A blanket, torch, spare phone charger, water, and some snacks can be a real comfort if you get caught in traffic or stuck in bad weather. A shovel, de icer, and high visibility vest are handy additions too.

Above all, adapt your driving style to the conditions. Accelerate gently, avoid harsh braking, and leave plenty of space between you and the car in front. Remember, stopping distances can be ten times longer on icy roads.

Whether you are heading to see family for Christmas or just facing the daily commute, a calm, prepared approach will help you stay safe and stress free. With a little extra care, you can keep your car running smoothly and enjoy the season with confidence.

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December Motoring - Nissan Micra EV

by Motoring Writer Chris Dell

The first thing that caught my eye was the Micra EV's appearance. It really is a looker, particularly in the 'Rebel Red' livery of the test car. Nissan have done a great job of including style cues that link today's Micra EV to Micras of yesteryear. However, the new model is sharper, more stylish, and more fun. Delightfully, it has also retained its predecesor's practicality.

I drove a mid-range 'Advance'. Impressive aspects include its responsive feel, whether overtaking, cornering, or tackling hills. It steered well, it braked well and it accelerated well. You really can't ask for more than that, especially when some might make the mistake of dismissing it as no more than a cute-looking city car.
The level of brake regeneration can be adjusted by 'paddles', mounted behind the steering wheel. At the lowest setting the car rolls along quite freely, but the highest level provides substantial deceleration, creating the potential for 'one pedal' operation. There's also a range of drive modes, allowing drivers to further tailor the vehicle's response to suit their own preferences.

The Micra offers a quality appearance, both inside and out. The 'Rebel Red' paintwork looked really good, as did the black interior, with the silver and black wheels adding a nice touch.

Where space is concerned, there's plenty in the front, a modest amount for back seat passengers, and the boot capacity is quite respectable for a car of this size. Practical touches include gas struts for the hatch, which take most of the effort out of opening it. The charging cable, V2L ('vehicle to load') adaptor, towing eye, locking wheel nut, pump and puncture sealant live under the boot floor.

The mid-range 'Advance' model I drove, with a 52kWh battery, offers 150bhp and a 'WLTP' range of 257 miles. On the road price, after deducting the EV grant, is £23,945, or £24,705 including £760 for the 'Rebel Red' colour option. The high-specification top model, the 'Evolve', starts at £26,245, while the entry-level 'Engage' (40kWh battery, 196 mile range, 122bhp motor) starts at £21,495.

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Kidderminster Harriers

Ready for The Christmas Fixtures

Harriers go into December with reasons for optimism. Paul Wotton's side have shown resilience in recent weeks, earning a 1–1 draw with Sutton United and a hard-fought 0–0 point away to Carlisle United. Goalkeeper Jack Wint was the hero at Brunton Park, saving a late penalty to preserve the clean sheet.

The 2–1 FA Cup qualifying-round win over Solihull Moors at Aggborough added another lift. Goals from Amari Morgan-Smith and Ashley Hemmings put Harriers in control, and despite Moors pulling one back, Wint's stoppage-time save helped secure a place in the First Round Proper. It was a determined performance, with captain David Davis influential in the build-up to the second goal. Club match reports and Carlisle recap
There have been setbacks, including a 3–1 defeat at Boreham Wood and a narrow home loss to Yeovil Town, so consistency remains the challenge. But the recent draws and cup win suggest a side willing to compete, work hard and stay in games.

December will test that resolve, with four league fixtures packed into a demanding spell. The month opens at Aggborough against Scunthorpe United, followed just three days later by another home match against Carlisle. After a trip to Sutton United, Harriers return home on Boxing Day to face Forest Green Rovers, before travelling to Tamworth on Monday 28 December. The two home dates offer supporters a chance to make Aggborough count, while the away games bring tough tests in quick succession.

With a cup run adding to the excitement and important league points at stake, there should be plenty to follow over the festive period. Strong support could make a real difference as Harriers look to turn recent grit into a consistent run of results.

December fixtures (kick-off times subject to change)
•Sat 5 Dec, 3pm:
Scunthorpe United (H)
•Tue 8 Dec, 7.45pm:
Carlisle United (H)
•Sat 19 Dec, 12.30pm:
Sutton United (A)
•Sat 26 Dec, 3pm:
Forest Green Rovers (H)
•Mon 28 Dec, 3pm:
Tamworth (A)



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