

# bishopstonvoice

March, 2026 Issue 158

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## Wanderful windows!



**BRIGHTENING** the gloom as we wait for spring are two Window Wanderland events. Residents in Bishopston, where the idea of lighting up windows for a free community event originated, and in the Chandos neighbourhood are all set for illuminated displays at the start of this month. The festival has the theme of Hope and offered a free downloadable template of birds for anyone needing inspiration. The Bishopston event is on February 27, February 28, and March 1 from 6-9pm while the Chandos one is on the Saturday and Sunday during the same hours.

## Council tax set to go up 4.99 per cent

BRISTOL city councillors have confirmed a 4.99 per cent council tax rise from April.

The Green-led authority's budget, comprising £634million for day-to-day services and £232million of capital investments in large projects and city infrastructure, such as houses, bridges and schools, was passed by 42-26 votes, with the Lib Dems in favour and Labour and the Conservatives against.

Just one of the nine amendments tabled by minority parties received support at February's four-and-a-half-hour meeting – a Lib Dem proposal to bring forward £1million of funding for road repairs by a year, doubling the amount available in 2026/27 – while the rest were rejected.

The budget included nearly £41million in savings to balance the books, but also a series of U-turns announced in January following public consultation, including £270,000 towards reopening public toilets and scrapping cuts to cultural groups.

The council tax rise comprises 2.99 per cent in core spending and two per cent for adult social care.. This is a rise of £129.79 to £2,713.68 for band D households and by £100.94 to £2,110.64 for Band B.

**Turn to Page 2**



## Musical magic on Beacon stage

Pupils from Trinity Academy staged a spectacular concert of music and dance at the Bristol Beacon.

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## Cap on parking permits paused

Plans to limit visitor permits in Bristol's resident parking zones have been put on hold following a flood of objections.

**PAGE 5**

## Community heroes hailed

Dozens of community heroes have been highlighted at the Horfield and Lockleaze Community Awards.

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Our April deadline is March 18. 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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## Council tax rises

### From Page 1

Bristol City Council leader Cllr Tony Dyer (Green, Southville) said: "This budget sets a stable financial position whilst making space to target investment where our city needs it most.

"Our investment plans prioritise the day-to-day services our city relies on – bin collections, road maintenance, street cleansing – and invest to secure high-quality social care services and support our schools to deliver a high standard of inclusive education.

"We plan to continue our efforts to tackle major systemic issues that impact our city's quality of life.

"Projects to build new homes and support routes out of homelessness will continue to receive millions of pounds of investment.

"Likewise, we have also set out ambitious plans for the ongoing transformation of our transport systems and the decarbonisation of our economy, which will secure long-term economic benefits for Bristol."

Labour group leader Cllr Tom Renhard (Horfield) said the other parties should be thanking the government for "saving our bacon" with the increase in the council's core spending power and the introduction of multi-year settlements.

Lib Dem group leader Cllr Jos Clark (Brislington West) said: "We must find £40million in savings next year rising to £70m in 2030/31 just to balance our books."

She said the latest local government settlement did not cover what councils needed to pay for services and that the burden was being shifted on to local taxpayers.

Conservative group leader Cllr Mark Weston (Henbury & Brent) said: "We're not seeing enough spent on road maintenance, parks maintenance, community investment, fixing potholes.

Councillors approved both the ring-fenced schools and housing budgets by 48-0 votes, with 20 abstentions from Labour.

By Adam Postans, Local Democracy Reporting Service

## ■ NEWS

MANOR Farm in Horfield lost a true friend and tireless campaigner with the death last month of Anna George, remembered by all who knew her as a lovely lady and a champion for the community she called home.

The following obituary was written by her brother, sister-in-law and friends at the Manor Farm Community Hub and is reproduced below with their permission.

Anna George (née Swoboda) was born on August 9, 1960, in Bexleyheath, Southeast London. She grew up near Gravesend, Kent, before attending the University of Sussex in Brighton. After her studies, she moved to Bristol, where she began her career as a translator. Following in the footsteps of both her parents, she had a remarkable gift for languages and worked as a skilled freelance interpreter, proficient in an impressive number of languages.

It was in Bristol that Anna met and married James ("Jim") George. Together, they welcomed two sons and made their home in the Manor Farm neighbourhood. Bristol remained Anna's home for the rest of her life, and there she put her heart and soul into her family, friendships, and the local community.

Anna was deeply devoted to improving the lives of those around her. She was a key contributor to establishing the St. Peter's Community Centre on the Manor Farm estate, working closely with stakeholders, Bristol City Council and the Manor Farm Community Hub (MFCH) CIC, where she served as a Director and Secretary.

# Farewell to Anna, a true friend to the community



Anna on a big day for Manor Farm



Anna receives the Lord Mayor's Medal

In recognition of her tireless volunteer service, Anna was honoured by the Horfield and Lockleaze Community Awards in 2024 and 2026, and with her close friend Ann Bennett, was honoured by the Lord Mayor of Bristol for their work in the community. Often uncaptured and under the radar, she was always recognised by those nearest and dearest to her.

Like her mother, Anna had a profound love of volunteering and the outdoors. She found joy in exploring her neighbourhood and other areas of Bristol on foot and sharing that joy with others, as a regular of the Horfield and Manor Farm Strollers Walking Group, supporting Julian and others in the group. Her walks were as much about connection as they were about movement—bringing people together with kindness and encouragement.

She was also, until very recently, a youth leader helping her good friend Geoff with holding and caring for the Church Youth Centre.

Anna's greatest happiness came from time spent with her family and many dear friends. She loved walking, meals shared out, and travelling, faithfully documenting life's moments in the many photographs she delighted in sharing with her close family and friends at Christmas. Her circle of friends was wide and enduring, spanning from her school and university years, her professional translators group, her local neighbourhood and her volunteering in the community.

Over the past decades, Anna worked tirelessly and closely with many members of the MFCH CIC as a director, board member and secretary

involved in and helping out numerous community activities, in local school fayres and church activities.

Anna was preceded in death by her beloved parents, Rita and Victor Swoboda, and by her husband, Jim, whose memory she lovingly kept alive with a rose bush in her garden and surrounded indoor memories. She is survived by her sons, Harry and Michael, in Bristol, her brother, Matthew, and his wife, Beverly, of Windham, New Hampshire (USA) and her niece, Diane, of Seattle, Washington (USA).

Anna has left us far too soon and will be deeply missed by all who knew and loved her. She will be remembered for her cheerfulness, optimism, generosity of spirit, kind-heartedness and unwavering commitment to helping others.

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## ■ NEWS

# Turbo Island inquiry date set

A DATE has finally been set for a long-awaited legal battle over protecting Turbo Island as a “village green”.

The public inquiry into the site in Stokes Croft will be held on June 16 and 17, with an extra day on June 18 if needed, in the St Pauls Learning Centre.

Protecting somewhere as a town or village green is a legal way of ensuring the public has access and developers can't build anything there. While village greens are usually used for activities such as ball games and barbecues, what happens on Turbo Island is different. An update was given to the city council's public rights of way and greens committee in January 22.

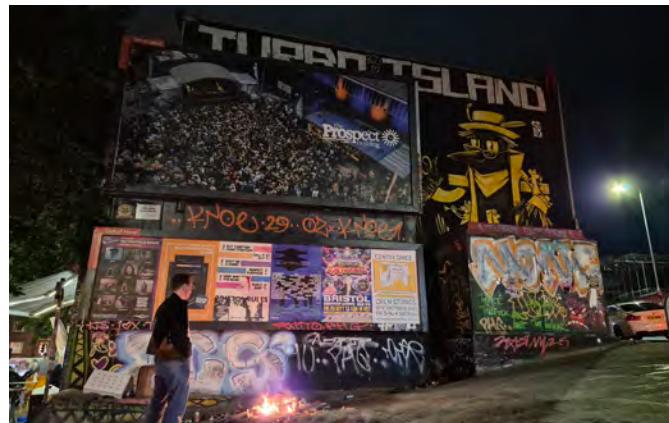
One key test will be whether the activities on Turbo Island count as “lawful pastimes”. Revellers and street drinkers

often converge on the corner of Stokes Croft and Jamaica Street, starting bonfires, playing music and holding impromptu parties.

While the site is a crime hotspot, with Avon and Somerset police receiving a report of crime every other day, the anarchic nature of Turbo Island is cherished by some locals.

The barrister's report will advise the council on next steps. Councillors will then vote on whether to protect Turbo Island as a green. This could still be challenged in the courts, if anybody unhappy with the result applies for a judicial review.

Conservative Cllr John Goulandris, chair of the greens committee, said: “The inspector will hear all the evidence, the inspector will write a report, and the report will come to PROWG [public rights of way and greens



committee]. We are seeing some definite progress. I know this one has been quite slow.”

Turbo Island was bombed during the second world war. The site was left empty as constructing a building there was considered too difficult, particularly given the awkward sight lines for drivers navigating the tight corner from Jamaica Street around to Stokes Croft. In the 2000s, the site became a counter-cultural symbol.

Following years of complaints

about noise and smoke, the former landowners Wildstone, an advertising company, paved over Turbo Island.

Wildstone sold the site to another advertising company, Out of Hand, in 2024. There were fears that the new owners could build something there. This prompted the People's Republic of Stokes Croft, a community group, to apply to register it as a village green.

*By Alex Seabrook, Local Democracy Reporting Service*



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## ■ NEWS

# Visitor parking permits cap paused

PEOPLE power has halted council plans to tighten the rules on visitor parking permits.

Residents in Bishopston, Redland and Ashley Down were among many who protested Bristol City Council consulted the public on possible changes for people visiting resident parking zones.

People living within a zone, with a permit for their own vehicle, can book some free permits for visitors, and more if they pay, as well as one-off passes for unexpected guests. The plan would have halved the number of available visitor permits, and make people pay for all of them, too.

Residents can get between 100 and 140 permits a year, but this would have been reduced to 50 and 70, and ended all free permits. An update was given to the transport policy committee, on February 5, which was received with applause from the public gallery in City Hall.



Green Councillor Ed Plowden, the committee's chair, said: "Since being introduced to the city back in 2014, the residents' parking schemes have provided real benefits to the communities they serve. Not only do the schemes help residents to park near their homes, they also reduce traffic, improve road safety, and contribute to cleaner air for all."

"As part of the statutory consultation, along with local ward councillors, I have received significant feedback about the proposed changes to the scheme, with concerns raised about the implications of reducing the free allocation of visitor permits and the overall number of visitor

permits available.

"As a result, we will be pausing our proposed changes to visitor permits, so we can review the proposals. This will give us time to analyse the responses to the statutory consultation and plan any changes needed to respond to this feedback."

Resident parking zones were first rolled out over a decade ago, to tackle parking pressure and reduce traffic. In 2024 councillors approved increasing the cost of permits for residents and updating pay and display rates. More areas could soon be covered by parking zones as well.

Last year, the council consulted on increasing the cost of visitor permits and limiting the number, as well as other changes.

The other proposals — to make business electric car permits chargeable and to remove the free half hour on pay and display machines — are still being considered.

Questions from the Lib Dems revealed that 3,000 people a year bought additional permits beyond the new proposed limit. This means that eight per cent of all households within resident parking zones would be affected by any cap.

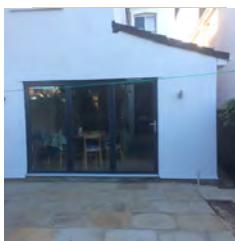
Lib Dem Cllr Nicholas Coombes said: "I'm glad that the council has listened to the feedback, and has decided to pause the implementation of this unfair restriction. Many anxious residents have contacted me to explain that they use visitor permits for a variety of reasons, including letting grandparents support childcare, and they are worried that they will exceed the proposed cap."

"I will continue to push for the reversal of this policy so that residents can continue to welcome visitors without worrying about an artificially low limit."

*By Alex Seabrook, Local Democracy Reporting Service*



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## ■ NEWS

# Joining a winning team ...

BRISTOL Rovers Community Trust (BRCT) has announced a partnership with creative company and education provider BoomSatsuma.

BRCT will work closely with BoomSatsuma's sports media production students, giving the 16-18-year-olds opportunities to build live broadcast and matchday content into their portfolios.

The collaboration will help strengthen BRCT's own media output and enable the trust to produce more creative and engaging storytelling across its programmes and teams.

The partnership has begun, with BoomSatsuma students having covered Bristol Rovers BTEC fixtures against Swindon and Exeter, as well as the BTEC women's derby match against Bristol City Robins Foundation.

Marc Lewis, head of marketing and media at BRCT, said: "This is a really proud moment - a lot of work has gone on behind the scenes to bring the partnership to life."

Adam Tutton, CEO at BRCT, added: "It's fantastic to be working alongside our long-time friends at BoomSatsuma to give their students the opportunity to develop their media portfolios within the world of sport, while also helping to raise the profile of our BTEC Education Programme."

# Community heroes in the spotlight

A CEREMONY was held to honour 43 individuals and groups – those “amazing people” who have made Horfield and Lockleaze “wonderful places to live, work and play.”

This year's Horfield and Lockleaze Community Awards focused on celebrating the unsung heroes who live or volunteer in the community. The event was planned by a small team of local residents, but was supported by Ebenezer Church, Lockleaze Neighbourhood Trust and Lockleaze Sports Centre to cover the cost of food and venue.

The winners included individuals who support children's wellbeing and physical activity, provide food support to the community, improve nature projects and green spaces, give their time to local schools, or promote sports and creative opportunities. Local groups such as the Friends of Horfield Common, the Grove Team at Orchard School and the 209th Lockleaze Scout Group were also collectively recognised.

Recipients of awards spanned the age spectrum. Nine-year-old **Jack Shaw** Jack reads to the elderly, supports a young boy from Ukraine, and has collected essential donations such as rice, toiletries, and socks to support those in need; he recently raised £1,700 for the Julian Trust homeless shelter by climbing Pen Y Fan.

**Zach Holmes** is a remarkable 16-year-old volunteer who helps distribute food to around 50 families at The Vench in Lockleaze, ensuring that food doesn't go to waste.



Dennis and Alison Kinnersley with their certificates Photo: Tim Brooks

Additionally, Zach volunteers at The Vench Corner Café at the weekend. During the summer holidays, he even cooked over 100 burgers at a football tournament to feed hungry players and their families.

Two award winners were also celebrated for their 50-year dedication to the community and local church. Since the 1970s, **Dennis and Alison Kinnersley** have tirelessly supported Horfield United Reformed Church, through various roles, from elder and secretary to caretaker – ensuring the church and hall are welcoming and well-maintained, as well as actively contributing to local events and theatre productions.

Organiser, Rachel Varley, thanking all those who nominated and who made the evening such a success, added: “We wanted to showcase those who so generously go above and beyond, acting with kindness and generosity to create a positive impact here in Horfield and Lockleaze.

“In a time where our news feeds are full of the sorrows in our world, moments like the one described above remind us of the things to be hopeful about – the wonderful people being generous in our community!”

More photos of the event, taken by Tim Brooks, can be found at [www.lockleazeandhorfield.co.uk/community-awards](http://www.lockleazeandhorfield.co.uk/community-awards)

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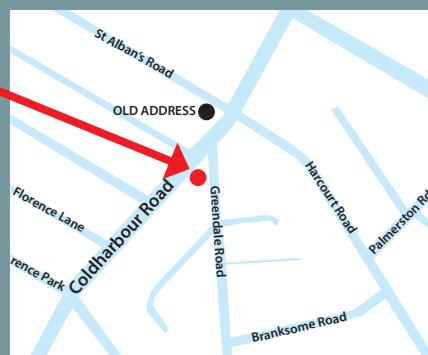
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## ■ ADVERTISING FEATURE

# Children Law update

**Katie Andrews, Solicitor at AMD Solicitors considers the Government's recent proposals to further protect children from abusive parents.**

Under the Children Act 1989, the Courts are required to place an emphasis on the 'presumption of parental involvement'. This presumption requires that the Court will assume that a parent's involvement within a child's life will always further the child's welfare, unless proven otherwise.

Due to this, the Courts have always placed a heavy weight on children needing a relationship and contact with both of their parents.

Towards the end of 2025, the Government unveiled plans to repeal the 'presumption of parental involvement'. This presumption led to concerns that always prioritising contact was leaving room for child abuse to continue in some cases.

In the recent review, it was found that in some cases, contact was being ordered even where there had been domestic abuse. Justice Minister, Baroness Levitt KC said in her findings "Being a parent is a privilege not a right: the only right which matters is a child's right to safety and this government is determined to ensure that that is at the heart of every decision made about each and every child."

Whilst there are already circumstances where the Court can consider it inappropriate for the child to have a relationship with a parent, this is a high bar and most commonly, the Court will want to see a relationship with both parents when applying the welfare checklist.

Moving forward, the Government are making it clear that the wellbeing and safety of children should be at the forefront of decision making for the Courts. More

time will need to be spent considering if contact really is safe for the child and the Court should not order direct unsupervised contact if there are concerns about the child's safety with that parent.

Where the Court considers a parent to be a threat to the child's safety, they can restrict that parent's involvement within the child's life. They can make Orders for written communication only, supervised contact through a contact centre or in some circumstances, no contact at all.

Whilst the Government have not clarified when this change is likely to come in to place, this is likely to be a welcome change for parents who have concerns about their child's safety through contact with their other parent.

Once implemented, this change will not affect the need for the Court to consider the circumstances of the child's life under the welfare checklist.



fare checklist such as their emotional needs, wishes and feelings, characteristics etc, all of which will need to be considered alongside the safety of the child.

If you would like to discuss matters regarding your children, one of our dedicated team would be well placed to assist you. Please contact us to discuss your matter further.



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## ■ NEWS



Singing, dancing and playing in an orchestra at a world-class venue, the refurbished Bristol Beacon, was a huge opportunity for Trinity Academy students

# Trinity students shine bright at Beacon

Trinity Academy students entertained an audience of more than 1000 at the Bristol Beacon with a spectacle of music and dance performances.

More than 450 students aged 11 to 18 took part in the "Trinity Loves" concert, including everyone in Years 7 and 8.

The event included orchestras, choirs, dance pieces, rock bands, steel pans and vocal solos. It culminated in two massive numbers involving over 350 students on stage: an arrangement of Teardrop by Bristol band Massive Attack, and a reworking of Handel's Hallelujah Chorus. Another highlight was a dance piece entitled Murmuration.

Trinity is a music and performing arts specialist school. Singing is a particular strength, and all Year 7 and 8 students sing in a choir once a week.

While the secondary school in Lockleaze, which opened in 2019, has its own 550-seater concert hall, performing at the Bristol Beacon gave students an opportunity to develop confidence and resilience by performing to an even larger audience at a prestigious venue.

The school's head of music and performing arts, Naomi Charatan, said: "It was an absolute privilege for our



students to perform in such a world class space. The students rose to the occasion and the experience will have developed them as performers, musicians and dancers. We are so proud of what they have achieved, and we were particularly pleased to see

students from all backgrounds. Headteacher Eiron Bailey said: "The school is blessed to be surrounded by a large supportive community of families and community advocates. The concert allowed us all to come together and celebrate the

continued growth and maturity of this relatively new school."

Last month, Mr Bailey was a finalist in the Music Inspiration Award category at the national Music & Drama Education Awards 2026.

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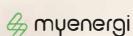
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## ■ LETTER

### COLLECTIVE ACTION ON SMART PHONES – CLASP

*A Bristol support group for parents and grandparents*

IT is becoming ever more widely recognised that smart phone use in children and teenagers can have severely addictive and health-damaging effects, leading to social isolation and withdrawal, and compromising human relationships, not least with parents concerned for their children's well-being who are trying to control phone use. Parents often feel hopeless about trying to tackle these problems on their own but together they can give each other the support and confirmation they need to find the solutions that improve their children's lives.

CLASP wishes to support all who are struggling with these and related issues. It subscribes to no fixed agenda, programme or judgements about the way forward but seeks to be an open forum offering actual (not on-line) face-to-face meetings for groups of parents and grandparents to discuss the problems and share possible strategies, information, remedies and alternatives to addictive phone usage.

This is the launch of a new initiative. If you would like to help us start a CLASP group here in Bristol, please write to the address or the email below and we will be in touch to arrange a time and place to meet.

Matthew Barton,  
19 Birchall Road, Bristol BS6  
7TW  
bartonmj@phonecoop.coop

## ■ NEWS

### Poetry success

A Year 10 student at Fairfield High School (FHS) has published a poetry collection.

The seven-poem book was inspired by work completed last year while working with Project Zazi, a scheme that supports young black people and ethnically diverse young people.

Aleem said: "People of colour are often told to be quiet but poetry gives me an opportunity to speak out."

Each poem in Standards, Shadows and Strengths is carefully structured, consisting of five verses and 20 lines. Copies of the book are being sold for £5.

Cashan Campbell, vice principal and Aleem's English teacher, said: "As a passionate Black educator, I am incredibly proud to see Aleem's talent being produced in a way which will challenge, cultivate and connect with others."



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# MBST: Supporting the body's natural cellular repair process

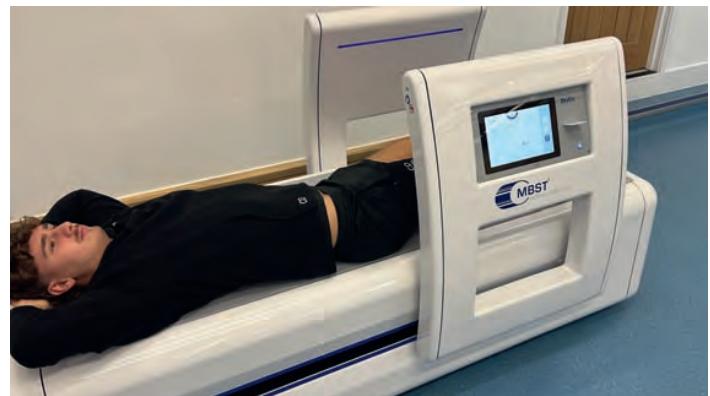
## MBST Sport

We have several return to play studies underway with some high profile sports teams across professional football and Rugby.

We're fairly early on in the seasons in term of gathering and presenting data at this point but the results we're seeing are very exciting in terms of rapid player healing and care for their bodies.

It's also accelerating return to play by significant amounts which is keeping squad availability higher. We anticipate this to have even greater impact towards the end of the season.

The data will be published at the end of the 25/26 season.



MBST UK is the official regenerative Partner for Bath Rugby and Wrexham FC. Not only is this leading to dramatic increases in the speed of player rehabilitation and return to play, but it's allowing us to gather data and explore the full ability of this technology



**MBST Bone Health:** At CURA we have the latest technology in assessing bone density and fragility. Unlike DEXA that uses X-Ray, REMS Scans use ultrasound to precisely assess the thickness of bone and the bone strength/architecture.

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### Hip and Knee

**Arthritis:** Shirley is a great example of how MBST can transform a patient's life. Shirley was diagnosed with a moderate plus Right arthritic knee. The pain was debilitating. A constant 6-7/10 pain wise. Mornings were stiff and painful and it was bad at night. Her left hip is also arthritic and was causing her pain. Standing for long periods was a real issue.

We applied MBST to support the recovery of her knee cartilage and lower limb bone damage.

5 months since the end of her treatment Shirley is leading a very different life. Her knee swelling is so much better. She has no pain and where she would struggle to stand for 45 minutes, she has recently completed her third straight 45 minute strength and conditioning wellness class at David Lloyd.

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## ■ COMMENT

As a past teacher, and also parent and grandparent at Bristol Waldorf (Steiner) School, I want to mark its closure last December with a few words to balance some of what was published about it in Bishopston Voice in 2025, after a bad Ofsted report. In all the sadness of its demise, I want to celebrate its extraordinary and innovative efforts in the educational and social landscape of our city over the past 50 years.

It started with the ideal of offering, firstly, a radically different form of education to its pupils from anything available in the mainstream, a truly holistic, enlivening and nurturing experience for every child's spirit, soul and body; and secondly, a non-exclusive schooling that would – and in the first phase of the school did – accept children from all backgrounds, irrespective of parents' income and ability to pay.

I would like to call it a non-materialistic education in every sense: in its contributions system, whereby parents paid however much or little they could afford; in its salaries to staff, paid in accordance with their particular, differing needs rather than on a fixed salary progression; in its fostering of play, creativity, imagination, music, art and human warmth not in opposition to but as the best foundation for cognitive and intellectual development; in its anti-hierarchical structure, in which all issues of management and child welfare were brought to the school's listening organ, the 'college', for discussion and decisions, which were then 'owned' by all; in the warm and very active involvement of parents in maintaining and supporting the school; in its rich celebration of

# Fond memories of a school that dared to be different



Happy days at the Bristol Waldorf (Steiner) School



Parent and child campaigners earn the school a temporary reprieve

festivals and lively community fairs; and last but not least in its active recognition of young children's religious sensibility and need for wonder and beauty, not as mere lip

service but as an intrinsic aspect of growing into the world and finding their true place in it.

Very idealistic and, many might say, unrealistic in this day

and age. It was not at all easy to flout mainstream ideas like this and to keep going on tiny salaries. There were all kinds of problems and difficulties. And in later years, forced to compromise the originating ideals with a headteacher, a board of trustees and a fixed fee structure, the school became what it never wished to be: a fee-paying and therefore exclusive school. Nevertheless, right up to the end, as comments published in this journal show, children loved their school. For instance, in January 24 I read: "My daughter was crying before school every day. Now she wants to be in school all the time, including weekends and holidays." And: "The school is a haven for our child... his spirit was being crushed. He (had) zero self-esteem when it came to academic learning. (At) Bristol Steiner School he has found his happy place and has made incredible progress socially, emotionally and academically."

I regard the loss of Bristol Steiner School as a tragedy. In an age of increasingly domineering educational orthodoxy, spearheaded by an Ofsted approach that has not infrequently been damaging to teachers and children, we urgently need more human-scale experiments in education such as the BWS. I feel grateful and proud to have been there.

Matthew Barton

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## ■ PHARMACY COLUMN

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Kellaway Pharmacy **Weight-loss support clinics** continue to be very popular. Our holistic approach means we are not just focusing on how to lose weight but also on why you may struggle to eat healthily and, most importantly, how to maintain healthy weight loss.

A top tip we share is: Are you drinking enough water? When dehydrated, many people will snack. We do not drink enough water with our meals or during the day, and we even break the golden rule: Hydrate Well after Exercise. The NHS recommends drinking six to eight glasses of water or fluids daily. This includes lower-fat milk and sugar-free drinks, like tea and coffee. While we can

guide and provide effective weight-loss therapies, including the novel injectable therapies Wegovy and Mounjaro, we are determined to help inform better lifestyle choices. Do contact us; we can help.

Those eligible for the **COVID-19 Spring Booster** jabs can book on the **NHS website (use postcode BS6 7XR)** or just walk in here at Kellaway Pharmacy. As with previous programmes, we are geared to deliver another excellent, well-run programme.

The NHS remains the embodiment of public service, rightly so, and we are grateful to the many individuals, not just clinicians, who help deliver all the care and supporting



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functions.

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## ■ MESSAGE FROM POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

# Volunteers protect rights and dignity

THE TV documentary *24 Hours in Police Custody* shapes many people's views of custody.

Dramatic moments often take centre stage, but the reality is more complex.

Custody is a highly pressured environment, where people are at their most vulnerable, and where decisions are made that have real consequences for individuals and for public confidence in policing.

What happens in custody matters. It is not a place the public typically sees, yet it is an area where human rights, dignity and safety must be protected without exception.

People arrive in custody in many different circumstances: some accused of serious

offences, some experiencing mental ill health, and some under the influence of substances.

Whatever the situation, they are entitled to fairness and appropriate care.

That is why public scrutiny is so important and is provided by independent custody visitors (ICVs). They are volunteers from our communities, who help my wider work in scrutinising the police and holding them to account, on behalf of you.

The volunteers who are recruited, trained and supported by my team are empowered to make unannounced visits to police custody suites.

Crucially, they operate independently of the police and

their role is to check the welfare of detainees, ensuring rights and entitlements are upheld.

During visits, ICVs are escorted to the custody area and may speak to detainees in private, out of hearing of officers.

They look at conditions in the suite, access to food, water and hygiene, and assess if people understand their rights.

After each visit, they produce a report which is shared with me and with the police. These reports enable issues to be identified quickly, improvements to be made, and trends to be monitored over time.

Throughout January, we trained a new cohort of ICV volunteers to bolster those already in post.



**With Police and Crime Commissioner Clare Moody**

They all bring a breadth of life experience and perspectives that will strengthen scrutiny.

Their willingness to give their time, often at unsocial hours, is deeply appreciated.

Transparency is at the heart of public confidence in policing, and custody is no exception.

I remain committed to supporting the volunteers whose independent oversight ensures that fairness, accountability and dignity remain at the core of policing.

## ■ ADVERTISING FEATURE

# Feeling the cold at home?

Many of us live in homes that are not well equipped to deal with winter weather. Living in a cold, draughty or mouldy home is not only unpleasant but expensive and bad for our health too.

Thankfully, there are lots of ways we can make our homes more comfortable that are also good for our pockets and the planet. Using heating wisely and draught-proofing are important first steps, there are also options such as insulation, heating upgrades, new windows and doors and renewable energy (such as solar).

Come along to one of the following drop-in sessions at St Werburghs Community Centre to meet with Retrofit West experts for free impartial, tailored advice. Hot drinks and refreshments will be provided.

**Mon 2 March, 5.30-7pm**  
**Tues 3 March, 11am- 12.30pm**  
**Mon 16 March, 11am- 12.30pm**  
**Tues 17 March, 6-7.30pm**  
**Thurs 26 March, 6-7.30pm**  
**Friday 27 March, 11am-12.30pm**

For more information contact Sophie on [sophie@stwerburghs.org.uk](mailto:sophie@stwerburghs.org.uk) or visit our web-



site using the QR code.

You can also contact Retrofit West directly on: **0800 038 6733** [advice@retrofitwest.co.uk](mailto:advice@retrofitwest.co.uk) or [homeowners.retrofitwest.co.uk](http://homeowners.retrofitwest.co.uk) to book a free advice call or home visit.

*"I had no idea a service like Retrofit West existed! It provided free, expert advice and helpful discounts on surveys, both just what I needed as I embarked*

*on my first major renovation! And they continue to be a helpful sounding board along the journey. Thank you!"*

**Ben St Werburghs resident**





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Parent

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## ■ NEWS FROM THE METRO MAYOR

# A transport network you can trust

NOBODY wants to sit stuck in traffic or hang around waiting for a bus that never turns up.

We all know that the West is best - but too often, our transport hasn't kept up.

As the country's fastest-growing region, we've been stuck in the slow lane for too long.

It's time to tackle congestion, potholes, and unreliable journeys, and build a transport network people can trust.

This isn't just about getting from A to B - it's about quality of life. It's about giving people their time back: to be home sooner, get out into nature more, or visit the many attractions that make our part of the world so special.

Transport is a big part of our Growth Strategy because it affects everyday life.

If we want more people across the West to be able to find work, access training, and take up new opportunities, we need a network that helps them get where they need to go.

Better transport also helps businesses grow and create more jobs locally.

That's why we've set out a clear vision for a better-connected West of England, focused on five priorities:

- Better buses: reliable, affordable services with one ticket and one timetable.
- More trains: new stations, more frequent services, and low-emission trains.

- Mass transit: a high-capacity system linking key places across our region.

- Active travel: safer walking and cycling routes, with e-bikes and e-scooters for short trips.

- Improved streets: smoother roads and pavements, more electric vehicle chargers, and better Park & Ride and travel hubs.

Wherever you're travelling, we need to invest so you can rely on how you get there. And we need a system that makes it easier to switch between different types of transport, with simple tap-on, tap-off travel so you never pay more than you should.

We've already secured record transport investment from government. With over 250 new green buses due by the end of 2026 and more stations being built, we can look ahead with genuine optimism.

One of the biggest opportunities ahead is mass transit. Right now, the West of England is the biggest city-region in the country without it. High-frequency services along dedicated routes would be a real game-changer, whether that's a tram, light rail, guided bus, or something else. It won't happen overnight, but council leaders and I are determined to do the work needed to start building within four or five years.

Alongside this, there is another important moment for our region: the consultation on North Somerset joining the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority is now open.



**Metro Mayor Helen Godwin**

writes for the Voice

This is about bringing more communities into the decisions and funding that can improve everyday life.

If North Somerset joins, it could unlock an additional £15 million in the short term, with the potential for more investment in future, helping us deliver better transport, housing, and opportunities across a wider area.

I'd really encourage residents, community groups and businesses to take part. This is your chance to have a say on the future of our region.

Find out more on our website, [westofengland-ca.gov.uk](http://westofengland-ca.gov.uk), or through paper forms at local libraries, community centres, and GP surgeries.

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## ■ BOOK REVIEW

# The Passenger

by Cormac McCarthy

WE start in Chicago, in the last year of the life of Alicia Western, a maths prodigy who suffers from mental health issues. The opening chapter is italicised, signposting to the reader, that what follows is one of many hallucinations, which haunt Alicia, whenever she skips her medication.

Each hallucination finds Alicia in dialogue with The Kid, a creature with a hairless skull, seal's flippers and oarlike shoes, accompanied by a group of demons, who she describes as penny dreadful entertainers. These hallucinatory chapters are interspersed with chapters depicting the life of Bobby, Alicia's brother who works as a salvage diver. We meet Bobby as he and his salvage team locate an aeroplane on the seabed in the Gulf of Mexico. They

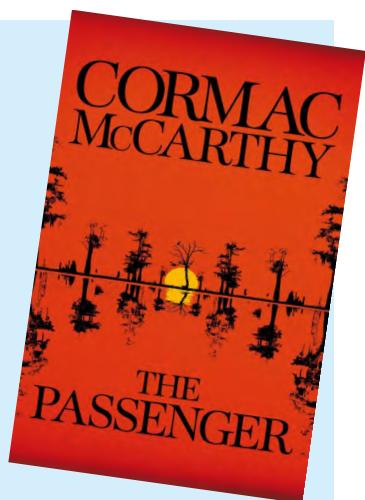
find seven bodies within the wreckage yet eight passengers are listed on the manifest. Bobby hires a boat to investigate the neighbouring beaches in search of the missing passenger.

The narrative shifts back and forth in time including the childhood of Alicia and Bobby, whose father was a nuclear physicist who helped split the atom, leading to the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We follow Bobby from growing up in Tennessee to present day life in New Orleans where he goes to his bank, seeking to withdraw 200 dollars. He discovers that the IRS have blocked his account and have confiscated the contents of his safe deposit box. He is being investigated for tax fraud and finds work in a dive shop in Tucson where he is paid off the books.

We delve into a wide range of subjects including the development of the Atom bomb, the assassination of President Kennedy, the Vietnam War and a discussion on Quantum Mechanics but the emotional heart of the novel is the relationship between Bobby and Alicia and the all-consuming grief Bobby suffers at the loss of his beloved sister.

This is an complex, strange and melancholic novel, full of captivating dialogue and intriguing characters, providing an enjoyable and challenging read. For this book and many more, please come and visit your local library. You will receive a warm welcome and enjoy access to the internet and wi-fi printing with your library card.

*Review by Bob Deacon, from Bishopston Library*



## Bishopston Library opening hours

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## ■ FROM BRISTOL CENTRAL'S MP

# We need urgent action on climate crisis

IS the government trying to hide the true threat from the climate and nature crisis?

A few weeks ago, a shocking report was released from Britain's intelligence chiefs: the 'global biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and national security assessment'.

We nearly didn't get to read it at all. It was meant to be published last year, but according to reports, the government blocked it because it was too negative. It took a Freedom of Information request for it to even be published.

But once it was released, the warning it contained was chilling: that the collapse of ecosystems around the world presents a serious – and escalating – threat to our national security.

As the climate and nature crisis threatens soil, plants and animal life across the world, the resources we rely on are declining. We're already seeing the effects, and they are likely to get worse in the

years ahead: the report warned of difficulties accessing water, crops failing, fishing stocks collapsing, and new diseases emerging.

For too long Labour and Tory governments have stuck their heads in the sand, and treated the climate crisis like a distant issue – not taking seriously the very real consequences it's already having for people in the UK. Consequences which will only worsen unless our government acts urgently to protect us.

The public deserves to know what we're facing – not least so that we can demand that our politicians do better when it comes to making sure our communities are prepared to deal with it.

Because there is plenty governments can do. First, of course, we need urgent action to stop the climate crisis from worsening. That means leaving oil and gas in the ground – not opening up new oil fields like the Rosebank development, which

ministers still haven't ruled out. It also means investing in protecting and restoring nature, on which we all rely for our food, water, clean air and a healthy environment.

Alongside that we also need action to deal with the impacts of the climate crisis that are already here. Extreme heat and cold are already costing lives in the UK because our buildings aren't designed to keep people warm in winter and cool in summer. Homes in Wales are being bulldozed because they are so vulnerable to flooding. Food prices are skyrocketing and are set to rise further.

The government must act urgently to protect us. Natural flood protection, fixing our homes so they can shelter us better from the heat and cold, and repairing our broken food system so we grow more of what we need here at home.

I'll keep fighting for action to protect Bristol and the whole country from the effects of the



**Carla Denyer**  
writes for  
the Voice

climate and nature crisis.

**• 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.denyer.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:carla.denyer.mp@parliament.uk)**

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## ■ FROM BRISTOL NORTH WEST'S MP

# Community-owned clean energy

I AM always proud of my home area. But seeing a community-owned wind turbine in Bristol North West highlighted as one of the pioneering projects that have helped to inspire this government's new Local Power Plan has left me grinning from ear to ear!

Published on February 10 by the government and Great British Energy (the new publicly owned energy company launched by the government), the Local Power Plan will help support community-owned clean energy generation projects across the country.

Imagine community-owned solar panels on our village halls, community centres and social clubs, with profits flowing back into our communities rather than lining the pockets of big energy companies.

Backed by funding of up to £1 billion, this is the biggest public investment in community energy in history, putting wealth and power into the hands of communities – and it's long overdue in this country!

Community-owned energy is the norm in other countries. In Germany, for example, about 40% of installed renewable energy generation capacity is citizen-owned. But, despite its huge potential, for too long community energy in this country has been held back by a lack of funding, central government support, and by planning regulations.

Indeed, the now celebrated wind turbine in Lawrence Weston, here in Bristol North West, only came to fruition because of the grit and determination of the residents behind Ambition Community Energy (ACE) – an off-shoot of the resident-driven organisation Ambition Lawrence Weston (ALW) – and led by the efforts of ALW's development manager, Mark Pepper. They not only had to secure funding but also negotiate some tricky planning regulations, and I was happy to lend my support to help unlock these problems on a number of occasions.

This government has worked at

pace to reform the planning system and remove unnecessary red tape that is stopping this country from building. In December, the government's landmark Planning and Infrastructure Bill received Royal Assent, which means it has become law. This new law will support clean power projects to be prioritised for grid connections to bolster Britain's energy security and empower community-owned wind turbines, solar panels and other forms of low-carbon power to get up and running – without the headaches that ACE had to battle.

I hope that, after reading this, you'll be inspired to develop a new community-owned clean energy project. And if you do pursue this, I'd love to hear about it!

You can find out more about the Local Power Plan and find out how to apply at [gbe.gov.uk/local-power-plan](http://gbe.gov.uk/local-power-plan)

Finally, there should still be time to book a ticket for my next town hall event – an open Q&A event – which will be held 2-3.30pm



**Darren Jones**  
writes for  
the Voice

on Saturday February 28 in the BS7 area. To book, please head to [darren-jones.co.uk/events](http://darren-jones.co.uk/events)

- 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)

#### Parks licences

You may recall that under the previous Labour administration, a decision was made to charge people operating businesses in our parks. Following resistance from the public and councillors alike, these were quietly shelved but were recently relaunched by officers after scant consultation with local councillors. Members of the Public Health and Communities committee, which has responsibility for parks halted the process and have managed to have the fees revised. There is now a 50% reduction in fees for smaller businesses, lower charges for dog walkers, and a sliding scale of fees depending on how many parks are being used. This is a separate system from the fees being introduced for the Downs, which sits under the Downs Committee.

We realise that this some people will still be unhappy with the situation. It's worth noting, however, that these fees are not intended to make money for the Council, but rather to cover administration costs and to ensure that businesses operating in parks are reputable and properly insured. The scheme will also be reviewed in the future to make sure that it is fit for purpose.

#### Vape shops

A number of residents have been in touch with concerns over the growth in the number of brightly lit shops selling vapes, especially on the Gloucester Road. Martin and Fi have been looking into the situation with colleagues and currently it appears that no specific planning application is needed for an existing retail premises to sell vapes or associated products.

However, we have asked planning enforcement to look into whether the proper planning applications have been made for

some of the rather eye catching shop fronts and lighting signage that has been installed on shops that sit within a designated Conservation Area.

We also suggested that trading standards check the products and indeed at least two shops in the area that were checked had counterfeit or illegal vapes and cigarettes that were seized.

At the moment there are no licensing controls over who can sell tobacco and vapes and where, but legislation is under way which will introduce regulation similar to alcohol licensing which will hopefully control the sale of such products more tightly. We will keep you posted.

#### Lamp post chargers

We're often asked when there will be better charging facilities for electric vehicles for people with no driveway. The answer is that after work to coordinate different charging systems there will be more availability. This includes the planned installation of lamppost electric vehicle chargers across Bristol at some suitable lampposts that were selected for where most likely to be needed (locations with few driveways), adequate power supply, and being by the road side (not the property wall).

After some delays, installations are now imminent, including many in the area with terraced streets in the Bishopston part of our ward. All relevant lighting columns have been upgraded, and installation of the charge points themselves will begin shortly. Once each charger is installed, it will be available for public use and shown on a public map of locations. Instructions on how to use it and the tariff will be clearly displayed on the Fuuse app with simple instructions next to the charge point.

We know there are some

concerns about how these will work at different times of day between people using roadside parking with non electric cars and we shall be keeping a close look at how the use of spaces next to charger columns is managed. The council will notify residents once chargers are fully installed and operational.

#### Planning out of special measures

We've reported many times on the backlog of planning applications after vacant posts were frozen by the last administration. The council was put into special measures by government after severe delays built up a few years ago. This meant larger projects were able to apply directly to the Planning Inspectorate, by-passing the council. The good news is this has now ended and once again the council planners are managing applications.

We're conscious that there's also a backlog in enforcement cases where permission isn't in place or conditions are not being met and we are pressing for this to be improved as well.

#### New parking bays for e-mobility

In response to concerns about obstructive parking of e-scooters and e-bikes new parking bays are being provided with funding from the West of England authority – such as an area on the highway in Egerton Road. Some new bays will use a single parking space on the road to give room for 10 Dott vehicles to be left in these locations. A small number may also be on the pavement where there is sufficient space. We're hoping this makes e-mobility more tidy but we'll continue to regularly monitor the bays to understand impacts.

Further funding to deliver more bays is available so we welcome suggested locations in the ward to

be proposed for the shortlist. We have been asked to provide the initial shortlist to WECA at the end of February so please email us as soon as possible.

#### Rethink on visitor permits for residents' parking scheme

Parking schemes can help residents to park near their homes, reduce traffic, improve road safety, and contribute to cleaner air for all. The initial residents parking schemes were introduced ten years ago so were in need of updating and recently changes were proposed by the all party transport committee.

These proposals triggered a statutory consultation and Martin and Fi were contacted by many residents who had concerns, especially about the removal of the allocation of free visitor permits and overall reduction of the number available. We are really pleased that the proposed changes to visitor permits are now being paused so that officers can assess all of the comments of councillors and residents alike.

This may result in another round of statutory consultation to ensure communities get support needed while encouraging people to use more sustainable forms of transport where they can. Other proposals – to make business e-car permits chargeable, remove the ability to use cash at parking meters and to remove the option to claim the free half hour on pay and display machines – are still being considered and a further announcement on this will follow once the responses to the statutory consultation are analysed.

#### 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](https://www.facebook.com/cllrmartin.fodor) or [cllrifi.hance](mailto:cllrifi.hance)

## ■ NEWS

THE Redgrave Theatre, part of Clifton College, is celebrating its sixtieth anniversary.

It was in 1966 that the curtain went up for the first time at the theatre in Percival Road.

The first production staged in the theatre by Clifton College pupils was Love's Labour's Lost by William Shakespeare.

Gemma Allan, from the theatre, said: "The Redgrave Theatre was originally simply known as the Clifton College Theatre.

"It was officially opened by Bristol-born

### Theatre turns 60

actor Sir Michael Redgrave who had been a pupil at the college. After his death in 1985 the theatre, which was one of the first purpose-built school theatres in the country, was renamed in his honour."

Former pupils of Clifton College have fond memories of treading the boards in a House play or a school production.

"Many have gone on to enjoy highly

distinguished careers in the performing arts after their theatrical debut at Clifton College," said Ms Allan.

Alumni include John Cleese, Simon Russell Beale CBE, Trevor Howard, Simon Shepherd, Neil Foster and the brothers Clive and David Swift.

Originally, the theatre was only used for college events but in the 1970s the decision was made for it to be hired out to amateur dramatic groups during the holidays. It now hosts professional performers too.

## ■ FROM YOUR COUNCILLORS

### Bishopston & Ashley Down: Emma Edwards and James Crawford (Green Party)

#### Electric vehicle charging – installations imminent

Following some unavoidable delays, we're pleased to confirm that new lamp post electric vehicle chargers for Bishopston are now ready for installation. The necessary upgrades to lighting columns across the ward have been completed, and work on the charge points themselves will begin shortly.

These locations were shaped by positive resident feedback during the consultation process, and several sites have now been approved.

A map of all planned installations can be viewed at: <https://portal.bcc.lan/portal/apps/webappviewer/>

Once installed, the chargers will be fully accessible for public use. Clear instructions and tariff details will be available on the Fuuse app, with simple guidance displayed at each charging point. We'll be in touch again as soon as the chargers are operational.

#### Concorde Way – lighting and safety improvements

We continue to receive feedback about lighting and safety along Concorde Way, particularly around Ashley Down Station. Officers are now exploring practical and policy options to improve visibility and safety along the route, with commitments to drive progress over the next six months. We have also been in contact

with Network Rail regarding improving access through the station gates.

On a positive note, the Progression artwork—damaged by vandalism last year—has now been restored following our report to the Severnside Partnership.

#### Gloucester Road crossing repainted

The pedestrian crossing near Sainsbury's on Gloucester Road has now been repainted. Many residents raised concerns about this crossing, and we have been pressing for the necessary maintenance. The refreshed markings should improve safety for all crossing the road at this busy location.

We are also continuing to explore options for additional crossings on Gloucester Road, and James has written to MP Darren Jones to seek support.

#### New Post Office service on Muller Road

We're delighted to share that a new Post Office service has opened at Stop & Shop, 154–156 Muller Road, BS7 9RE, in partnership with Payzone. This "Drop & Collect" service provides flexible access to Post Office functions using a handheld terminal, enabling bill payments, prepaid parcel collections, and returns. We know many residents have been asking for improved Post Office provision, and we hope this service proves convenient for the community.

#### Ward Boundary Review – Have Your Say

The Local Government Boundary Commission is currently consulting on proposed changes to ward boundaries across Bristol, including Bishopston.

This review aims to ensure fair and effective representation by examining the size and shape of wards, as well as the number of councillors for each area.

For Bishopston residents, this consultation is an important opportunity to help shape how our community is represented in future elections. The proposals could alter ward lines and potentially influence neighbourhood identity, community cohesion and how local services are planned.

You can view the proposals, maps and guidelines — and submit your comments — via the Commission's consultation webpage: <https://www.lgbc.org.uk/all-reviews/bristol>

We strongly encourage all residents to take part. Your feedback on community identity, local geography and how the ward functions day to day will be vital in ensuring the final boundaries reflect Bishopston's needs. If you would like support in responding or wish to share your initial views, please feel free to get in touch.

#### Contact us

[Cllr.james.crawford@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:Cllr.james.crawford@bristol.gov.uk)

[Cllr.Emma.edwards@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:Cllr.Emma.edwards@bristol.gov.uk)

## ■ COMMUNITY NEWS

### Sharpen up your pruning skills

#### HORFIELD ORGANIC COMMUNITY ORCHARD

A BIG Huzzah! to all the Wassailers who joined us in January. The fruit trees at Horfield Organic Community Orchard (HOCO) are stirring into life – buds beginning to swell before breaking into spring blossom.

We are warming up to a new year of orchard care activities. Dormant season pruning keeps us busy from mid-February to mid-April. Dodging heavy rain has been a challenge this winter! The wet weather has given us plenty of time to check, sharpen, and oil our tools – and plan new pruning workshops.

Pruning fruit trees is an art, a skill, and a life-long learning and practice. It's never too late to learn! I have been working with the 100 trees at HOCO for 18 years. They have been my teachers. Pruning is a process for renewal created by the relationship between two living beings. Time is the third ingredient. Observing a tree, its

environment, and knowing the age, variety, and fruiting habits, informs the chosen actions. Trees respond to winter pruning by growing new shoots, leading to another phase of pruning in the late summer months.

HOCO provides hands-on learning and seasonal training opportunities in the orchard – everything from taster sessions at events, to courses for gardeners and community growers.

#### Dormant season pruning courses:

- Beginners – Saturday 7 March
- Improvers – Sunday 8 March

To complement these popular and highly praised courses, we are delighted to announce a series of new workshops. Ideal for those with some previous training and experience, who are keen to sharpen their pruning skills.

#### Dormant season pruning workshops:

- Pears – Sunday 1 March
- Apples – Saturday 14 March
- Apples – Sunday 22 March

Places are limited and must be



Pruning the medlar at HOCO

booked in advance.  
More information: <https://community-orchard.org.uk/>  
0117 373 1587

Words by Shannon Smith aka The Apple Tree Lady  
Photograph by Jamie Carstairs

#### 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 Tuesday March 10, author Thomas Messel is giving a talk on "Elizabeth Linley: The Nightingale of Bath".

Elizabeth Linley was one of Britain's most celebrated singers of the eighteenth century. The talk explores her artistic achievement, her constrained domestic life, and her complex relationship with the playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan. On Thursday 26th March, there will be an illustrated talk "Getting to Know Your Place". Meet Pete Insole, who created the Know Your Place website in 2011. Both events start at 7pm and admission is £3 ( pay at the door – cash only ).

For details visit our website. <https://FriendsOfRedlandLibrary.org.uk>

## 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

### 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

### March 23rd

■ HENLEAZE SENIOR FILM CLUB The Critic (15) 2pm - When the most feared and vicious theatre critic in town Jimmy Erskine finds himself suddenly in the crosshairs of the Daily Chronicle's new owner, he strikes a sinister Faustian pact with struggling actress Nina Land who is desperate to win his favour. Starring Ian McKellen, Mark Strong and Gemma Arterton. Carers welcome, easy access. St. Peter's Church Hall, The Drive, Henleaze BS9 4LD. For more information, please call 0117 435 0063

Send details of your events and activities:

in no more than 40 words,

email us at: [news@bishopstonvoice.co.uk](mailto:news@bishopstonvoice.co.uk)

### ■ BLAISE COMMUNITY GARDEN

behind Blaise Museum BS10 7QS open Wednesday 10-12 and Saturday 10 to 2, interesting walled kitchen garden, free entry, new volunteers needed & welcomed, plants available. Events : Café on the 14th March 9.45am-2pm, and further Café on 11th April.

### March 18th

■ BRISTOL OPERA CLUB - Bristol Opera Club presents a talk on The Flying Dutchman. David Martin will seek to explain the background to and the revolutionary nature of this seminal opera using DVD excerpts. 6.30 for 7.00pm, All are warmly welcomed, The Apostle Room, Clifton Cathedral, Worcester Road Entrance. £8.00/£1.00 cash only please, Dedicated parking, Bar. Details: [borkmail100@gmail.com](mailto:borkmail100@gmail.com) 01275 848526

### 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](http://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](http://www.mindbodypilates.org). Contact; Leanne 07817189474 or [leanne@mindbodypilates.org](mailto:leanne@mindbodypilates.org)

■ 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](http://pilates.ittahowie.co.uk) or email Itta at [mail@ittahowie.co.uk](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:redlandwindband@gmail.com)

### 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](mailto: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](mailto:info@folkstars.co.uk)

### ■ 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](http://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 GAMBAN

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 [keithripley27@gmail.com](mailto:keithripley27@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 [westburryparkwi@gmail.com](mailto:westburryparkwi@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.theartsociety-bristol.org.uk](http://www.theartsociety-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](mailto:mail@ittahowie.co.uk)

### ■ BRISTOL HARMONY WEST GALLERY CHOIR

and band sing and play lively church and village music from the 18th century. St Edith's Church Hall, St Edith'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](http://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: [wetwo@gentlyblown.co.uk](mailto:wetwo@gentlyblown.co.uk) Web: [poetryunlimitedbristol.weebly.com](http://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@companionsvoices.org](mailto:bristol@companionsvoices.org). Visit [www.facebook.com/CompanionVoicesBristol](http://www.facebook.com/CompanionVoicesBristol) and [www.companionsvoices.org](http://www.companionsvoices.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

**■ 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.westburyparks.org](http://www.westburyparks.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.westburyparks.org](http://www.westburyparks.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.

#### ■ 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 rgs or whatever you would love to resurrect or mend! Every Wednesday in October at Clifton

Library 10.30-12.30pm.

**■ 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 [tanialake@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:tanialake@yahoo.co.uk)

#### 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@mail.ittahowie.co.uk](mailto:Itta@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

**■ 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 ]

Looking for a new hobby? Join us for fun, fitness and friendship (singles welcome). First evening free! Thursdays: New/Inexperienced dancers 7-8.30pm (£4). Intermediate/Advanced dancers 7.30-10pm (£6). St Monica Trust, Oatley House Main Hall, BS9 3TN.

[www.rscdsbristol.info](http://www.rscdsbristol.info). Contact Ruth 01179683057.

**■ 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)

#### ■ 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.henbursingers.org](http://www.henbursingers.org). Contact the secretary at [secretary@henbursingers.org](mailto:secretary@henbursingers.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 09685409 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.henbursingers.org](http://www.henbursingers.org) contact secretary at [secretary@henbursingers.org](mailto:secretary@henbursingers.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](mailto: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

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## ■ VINEYARD NEWS with INGRID BATES

# Turning all that rainwater into wine

OUT in the vineyards, we've been experimenting with rainwater collection systems. The last few summers have been noticeably drier, which for established vines isn't a problem, but for young vines it can be disastrous. Contrary to popular belief, newly planted vines need a good supply of water during their first year while their root systems are establishing. Depending on soil type, it can actually take three or even four years for a vine to develop a strong, resilient root system.

Our new site near Bath sits on a south-facing slope with very free-draining soil and no access to natural or mains water, so we're planning ahead to make sure any freshly planted vines get the best possible start. We've installed large water butts in the lower corner of the field and are experimenting with different ways of channelling rainwater down towards them - a surprisingly satisfying process to watch!

Elsewhere in the vineyard, vine pruning is almost complete. We've been marking weaker-looking vines so that we can easily return to them over the coming weeks

and give them a helping hand in the form of willow mulch. The soil at our Wrington site is heavy clay and the vines sometimes struggle in drier areas during summer. The willow mulch improves soil nutrient levels but also helps retain moisture so growth can continue even in drought conditions.

Paradoxically, for all this talk of dry weather, the main challenge right now is the opposite - the ground is too wet! The vines are dormant so it's not a major issue, but they'll certainly be feeling a little stressed with their roots sitting in waterlogged soil. Unfortunately, there's not much we can do except wait for things to dry out.

On the wine front, we still have our usual range of sparkling wines and still rosé available. Just get in touch if you'd like to find your nearest stockist or check free local delivery.

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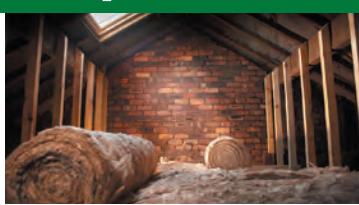


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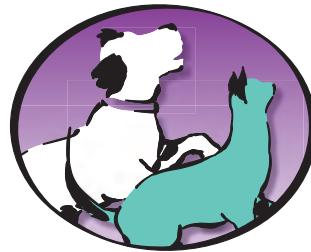
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**NATURE WATCH**

with Dawn Lawrence

# 'Little Brown Job' plays second fiddle to robin

THERE is a bird that flits around our gardens almost unnoticed and, so far, completely unremarked in these columns. Just like the hairy-footed flower bees, unless you know what you are looking for they will easily pass you by. But this archetypal LBJ (Little Brown Job – a birding term for those nondescripts that fail to catch the eye) can really sing and his scientific name, *Prunella modularis*, celebrates that. Meet the “little brown singer” commonly known as the dunnock.

Like the similarly sized robin his voice is surprisingly loud but, unlike the robin, he prefers a low perch and sings mostly around dawn and only during the mating season. The males and females are identical with brown stripey backs and grey heads, chests and bellies, with more striping on the flanks and around the eyes. Their simple plumage, their habit of hanging around low down in thickets, even their choice of a modest singing platform suggest they are happy to play second fiddle to the robin.

We used to know them as hedge sparrows and they are often to be seen poking about the hedge bottoms, but they are not closely related to sparrows so the old name dunnock is now preferred (it simply means “little brown



**A dunnock on a garden gate**  
Photo by Tim Felce (Airwolfhound)

one” – I’m sure you’re getting the picture). Despite their plain appearance and skulking habits they have a wealth of vernacular names including “hedge chanter” and the delightful “hedge Betty” which seems to express a heartfelt fondness. It is obvious why the confiding robin has always been cherished but perhaps this ancient affection for the shy dunnock is explained by his singing: a rapid, tuneful whistle, somewhat scratchy but spirited and cheerful.

As unassuming as they are to look at,

their private lives are anything but. Often dispensing with monogamy, females can share a male, males share a female or even two or three males share two to four females across different territories. They also copulate readily and often, albeit in an act of very short duration. To complicate family matters further the country dunnock is a target for the cuckoo; probably a recent host since the cuckoo has not yet evolved eggs to match the dunnock’s own startling blue clutch and neither has the dunnock developed the ability to reliably detect the dark-spotted intruder egg. Our city dunnocks do not have to face the threat of a cuckoo in the nest and although not in the top ten they tend to hover around 15th in the RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch results table and are present in around 40% of gardens.

Look for them under the bird table or hanging feeder, meekly taking the scraps dropped by the other birds. They prefer to feed low down and scuffle about amongst the dead leaves and emerging shoots around the shrubbery at this time of year. A pleasing bird with an uplifting song, good luck in spotting hedge Betty this spring.

© Dawn Lawrence

**NEWS**

A THEATRE producer has been shortlisted as one of ten finalists in the VisitEngland annual Tourism Superstar Awards.

Sheila Hannon, who co-founded the Show of Strength Theatre Company in Bedminster in 1986, was nominated by Visit West for her celebrated and award-winning theatre walks. With tours revealing the hidden histories of both Bristol and Bath, Sheila highlights notorious crimes, tales of notable women or the working classes, supporting local cafes and pubs along the way. Prominent figures such as Mary Shelley and Cary Grant are brought to life through her humour, charisma and research.

## Vote for Sheila!

The VisitEngland website lauds her for her “natural curiosity”, which ensures that “every story is entertaining and insightful, making her a standout figure in Bristol’s cultural landscape.”

Now in its 14th year, the Tourism Superstar competition “seeks out champions working in tourism who provide fantastic experiences for visitors, as well as showcasing the variety and quality of England’s tourism offer, businesses and destinations”. The winner, who is decided

by public vote, will be announced after the English Tourism Week on March 13-22.

Reflecting on her experience of being nominated, Sheila explained: “All finalists have a short film made about them - we filmed ours starting at the Bridge, a stopping point on our Clifton tour. Films will be available to view on Visit England’s website, so it’s a real opportunity to promote Clifton and the surrounding area.”

The public vote opened on February 9 and is available until March 22. To view Sheila’s film and cast your vote, visit: <https://visitenglandawards.secureplatform.com/tourismsuperstar/>



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