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Slimming World Turn Festive Excess Into Community Kindness

Every January, Slimming World groups across the county share a familiar post-Christmas dilemma: cupboards overflowing with chocolates, biscuits, and boozy treats. Those well-meant gifts that tempt us just as we're trying to refocus on healthier habits. But this year, many consultants are transforming that challenge into something far more meaningful.

Enter the "SWIP Tip." What began as a playful nod to Slimming World's food-optimising system has grown into a heartfelt community initiative. Members are encouraged to bring in their unwanted festive goodies; those boxes of biscuits from Auntie Sue, the second (or third!) tub of chocolates hiding at the back of the cupboard, and donate them to a central collection point.

From there, consultants pass them on to local charities, food banks, community kitchens, and shelters.

And the impact is profound.

At a time of year when many families continue to feel the strain of rising living costs, simple treats can bring a moment of joy or comfort. For parents who can't stretch the weekly budget to include a "luxury," or for individuals relying on food banks to get through difficult times, these little indulgences can be a rare lift. What may be a temptation for one household becomes a treasured gift for another.

More importantly, the "SWIP Tip" isn't about guilt or restriction. It's about empowerment and compassion. Members choose to donate not because they must, but because they want to create positive change, both for their own wellbeing and for those who need support. Consultants have seen first-hand how bringing in a bag of goodies can spark conversa-



tions, increase accountability, and give members a sense of shared purpose as they head into the new year.

It's community spirit in its purest form: people helping people, one chocolate tin at a time.

In a world where healthy living is often portrayed as a solitary journey, Slimming World consultants and members are proving otherwise. The "SWIP Tip" shows that the small choices we make as individuals can ripple outward, supporting whole communities. It turns temptation into generosity, resolutions

into action, and festive excess into much-needed kindness.

Slimming World Consultants and their warm and friendly groups are there to support any person who walks through their door to a healthier and happier life.

If there's a better way to start the new year, we haven't heard it yet.

For details on your local group head to : www.slimmingworld.co.uk



Celebrate Our Refurbishment With Exclusive January Offers!



After months of planning and a complete transformation, KAW Interior Design is proud to unveil our newly refurbished showroom in Kidderminster. This exciting update reflects our commitment to providing the very best in kitchen design, furniture, and appliances, all showcased in a fresh, inspiring space that's ready to welcome you.

For over 20 years, KAW Interior Design has been helping homeowners create beautiful, functional kitchens tailored to their lifestyle. Our award-winning team combines expert craftsmanship with the latest trends and premium brands to deliver designs that truly stand out. The refurbishment marks a new chapter for us, and we're inviting you to be part of it.

To celebrate, we're launching an exclusive New Year Promotion throughout January. Enjoy extra

discounts on selected furniture and appliances, making this the perfect time to refresh your home and secure your dream kitchen for 2026. Whether you're planning a full renovation or simply upgrading key elements, our team is here to guide you every step of the way.

But hurry—installation slots for early 2026 are limited, and once they're gone, they're gone! Book your consultation now to guarantee your place and take advantage of these incredible savings.

As part of our refurbishment celebration, we're excited to host an exclusive Neff Cooking Demonstration in March 2026. Join us to experience the latest Neff appliances in action and learn professional cooking tips from a Neff Home Economist. Dates will be announced in January - spaces are limited, so book early to secure your spot. Visit our events

page for details: kawinteriordesign.co.uk/kaw-events. This is a fantastic opportunity to see innovative appliances in use and enjoy a fun, interactive session while exploring our newly refurbished showroom.

Visit our showroom at Units 2 & 3, Lisle Avenue, Kidderminster, DY11 7DF, and experience the new look for yourself.

For more details or to arrange your appointment, call 01562 66882 or email: sales@kawinteriordesign.co.uk.

Offers end 31st January—don't miss out on this opportunity to transform your home with KAW Interior Design.

We look forward to welcoming you to our showroom and sharing this exciting new chapter with you. Discover how our designs can transform your home and make 2026 your most stylish year yet.

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As we welcome a new year in the Wyre Forest, Food Share Wyre Forest & Community Café continues to play a vital role in supporting local families while helping to tackle food waste. Based at The Community Centre on Linden Avenue, Stourport-on-Severn, the project is run entirely by dedicated volunteers who give their time to make a real difference in the lives of others.

Food Share operates on a simple but powerful idea: take surplus food that would otherwise go to waste and make it accessible to the community. The result is a welcoming, stigma-free space where people can pick up a variety of fresh and ambient items at very low cost, helping household budgets stretch further while preventing perfectly good food from ending up in landfill.

Opening Times:

Food Share

- Wednesday & Thursday: 11am - 1pm
- Sunday: 1pm - 2.30pm

Food Share Wyre Forest: Community in Action

Community Café

- Wednesday & Thursday: 10am - 2pm

The café has quickly become a friendly meeting place for neighbours to connect over a warm drink or a light bite. Whether you're stopping by before collecting food or simply looking for a welcoming space to relax, the café team is always ready with a smile.

The heart of the project lies in its volunteers, who work tirelessly sorting donations, running the café and supporting visitors. Their commitment ensures that the service remains reliable, warm and truly community-led.

Located at:
The Community Centre,
Linden Avenue,
Stourport-on-Severn,
DY13 0EG

For more information, to donate, or to get involved, you can contact the team at velmc161@yahoo.co.uk.

Food Share Wyre Forest & Community Café stands as a shining

example of community spirit in action sharing what we have, supporting one another, and making sure nothing goes to waste.





What a magical term we've had at Chloe May's Dance Academy!

As the principal of CMDA, I feel incredibly proud looking back at all our dancers have achieved over the past few months. Our biggest highlight was without a doubt our spectacular academy production Glitter & Glow: A Festive Show, which lit up Stourbridge Town Hall on Saturday 29th November. An amazing 170 dancers from our tiniest 3-year-olds right through to our fabulous adult performers took to the stage with confidence and sparkle. Audiences were treated to a wonderful blend of festive favourites and exciting non-festive pieces across a huge variety of styles including Ballet, Tap, Acro, Commercial, Modern, Street, Lyrical, Contemporary and Cheer Dance. It was a true celebration of the talent, enthusiasm and hard work that fills our classes every week.

Earlier in the term, we were thrilled to see all five of our Grade 3 Ballet students qualify for the Midlands Ballet Cham-

pionships on the strength of their exceptional Grade 2 exam results what a fantastic achievement! Two dancers proudly represented CMDA on the day, gaining invaluable performance experience in a prestigious and inspiring environment.

We also tapped our way into something very special as 40 dancers aged 8 to 71 took part in this year's BBC Children in Need Tapathon. Not only did we help raise money for a wonderful cause, but the event was also a world record attempt we're now eagerly awaiting the official results!

And our newly launched Performance Squads made a dazzling debut on stage at Redditch Gotta Dance at The Palace Theatre on 11th November. These squads in both Kidderminster and Bromsgrove offer our most dedicated students the chance to shine in exciting theatrical settings and this is just

the beginning. As we step into the new year, we are delighted to be welcoming new members to our dance family. We are currently offering trial bookings for January across our children's classes (from walking upwards!) and a brilliant selection of adult classes too. With classes in Tardebigge (near Redditch), Bromsgrove and Kidderminster, there's something for everyone and lots of opportunities for all ages and abilities to progress and perform.

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Supervet Noel Fitzpatrick Helps Launch New Chapter for Birchen Coppice Primary Academy

Birchen Coppice Primary Academy in Kidderminster has celebrated a remarkable milestone with the opening of its first-ever school library officially unveiled by the nation's favourite Supervet and bestselling author, Noel Fitzpatrick.

Although the event took place at the end of November, its impact will be felt well into 2026 as the school embraces the upcoming National Year of Reading. What began as a single half-empty bookcase in a storage room has been transformed into a vibrant, welcoming library thanks to the

support of local businesses, community partners and generous book donations. The new space is already proving to be a sanctuary where pupils can discover stories, ideas and a genuine love of reading.

Noel Fitzpatrick praised the school's achievement, saying: "It is a joy to help open this beautiful new library for the children of Birchen Coppice Primary Academy. Stories have the power to change lives, and it's wonderful to see a school placing reading at the very heart of its community."

Headteacher Sandra Pennington echoed the significance of the moment. "This is the first time our school has had a library and it's already playing a huge part in changing both the school and our children's fortunes. Many of our families face social and economic challenges, and we know reading is key to positive change. Our library is helping transform behaviour, confidence and aspirations." She added that the school's recent move out of special measures was partly attributed to the renewed reading culture, with Ofsted noting continued improvements in pupil behaviour.

Pupils are already embracing the new space. Ten-year-old Brodie described it as peaceful and calming, while Keira shared how much she enjoys escaping into a story inside the reading pods that "block the noise out".

To mark the special occasion, every family at the academy received a copy of Noel Fitzpatrick's new children's book, *Over the Rainbow Bridge*, illustrated by Alison Brown – a touching story about love, loss and the bond between humans and animals. The gift aims to spark shared reading at home and strengthen the school's growing culture of literacy.

The event also welcomed a number of special guests, including the High Sheriff of Worcestershire, the Mayor of Kidderminster, local councillors, governors, representatives from Simon & Schuster, the National Literacy Trust, and other supporters who helped bring the library project to life.

The opening marks the beginning of an exciting new chapter for Birchen Coppice Primary Academy – one built on books, imagination and the belief that reading can change futures.

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THIS MONTHS Local Lowdown Quirky Tales & Local Lore

As January settles in, the Wyre Forest district comes alive with whispering woods, railway legends and winter wildlife tales. Here are this month's quirkiest bits of local lore...

The Bewdley 'Snow Stag'
For years, residents near Bewdley have told the tale of the almost-mythical Snow Stag a ghost-white roe deer said to appear only during the first frost of the new year. Whether it's a trick of the light or a rare local creature, the story keeps walkers peering through the cold morning mist every January.



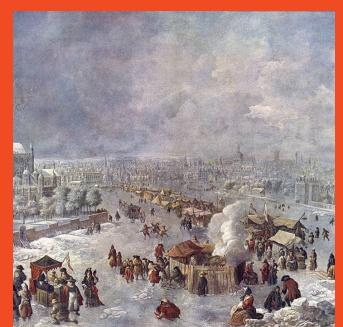
Kidderminster's "Invisible Train"
Long-time railway workers insist that on icy winter mornings, you can sometimes hear the whistle of a steam locomotive on the Severn Valley Railway before the first service leaves. No train ever appears – but the sound drifting through the fog has been reported by early dog walkers for decades.



Wyre Forest's Whispering Trees
Hidden in one of the older pockets of the forest is a cluster of unusually hollow trees that "speak" when the winter wind hits just right. Volunteers know it's natural acoustics – but the legend says the trees share centuries-old stories. It's a favourite spot for curious families and folklore lovers alike.



The Stourport Frost Fair Memory
Older locals recall stories from their grandparents about a time when the canal froze so solid in deep winter that makeshift "frost fairs" popped up along the banks small stalls selling hot chestnuts and mulled drinks. There's no photo evidence, only memories... but the tale returns every cold January.



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Kidderminster Launches 'New Year, New Community' Week to Support Local Residents

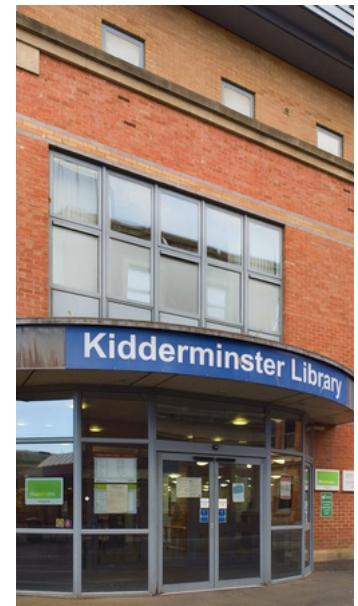
Kidderminster is kicking off 2026 with a brand-new initiative aimed at bringing the community together and supporting residents through the winter months. "New Year, New Community Week" will run from Monday 13th to Sunday 19th January, offering free activities, advice sessions and family events across the town.

The event is being coordinated by local charities, Wyre Forest District Council and Kidderminster Library, with the goal of helping people make a positive start to the year.

Throughout the week, residents can drop into Kidderminster Library for free workshops including budgeting advice, CV writing support and wellbeing sessions. The Youth House on Bromsgrove

Street will host after-school clubs, creative sessions and gaming evenings for young people, while St George's Parish Rooms will hold a Community Café offering low-cost meals and a warm space. Local businesses are also taking part, with several independent shops on Vicar Street and Coventry Street offering January discounts to encourage residents to support the high street during the quieter winter season.

Organisers say they hope the initiative will become an annual fixture. "January can be a tough month for people," said one volunteer coordinator. "This week is all about connection, support and giving everyone in Kidderminster a boost to start the year."



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January's New Resolution: Buy Nothing New

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Embracing repair saves you money, cuts down on the need to make new items and gives you a truly satisfying feeling of self-sufficiency. Online tutorials and local repair cafes are making it easier than ever to learn the skills you need.

The next step is to maximize what you already own. The

most environmentally sound item is the one that already exists.

Finally, commit to resisting the sales. Instead of buying a new piece of clothing because it's cheap, try hosting a clothing swap with friends or commit to buying only preloved for the next month.

Making these changes creates a domino effect: less waste in your bin, less money leaving your bank account, and less pressure on the planet. Let's make 2026 the year we choose restoration over retail!

For more information on Buy Nothing New Month visit www.keepbritaintidy.org and for general waste prevention tips and ideas visit www.letswasteless.com.



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Mark Garnier
Member of Parliament
for Wyre Forest

May I start with wishing you and your family a happy New Year and I hope that 2026 brings you all good health and prosperity as we leave 2025 behind along with a budget statement which saw the wheels flying off.

At the last possible date the Chancellor asked people to "pay a little bit more in the nation's interest". The result? The highest tax burden on our economy since the dismal 1970s. And the "nation's interest" is the political choices made by the Chancellor and the Prime Minister to appease their restless left-wing backbenchers. The chancellor barely mentioned growth in her budget. Business groups have reacted to the budget by pointing out that the choices made by Rachel Reeves for example revaluing business rates will kill growth and business

confidence. As a result, the Office for Budgetary Responsibility has downgraded growth forecasts for the next few years. So, we now see the wealth creators businesses stopping investment and cutting jobs.

So, the choices made "in the nation's interest" is to whack the private sector with a £26 billion tax bill.

The financial illiteracy beggars belief. Reeves keeps on saying that her choices have allowed the Bank of England to reduce interest rates five times. The Bank of England is independent of the government, and its remit is to keep inflation at 2%. If inflation is high, increase interest rates to tighten money supply and inflation goes down. So why is the Bank of England cutting

rates when inflation is above the target 2%? Simple. The chancellor has killed growth so the Bank cuts rates to try to stimulate investment. The Chancellor goes on about us being the second highest growing economy in the G7. But when you look at that number per person, we are the weakest performing economy.

And on it goes.

But the disaster has hit a new high. Reeves has spent the last few months allowing us – encouraging, even – to believe that there was a £30 billion black hole in public finances. That was the argument that underpinned her decision to tax us more. But the OBR has now come out to say this was a lie. Public finances were in surplus to the tune of £4.6 billion.

People are saying this was the worse budget since Liz Truss's mini budget. I agree. But we didn't stick with our useless leaders. Truss, and her chancellor, were thrown out in a matter of days for messing up so badly. This Labour government are sticking with their useless leaders. Its three and half years to the next election. How much damage can they do – we shall have to wait to see what 2026 brings us.

Mark holds regular weekly surgeries: to book an appointment please contact his office via:

T: 01562 746771
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Promoted by Mark Garnier, of 28A Bewdley Road North, Stourport-on-Severn, DY13 8PS



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History: “The Fair Came to Town” The Story of Stourport’s Riverside Fair

Stourport's riverside fair is so woven into the town's identity that it's hard to imagine the Severn without its bright lights, music and laughter. Yet its origins stretch back more than a century, beginning as a modest travelling fairground that visited the town during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. What started as a few steam-powered rides pitched on the riverside meadows gradually became one of the region's most recognisable leisure attractions.

In the early days, Stourport's prosperity was changing. Canal trade was slowing, and the once-busy basins were quieter than they had been in decades. But families still flocked to the river-

bank on holidays and weekends, and travelling showmen quickly recognised an opportunity. By the 1920s, regular fair visits were cemented in the town's calendar, bringing with them a burst of colour and excitement that contrasted with the town's industrial backdrop.

Much of the fair's longevity is owed to the showmen families who returned year after year. Names such as the Danter, Jennings and Edwards families became familiar to local generations, operating rides, stalls and attractions that evolved alongside technology and tastes. Steam gave way to electric motors; hand-painted signs to neon; coconut shies to high-speed thrill rides.

But the tradition of family-run showmanship never disappeared. By the mid-20th century, Stourport Fair had become more than a visiting attraction – it was part of the town's cultural fabric. Summer wouldn't feel complete without the hum of the Waltzer, the smell of candyfloss drifting across the river, or the late-night glow of the dodgems reflecting on the water.

Today, while modern amusements dominate, the fair retains its historic character. It is a reminder of Stourport's long tradition of reinvention: a town shaped by industry, uplifted by leisure, and forever defined by the joy of the fair coming to town.



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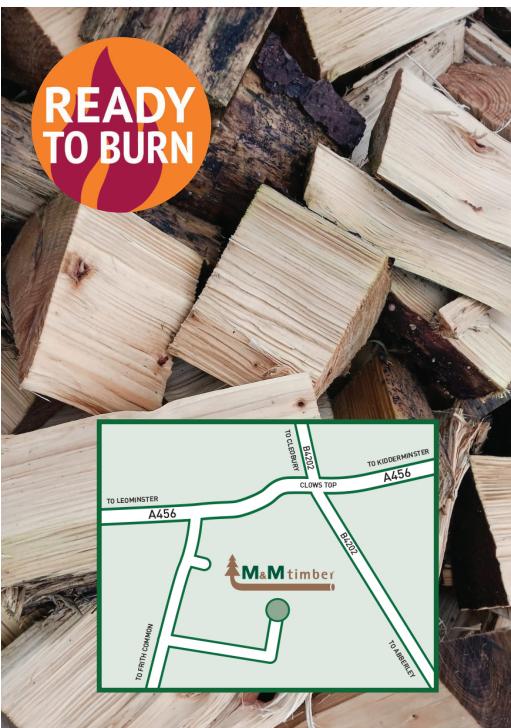
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January Gardening: Preparing for Winter and planning ahead



January may feel like the quietest month in the gardening calendar, but it's an essential time for preparation, protection, and thoughtful planning. While growth above the soil slows down, plenty is happening underground and with the right care now, your garden will be well positioned for a flourishing spring.

Begin by checking that your winter protection is still doing its job. Cold snaps, strong winds, and heavy rain can loosen fleece, topple pots, or expose vulnerable plants. Reinforce coverings where needed, brush heavy snow off evergreens, and move delicate containers into sheltered corners. It's also a good opportunity to tidy borders, clearing away soggy leaves and debris that can harbour pests and diseases.

If the ground isn't frozen, January is ideal for pruning dormant fruit trees such as apples and pears. A light winter prune shapes healthier growth and encourages better harvests later in the year. You can also plant bare-root roses, hedging, and fruit bushes excellent value and quick to establish when planted while dormant.

Planning is just as important as practical jobs this month. Use these quieter days to map out your garden goals: which flowers you want to grow, which vegetables you'll prioritise, and where improvements could be made. Order seeds early, as popular varieties often sell out before spring. It's also a great time to clean tools, organise the shed, and prepare pots and trays for February sowing.

January is also a wonderful month for observing and supporting wildlife. Putting out high-energy food such as fat balls, seeds, and suet helps birds through the coldest weeks and encourages them to stay nearby for spring nesting. Refreshing water sources and keeping feeders clean makes a real difference. These small acts not only support local wildlife but also bring colour, movement, and joy to otherwise quiet winter gardens.

Cold and still it may be, but January is full of promise. With a little care and planning now, your garden will be ready to burst into life when warmer days return.

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M&M Timber retains its independence operating, from a 25 acre site at Clows Top, near Kidderminster, where all timbers are manufactured. The business is now one of the UK's leading manufacturers and specialists of machine rounded timber products and the supplier of choice to the agricultural, utility, commercial, landscaping, land owner

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The site at Clows Top sells firewood and wood shavings. Kiln dried softwood firewood is available in bulk bags. The firewood is Woodsure Ready to Burn accredited, with the moisture content below 20%.

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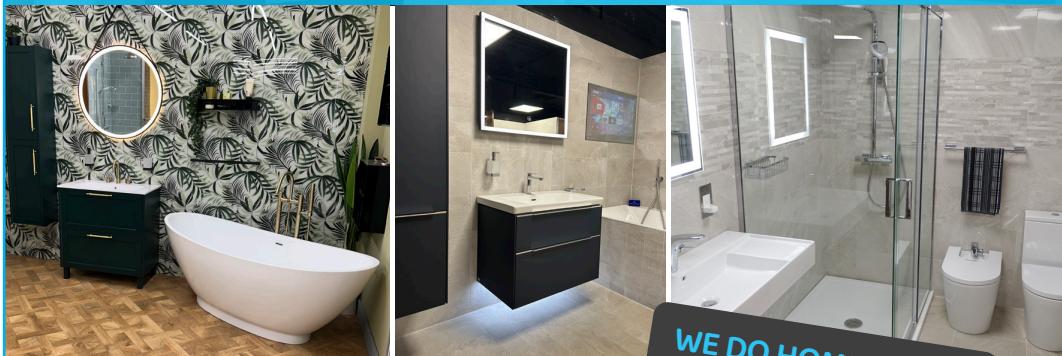
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January Declutter & Reset Creating a Calm Home for the New Year

January is the perfect month to reset your home and create a calmer, more organised environment for the year ahead. After the busy festive season, many of us find our living spaces feeling cluttered, crowded, or simply in need of a refresh. A January declutter doesn't just tidy your home it can also lift your mood, reduce stress, and set a positive tone for the months to come. Start by tackling the areas that tend to gather the most "holiday leftovers": living rooms, hallways, and kitchens. Removing unused décor, recycling packaging, and finding homes for new gifts instantly creates breathing space. January is also an ideal

time to re-evaluate belongings. If something hasn't been used in a year, consider donating or recycling it to free up room and simplify your surroundings.

Smart storage solutions can make an enormous difference. Baskets with lids, stackable boxes, ottomans with hidden compartments, and slim shelving units all help keep everyday items organised while maintaining a stylish look. In smaller homes, using vertical space such as wall-mounted shelves or hooks can transform cluttered corners into practical storage areas.

Creating a peaceful home isn't

just about tidying; it's about establishing habits that support calm living. Introduce regular "reset moments" five to ten minutes each evening to return things to their place. Not only does this prevent clutter from building up again, but it also makes mornings feel more relaxed and organised.

Finally, bring a sense of freshness into your space. A new houseplant, a scented candle, or simply rearranging furniture can make a room feel renewed without any major expense. Paired with decluttering and thoughtful organisation, these small touches help create a soothing environment to start the year.

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January's Rug Refresh

January is the ideal time to refresh your living spaces, and one of the simplest yet most transformative updates you can make is introducing a new rug. After the festive season, rooms can feel a little sparse, but the right rug instantly adds warmth, colour, and comfort perfect for brightening up the winter months.

Rugs play a key role in creating a cosy atmosphere, especially during January's colder days.

A thick, textured rug not only feels wonderful underfoot but also helps to insulate your home, making living areas feel warmer and more inviting. From deep-pile shaggy styles to handwoven wool designs, there's a rug to suit every taste and budget.

They're also an excellent way to redefine a space. A well-chosen rug can anchor a seating area, add personality to a bedroom, or bring softness to hallways and dining rooms. January is a great

month to explore earthy tones, soft neutrals, and warm patterns that complement winter décor while still feeling fresh for spring.

For those looking for value, the January sales often offer fantastic savings on quality rugs, making it the perfect time to invest in something long-lasting. Whether you opt for a statement piece with bold patterns or a subtle, minimalist design, a new rug can completely change the atmosphere of a room without the need for a full makeover.





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Although the hospital has been performing navigated joint replacements for over 15 years, CORI represents a major step forward in surgical innovation for the region.

Renowned orthopaedic surgeon Professor Edward Davis, who has been leading the way in navigated surgery at West Midlands Hospital, said:

"I have been performing computer-assisted joint replacement surgery at the West Midlands Hospital for over 18 years. This technology helps me plan and position implants with exceptional

precision, aiming to restore natural movement and improve the long-term success of each replacement. The latest development in this area is the CORI system. CORI provides assistance for knee replacements and computer-assisted guidance for hip replacements, allowing me to tailor every operation to the individual patient. By combining surgical experience with advanced technology, my goal is always to deliver the most accurate, reliable and natural-feeling results possible therefore helping patients get back to the activities they enjoy with confidence and comfort."

Hospital Director Harry Wallace added:

"Reaching 100 successful CORI cases is a fantastic achievement and a real reflection of the skill, dedication, and teamwork across our surgical and theatre teams. It's also a proud moment for the hospital - bringing world-class robotic surgery to the people of the West Midlands."

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COUSINS FURNITURE

Celebrating Craftsmanship with Cousins Furniture This Winter

This winter, Cousins Furniture launches their 40th Winter Sale, marking another milestone in a year of celebration. Over the summer, Cousins celebrated their 40th anniversary, reflecting on decades of quality, style, and innovation. Always evolving, Cousins introduces new collections designed for modern living, while continuing to honour the craftsmanship that has defined

the brand. Combining fresh designs with trusted classics, Cousins brings timeless style into homes across the UK.

Introducing John Sankey

Alongside Parker Knoll and G Plan, Cousins proudly presents new brand John Sankey, a distinguished British upholstery brand renowned for exceptional craftsmanship. Each piece is hand-

made in Long Eaton by skilled artisans, built on sustainably sourced hardwood frames, and backed by a lifetime guarantee. With a wide range of fabrics, finishes and detailing, John Sankey sofas and chairs deliver both comfort and enduring elegance.

Re-Imagined Classics

Cousins' new sofa collections offer a contemporary twist on classic designs, reinterpreting the timeless Chesterfield and mid-century styles with a modern edge. Expertly handcrafted from the finest materials, these sofas are upholstered in a choice of practical, fashionable fabrics or luxurious leathers. A standout is the Felix collection, available in both standard sizes and a chaise version, featuring tufted square-quilt detailing and plush foam topped with a cosy fibre layer for maximum comfort and style.

Delicate Dining

In the dining room, Cousins celebrates craftsmanship in true style with the new Tetbury and



Bowden collections, blending classic English design with modern touches. The Tetbury range particularly highlights hand-crafted bobbin detailing, meticulously turned on a lathe by master craftsmen and is also available as a bedroom collection. Made from solid oak and fine veneers, with a subtle lime-wash finish, these collections offer an updated classic look with thoughtful detailing and timeless elegance.

Bespoke Fitted Bedrooms

Cousins also makes the most of every space with their enhanced Bespoke Bedroom range, now including fitted bedroom furniture. From floor to ceiling wardrobes to modular storage solutions, every design maximises functionality while maintaining style. Sliding wardrobes are perfect for rooms with limited space, running on market-leading proprietary tracks and offering versatile options, from utility rooms to walk-in wardrobes or even room dividers. Every piece is fully customisable, from size and layout to shelves, colour, materials and finishes, allowing

customers to create a truly personalised bedroom. All installations are carried out by Cousins' professional teams, ensuring a perfect fit and effortless style, so you can sit back and relax.

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Cousins supply the latest designs in home accessories, including lighting, rugs and flooring to help complete your look. Visit their flooring departments to explore a wide range of carpets, hard flooring and statement rugs for every style. Whether updating a living room, bedroom, dining area or high-traffic hallway, kitchen or staircase, their experts can recommend the perfect balance of luxury, practicality and durability.

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Visit Cousins Furniture

With the introduction of exciting new collections, an expanded bespoke furniture offer, and the savings on offer from the Winter Sale, Cousins Furniture invite you to experience the next chapter of its journey. Styles and times may have changed, but the Cousins quality remains. Explore the latest collections and create spaces that not only enhance your home but also provide a backdrop for lasting memories.

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January is also Mental Wellness Month



January is often seen as a month of new beginnings. After the festive season fades and the year opens before us like a blank page, many people naturally shift their attention towards health, wellbeing, and positive routines. What's less widely known is that January is also Mental Wellness Month a time dedicated to raising awareness around mental health, encouraging self-care, and promoting habits that support both emotional and physical resilience.

While many New Year resolutions focus on diet, fitness, and breaking old habits, January offers an ideal opportunity to look inward, slow down, and build a foundation for overall wellbeing that lasts far beyond the first

few weeks of the year.

Prioritising Mental Health

Mental health impacts every part of our lives—from energy levels and relationships to productivity and how we cope with stress. Mental Wellness Month invites us to take stock of our emotional wellbeing and recognise that mental health deserves just as much attention as physical health.

During winter, shorter days and colder weather can sometimes affect mood. Some people experience lower motivation or seasonal dips in energy. January offers a moment to acknowledge these feelings and introduce small, gentle practices to support mental balance. Simple acts such as taking breaks from

screens, spending time in natural light, connecting with loved ones, or making time for positive routines can make a noticeable difference.

It's also a reminder that seeking help from talking openly with a friend to consulting a mental health professional should be seen as a sign of strength rather than reluctance.

Building Healthy Habits That Last
 January is synonymous with fresh starts, but the key to lasting wellness is setting realistic, sustainable habits rather than overwhelming yourself with drastic changes. Instead of quick fixes or extreme resolutions, this month is an ideal time to focus on steady improvements that feel manageable and achievable.

Some positive habits might include:

- Regular movement: This doesn't have to mean joining a gym. A brisk walk, stretching routine, or a short daily home workout can do wonders for both mood and physical health.

- Balanced eating: After December's indulgence, many people crave wholesome, nourishing meals. January is a great time to experiment with seasonal produce, simple recipes, and mindful eating rather than strict diets.

- Quality sleep: Rest is a pillar of wellbeing. Creating a calming bedtime routine, reducing late-night screen time, and aiming for consistent sleep patterns can significantly improve mental clarity and energy levels.

- Mindfulness and reflection: Journalling, meditation, or simply taking a few minutes of quiet each day can help reduce stress and support emotional resilience.

Embracing Self-Care Without Guilt

One of the key messages of Mental Wellness Month is the importance of self-care—something many people forget to prioritise during busy schedules. Self-care isn't about luxury or indulgence; it's about making time for activities that restore your mind and body.

This can be as simple as reading a book, enjoying a warm bath, spending time on a hobby, or stepping outdoors for fresh air. These small rituals create moments of calm and remind

us that wellbeing isn't an after-thought; it's essential.

A Positive Outlook for the Year Ahead

January sets the tone for the months to come. By starting the year with a focus on mental wellness, we're more likely to approach challenges with clarity, patience, and confidence. Whether you choose to adopt new routines, reconnect with personal goals, or simply slow down and reflect, this month is a valuable reminder that wellness begins with intention.

As the year unfolds, carrying these mindful habits forward can lead to a more balanced, fulfilling, and healthier lifestyle one where mental wellbeing is nurtured just as consciously as physical health.



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SCAN TO BOOK!



Seasonal Spotlight: Beetroot – January's Vibrant Winter Gem

January can feel a little grey, but one vegetable that brings colour, comfort, and nourishment to the plate is the humble beetroot. In season throughout winter, beetroot is at its best right now – earthy, sweet, and wonderfully versatile.

Known for its deep ruby flesh, beetroot has long been a staple of British winter cooking. It thrives in cold weather, stores well, and offers a surprising dose of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Rich in folate,

fibre, and nitrates, it's a brilliant choice for those starting the year with healthy eating intentions. Beetroot has even been linked to improved heart health and better stamina – a welcome boost for anyone tackling New Year fitness goals.

In the kitchen, beetroot is far more adaptable than many people realise. Roast it slowly and it becomes sweet and caramelised, perfect for tossing into winter salads with goat's cheese, walnuts, and peppery

rocket. Grate it raw for a vibrant slaw that brightens up cold plates. Blend it into soups for a stunning magenta bowlful – ideal for warming up after a frosty walk. Beetroot also pairs beautifully with earthy flavours like cumin, horseradish, and dill, as well as citrus fruits that cut through its natural sweetness.

For something a little more indulgent, beetroot even earns a place in baking. When puréed, it adds moisture and a subtle richness to chocolate brownies and cakes, of-

fering a slightly healthier twist without compromising on flavour.

Many local farm shops and markets across the area stock freshly harvested beetroot at this time of year, often available in different varieties from classic deep red to golden or even candy-striped Chioggia. Whichever you choose, January is the perfect month to celebrate this colourful root vegetable and make the most of its seasonal goodness.

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Brussels sprouts winter salad with clementine dressing



Ingredients

- 350g brussels sprouts shredded
- 150g kale shredded
- 50ml extra virgin olive oil
- 3 clementines 2 peeled and segmented, 1 zested and juiced
- 3 tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 1 tbsp honey or maple syrup
- 2 tsp Dijon mustard
- 50g pine nuts
- 50g pomegranate seeds

Step 1

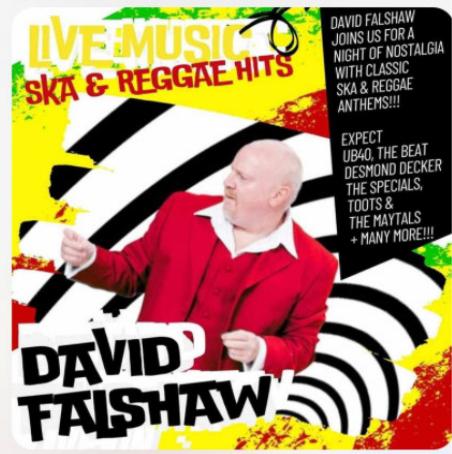
Put the shredded sprouts and kale in a large bowl with a large pinch of salt. Pour the olive oil into a small bowl or jug, and mix in the clementine zest and juice, vinegar, honey and mustard, then pour this over the leaves. Scrunch with your hands until the dressing is well distributed, then leave to soften for 15 mins.

Step 2

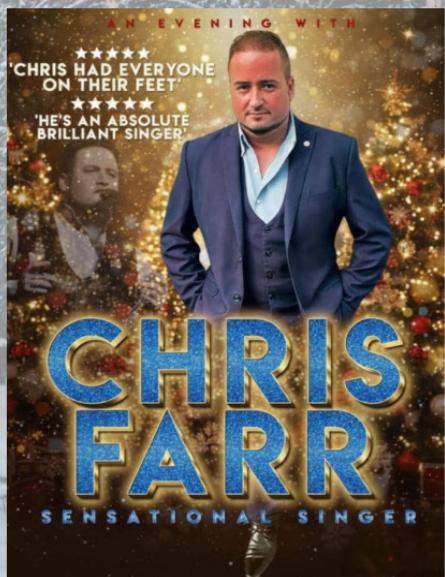
Fold through the pine nuts and clementine segments, then spoon the salad onto a platter or into bowls. Scatter over the pomegranate seeds, if using, and serve. rare beef, 30 mins for medium. Allow to stand for 10 mins before serving in thick slices.



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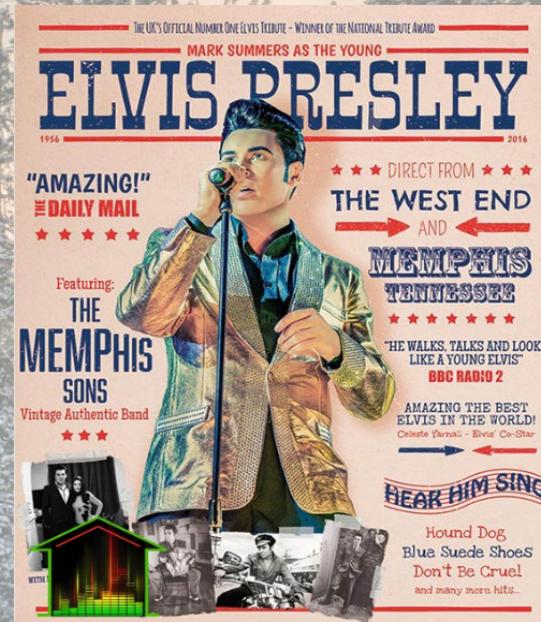


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17.01.26



January

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Sun ~ 12:00 - 10:00

No Sunday Dinners throughout January

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24.01.26

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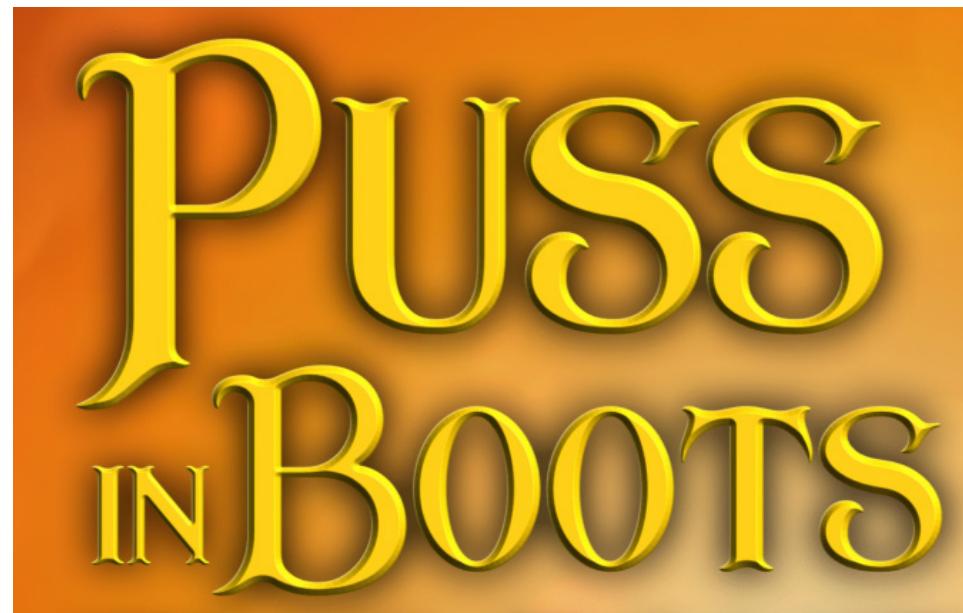
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Monday Night Group Presents Puss in Boots – A Family Pantomime

Taking to the stage at The Civic Hall, Stourport-on-Severn, the much-loved Monday Night Group returns with its annual pantomime, Puss in Boots, running from Friday 23 January to Saturday 31 January 2026.

A staple of the local arts calendar, Monday Night Group brings together talented volunteers to deliver a professional, laugh-out-loud family show – all while raising vital funds for the Wyre Forest community. Formed in 1967 and registered as a charity since 1981, the group has donated over £500,000 to local causes, supporting organisations that help young people, older residents, community groups and those with disabilities.

Behind the scenes, a dedicated board of trustees and a passionate production committee work tirelessly throughout the year. Meeting once a month—true to their name—the group plans future shows, social events, and the fundraising efforts that sit at the heart of everything they do. Supported generously by local businesses, they stretch every penny to ensure that more of the money raised goes directly back into the community.

Their annual pantomime is the highlight: an affordable, fun-filled performance designed to bring joy to families, schools, Cubs, Brownies and long-time pantomime lovers who return each year to cheer, boo and

shout, "He's behind you!" Join them this January for a magical performance of Puss in Boots and help support a group that has been giving back to the Wyre Forest for nearly six decades.

Tickets:
www.ticketsource.co.uk &
search Monday Nigh Group

or visit:
www.mondaynightgroup.org

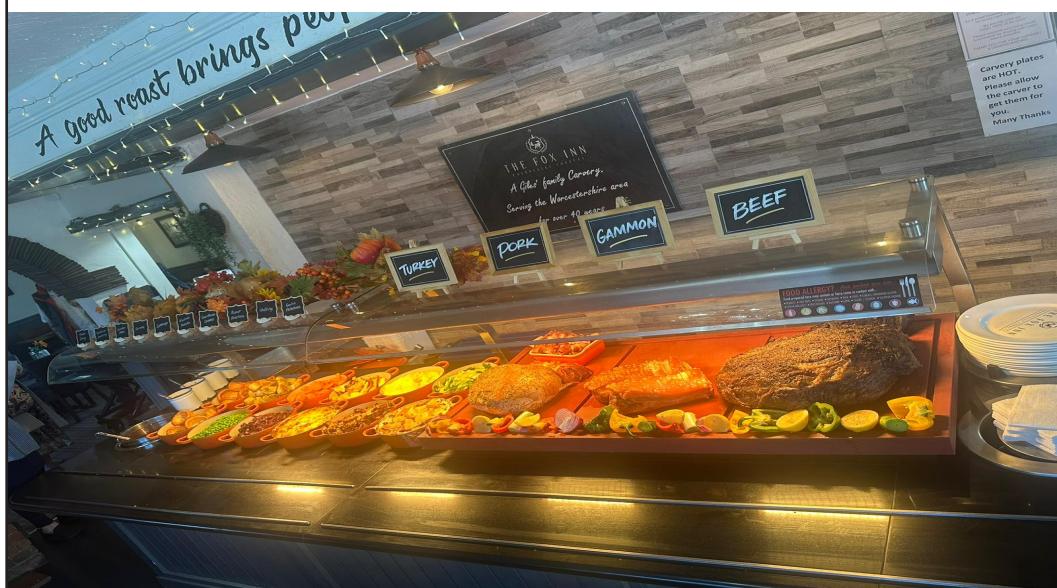
The image is a promotional advertisement for 'The Church Restaurant & Bar'. It features a large, ornate Gothic-style building facade in the background. In the upper left, text reads 'Start the Year in Style with Our Fresh New Menu!' and 'Served Lunch & Dinner'. In the upper right, there is a detailed line drawing of the building's intricate stonework and architecture. Below the drawing, the restaurant's name 'The Church' is written in a large, serif font, with 'Restaurant & Bar | Venue' in a smaller font underneath. In the center, text reads 'Plus our delicious 2-Course Set Lunch Menu will be available each weekday'. To the left, a chef in a white coat and black apron is shown plating a dish. Three smaller inset photos are arranged horizontally: a dessert with fruit and sauce, a main course with meat and vegetables, and another dish. At the bottom, text provides opening hours ('Open Wednesday–Sunday'), meal times ('Lunch 12–2:30pm – Dinner 5:30pm – 9:45pm'), and a booking message ('Book early to avoid disappointment'). The phone number '01562 320420' and the address 'Church Street, Kidderminster DY102AR' are also provided. Social media icons for Facebook and Instagram are at the bottom left, with the website 'thechurch.dy10' at the bottom right.



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Wyre Forest Soul Collective

Northern Soul Night at Kidderminster Town Hall

Northern Soul returns to Kidderminster as the Wyre Forest Soul Collective takes over the newly refurbished Town Hall on Saturday 24 January 2026, with the music kicking off from 7:30pm right through until 12:30am.

Two dedicated rooms will be filled with the very best in soul all night long – from timeless Northern Soul classics to rare vinyl gems and unbeatable floor-filers, all expertly delivered by a top-tier line-up of DJs who know how to keep the dancefloor buzzing.

Whether you're a lifelong Northern Soul devotee or discovering

the scene for the first time, this vibrant night promises a perfect mix of rhythm, atmosphere and community spirit.

Join the celebration as Kidderminster's historic Town Hall once again beats to the sound of soul. Get those dancing shoes ready – this is a night you won't want to miss.



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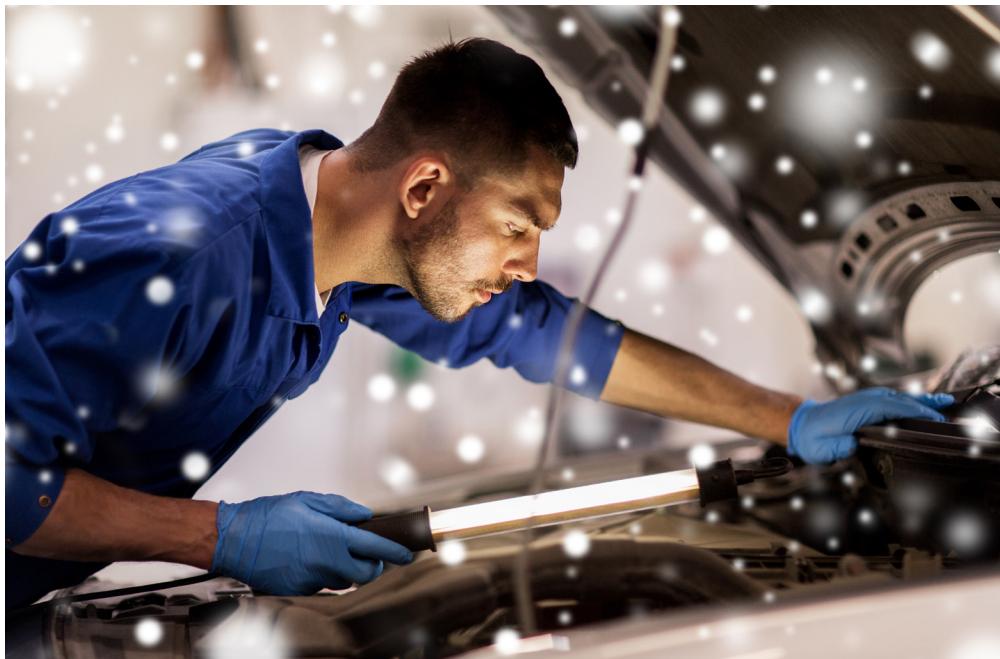
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January Motoring: A Fresh Start on the Roads

January is always a month of new beginnings, and for many motorists it's the perfect time to reset, refresh and rethink driving habits for the year ahead. After the rush of the festive season and the often-gruelling winter miles, the start of the year offers a welcome moment to slow down, take stock, and get vehicles into top shape for the months ahead.

Winter can be unforgiving, and January's cold snaps, dark mornings and damp roads make it more important than ever to stay prepared. A quick seasonal health check is a smart investment: tyres, brakes and battery condition are the three most common culprits behind early-year breakdowns. Many local garages now

offer free or low-cost winter checks, giving drivers peace of mind just when it's needed most.

It's also the ideal month for a cabin declutter. Removing the leftover Christmas chaos from the boot can improve fuel efficiency, while a fresh interior clean does wonders for that "new year, new start" feeling. Drivers planning longer trips in 2026 should also take the opportunity to update sat-navs and check in with insurance renewals and MOT dates no one enjoys those last-minute panics when paperwork creeps up unexpectedly.

January is traditionally a strong month for car deals

too. With dealerships eager to kick off the year positively, buyers may find attractive promotions on both new and used models. For those not ready to commit, short-term leasing options continue to grow in popularity, offering flexibility in a climate where many want predictability in their monthly budgets.

Whether you're clocking up daily commuter miles or planning weekend family adventures, January is the month to get motoring safely, efficiently and with renewed enthusiasm. Here's to smooth journeys and a great year ahead on the road.

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Kidderminster Harriers: JANUARY Diary

January marks the start of a pivotal chapter in Kidderminster Harriers' National League North campaign, with a packed schedule offering plenty of chances to build momentum. The New Year begins at Aggborough on 3 January, as Harriers welcome Curzon Ashton—a chance to set the tone early and start 2026 with three points on home soil.

A tough away trip follows on 10 January, with a visit to Macclesfield, always a testing ground and a fixture that often demands resilience and discipline. Harriers return home on 17 January to take on Worksop Town, a match that could prove important in tightening their grip on mid-table rivals.

The final stretch of the month features two consecutive away days. First up is Scarborough Athletic on 24 January, where the Harriers will look to handle a lively atmosphere and a well-organised side. Then on 27 January, a midweek journey to Bedford Town presents another tricky challenge under the floodlights.

To close out the month, Harriers return to Aggborough on 31 January for a home clash against Alfreton Town, rounding off a demanding but opportunity-filled start to the year. With six games in four weeks, January could be season-defining.

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