

# bishopstonvoice

February, 2026 Issue 157

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## Gym is strictly a tonic for Harry

Harry Aikines-Aryeetey, Team GB sprinter, Gladiator and Strictly Come Dancing contestant, was in Bristol to encourage us all to keep up our New Year's resolutions to get fitter. Harry was star guest at a community open day to mark a multi-million-pound refurbishment at Easton Leisure Centre, which has seen the gym extended, sports hall modernised, and a new soft play launched. Pool changing facilities, the exercise studio, reception area and café have also had an upgrade.



### King honours Serena, 21

Serena Wiebe, 21, who has advised the Government on its youth strategy, has been given the British Empire Medal in the New Year Honours List.

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### Wanderland to bring hope

Window Wanderland, the community festival that began in Bishopston, is back to brighten lives at the end of the month with the theme of Hope.

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### Playing fields battle continues

Cotham School has banned "all permissive public access" to its playing fields at Stoke Lodge, claiming damage to the fence and abuse of staff by residents.

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## Fortnightly bin collections stay

BLACK bins in Bristol will still be collected fortnightly in 2026 after councillors voted against moving to a three-weekly collection.

The Greens wanted the switch to try to boost recycling rates but Labour, Liberal Democrat and Conservative councillors opposed it.

Labour Councillor Kirsty

Tait told a meeting in December that 71 per cent of residents did not want the change. "How can we justify pressing ahead with a model that the public clearly does not want?" she asked.

Bristol recycles the most of its rubbish compared to other large cities in England. But recently recycling rates have stagnated, and new laws coming

in mean the council has to try and keep these rates driving up. By reducing the amount people put in their black bins, by collecting them less often, this would get them recycling more.

The council is now looking at other measures, including a nappy collection service and introducing better and larger recycling containers.

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Our March deadline is February 11. To ensure your news or letter is included, please contact us by this date. Advertisers are also asked to contact us by the same date.

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## MESSAGE FROM POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

# Neighbourhood policing gets results

AS we begin a new year, there have been changes to the Police and Crime Commissioner role nationally, but my commitments remain the same: keeping people safe and ensuring policing is rooted in the communities it serves.

Neighbourhood policing continues to be at the heart of that approach, because visible, local policing builds trust and tackles the issues that matter most to you.

That's why I have supported the national Winter of Action campaign, a programme running through December and January to keep communities safe during the festive season and darker evenings.

This initiative builds on the success of the Safer Streets Summer, with local policing teams increasing high-visibility

patrols, working closely with businesses, and continuing important efforts to tackle violence against women and girls.

This includes campaigns such as StreetSafe, a national app that lets people anonymously report places where they feel unsafe, and Walk and Talk, where women join officers on patrol to share concerns and help shape safety measures.

The Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee has already delivered 70 additional officers, PCSOs, and special constables into local teams, strengthening visible policing where it counts.

Here are some examples of how it is making an impact:

In Bristol, specially trained officers have been carrying out deployments in the city centre.

These unpredictable patrols combine uniformed and plain-clothes officers to deter crime and keep people safe.

Recent activity led to several arrests, including a woman wanted on a warrant, a man recalled to prison, and another arrested for drugs and weapons offences.

Officers also acted swiftly to stop a prolific shoplifter, recovering nearly £400 worth of stolen goods.

In South Gloucestershire, mounted units joined neighbourhood teams for patrols around Bradley Stoke following reports of antisocial behaviour.

And when residents raised concerns about speeding at a local 'Talk to Us' event, the Speed Enforcement Team investigated.

Their checks revealed

that over 84% of vehicles were exceeding the limit - a worrying figure that led to the road being added to the mobile enforcement schedule.

This shows how speaking to your local team can make a real difference.

This is what neighbourhood policing is all about: listening to communities, acting on concerns, and being there when it matters most.



**With Police and Crime Commissioner Clare Moody**

## NEWS

# Outdoor play at Purdown gets a boost

FAMILIES have a new play area to enjoy in 2026 - and there's more to come.

The South Purdown site near Muller Road includes inclusive and engaging equipment designed to cater to different ages and abilities. Among the highlights are:

- Two-bay swing set for classic fun and movement.
- Tower and net climbing structure to encourage physical activity and coordination.
- Wheelchair-accessible carousel, ensuring play opportunities for children with mobility needs.
- Butterfly seesaw and springers for younger children.
- Spinner bowl and springboard for dynamic play.
- Exploration features such as a frog tile slide, pond explorer, and hive maze for imaginative adventures.

All equipment has been installed to meet European safety standards (EN1176 & EN1177), with careful attention to surfacing depths and safety zones to ensure a secure environment for play.

The project was funded primarily through an £87,500 allocation from the local Area Committee and a £50,000 grant from the Enovert Community

**Local residents including children join Cllr Heather Mack as she cuts the ribbon at the new South Purdown play area**

Trust.

A second phase of development is planned, which will see additional play equipment installed by the end of 2026. This next stage is funded by £50,000 of City Council capital investment, with orders for the new equipment being placed before the Christmas holidays and work scheduled to start in early March.

Councillor Heather Mack, deputy leader of Bristol City Council and local ward councillor for Lockleaze, said: "We're thrilled to open the South Purdown play area, which will give local families a safe, exciting space to enjoy the outdoors. This project is a fantastic example

of local communities working with, and being supported by, the council, I thank the local parents who have worked for years to secure this playground. Play is essential for children's development and wellbeing, and this new facility will help create lasting memories for families in Lockleaze."

The site also includes new fencing, gates, and a tarmac path for easy access, with landscaping incorporated to blend the play area into its natural surroundings. The design prioritises safety, accessibility, and sustainability, creating a welcoming space for the whole community.

Stephen Williams, chair

of the public health and communities policy committee, said: "It's fantastic to see the South Purdown play area come to life - a new space created for Lockleaze families thanks to our broader commitment to park and play improvements across Bristol. 'Last month, our committee approved a £1.1 million investment in parks and children's play facilities citywide. This new play area in Lockleaze is exactly the sort of transformational outcome we're looking to deliver through this new funding: accessible, inclusive, safe and fun spaces that support children's development and community wellbeing."





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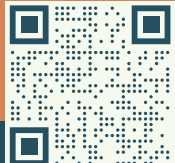


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## NEWS

# Fresh look at expansion of rail services

TRANSPORT planners are looking at the possibility of extending the Severn Beach railway line to Bristol Parkway train station. After reaching Parkway, trains would then turn around and head back the other way, instead of looping around the city as some councillors are calling for.

A study was commissioned by the West of England Combined Authority to look at options for increasing the number of trains going to the planned Henbury station. One option would be to allow passenger trains running from Avonmouth to use an existing freight line to Henbury.

This would connect up the west and north-west of Bristol with the north and the north-east, including major employment centres like the port with newly built housing estates. It's not clear when the study will be completed, but new details were revealed in a member forum meeting on January 13.

Green Councillor Ed Plowden, chair of the transport policy committee, said: "We've invested a lot in rail, we've seen the Ashley Down station and the Portway station, and these are really good things. They're actually busting our expectations so I'm really hoping that the way we do the appraisals of future things actually learns

from the success we've already had. I'm very concerned that we're ruling out options, for example to make it into a loop. They'll have to drive in and reverse out again and do some sort of complicated manoeuvre. We need to recognise that it's a highly regulated environment, it's an existing live line that we're talking about which has freight on it, and we have to listen to the experts."

The plan falls short of filling out the Henbury Loop, which would in effect create a circle line around Bristol. With this idea, the northern end of the Severn Beach line would connect to Henbury, which would then go down to Temple Meads and rejoin the line at its southern end.

The Severn Beach line calls at Lawrence Hill, Stapleton Road, Montpellier, Redland, Clifton Down, Sea Mills, Shirehampton, Portway Park and Ride, Avonmouth, St Andrews Road and Severn Beach. New stations are planned at Henbury and North Filton next to the new YTL Arena.

Conservative Cllr Mark Weston, who represents Henbury and Brentry, has long advocated for the Henbury Loop option. He tabled a motion for the full council meeting on January 13, seeking to get cross-party support for the Henbury Loop, although this

did not get debated due to a lack of time.

Cllr Weston said: "The last time we looked at the loop, the experts said that only eight journeys a day would loop from Henbury to Avonmouth. That's four return journeys, eight movements. So forgive me if I'm slightly sceptical when an expert says that."

Despite the motion not getting debated, the idea was supported by Green Cllr James Crawford, who represents Bishopston and Ashley Down, where the new Ashley Down station opened in 2024. He said residents were keen for investment in the railways.

Cllr Crawford added: "It has been proven that access to high quality public transport is key to strengthening local economies. It improves access to local services and housing. It brings communities closer together. And with the climate crisis progressing at pace, it enables a more sustainable and convenient lifestyle for residents."

"Expanding the Henbury Line will go a long way to meeting this untapped demand. There are obviously technical challenges to overcome, but provided the political will is there, I believe there is incredible potential in creating a true circle line for Bristol."

*By Alex Seabrook, Local Democracy Reporting Service*



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## NEWS

# Get set for Window Wanderlands x 2

FED up with the gloom of a long dark winter? Relief is at hand at the end of this month when two Winter Wonderland events will take place in our area.

They are in Bishopston, where the idea of lighting up windows for a community event originated, and in the Chandos neighbourhood during the weekend of February 28 - March 1.

Both events, and others taking place in 2026, have the theme of Hope.

The festival's founder, artist Lucy Reeves-Khan, said: "I found out this year that thinking and acting hopefully can actually help your brain to be more resilient when times are bleak. Window Wanderlands are already incredibly hopeful festivals, so this theme seemed a natural fit for us."

Since Lucy organised the first Window Wanderland in Bishopston in 2015, the festival has spread across the country and beyond. Communities have

created almost 400 unique festivals involving more than 27,000 displays.

Lucy said: "I wanted to see if something simple could make a real difference to a community and bring out people's playful side. Anyone can participate. It all happens right outside your front door, but even if you find it hard to get out, you can still join in. It's all about doing as much or as little as you like."

"We have seen displays made by schools, grandparents, even pets! It's a proper grassroots community festival. Some roads had almost every house participating, using campervans, top floor windows and even decorating hedges with lights."

Both trails emphasise that designs can be as simple or complex as participants wish – the important thing is to take part in the community event.

Workshops to help people create designs are planned – look out for details on social media.

Artist Tracey English is providing a template of a simple image for people who are not confident art makers to download.

For those who want to create something more ambitious, anything goes – as long as it's family friendly.

A spokesperson for Chandos Neighbourhood Association, which is bringing back its trail after a year's break said organisers hoped for a wide range of designs.

"There are many sources of inspiration for our displays, with popular ones including nature and animals, and of course Bristol's famous suspension bridge and balloons. The Winter Olympics, World Cup, St David's Day or Chinese Year of the horse are all possible inspirations this year. Individual households choose whichever theme they prefer, and express a wealth of creativeness."

The Bishopston event is on Friday February 27, Saturday



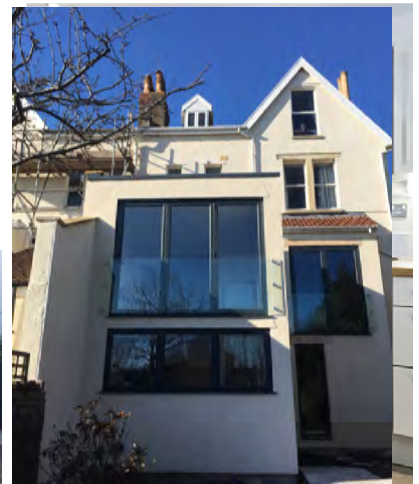
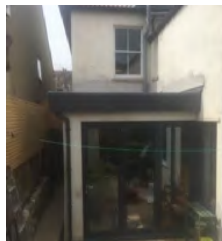
**Decorated windows brighten up neighbourhoods during the long dark winter evenings**

February 28, and Sunday March 1 from 6-9pm while the Chandos one is on the Saturday and Sunday during the same hours.

Maps of participating properties will be available online. If you are taking part, don't forget to register!



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## NEWS

COTHAM School was able to bring back some games lessons to Stoke Lodge last month – but the battle over the playing fields is nowhere near an end.

Pupils returned to the site, which the school leases from Bristol City Council, on Friday January 16, for the first time in several years. This was after the school had locked all the gates, claiming that it was suspending “all permissive public access” following damage to the re-erected fence and threatening behaviour towards staff by local residents.

The We Love Stoke Lodge group, which has campaigned for continued public access to the 23-acre site, accused the school of “behaving in a hostile and aggressive manner”.

The two sides have been in conflict since the school, which does not have playing fields on its site, first installed a fence in the interests of safeguarding pupils. This had to be removed when the Stoke Lodge fields were declared a village green but was put back up last autumn after the High Court ruled against that decision.

The school brought in mobile security cameras and applied to the council for eight permanent cameras, but that request has been refused.

The war of words is likely to continue until at least October, when a public inquiry will look into a council decision to confirm four public rights of way across the playing fields.

In a statement released in the evening of January 16, Cotham School said: “The safety of our students and staff and the

# New battle as school bans public access to playing fields

security of our playing fields at Stoke Lodge are Cotham School's top priorities. In response to yesterday's and today's disruption by adult individuals seeking to prevent our lawful use of the site, the school has been left with no choice but to lock the gates and suspend all permissive public access. This suspension will remain in place until the school can be confident that the public and campaign groups will respect the school's use of the fields and maintain the security of the fencing.

“This action comes in response to more criminal damage overnight and significant disturbances that occurred yesterday and today. Yesterday this prevented the lawful use of the site and the delivery of physical education to our students.

Today the premises staff attending the site in the morning had to repair the fence and at 1pm after lessons ended they experienced verbal abuse and threatening behaviour from members of the public. This is completely unacceptable.

“Until now, Cotham School has always provided the public with access to the fields when not in use by the school, which is typically every afternoon and at weekends. Dogs have not been permitted on the fields.

“The public is reminded that the claimed Public Rights of Way over the Stoke Lodge playing fields have no legal standing at this time. These rights are only claimed and are not formally registered in law. The school will continue to take all necessary steps to protect our use of our site.”

In response, WLSL issued a statement, saying: “We are disappointed, yet again, that Cotham School is behaving in such a hostile and aggressive manner.

“It should surprise no one that when school representatives arrived at the field to lock the gates yesterday, there were people walking on the public rights of way, but they made it clear that there was no intention to disrupt any lessons...

“The school has now declared that it will lock all the gates, all the time. This is what many people believe they intended to do all along. It is completely unacceptable conduct.

“Many other schools in Bristol and across the UK have public rights of way across playing fields (or use open access land) and do not treat members of the public in the way that Cotham School does.

“The whole episode demonstrates the problems that the school has failed to plan for,

when erecting a fence all around the perimeter in full knowledge that four public rights of way lie within the fenced area.

“The school only uses the field for PE lessons of 45 minutes, once or twice a day. It could easily have resolved the whole situation by fencing a smaller area of the field.

“Under section 137 of the Highways Act, it is a criminal offence to wilfully obstruct free passage along a public right of way. The school keeps repeating that the public rights of way have no current status, but that is not correct. The High Court judge noted that the school's use under the lease is subject to ‘rights that the local community might have already acquired, such as a public right of way (which does not require registration to come into existence)’.

“The school's failure to respect the law impacts young children, who cannot now walk a safe route to Stoke Bishop School across the field, elderly people who could manage a short cut across the field but cannot walk a longer route, and thousands of others including those with mobility and other issues.

“It shows an absolute lack of good faith towards the council (which has said that these rights of way exist) and to the wider public.”

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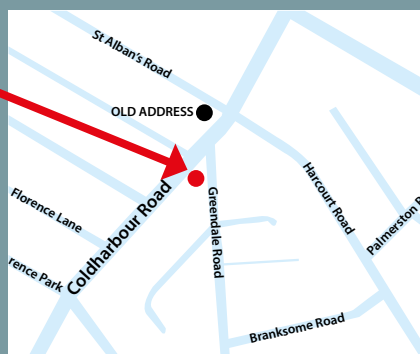
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## ■ ADVERTISING FEATURE

# Executors: To Act or Not to Act

When someone makes a will they should have appointed an executor or multiple executors. The role of an executor is to administer someone's estate to ensure their assets are distributed in accordance with their wishes. As you might imagine, the duties involved impose important responsibilities on the appointed executor(s), which can be time consuming and stressful. In addition to this, executors can be personally liable if their duties are not carried out properly.

So what are your options as an executor?

**Act and instruct a solicitor** – The estate administration process can take many months, have unexpected complications and is often an emotionally difficult process, particularly if the executor has lost a close family member or friend. Instructing a solicitor to assist with the estate administration can pro-

vide an executor with comfort in the knowledge that whilst they are still responsible for the estate, an experienced professional is dealing with the day to day work for them, as well as the often complex probate applications.

**Choose not to act** – If you do not want to act as executor, you can choose to renounce your appointment. This means that you give up your right to act as executor. This is done by way of a Deed of Renunciation. However, it is important to note that if an executor has taken steps to deal with the estate or has 'intermeddled' they will not be able to renounce.

**Choose not to act, for now** – If you do not want to give up your power to act completely, you can choose to reserve your power. This can be useful if, for example, an executor lives abroad and it may

not be practical for them to act, but they would like to keep the option to act in the future. The other appointed executor(s) would carry on dealing with the day to day running of the estate and would apply for probate. If the executor with power reserved wanted to step back in at a later stage, they would need to apply to the Probate Registry for a 'double-grant' to be issued.

**Appoint an attorney** – If there is only one executor and they do not want to act but know someone who would, they could appoint them as their attorney for the purposes of dealing with the estate administration.

### Conclusion

An appointed executor may be more than happy to act, or may have been completely unaware the deceased appointed them an executor. Whatever the circum-



stances, the executor has various options to consider and is not necessarily bound to act. If you require advice regarding your appointment as executor under a deceased's Will our Probate team is available to assist. Please contact us on **0117 962 1205**, by email to **info@amdsolicitors.com** or through our website **www.amdsolicitors.com**.



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## NEWS

# Ardagh chief honoured for sustainability work

THE CEO of a highly regarded local charity in north Bristol has been awarded a British Empire Medal (BEM) in the King's New Year's honours list.

Christine Storry, of the Ardagh Community Trust (ACT), has been recognised for her services to Sustainable and Local Food Procurement as a procurement manager for Bath and North-East Somerset Council, where she worked until early 2025. The award was announced in the official public record, 'The Gazette', in December 2025.

Christine said: "I was so surprised and thrilled to receive this award. It's amazing to think that the work we did to encourage

and secure short, local supply chains has become part of a national framework, rolled out across the country, ensuring all those small and medium-sized food producers have a secure route to their local markets."

Christine became CEO of ACT, a charity-run venue in the heart of Horfield Common, in May 2025, and has continued her food production and distribution-related work with her ongoing plans for the Ardagh's food bank collation and community garden. The garden recently won a Royal Horticultural Society's In Your Neighbourhood award, and is home to the first café in Bristol to compost 100% of its food waste on site.

"It's so rewarding to be able to continue to put all I've learnt about the importance of good food in communities into action. Watch this space for more activities and events this year", added Christine.

Alongside its social enterprises (the café and plant nursery) ACT hosts a wide range of events and activities, including craft fairs, food pop-ups, t'ai chi classes, concerts and creative sessions for children. The site also features an on-site community sauna. It does all this with a tiny core team and the help of a small army of volunteers. It receives no central funding, so relies on grant applications, fundraising campaigns and on-site income generating activities.

# Praise and pride as Serena, 21, gets British Empire Medal

A YOUNG Bristol woman who is playing a national role in making sure the voices of young people are heard by policymakers has been honoured by the King.

Serena Wiebe, 21, was given a British Empire Medal (BEM) in the New Year's Honours List for her outstanding work.

Serena, who grew up in East Bristol, is an anti-knife crime campaigner, boxing coach and mentor with the charity Empire Fighting Chance, where she also works as a Youth Voice Ambassador. Through her work, Serena helps young people build confidence, find their voice and create positive change in their communities.

She has also played an influential role in national youth policy, including contributing to the development of the Government's National Youth Strategy and speaking up for

young people at events such as the Youth Opportunity Summit at St James's Palace, where she sat alongside King Charles and Sir Keir Starmer to share young people's perspectives. She also attended the first annual Knife Crime Summit at 10 Downing Street.

Speaking about her award, Serena said it was an "incredible honour" to represent Empire Fighting Chance and the Bristol community, and she was proud to speak up for young people whose voices are often unheard.

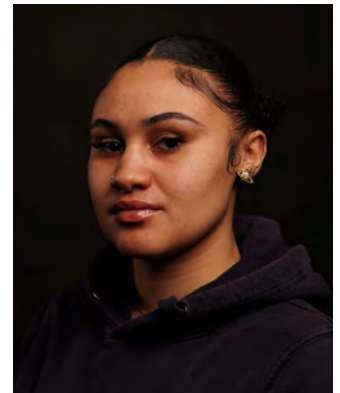
Empire Fighting Chance said: "Serena's journey with Empire is a powerful example of lived experience driving real change, from coming through our programmes herself to now mentoring and inspiring young people every day.

"This BEM is a brilliant recognition of Serena's

leadership, her voice for young people, and the impact she continues to make both locally and nationally. Please join us in congratulating Serena on this well-deserved honour, we are so proud."

Serena originally joined Empire Fighting Chance after her brother took his own life. After losing friends to knife crime, she decided to work with other young people to bring about change. She is a former pupil of Fairfield High School.

Asked about school experiences, Serena said: "While my journey wasn't always easy, there were some teachers at Fairfield who really believed in me when I needed it most. They offered encouragement, reassurance, and provided me with a space where I could feel comfortable during tough times. I'm very grateful to those



Serena Wiebe

individuals, as their belief in me stayed with me and helped shape my confidence moving forward."

Edel Cronin, the school's principal, said: "Serena is an inspiring young woman who has faced considerable challenges and used her experiences to help and empower others. We are proud that she has been recognised in this remarkable way and that she spent her formative years at Fairfield. Her story will continue to inspire our students for years to come."



Fiona Donald

# Anaesthetist Fiona is made OBE

A FORMER consultant anaesthetist at North Bristol NHS Trust (NBT) has been recognised in the King's New Year's Honours List for outstanding contributions to her field.

Dr Fiona Donald, who worked at NBT for 27 years before her retirement, has been made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to anaesthesia, intensive care and pain medicine.

Dr Donald specialised in obstetric anaesthesia and perioperative medicine, with further interests in teaching and training, and is also a former

President of the Royal College of Anaesthetists.

Dr Donald said: "I am delighted to have been awarded the OBE, particularly because this honour also reflects the work of the many individuals and teams I have had the pleasure of working with over the course of my career. Each collaboration helped me work towards my aims of improving patient outcomes and educating future generations of anaesthetists.

Maria Kane, Bristol NHS Group chief executive, said: "This accolade is the perfect celebration of Dr Donald's truly outstanding career."

## NEWS

# Tower tours net fifty grand!

THOUSANDS of visitors have now climbed to the top of the University of Bristol's Wills Memorial Building through its popular tower tours, raising funds for The Grand Appeal, the dedicated charity for Bristol Children's Hospital.

Informal tours of the 100-year-old Neo-Gothic building were so popular that scheduled tours were introduced and opened to the public in exchange for charitable donations.

The tours are coordinated and run by guides Gary Nott, senior estates assistant at the Wills Memorial Building, and Sarah Price, engagement officer in the university's global engagement division.

Gary said: "For 25 years, we've helped raise lots of money for The Grand Appeal by welcoming visitors from all over the world. Recently, I was able to visit some of the facilities provided by The Grand Appeal to families of sick children, and it was amazing to see first-hand where the money we have raised has been going. We hope to continue to welcome lots of visitors over the coming years."

In recognition of his outstanding efforts, Gary Nott was presented with a Golden Gromit for his exceptional

contributions to The Grand Appeal.

Professor Judith Squires, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost, said: "Gary Nott and his team have worked tirelessly to welcome members of the public into the Wills Memorial Building, helping to generate £50,000 in support of the dedicated charity for Bristol Children's Hospital, The Grand Appeal. This remarkable achievement will make a real difference."

Kate Jones, community fundraising manager at The Grand Appeal, added: "We're incredibly grateful to everyone who has supported these tours over the years. Every donation helps us provide the specialist equipment, facilities and support that families need during the toughest times."

The building hosts graduation ceremonies twice a year as well as other events. Visitors on the tours experience the splendour of the Great Hall, Council Chamber and ornate libraries, and can climb to the top of the building's tower where the view of Bristol is unparalleled.

The tours also give a unique insight into the history of the building, including the damage caused by the Bristol Blitz.



Kate Jones, from, The Grand Appeal, Gary Nott, Wills Memorial tour guide, and Professor Judith Squires



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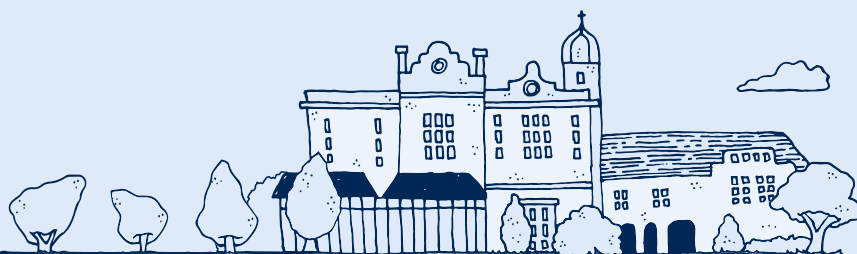






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## NEWS

# 'Positive change' praised

OFSTED has praised the workforce and the leadership of children's services at Bristol City Council.

In their report published last month inspectors said: "Committed and determined political and corporate leadership is bringing positive change to children in Bristol."

Most children in need and those under child protection plans were receiving timely and appropriate support, benefiting from well-coordinated multi-agency planning, they said.

Other positive comments included: 'workforce morale is high', 'practitioners love working for Bristol' and 'there is an unwavering commitment to improving services and support for children'.

The findings, based on Ofsted's inspection in December 2025, also highlighted two areas for improvement, including the quality of safety plans and note-taking in records.

The inspection assessed the council's arrangements for children in need, child protection planning, and private fostering arrangements.

The report acknowledged the council's stable senior leadership team, and increasingly permanent workforce, which

have enhanced social work practices and the quality of support provided to children. It notes that workforce morale is high, with staff expressing their appreciation for the supportive environment and their ability to make a positive difference in the lives of vulnerable children.

A full Inspecting Local Authority Children's Service's Ofsted inspection is due in Bristol within the next six months.

Councillor Christine Townsend, chair of the children and young people committee, said she was really pleased that Ofsted has recognised the significant progress made in improving children's services in Bristol. She said: "This outcome reflects the hard work and dedication of our staff, who are committed to making a positive difference in the lives of vulnerable children and families."

"We are really proud of the progress made particularly in workforce culture and practice which is fundamental to how we can support children and young people. There will always be areas for improvement, and we are confident of being able to progress those highlighted in the report. Our unwavering commitment to putting children at the heart of everything we do remains stronger than ever."

## Academy trust has new chair

AN educational trust that runs eight schools in Bristol has a new chair.

Toby Watson has stepped from Excalibur Academies Trust after eight years and is replaced by Susan Clarke.

Nick Lewis, chief executive officer, said: "We are extremely grateful for the significant contribution that Toby has made over the past eight years. His leadership, insight and commitment have been instrumental in the trust's growth and success, and we thank him sincerely for all he has done."

"I am delighted to welcome Susan to her new role as Chair of Trustees. Her experience and values will ensure strong governance as we continue to build on our success and serve our communities."

Susan, a founding member of Excalibur in 2012, was previously vice chair. She said: "My focus will be to ensure that all children receive the best possible education with diversity, inclusivity and fairness at the heart of our work."

Excalibur has 20 schools including Fairfield High School, Redland Green School, Ashton Park School and five Bristol primaries.



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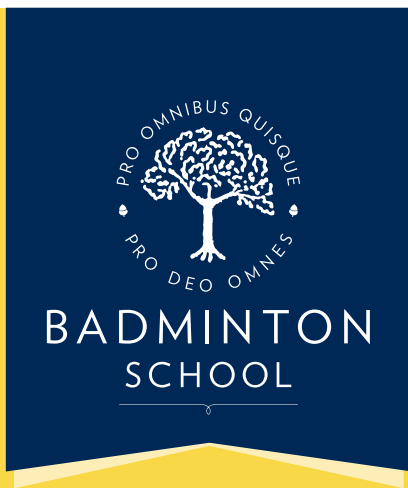
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## ■ PHARMACY COLUMN

# Simple but powerful health benefits

LIKE many people, we start each year full of ambition, convinced that this will be the year of massive and dramatic change. Unfortunately, our track record of seeing things through may not bear testament to our worthy goals.

So this year, why not try something doable: small, incremental, sustainable changes that actually bring success.

One of those changes is remarkably simple. You've probably heard that going for a walk after eating is "good for digestion". Research suggests this modest habit may also help control blood sugar levels and protect long-term heart health—even for people without diabetes.

After we eat, our blood sugar naturally rises. When this rise is too high or lasts too long, it's known as post-meal (postprandial) hyperglycaemia. Repeated spikes in blood sugar

can damage blood vessels, impair circulation, and increase the risk of cardiovascular disease over time. While this problem is well recognised in people with diabetes, studies show that temporary blood sugar spikes can also negatively affect otherwise healthy individuals.

Exercise is one of the most effective ways to reduce these post-meal glucose rises. Physical activity after eating helps muscles absorb glucose more efficiently, reducing the amount left circulating in the bloodstream.

The good news is that this doesn't require gym memberships, Lycra, or heroic levels of motivation. Several studies suggest that in healthy adults, even a brief 10-minute walk after each meal can offer similar benefits to a single 30-minute walk done once a day. For people with type 2 diabetes, walking for 20–30 minutes around half an hour after eating

significantly reduces post-meal blood sugar levels, with very little risk of low blood sugar.

But what about walking immediately after eating? Many people worry that this might cause discomfort or be less effective. Research comparing timing options found that a 10-minute walk immediately after a meal reduced blood sugar levels as effectively as waiting 30 minutes and then walking for longer. Importantly, participants reported minimal stomach discomfort, suggesting there's no need to rest before heading out for a gentle stroll.

Why does this matter? Elevated post-meal blood sugar levels are linked to a higher risk of heart disease—even in people without diabetes. Regular short walks after meals could therefore be a simple, accessible way to lower that risk. Even better, studies suggest that slower walking speeds still help, making this approach suitable for older



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adults too.

The message is clear: moving your body after eating matters. A short, relaxed walk—even just 10 minutes—can support better blood sugar control and contribute to long-term health.

So perhaps we can all take a leaf from Julien, the great king of Madagascar's lemurs, and "...like to move it, move it" (especially after meals). The Kellaway Pharmacy Team are ever ready to support every positive change. Sometimes the simplest habits make the biggest difference. Let's move it!

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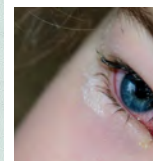
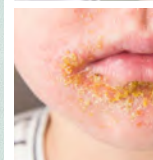
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## NEWS

# Air ambulance crew sets callouts record

BRISTOL'S air ambulance crew attended a record number of callouts in 2025.

With one helicopter and three critical care cars, Great Western Air Ambulance Crew (GWAAC) responded to 2,344 people in urgent need of care in Bristol, Bath and North East Somerset, Gloucestershire, South Gloucestershire, North Somerset, and parts of Wiltshire.

The team includes Critical Care Paramedics and Consultant Doctors from hospitals, bringing the skills, experience and equipment usually found in a hospital emergency department direct to the patient.

Serious medical-related incidents accounted for 56% of GWAAC's total callouts in 2025 while trauma-related injuries accounted for 44% of missions.

GWAAC's Operations Officer, Tim Ross-Smith said: "We're getting more requests for assistance from our local land ambulance crews on top of the traditional air ambulance call-outs for incidents like road traffic collisions and cardiac arrests.

"This could be due to the outreach work our crew are doing, educating land paramedics about when we can add value to patients who are in urgent need of care."

The crew were called to 521 people in cardiac arrest, meaning it is still the biggest



single reason that GWAAC's service might be needed.

One cardiac arrest patient was Pam, 66, who said: "I'm here today because my husband immediately called 999, the paramedics gave me CPR and defibrillation, the GWAAC team kept me stable and got me to a specialist heart hospital. I'd encourage anyone to learn how to do CPR and find where their nearest defibrillator is so they know how to help in an emergency."

GWAAC's crew were called to help 668 people in Bristol (28% of all callouts), making it the second busiest region for the charity. Gloucestershire was the busiest region with 677 people in need of urgent medical care. South Gloucestershire came next with 323 people in urgent need, followed by North Somerset (281), Wiltshire

(138), Bath and North East Somerset (121), and Somerset (90). GWAAC's crew were tasked to 46 patients outside of its usual region, such as in Wales.

Only 2% of patients were conveyed to hospital by air. More often, their crew continue treating patients in the back of a road ambulance, where there is more space to work, while transporting them to the hospital best suited to their needs.

Anna Perry, chief executive, said: "Demand for our lifesaving service has never been higher and I feel very proud that GWAAC has been able to help a record number of people for a consecutive year.

"I'm especially proud because our charity has been facing increased operational costs and an increasingly tough fundraising environment. So, thank you to everyone who has donated, volunteered, taken part in sponsored events and bought from and donated items to our shops.

"But we have a tough challenge ahead of us; we desperately want to be able to be there for everyone who needs us so we're asking for support from our communities again in 2026. If you can, please donate and help us be there for more people in the future."

For more information about GWAAC visit [www.gwaac.com](http://www.gwaac.com)

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# Why Wellbeing Matters as You Get Older

Growing older brings new challenges—changes in health, mobility, and how we socialise can affect how we feel day to day. It's the everyday things that used to feel small that can often cause us stress, such as paying bills or going out to buy food. That's why it's so important, that we look after our physical and mental health as we get older.

The **5 Ways to Wellbeing** provides a simple, practical framework to stay positive and resilient. By focusing on connection, activity, learning, giving, and mindfulness, it provides a way for older adults to maintain independence, boost mental health, and enjoy a sense of purpose and belonging.

For over 60 years, Abbeyfield Bristol and Keynsham has provided more than just housing; they offer a warm community built to tackle isolation and build lasting friendships. They believe that staying connected is the heartbeat of wellbeing, which is why their supported living houses bring residents together every day through shared mealtimes and activities.



Recently, they've embraced the "5 Ways to Wellbeing." Developed by the New Economics Foundation as a mental health equivalent to "5-a-day," these simple, practical steps are essential for maintaining a sense of purpose and improving wellbeing.



## 1. Connect

Life is better together. Supported living communities provide opportunities to build friendships, share stories, and enjoy social activities. Whether it's a coffee morning or a group outing, staying connected combats loneliness and boosts emotional health.

## 2. Be Active

Movement matters at every age. From gentle exercise classes to walking in landscaped gardens, supported living encourages physical activity tailored to your abilities—keeping you strong, mobile, and independent.

## 3. Keep Learning

Learning doesn't stop as we grow older. Explore new hobbies, attend workshops, or join book clubs in your community. Supported living houses offer creative and educational programs that keep your mind sharp and engaged. Such as, quizzes, history clubs, and crafting sessions.

## 4. Give

Giving brings joy. Whether it's helping a neighbour, volunteering, or sharing your wisdom with younger generations, supported living fosters a sense of purpose and community spirit.

## 5. Take Notice

Pause and appreciate the little

things—a beautiful sunset, a blooming flower, or a shared laugh. Supported living environments are designed to help you enjoy life's moments in a safe, stress-free setting. Abbeyfield Bristol and Keynsham has created a 'Book of Wellbeing' to share ideas that can help keep you connected and improve your wellbeing by offering tips and activities to boost your happiness. Scan the QR code to read the 'Book of Wellbeing'.



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### Our Local Houses: Abbeyfield Bristol & Keynsham

Abbeyfield Bristol & Keynsham houses offer, en-suite studio and one-bedroom apartments across houses in Henleaze, Keynsham, Hanham, and Redland. As part of a vibrant community, residents enjoy home-cooked meals, relaxing gardens, daily events, and companionship that comes with living with other residents.



## NEWS FROM THE METRO MAYOR

# A positive start to the year

THE year is off to a positive start already in the West of England, with good news for families and young people from the festive period.

Our Kids Go Free scheme returned over Christmas, giving under-16s free travel on buses across Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire.

Despite bank holidays and reduced services, children took 182,351 free journeys – a huge 50% increase on the number paying to travel during the same period the previous year.

This is even better than the 32% increase we saw during last summer's school holidays, compared to the same time in 2024.

Families have already saved around £1.1 million through Kids Go Free, and for some children, this scheme has opened the door to our region's attractions for the very first time.

It's fantastic to see how free travel can make a real difference – helping young people get to sports clubs, libraries, cultural events, or just explore their local area.

It also supports local businesses and visitor attractions, boosting our economy and giving more people a chance to experience what the West has to offer.

With child fares already among the cheapest in the country, we are making bus travel as easy and accessible as possible for families.

In the past few weeks, the West has celebrated another milestone: the UK's first Citizens' Assembly dedicated to culture publishing its report, setting out a vision for "a West of England where culture is for everyone as part of everyday life."

The assembly recommended opening up parks, libraries, schools, and heritage sites; embedding creative learning in schools; developing creative and accessible solutions to transport and creating opportunities for people to shape cultural priorities at a local level.

I'm delighted that the Citizens' Assembly will continue its work as the Citizens for Culture panel, with £100,000 from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to try out their ideas.

On top of this, the West of England has been chosen as one of just six regions to receive £25 million from the Creative Places Growth Fund – a huge vote of confidence in our creative sector.

Together, these investments will help our cultural scene and put people back at the heart of things. Working together with our



**Metro Mayor Helen Godwin**  
writes for the Voice

local councils, creative organisations, and residents, we can make culture accessible for all – and build a West of England we can all be proud of.

Both Kids Go Free and Citizens for Culture show what's possible when we remove barriers.

From giving children the freedom to travel and explore, to empowering communities with a role in shaping cultural priorities, together we are opening doors and creating opportunities for everyone in our region – and helping more people shape the West of England's future.

**Abbeyfield**  
Bristol & Keynsham

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## BOOK REVIEW

# Our Wives Under the Sea

By Julia Armfield

LEAH and Miri are a married couple. Leah is a deep sea research scientist whilst Miri works from home, writing grant applications for non-profit organisations.

The novel opens with the return of Leah from a deep sea mission, that was supposed to last three weeks but saw her absent for six months. We are presented with a dual narrative with Leah looking back at her life changing mission and Miri providing the reader with her perspective of life since her partner's return home. Miri finds Leah much changed from the woman she married. Leah spends much of her time, submerged in the bath tub, vomiting seawater, her skin

developing a strange oyster sheen, changing from white to blue and green.

We discover that Leah was accompanied on the submarine by two colleagues, the Catholic and saint worshipping Jelka and a former fisherman Matteo.

The submarine dropped to the bottom of the ocean with all communication cut with the surface world. We also piece together the backstory's of Leah and Miri. We hear about Leah learning to swim at the age of seven, when her father chucked her into the deep end of the local swimming pool and how she fell in love with the ocean whilst reading about Challenger Deep, the deepest

point of the Pacific.

We discover that Miri is still in grief from the loss of her mother, who lived alone by the sea, until moving into a hospice. This is an intriguing and thought provoking book, with two unreliable narrators, tackling issues of love, loss, grief and trauma. The ending is both poignant and beautiful and will stay with me for some time to come.

Why not visit your friendly and welcoming local library? You will walk out with a library card giving you access to over two million books, as well as the internet, study space, wifi and printing.

*Review by Bob Deacon, from Bishopston Library*



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## ■ FROM BRISTOL CENTRAL'S MP

# Fixing housing crisis in our city

THIS year has been off to an unsettling start, with Trump's aggression in Venezuela and transparent ambitions to 'own' more and more territory, including Greenland. It's vital that Keir Starmer finds his backbone and stands up to Trump – I and my fellow Green MPs will be holding his feet to the fire, as always.

But closer to home, we started the year with some brilliant news – Bristol Council has smashed records for building affordable housing. In just six months, between April and September last year, more new affordable homes were built in the city than in any other year 'within memory' – 286. While there's much more to be done, it's worth a moment to celebrate that Bristol is now the best council outside of London for building affordable homes!

The Green-led council has also made huge strides towards sorting out the mess it inherited from the previous Labour council when it comes to maintaining existing council housing in the

city. When Greens took over the council in 2024, England's social housing regulator had made a serious judgement on the council's failures to properly look after its stock of council homes. But now the council has made huge progress towards fixing these failings, with regular communication with tenants and a huge project underway to survey every council home for damp and mould.

Of course, these are just first steps. A decade and a half of government neglect has caused a huge housing crisis which is still devastating lives in Bristol and across the country. The progress is brilliant, and will have a huge impact on people's lives. But we need more from the Labour government – like more funding for councils so that they can build all the homes that are needed to fill the gap. And rent controls, to stop landlords exploiting tenants by charging extortionate rents that people can't afford.

Since being elected in 2024,

this Labour government has proved a disappointment to the people of Bristol time and time again. Residents tell me they are frustrated by its failure to take bold climate action, and upset by its anti-migrant rhetoric and policies – dancing to Reform's tune of scapegoating the migrants and refugees who are a vital part of our community.

But as we head into 2026 I'm inspired and spurred on by the knowledge that in Bristol, we don't just fight for the things that we care about – we get on with doing them.

From the brilliant volunteers I meet week in-week out who are doing so much for their local communities, to the hardworking Green councillors making Bristol a leading city in the fight against climate change and tackling the housing crisis head-on – I see so much in this city that makes me feel positive about the year ahead. And so proud to be working with my fellow Bristolians to get the job done!



**Carla Denyer**  
writes for  
the Voice

• If you live in Bristol Central and need help with a local issue, email me at [bristolcentraloffice@parliament.uk](mailto:bristolcentraloffice@parliament.uk) or write to Carla Denyer MP, House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA For national issues email me using [carla](mailto:carla.denyer.mp@parliament.uk).

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## ■ FROM BRISTOL NORTH WEST'S MP

# No more damp and mouldy homes

WHEN we talk about feeling safe in our own homes, most people will think about securing their home from potential intruders. But for some, the everyday threat comes from living in hazardous conditions caused by severe damp and mould.

Constituents frequently contact me about damp and mould issues in their social housing. In the past, despite the best efforts of my team and I, we haven't always been able to get a successful outcome when we have urged a social housing landlord, including Bristol City Council, to undertake the necessary remedial work to put these properties in a liveable state.

But now, this government is putting a stop to social landlords not acting on reports from tenants about damp and mould and other emergency hazards.

The government has introduced Awaab's Law, which is named in memory of two-year-old

Awaab Ishak, who died after being exposed to mould at his Rochdale home in December 2020.

The new law came into force on 27th October 2025 and states that social landlords must fix emergency health and safety hazards within 24 hours of reporting. They must also investigate significant damp and mould within 10 working days of being notified and then make properties safe in five working days. They must also write to tenants with their findings within three working days of an inspection.

Since this is the law, this should mean it's case closed on all the casework my team is dealing with on constituents' damp and mould issues. However, I'm bitterly disappointed to learn that Bristol City Council has not sufficiently prepared to be compliant with this new law.

This is completely unacceptable. For my constituents

living in damp and mould-ridden properties, every single day of a delay brings further misery and potentially puts their health at risk.

I have written to the council about the need to comply with Awaab's Law and asked them to clarify the timeframe by which they will be fully compliant. I noted that this Government announced in December a radical overhaul of how local government is funded, with Bristol City Council getting a cash injection of £161.3 million over the next three years – a 30% increase in the council's core spending power compared to 2024-25. I hope the council uses some of this increase in funding to improve the housing stock in Bristol.

In my letter, I also shared the personal story of one constituent I had spoken to before Christmas, to share the grim reality of what it's like to be forced to live with severe damp and mould in your



**Darren Jones**  
writes for  
the Voice

home. I'll share the council's response in a future column. • As always, if you need my help or have a question, you can get in touch with me on email at [darren.jones.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:darren.jones.mp@parliament.uk), by calling my office on 0117 959 6545 or by writing to me at the House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

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## FROM YOUR COUNCILLORS

### Redland: Martin Fodor and Fi Hance (Green Party)

#### Parking permits

Lots of people have been in touch about the consultation on changes to the current resident parking scheme. As you may know, a cross party group of councillors unanimously agreed to propose changes to visitor parking permits which would limit the number available, remove the free allocation of permits and increase the cost. Whilst a review is long overdue as charges have remained the same since the scheme were first introduced many years ago, we are concerned that so many changes in one go is too much to cope with and should be brought in more gradually.

The proposals also suggest that the 30 minutes free parking only be available via smartphone or some other data device. We are conscious that the use of machines can be abused but share resident concerns that this approach could exclude those who are less confident with the digital world. We're assured that a phone call can also still be made to register for the free 30 minutes.

There have also been concerns about traders who need to work in the parking areas. However, most common trades do have access to the Trader Parking Permits and can then work in all the RPS areas.

Along with many residents, we have commented on the proposals. All the submissions are being closely reviewed and we're hopeful that there will be some changes to reflect our concerns. Once the consultation responses have been analysed and considered we shall update on the proposed changes. Many thanks to everyone who took the time to get in touch with us about this.

#### Crossing repainted

We've both been concerned about the worn out road markings for some time and thank residents who've asked about the pedestrian crossing close to Bishopston Library.

We've both chased this on various occasions as we know how well used it is. Repainting road markings fell behind when budgets shrank from austerity.

The good news is that Fi has now been notified there's a contract let and this crossing and its zig zag lines will be repainted soon – it's now in the hands of the contractor so they will have it scheduled along with other sites. We hope once it's refreshed this will be safer and left unobstructed by parked vehicles.

#### Flytipping hotspots

Thanks to everyone who has been reporting Flytipping and highlighting locations where it persists. The new FixMy Street App has made accurate reporting much easier and reduced duplicated or unclear reports by adding location and picture features. It's become a major source of information for the council to tackle flytipping more efficiently.

We're getting support from officers to tackle some known hotspots like Bishop Road near Bishop Lane and the start of Zetland Rd. We've asked our enforcement team to monitor sites for evidence of flytippers and speak to businesses not presenting waste according to the rules and we're getting the engagement team from Bristol Waste back to speak to residents and businesses about bins on Bishop Road. A few years ago we did manage to reduce the problem and sadly its now time to focus on the site again. We do hope the situation improves.

#### New recycling containers coming

A detailed review of the recycling service has been undertaken and this included ways to improve the service and how materials are presented. This has now been agreed by the committee Martin chairs. Cleaner streets was a top priority for residents consulted along with better recycling. We're hoping there will be less litter once changes are in place.

There have been issues with boxes used for various materials and in future new sealable sacks are to be issued for packaging materials like plastic bottles, cans, and cardboard. This follows new government guidance on Simpler Recycling. Our recycling service already deals with the materials and food waste that is expected and the new sacks are coming soon. These will ensure materials can be stored and presented with less spillage and there will be more space for cardboard as this material is more common now. Almost all our materials go to markets in Britain and the sorting residents do means we collect high quality materials which help pay for the service.

We're also delighted to know that the holiday service has been far more reliable than a year ago and the number of reported problems was a tiny fraction of the previous year thanks to all the efforts by our contract manager and Bristol Waste.

#### Budget for coming year

Information is still being released by government towards the council budget for next year. At a recent council meeting this was explained by the council leader Cllr Dyer. A new formula is proposed that rolls several previous grants together, so the headline figure is not new money. In fact most of the funding for local government is in future expected to come from council taxes and business rates that councils will be allowed to keep. The government assumed all councils will increase council tax by the maximum percentage allowed without a referendum.

In future just five percent of local council spending will come from central government – a significant reduction. We'll be reliant on council tax collected by local companies and organisations. While the core grant will rise a few percent the council also has to deal with inflation and other costs like national insurance. This means

when the council meets to set its budget for the coming year there will still be cost pressures affecting most services and little headroom for new investment we know the city needs. By law the council has to set a balanced budget matching expenditure to all the income received. Most of the budget is spent on social care and education plus other statutory requirements. As always we'll be looking at ways to make sure local services are prioritised.

#### New digital assistant

Briz, a new 24/7 digital assistant designed to make it quicker and easier to access council services will be available across council phone lines and website, bristol.gov.uk, from late January. It provides instant answers to a wide range of everyday queries from bills to bins at any time, day or night. Briz is simple to use, requires no technical know-how, and complies with all data protection laws. It should handle most common queries instantly, but you'll still have the option to speak to a human advisor during standard opening times.

The advisers can focus on queries that need a personal touch, more complex queries, and help people needing more support to use technology (due to a disability or other factors) or don't have English as their first language.

If Briz does not understand the question, it will transfer you to the main switchboard to speak to an adviser, where you can access appropriate help the same as previously. We're assured no one will be left without support during standard hours. You can feedback when it's launched to share their ideas for how Briz can be improved, so that it can better serve people's needs.

#### Contact us

**Fi:** [Cllr.fi.hance@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:Cllr.fi.hance@bristol.gov.uk)  
**Martin:** [Cllr.martin.fodor@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:Cllr.martin.fodor@bristol.gov.uk) **Fi:** 0117 3534720. **Martin:** 0788 4736101 **Facebook.com/**  
**cllrmartin.fodor or /cllrfi.hance**



## COMMUNITY NEWS

### WESTBURY ON TRYM SOCIETY

#### Hanging baskets in Westbury Village in 2026

The Westbury on Trym Society has recently been informed that Blaise nursery will not be supplying and watering any hanging baskets in 2026. The Society has organised and paid for these through the donations of businesses, local people and Society funds for many years. The number of hanging baskets displayed above businesses has diminished in recent years, largely due to the council's concerns about the safety of the brackets that support them.

The council have cited difficulties in accessing some of the planters for installation, removal and watering, which we understand has been due to parked vehicles obstructing access. The council also says that 'the existing brackets are coming to the end of their life-span and we do not have anybody to replace them and also it is not something we would want to replace anyway due to the high level of risks involved.' Apart from the areas where we understand that basket displays were funded by Business Improvement Districts, such as the



City Centre and Clifton, Westbury has been the only other area which has kept up the tradition of 'Bristol in Bloom'. The displays provided and watered by Blaise nurseries were spectacular last summer despite the hot, dry weather.

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despite the hot, dry weather.

Westbury village flower displays, 2025

We understand that Blaise nursery will continue to plant up and water the many pots and troughs that the Society has provided throughout the village. The numbers of these have grown over the years and last year we added pots to four locations in the village. Our annual appeal for contributions to the flower fund will continue. The committee will be looking at other means of providing and watering hanging baskets for the businesses that have displayed them for so long.

Volunteers from the Society have resumed work in the sunken garden in Canford Park after a Christmas break. One of the first tasks was to clear the pond of the debris after it was iced over and from the subsequent storm. Lemon balm has been removed from one of the former rose beds so that rose bushes can be replanted. Parks department staff have dug up another bed, which had been planted with a wildflower mix, that had become full of couch grass. This will be replanted with suitable species by our volunteer team in the near future.

**Andy Renshaw, Chair,  
Westbury on Trym Society**

### FRIENDS OF REDLAND LIBRARY

The Friends of Redland Library is a voluntary group set up to support Redland Library. We organise talks and panel events.

On **Thursday 5 February**, we are celebrating Bristol: City of Culture. This is quite topical given the possibility of Bristol bidding to be UK City of Culture in 2029.

On **Tuesday 17 February**, we are holding an event on Ireland, covering its people, culture and history.

For full details of our February and future events, please visit our website <https://FriendsOfRedlandLibrary.org.uk>

### FRIENDS OF BISHOPSTON LIBRARY

**Non-Hormonal Support for Perimenopause and Beyond: Tuesday 20 January 6.30pm - 7.30pm**

Join Dr Sam Morgan for an empowering session designed to

help you navigate every stage of menopause with confidence. Discover evidence-based strategies for perimenopause through to postmenopause, focusing on nutrition, supplements, exercise, sleep, rest, and meaningful connections.

**Understanding Hormone Replacement Therapy: Tuesday 24 February 6.30pm - 7.30pm**

Join Sam for a practical overview of HRT — from the different types available and how to get the best from each product, to recognising when testosterone may be helpful. We'll explore benefits and risks, address common myths, discuss how long HRT can be used, and I'll share tips on how to navigate shortages of your usual prescription.

Both events are free, and refreshments will be provided (donations welcome), but it is essential to book by via Eventbrite.

Sam is a menopause specialist doctor accredited by the British Menopause Society with over

20 years of experience as an NHS GP. She founded Rethink Menopause to provide reliable, evidence-based information to individuals and businesses, and other healthcare professionals. You can find out more here [www.rethinkmenopause.com](http://www.rethinkmenopause.com).

To support the neighbourhood event and help people get their ideas under way, we're hosting a **Window Wanderland** in-person workshop on **Tuesday 17 February 7-9pm**

Let's make some magic together and turn ordinary windows into spectacular views!

Materials and drinks included in the price of £7.50 + £1.33 Eventbrite booking fee. For Eventbrite bookings, please search for Friends of Bishopston Library events on Eventbrite.co.uk. The links are also on the Bristol Libraries Events page <https://bristol.events.mylibrary.digital/> and our Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/bishopstonlibrary>.

In the spring, we will host another

health event for men and women on "Overcoming Sleepless Nights and Anxiety" led by solution-focused therapist, Debs Penrice. Then coming up in April and May, we will host Alison Boulton for an interesting session on "Telling Tales: bringing your family history to life", and her talk which explores the hidden history of the talented "Women in the Music Hall".

Please join our mailing list or check our Facebook page for more information. We would love a few more people to join in the Friends of Bishopston Library group. If you'd like to get involved planning and running events, you will get a warm welcome. Get in touch with us: [friends@bishopstonlibrary.org.uk](mailto:friends@bishopstonlibrary.org.uk)

Library open hours: Monday – 1 to 7pm; Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday – 11am to 5pm; Tuesday & Sunday – close. Bishopston Library, Gloucester Road, BS7 8BN. Hope to see you or hear from you soon.

## WHAT'S ON IN OUR AREA

### LA SCALA DELI HENLEAZE

Join us at the Italian Hub of Henleaze for our new series of wine tastings for 2026! Led by our in-house sommelier, includes 5 wines accompanied by a small aperitivo board - small plates available

### JANUARY

15th & 30th - Piemonte  
16th & 31st - Winter Reds  
17th - Wine & Dine Dinner Party - 5 regional courses paired to 6 wines - Lombardia

### FEBRUARY

13th & 14th Valentines Day  
26th - Piedimonte  
27th - Winter Reds  
28th - Wine & Dine Dinner Party - Lombardia

### MARCH

6th & 12th - Liguria & Valle D'Aosta  
7th & 13th - Spanish Tasting - La Scala Exclusive  
14th - Wine & Dine Dinner Party - 5 regional courses paired to 6 wines - Rome

### APRIL

2nd & 9th - Liguria & Valle D'Aosta  
10th & 23rd - Spanish Tasting  
4th - Wine & Dine Dinner Party - Rome

### February 23rd

**HENLEAZE SENIOR FILM CLUB**, Conclave (12) 2pm  
Conclave follows one of the world's most secretive and ancient events - selecting a new pope. The Church's most powerful leaders have gathered from around the world, locked together in the Vatican halls. Tasked with running this covert process, Cardinal Lawrence (Ralph Fiennes) finds himself at the centre of a conspiracy and discovers a secret that could shake the very foundation of The Church. Also starring Stanley Tucci, John Lithgow and Isabella Rossellini. Carers welcome, easy access. St. Peter's Church Hall, The Drive, Henleaze BS9 4LD. For more info, call 0117 435 0063

### BLAISE COMMUNITY

**GARDEN** behind behind Blaise Museum BS10 7QS open Wednesday and Saturday 10 to 2, interesting walled kitchen garden, free to enter, new volunteers needed & welcomed, plants always available.

### February 18th

**BRISTOL OPERA CLUB** is delighted to continue our inaugural year with a screening of David McVicar's superb production of Donizetti's Maria Stuarda, with Joyce di Donato sublime as Maria. This will be shown on the newly installed improved equipment and introduced by Andrew Borkowski. All are warmly welcomed in The Apostles Room, Clifton Cathedral, Worcester Road Entrance. 6.30 for 7.00. Entrance £8.00. Dedicated parking Bar Details: borkmail@gmail.com 01275 848526

### February 27th

**PHOTOGRAPHING BIRDS TALK AND SLIDESHOW** - 7.30-9.30pm  
St Matthews Church, Clare Road Kingsdown BS6 5GB. Tim Snowden shows how photographing birds draws him closer to nature creating a deeper understanding of its fragility and beauty. He shares techniques and advice on getting started yourself.

### 21st March 2026

**BRISTOL BACH CHOIR** with Bristol Ensemble Baroque at St George's Bristol. 7.30pm, Mass in B minor, J.S. Bach. Tickets: from £12. www.bristolbach.org.uk 0117 214 0721. The acoustics of St George's will be the ideal place in which to hear this work with its wide-ranging textures of arias, ensembles and choruses.

## REGULAR EVENTS

### Various days

**PILATES** classes, Northcote Scout Hall, BS9 3TY. Mondays 9.30am (Improvers), 10.30am (Mixed Ability inc. Beginners); Tuesdays 9.30am (Improvers), 10.30am (Gentle); Thursdays 9.30am (Improvers), 10.45am (Mixed Ability - inc Beginners). Small, friendly classes. Please register interest before attending. Full details

at www.mindbodypilates.org. Contact: Leanne 07817189474 or leanne@mindbodypilates.org

### INSTRUMENT AMNESTY:

If you have an unused keyboard, guitar, violin or ukulele gathering dust Folkstars would love to hear from you! We will come and collect from you. Any condition, we will fix and use to give more kids in Bristol the chance to play an instrument. Smaller sizes a bonus but all sizes useful. Please email info@folkstars.co.uk to arrange a collection. Folkstars is a non-profit setup to give more children in Bristol the chance to learn an instrument. We provide affordable instrumental tuition during school time that's free for pupil premium, inclusive and fun. If you would like your school to be considered please email info@folkstars.co.uk

### OVER 30s DANCE PARTY at the superb BAWA Club, Filton

... on the FIRST Friday of every MONTH (NO dance in August or January) It's the ideal night out for the 30-60 age range. Come dance and socialise amongst a friendly, lively crowd. Dancing Thru' the Decades includes Motown, Soul, Club Classics... Music you can relate to. Club times are 9 'til 1. Last entry 11pm - very smart casual. No t-shirts or trainers and gents required to wear collared shirts. Entry: £8. www.mingles.co.uk. Facebook: @Luv2mingle

**GENTLE PILATES** Small and friendly group classes with a mindful approach. Beginners welcome. Tuesdays 7.15-8.15pm and Thursdays 11.30-12.30am at Bristol Yoga Space, Princes' Place, BS7 8NP. For further information visit pilates.ittahowie.co.uk or email Itta at mail@ittahowie.co.uk

**BRISTOL HOME LIBRARY SERVICE.** A free home delivery service for Bristolians provided by local volunteers. For anyone affected by age, disability or caring responsibilities. 07714898558

### Monday

**SHARED READING AT ST PAUL'S LIBRARY.** Meet and connect with others Mondays 2pm - 3.30pm. St Paul's Learning Centre, 94 Grosvenor Road, Bristol BS2 8XJ. Email: support@thereader.org.uk

**REDLAND WIND BAND** has vacancies for some woodwind, brass and percussion players. This friendly group meets 7.30-9.30pm at Redland Church Hall, Redland Green. Contact

via email on redlandwindband@gmail.com

**DICKENS SOCIETY.** 7pm, at Leonard Hall, Henleaze URC, Waterford Rd, Bristol BS9 4BT. Talks, costumed readings, book club and social events. See www.dickens-society.org.uk or phone Roma on 0117 9279875.

**PLAY BOWLS** at Canford Park in a friendly, social atmosphere. Qualified coaches and equipment provided. Contact: Les on 07305695579

### BRISTOL COMMUNITY GAMELAN

play the music of Java at Cotham School from 6.30-8.30. We play by numbers - only 1-6, without the 4! So no auditions, no need to read music. If you fancy a different musical experience, contact us via email on keithrhipley27@gmail.com

**WESTBURY ON TRYM WOMEN'S INSTITUTE** meets on the third Monday of the month in the Westbury Village Hall, Eastfield Road, BS9 4AG, from 2.00 - 4.00 pm. We have interesting speakers, and extra activities of crafts, lunch club, skittles and outings. For more information call Sascha on 07961619806 or Traci on 07766073917

### Tuesday

**WESTBURY PARK WOMEN'S INSTITUTE** meets on the first Tuesday of every month in the Girl Guide Hut on Westmorland Road from 7.00 - 9.30pm. We are an active and friendly group with a varied programme plus extra sessions for craft, coffee, book clubs, walks etc. Visitors are always welcome and for more information do call Sue on 07813795936 or email westburyparkwi@gmail.com

**THE ARTS SOCIETY BRISTOL** welcomes new members. Our lectures, given by specialists in their own field, take place on the second Tuesday of the month from September to May at 7.30pm at Redmaids' High BS9 3AW and by internet. For more information visit our website www.theartssociety-bristol.org.uk

**GENTLE PILATES** Small and friendly group class with a mindful approach. Beginners welcome. Tuesdays 7.15-8.15pm at Bristol Yoga Space, Princes' Place, BS7 8NP. For further information email Itta at mail@ittahowie.co.uk

**BRISTOL HARMONY WEST GALLERY CHOIR** and band sing and play lively church and village music from the 18th century. St Edyth's Church Hall, St Edyth's Road, Sea Mills, 7.30 pm on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday each month. All voices (SATB), string, wind and reed instruments welcome. No auditions but ability to read music helpful. www.bristolharmony.wordpress.com



or call Fritjof 0117 924 3440. Contact before attending.

■ **POETRY UNLIMITED** – poetry circle meet on the First Tuesday of every month 11am - 12 midday. Basement Room, Café Kino, 108 Stokes Croft, Bristol, BS1 3RU.

£2.50 - £3.00 donation towards the cost of the room. Bring a couple of poems to share, other poets or your own. Contact Dee: poetwo@gentlyblown.co.uk Web: www.poetryunlimitedbristol.weebly.com

■ **COMPANION VOICES BRISTOL** We are a 'threshold choir' looking for new people to join us. We meet in Easton on the 3rd Tuesday of the month from 7 to 9 pm to learn songs by ear and build skills in sensitivity/compassion/loving presence to sing at the bedsides of people nearing the end of life. To join/support us in this work, contact Valerie on [bristol@companionvoices.org](mailto:bristol@companionvoices.org). Visit [www.facebook.com/CompanionVoicesBristol](http://www.facebook.com/CompanionVoicesBristol) and [www.companionvoices.org](http://www.companionvoices.org)

■ **BRISTOL A CAPPELLA:** Tuesdays 7.30pm, Victoria Methodist Church. Bristol A Cappella is an award-winning mixed barbershop chorus of around 30 members who love to sing close harmony a cappella. Our songs are mainly from pop music, with a bit of rock and some musicals. [www.bristolacappella.co.uk/](http://www.bristolacappella.co.uk/) Contact: [membership@bristolacappella.co.uk](mailto:membership@bristolacappella.co.uk)

■ **BRISTOL GOOD AFTERNOON CHOIR** rehearses at Westbury-on-Trym Methodist Church (BS9 3AA) 2-4pm (term time only). We are a fun and friendly, non-audition, community choir for both male and female voices - one of 32 Good Afternoon Choirs who 'sing in the afternoon' around the South West and further afield. New members are always welcome and, whether you come alone or with a friend, we will be very pleased to meet you! For further details please visit our website – [www.goodafternoonchoir.org](http://www.goodafternoonchoir.org) – or contact us on 01761 472468 or via e-mail at [gac@grenvillemusic.co.uk](mailto:gac@grenvillemusic.co.uk)

### Tuesday and Saturday

■ **BRISTOL HF RAMBLING CLUB** We are a friendly sociable club with a variety of walks. We have 2 Tuesday walks of either 8-9 miles or 5-6 miles. On Saturdays we have varying length walks including a hill walk eg Brecon Beacons once a month. If you would like more information please visit our website.

### Wednesday

■ **OPEN DEVELOPMENT CIRCLE** For those interested in developing their spiritual awareness and mediumistic ability. 7.15 for 7.30 start at Westbury Park Spiritualist Church, Cairns Road BS6 7TH. Just turn up or visit [www.westburyparksc.org](http://www.westburyparksc.org)

■ **HEALING SESSIONS** Spiritual Healing is available from 2pm to 3.30pm by the accredited healing team at Westbury Park Spiritualist Church, Cairns Road

BS6 7TH. Just turn up or visit [www.westburyparksc.org](http://www.westburyparksc.org)

■ **GOLDEN HILL WI** Meets the first Wednesday of every month. 1-3pm. Golden Hill Sports Ground, Wimbledon Rd, BS6 7YA. A vibrant, lively new afternoon WI in BS6. Contact Pam Scull at [goldenhillwi@gmail.com](mailto:goldenhillwi@gmail.com).

■ **BRISTOL VOICES COMMUNITY CHOIR** welcomes new members at any time. We meet at 7.30pm in St Werburghs Primary School during term time. See [www.bristolvoices.org.uk](http://www.bristolvoices.org.uk) for details.

■ **BRISTOL SCRABBLE CLUB** meets every Wednesday evening at 7pm until 10pm at Filton Community Centre, Elm Park, Filton BS34 7PS. New members welcome- first visit free so come along and give us a try. For further information contact Tania by email at [tania lake@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:tania lake@yahoo.co.uk)

### ■ WELCOME WEDNESDAY

Friendly and free coffee afternoon on the last Wednesday of the month, 2-3.30pm at The Beehive Pub, Wellington Hill West, BS9 4QY. Meet new people, have fun, and find out what's happening in your local area. Call 0117 435 0063 for more information.

■ **CLIFTON CRAFTERS** We all have craft items we started and are now lurking in a drawer unloved – dig them out and come and share a morning of knitting, crochet, tapestry, rag rugs or whatever you would love to resurrect or mend! Every Wednesday in October at Clifton Library 10.30-12.30pm.

### Thursday

■ **HIGHBURY BADMINTON CLUB:** Pete Stables 0117 950 1524 or [www.pete4458.wixsite.com/highburybadminton](http://www.pete4458.wixsite.com/highburybadminton) Thurs 7:30pm mid September to End April, Westbury-on-Trym Village Hall

■ **THE STEPFORD SINGERS WOMEN'S COMMUNITY CHOIR** meets at Horfield Baptist Church, Bishopston on Thursday afternoons, 1pm to 3pm. No auditions and no need to read music! Come for a free taster session with our friendly, supportive group and learn to sing in harmony. For info, contact Fran [franbolton66@gmail.com](mailto:franbolton66@gmail.com)

■ **MINDFULNESS YOGA.** Thursdays 5.30 - 6.30pm. Deepen your yoga practice & awareness, through a meditative & loving-kindness approach. Classes adaptable for beginners and intermediates. By donation. See [www.bristol-buddhist-centre.org/yoga/](http://www.bristol-buddhist-centre.org/yoga/) for more details. Or email [info@bristol-buddhist-centre.org](mailto:info@bristol-buddhist-centre.org)

■ **GENTLE PILATES** Small and friendly group class with a mindful approach. Beginners welcome. Thursdays 11.30-12.30am at Bristol Yoga Space, Princes' Place, BS7 8NP. For further information email [Itta at mail@ittahowie.co.uk](mailto:Itta at mail@ittahowie.co.uk)

■ **THE READER** : We meet to share

experiences using stories and poems that we read aloud; no pressure to read or talk. 11.30am to 1.00pm at Bishopston Library. Dee Derbyshire 07980364909 & Juliet Harvey

■ **BRISTOL BACH CHOIR** are now recruiting new members. We are a friendly auditioned choir of between 30 and 40 singers. All voice parts are welcome. We rehearse on a Thursday evening at Bristol Grammar School from 7.30pm to 9.30pm. If interested please contact Julie at [membership@bristolbach.org.uk](mailto:membership@bristolbach.org.uk)

■ **SWIFTS INCLUSIVE SPORTS** swimming sessions are for adults 18+ with any disability (hoist available) on Wednesday evenings from 7-8pm. £5 per session at Henbury Leisure Centre. Contact Karen Lloyd at 07734 335 878.

### ■ FRIENDS TOGETHER

**DEMENTIA FRIENDLY CAFÉ** A Dementia accessible café for all on the first Thursday of every month, 10am-12pm; The Randall Room at All Saints Church, Pembroke Rd, Clifton. Support, guidance, information and friendship with complimentary tea, coffee and homemade cake. No need to book – just come along and be a part of our community! For more information contact All Saints Parish Office: 0117 974 1355

### ■ ENJOY SCOTTISH DANCING ]

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### ■ HENBURY SINGERS WELCOMES

**NEW MEMBERS** Do you have a yearning to join a choir? Whether you are new to choirs, or returning after a short or long break, a warm welcome awaits you at Henbury Singers. We meet each Thursday 7.30 – 9.15 at Stoke Bishop Primary School, Cedar Park BS9 1BW during school term times. We perform a wide range of sacred and secular music under our conductor Barbara Rusbridge. No auditions. See our website [www.henburysingers.org](http://www.henburysingers.org). Contact the secretary at [secretary@henburysingers.org](mailto:secretary@henburysingers.org)

■ **HENLEAZE LADIES' CHOIR** Join us as we fill St Peter's Church Hall in Henleaze with a diverse selection of music. We are a friendly choir and meet on Thursday afternoons in term time from 1.45 to 3.45. There are no auditions, and the ability to read music is not necessary. Contact Jeanette on 9685409 or Jane on 07752 332278

■ **HEALING FOR WELLBEING** - New time, 5pm to 6.15 pm. Drop in

sessions with trained practitioners. Redland Meeting House, 126 Hampton Road, BS6 6JE. All welcome - donation basis. For information, visit <http://www.facebook.com/BristolHealingGroup> or <https://www.thehealingtrust.org.uk/healing/healing-centre> or phone Selina 0117 9466434.

■ **BISHOPSTON COMMUNITY CHOIR** Meet on Thursday evenings, 7.30pm to 9.00pm at Horfield Baptist Church, 160a Gloucester Road, Bishopston BS7 8NT. Everyone welcome, no audition necessary. Contact us on [bishoproadchoir@gmail.com](mailto:bishoproadchoir@gmail.com)

■ **LOCAL CHOIR ACTIVELY RECRUITING NEW MEMBERS.** We meet at Stoke Bishop CE Primary School, BS9 1BW on Thursday, 7.45 - 9.15pm. We are a well-established mixed choir performing both sacred and secular music. See website [www.henburysingers.org](http://www.henburysingers.org) contact secretary at [secretary@henburysingers.org](mailto:secretary@henburysingers.org).

### Friday

■ **BRISTOL SPANISH CIRCLE** Come and meet a group of friendly people and enjoy talks in Spanish, musical events and social evenings. We meet every month from September to June, usually on the last Friday of the month, at St Peter's Church Hall in Henleaze. For more info, see <https://www.spanishcirclebristol.com/>

■ **COFFEES AND CRAFT** at Horfield Baptist Church, This community event is open to all who enjoy making and doing activities with their hands. Please bring your craft to work on and expect to have a relaxing and social time. When: Fridays in January 9th, 23rd and 30th, February 13th and 27th. Times 10.30 to 12.15. For further information please contact the church office office@horfieldbaptist.net

### ■ HENLEAZE BOWLING CLUB.

Come along at 5.45pm on Fridays to see if bowling could be the sport for you. Coaching available. Experienced bowlers welcome. Grange Court Road, by Newman Hall. This is a friendly Club with good bowling facilities and social events throughout the year. Phone, Tom Logan, on 0117 962 1669 or email [hbcsec@henleazebowlingclub.org.uk](mailto:hbcsec@henleazebowlingclub.org.uk) for further details.

■ **FOLK NIGHT** every third Wednesday of the month at the Victoria inn, Chock lane, Westbury on Trym. 7.30-10.30pm. All musicians and singers welcome or just pop in. Call 0117 959 0834

### Saturday

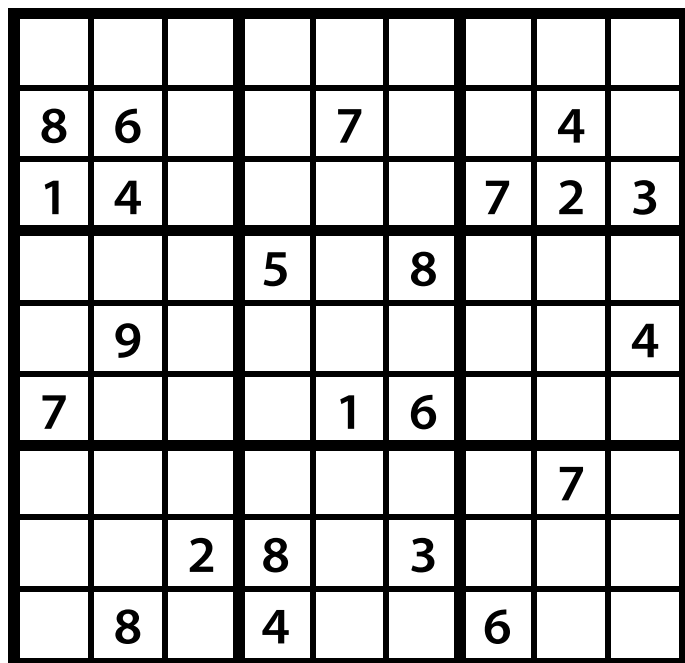
■ **SEA MILLS REPAIR CAFE** offers sewing, woodwork, general, electrical and cycle repairs at the Methodist Church, Sea Mills Square, from 10am-12pm, every second Saturday of the month (except August). This is a voluntary service run by experienced repairers. Donations welcome. FFI see Facebook @seamillsrepaircafe

## PUZZLE PAGE

### The FIEND

Each row, column and square (9 spaces each) needs to be filled out with the numbers 1-9, without repeating any numbers within the row, column or square.

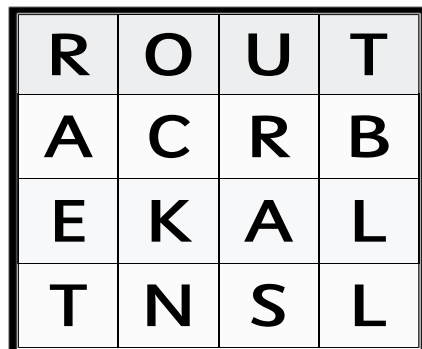
NOTE After feedback from readers, we have made The Fiend SLIGHTLY easier!



### For younger readers

#### Tennis Boggler Puzzle

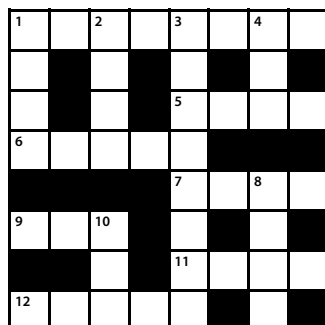
How many words of 3 letters or more can you find using the letters below? Words are formed from adjoining letters. Letters must join in the proper sequence to spell a word and may join horizontally, vertically, or diagonally, to the left, right, or up-and-down. No letter square, however, may be used more than once within a single word. You may use plurals if available. Score 1 point for each 3 letter word, 2 points for 4 letter words, 3 points for 5 letter words and so on. Score an extra 2 points for every tennis word that you make!



My points \_\_\_\_\_

### Txtpert

Theme: Music



Use the phone keypad to decode the clues.  
For example:  
2 could be A, B or C... and  
5678 could be LOST



Across

1 86625489 (8)

5 4533 (4)

6 67372 (5)

7 8655 (4)

9 247 (3)

11 7333 (4)

12 28453 (5)

Down

1 8746 (4)

2 6683 (4)

3 54428873 (8)

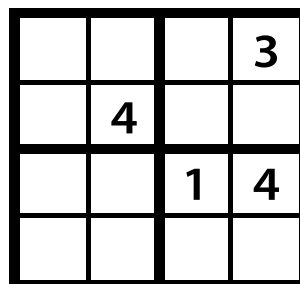
4 843 (3)

8 5433 (4)

10 724 (3)

### Easier sudoku

Rules the same as the Fiend, but only four numbers in each box, row and column



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## SPORT

# Delight as Taylor commits to Glos

GLOUCESTERSHIRE stalwart Matt Taylor has signed a two-year contract extension, keeping him at the club until 2028.

Fifteen years on from his debut at the Cheltenham Cricket Festival in 2011, Taylor made 220 first team appearances for the Club.

A consistent performer across all formats, he has taken 236 wickets in red-ball cricket, 51 in List A, and 84 in the Vitality Blast. His outstanding performances in 2023 and 2024 earned him the GCCC's Bowler of the Year award in consecutive seasons.

In the 2025 County Championship campaign, Taylor claimed 18 wickets in eight matches, including a crucial five-wicket haul away against eventual champions Leicestershire.

His best red-ball return

remains an exceptional 2018 campaign, during which he claimed 46 wickets in 14 matches at 25.45.

Taylor, 31, led the attack in Gloucestershire's run to the quarter-finals of the 2025 One-Day Cup, finishing as the team's top wicket-taker with 14 scalps, his best return in a 50-over campaign.

He has been an integral part of Gloucestershire's Vitality Blast history, and is currently fourth on the list of all-time T20 wicket takers for the club.

Taylor played a major role in the club's first-ever T20 trophy, taking 29 wickets across 17 games at an impressive economy rate of just 6.91 when Glos won the Vitality Blast in 2024.

In 2015, he joined an elite club by bowling a T20 maiden at Chris Gayle, and in 2016 he helped Gloucestershire top their



group for the first time in a decade with 15 wickets.

He said: "I'm really pleased to be extending my contract at Gloucestershire, it's been my home for 15 years or so now, and it is a place that holds so many special memories.

"I'm excited about the next few years to see what we can achieve as a group. Having had a taste of success with the Vitality Blast win in 2024, it's made me even hungrier to keep striving to improve and to try and contribute as much as I can to

the club winning more trophies in the coming years."

GCCC's director of cricket, Jon Lewis, a fellow bowler and academy graduate, was equally as delighted with the new contract: "We're delighted that Matt has extended his time at Gloucestershire, which we hope will take him into his 16th, 17th and 18th seasons at the club.

"A Gloucestershire man through and through, he pours his heart and soul into the Club and is a true team player, always willing to do the hard yards."

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## ■ VINEYARD NEWS with INGRID BATES

# We're watching and waiting ...

JANUARY is always one of the quietest months in the vineyard but it's also one of the most important. Over the last few weeks we've spent most days pruning the vines and chopping back the willow windbreak that surrounds the vineyard - slow repetitive work that doesn't look very exciting but has a massive impact on how the vineyard will grow and look this summer.

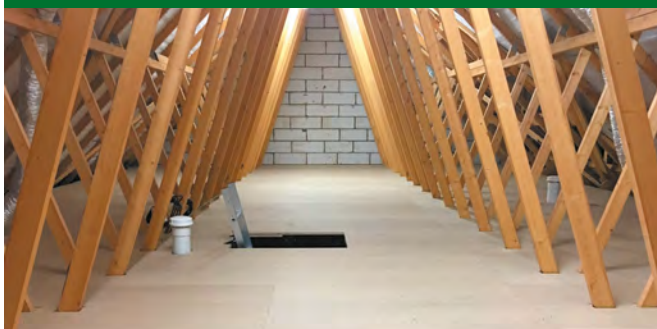
The vines themselves might look lifeless but the vineyard doesn't feel empty. Every day we've been watching

groups of rooks gathering and moving across the field in large, impressive flocks. Likewise in the winery, there's a lot going on. The winemaking team have been busy prepping our 2025 wines for bottling over the coming months. Just another reminder that things may feel quiet but the cycle never really stops.

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## NATURE WATCH with Dawn Lawrence

# Rich world of bees awaits your discovery

IT might seem a bit early in the year to be thinking about bees but this winter buff-tailed bumblebees could be seen on almost any day because so many more flowers are blooming through midwinter - local sign of continuing climate change. The mild weather also brings spring flowers into bloom earlier and so it is certainly not too soon to alert you to the quaintly named hairy-footed flower bee.

The bees that get the most press tend to be the sociable honey bee and the bumblebees. However, in the UK alone (brace yourself) there are around 270 species of bee and over 90% do not live in colonies. Instead the solitary female builds her nest and tends it herself without any help from worker daughters: the hairy-footed flower bee is one of these.

In our garden, when the lungwort comes into flower, it is time to seek the hairy-footed flower bee. Lungwort is a ground cover plant with blue to purple to pink flowers and rounded silver-spotted leaves and it is the bees' favourite. The males appear first, usually in February and dart and hover around the plants once they are in bloom, apparently setting up territories. The females appear a week or so later. Both sexes are about 1cm long and the males are a slightly dull brown with white



**This female hairy-footed flower bee is just showing a hint of ginger-haired hind leg.**

Photo by Gail Hampshire

hairy faces. The females are more distinctive with black head and body and fetching ginger hairs on their legs. This is the feature to look for - the contrast between ginger legs and black body. It is particularly obvious on the two hind legs which are generously provided with special hairs for collecting pollen. These "pollen brushes" hold the pollen as she flies back to

her nest where she uses it, along with nectar, to feed her brood.

In the city the hairy-footed flower bee makes her nest in a small hole in a wall though she might use a quarry face or even a rabbit burrow elsewhere (the males play no part, their role is simply to mate with the females). She builds a small nest consisting of a row of cells lined with a waterproof material. She stocks each cell with pollen and nectar, lays a single egg within and then seals it. She only makes a small number, perhaps 10 or fewer, though the books are reluctant to offer a firm opinion. This is a very different habit to the social honey bees which produce thousands of offspring in a large nest - usually an artificial hive.

If you can't find any lungwort, the hairy-footed flower bees also choose comfrey, wall flowers and other spring flowers. Once you have added flower bee to your bee list, you can look out for masonry bees, mining bees, nomad bees... there are even cuckoo bees with a lifestyle reminiscent of their namesake bird - there is a rich bee world out there to be discovered!

© Dawn Lawrence

## COMMUNITY NEWS

### DIFFERENT STROKES

Hopefully, you have never needed to come across Different Strokes. But if you are a younger/working-age stroke survivor (or have a family member who is), this national charity may be able to help. Set up in 1996, it responds to the need for younger stroke survivors to reclaim their lives, challenging the common perceptions of stroke recovery and changing the term from 'victim' to 'survivor'. Most of the staff, volunteers and trustees have personal experience of stroke - for

themselves or a family member - and champion younger peer support as a means to active recovery. It advocates self help with gentle exercise, consulting with survivors regularly to ensure that services are relevant and personalised.

The Bristol group has been active for over 20 years and runs exercise sessions for stroke survivors twice a week. Although Different Strokes is aimed at younger stroke survivors, it does not discriminate against any age and welcomes all survivors who

are interested in taking part in activities.

The group meets in the coffee lounge in the Somerville Building at Westbury Fields Retirement Village, Cricket Lane, Westbury-on-Trym BS10 6TW on Saturdays at 10.30am for group exercise and at Redland Green Tennis Club, Redland Green, Bristol BS6 7HF on Thursdays at 1.45pm for gym sessions.

Both sessions have qualified instructors in attendance. Members can attend either or both as they wish, and an introductory

free session for either of these is provided should you wish to consider joining in. All members, along with partners/carers, are encouraged to take part in other activities such as ten-pin bowling, day trips and visits. The group has an active voluntary management team and welcomes any members who would like to join this team.

If you are a younger or young-at-heart stroke survivor and are interested in joining, contact the coordinator, Len Curthoys, on: 07970 684417 or email [bristol@differentstrokes.co.uk](mailto:bristol@differentstrokes.co.uk)

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