

emersonsgreenvoice

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February 2026, Edition — Issue 106

FREE EVERY MONTH IN EMERSONS GREEN, LYDE GREEN, SHORTWOOD & PUCKLECHURCH

Protest over 280 homes plan



Protesters on one of the fields that could be built on under the plans

VILLAGERS have joined with Green Belt campaigners to show their opposition to plans for 280 homes in Shortwood.

Land promoter Lightwood Strategic Ltd and local landowners have applied for permission to build the homes

on farmland off Cattybrook Road in the village.

But residents say if it goes ahead it would swallow up the existing village, which has around 90 homes, overwhelm roads, threaten wildlife and go against the council's

environmental policy.

As the Voice went to print more than 90 people had written to South Gloucestershire Council to object to the plans, with no one writing in support.

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George on tour

Social media star George Clarke is going on a UK tour after reaching the final of the BBC's Strictly Come Dancing.

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Speed limit call

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Police ban

A police officer who injured a woman while driving through a red light on an emergency call has been banned from driving.

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DEADLINES

Our March edition deadline is February 11.

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COMPLAINTS

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Further details of the complaints process can be found on the Voice website, or can be obtained by contacting the Publisher.

A member of the



The new bridge deck

Bridge is on track

NATIONAL Highways says the new bridge to carry the A432 over the M4 is on course to open in the "late spring".

A series of six overnight closures of the motorway took place in the first week of January, to remove casings for some of the concrete parts of the bridge structure.

A National Highways spokesperson said: "We have made positive progress on the new bridge, with all the concrete formwork and temporary edge protection removed during the recent overnight closures."

"Moving forward, there will be some overnight closures towards the end March to change the traffic management and allow for the central concrete barrier on the M4 to be reinstated."

"We will also be undertaking earthworks and other civils work on the abutments to move the bridge towards completion, before reconnecting it to the existing A432."

"All work is weather dependent, but we are on course to reopen the bridge in the late spring."

The old bridge next to the Wick Wick roundabout closed in July 2023 when an inspection discovered "accelerated deterioration and cracking" in the concrete.

Speed cameras plan

A MAIN road could get a 20mph limit - enforced with average speed cameras.

The cameras are being proposed for the A432 Badminton Road between the Avon Ring Road and Cleve Hill traffic lights in Downend: around a mile and a quarter of road that currently has a 30mph limit.

A new 20mph limit would also cover the high street area, extending along Downend Road towards Fishponds, and along North Street to join up with the existing 20mph zone towards Staple Hill.

People are being asked to have their say on the proposals, which also include extending the 20mph limit to 50 nearby side roads that currently have 30mph limits, including Blackhorse Lane.

Five new zebra crossings are also proposed on Badminton Road as part of the project, which is aimed at reducing road accident casualties.

They would be near the junctions with Westons Brake, Britannia Close, Blackhorse Lane and Cleve Park Road, and the Leap Valley footpath crossing.

South Gloucestershire Council is working with neighbouring Bristol City Council on the plans, which would see the 20mph limit on the A432 extended to cover the entire five-and-a-half mile stretch from the ring road to the city centre end of Stapleton Road.

The A432 Safer Roads survey is open for comments until midnight on February 13.

It can be found online at bristol.gov.uk/a432-safer-road-survey.

Anyone who is not online can call 0117 922 2848 and ask for the survey in a different format.

Shortwood says no to plans for 280 homes

From page 1

In January more than 50 people gathered on one of the fields that would be built on under the plans with banners and placards, to show their opposition.

The site is on the opposite side of the Avon Ring Road to Pomphrey Hill North playing fields, between Emersons Green and Pucklechurch. It sits between the ring road, Main Road in Shortwood, Cattybrook Road and the B4465, the road linking the ring road and Pucklechurch.

It is one of several potential development sites that could be taken out of the Green Belt if South Gloucestershire Council's draft Local Plan is approved by the government.

The developers claim that because there is already housing on one side of the site, and building on it won't lead to the "merging" of Bristol and Pucklechurch, it should already be classed as 'grey belt' land suitable for development.

The site is currently divided into several green fields.

Farm buildings and one home on the site would be demolished, with the original farmhouse kept and converted into two homes.

In a planning statement to the council, consultants Origin3 said the housing "will comprise a mix of sizes, types and tenures, including 40% affordable housing and 5% self and custom build".

Buildings would be up to three storeys high.

The plans also include space for a commercial building, "active travel" routes for pedestrians and cyclists, electric vehicle charging points, allotments, play areas and "informal, natural and semi natural" open space.

The only vehicle access would be where Cattybrook Road, a narrow country lane, meets Main Road, a road used by drivers travelling between Pucklechurch and Mangotsfield that has cars parked on one side for some of its length.

An entrance to the opposite side of the site, beside the B4465, would be reserved for pedestrians, cyclists and emergency vehicles only.

The consultants said: "There

is a national housing crisis and a pressing need for affordable housing in South Gloucestershire due to the backlog of unmet needs and worsening affordability.

"This is a matter for the planning balance to which great weight should be afforded."

They say the development would contain "high quality, energy efficient homes set within generous green space and links out to open countryside with benefits for healthy living".

The consultants describe the site as: "A sustainable location with excellent opportunities to connect into existing employment, services and facilities at Mangotsfield, Lyde Green and Emersons Green, and new facilities planned to the south within the Carsons Green Neighbourhood."

A biodiversity report submitted by the developers describes the farmland as a range of habitats of 'poor', 'moderate' or 'good' condition - but concedes the current proposals result in an "overall net loss" of habitats.

Residents fear village will be 'swallowed'

Residents' group What's Up Shortwood and Save Our Green Spaces South Gloucestershire (SOGS-SG) are organising opposition to the plans.

Shortwood resident David Heape said: "The Rock House Farm development is attempting to expand Shortwood by more than 300%.

"It's situated too close to the existing village and is in danger of swallowing it.

"The planned access onto Main Road is on a known dangerous bend, plus the significant rise in traffic will undoubtedly increase emissions and lead to large-scale congestion."

Mr Heape told the council the developers have described the plans as "founded on sound urban design principles", but said the village was "the wrong area for an urban design".

In her written objection, Gloria Hale said she has lived



More than 50 people demonstrated against the plans on part of the development site in January.



An aerial view of how the proposed development could look, with existing homes below and right

in Shortwood for 50 years and it has always been a "peaceful village" surrounded by open farmland and wildlife.

She said: "I regularly see wild deer, foxes and birds in my garden and the surrounding area, and enjoy the tranquillity of village life.

"I strongly believe that a development of this type would be doing a massive disservice to our children and grandchildren."

Lusia Przytocki said: "The proposal for this site would significantly change the character of Shortwood and Mangotsfield."

Emersons Green Town Council's planning committee has objected "due to the combined impacts on traffic, infrastructure, and the local environment".

Town councillors said the extra vehicle journeys generated by the development, and another planned on the other side of the ring road, "will inevitably increase pressure on Cosham Street, which already suffers from heavy congestion and limited capacity at peak times, creating further safety risks

for pedestrians, cyclists, and residents".

They added: "Furthermore, the proposal would result in the unacceptable loss of valuable green space, which currently supports wildlife, provides a buffer between existing housing and the main road, and contributes to the character and well-being of the community."

Government advisory body Natural England has raised no objections to the plans, saying it will not have "significant adverse impacts" on protected nature conservation sites or landscapes.

The NHS Bristol, North Somerset, and South Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board has told the council there is not enough local primary healthcare capacity, such as GPs and dentists, to meet the extra demand.

The ICB says the developers should pay more than £280,000 towards the capital cost of new provision.

The application can be viewed and commented on by searching for application P25/02966/O on the council's planning website.



What the turbines will look like from Parkfield, between Lyde Green and Pucklechurch

Have your say on wind turbine project

A PUBLIC consultation on a project to build two community-owned wind turbines near Pucklechurch has been launched.

A website has been set up so people can find out more about the Leigh Farm Wind Turbines project, with exhibition events staged in January for people to ask questions of the groups involved.

People are being invited to have their say on the project from now until March 7, before a planning application is submitted later in the spring.

The project is being led by non-profit renewable energy organisation Bristol Energy Network, in collaboration with Emersons and Lyde Green Community Energy (ELCoE) and South Gloucestershire Community Energy Network (SGCEN).

It is being funded by the West of England Combined Authority and the turbines will be built on land owned by South Gloucestershire Council, just north of the M4 between Pucklechurch and Westerleigh.

The Voice reported last month that the aim is to build two turbines that between them will generate 8.5 megawatts of electricity - enough to power 8,000 homes.

They will be owned through a "community benefit society" structure, with profits from the sale of energy committed to benefiting South Gloucestershire residents, particularly those communities closest to the site.

BEN said: "Over their lifetime, the turbines are intended to support work on fuel poverty, home energy efficiency

and climate action, alongside other local priorities that communities identify."

Maps produced for the consultation show that the turbines would be built close to the M4 on the opposite side to Lyde Green and Pucklechurch.

BEN expects any noise from the turbines to be largely drowned out by motorway traffic.

The closest settlement to the site is Parkfield, a hamlet south of the M4, while on the north side the Westerleigh fuel depot, abattoir and crematorium are closer to the turbines than Westerleigh is.

However the area to the west of the fuel depot is earmarked as a potential development site for 2,050 homes in South Gloucestershire Council's draft Local Plan, which is currently awaiting government approval. Last month the Voice reported that housing provider Places for People had secured use of that land as lead developer for the North Lyde Ecotech Village project.

BEN says the turbines would have a 25-year lifespan: after that they would be taken away for recycling and the foundations covered so the land can be returned to its previous use.

The plans include planting new hedgerows, wildflower meadows and trees at the 228-acre Leigh Farm. The open spaces around turbines make it possible to restore and manage habitats that further support pollinators and other wildlife.

The site would be remotely monitored 24/7 and undergo regular maintenance and management through BEN.

The first exhibition event in Pucklechurch on January 19 was attended by around 35 people. Another was held the following day in Westerleigh, with the third scheduled for Lyde Green Community Centre on January 31 between 11.30am and 3pm.

Groups involved in the project have had stalls to give people more information at the events.

ELCoE's Chris Sunderland said: "We might be in receipt of some of the funds raised so we want to tell people what we're about."

Details of the project can be found online at www.leighfarmwindturbines.co.uk.

People can email views to feedback@alpacacommunications.com, and anyone who is not online can call 07846 503784 or write to Bristol Energy Network at

Redbrick House, 6 Wilder Street, BS2 8QH.

After the consultation ends a formal planning application will be made to the council, with a decision on permission expected in around a year's time.

Building the turbines is expected to take about six months, with construction traffic using Westerleigh Road between the Hambrook and Tormarton junctions of the M4 to reach the site.

One issue facing all new energy projects is a "bottleneck" in connecting them to the National Grid, which is in need of updating to handle new capacity.

A possible solution under consideration is to use the turbines to supply power directly to the Bristol and Bath Science Park in Emersons Green.



The orange circles show where the turbines will stand, near the M4 and Westerleigh fuel terminal.

George off on tour after Strictly final

A SOCIAL media star who grew up in Emersons Green missed out on the Strictly glitterball trophy - but has won a legion of new fans.

George Clarke and professional partner Alexis Warr made it to the final of BBC's Strictly Come Dancing on the last Saturday before Christmas.

And although the pair missed out to former England footballer Karen Carney and partner Carlos Gu in the public vote, it isn't the end of their partnership, which George called 'Team Warrkey', as both are taking part in the Strictly Come Dancing Live tour, which is currently playing 31 shows at nine arenas around the country.

George said: "The last few months have been a whirlwind, but I'm honestly delighted to be joining the tour and to be able to continue my Strictly journey on the road."

The 26-year-old YouTube, TikTok and podcast host, who posts as George Clarke, wrote a message to fans on his Instagram page after the final, thanking "anyone who showed any ounce of support".

He said: "Strictly has been a hell of an experience for me and I feel like I've learned so, so much.

"For someone who's made a career from sitting in front of a camera I really am not comfortable being the centre of attention so immediately I knew Strictly would be a challenge.

"After the first few weeks I really thought I'd bitten off more than I could chew, every week felt like such an alien movement and no part of me believed I could create as good a dance as the other people in the competition.

"But that's where I have to thank Alexis."

George said Alexis had "helped me discover some belief in myself, something that has really helped shape me as a person not just as a dancer".

In the final George and Alexis performed a show dance to 'Human' by The Killers, a Viennese Waltz to 'Somebody to Love' by Queen, and chose to reprise their favourite dance from the series, a paso doble to 'Game of Survival' by Ruelle.

George said: "I ended the night doing three wildly different dances, none of which I wouldn't have a chance in hell at doing at



George Clarke and Alexis Warr dance a paso doble in the final of Strictly Come Dancing. Picture: BBC/Guy Levy

the start of the competition.

"Not only was there an improvement but I, hand on heart, genuinely loved performing them and that was something I never thought would happen.

"Overall, the whole world of Strictly is so uplifting and positive.

"Everyone in and around the Strictly family has been a breath of fresh air to have in my life."

Among those who had been cheering George on from afar were pupils at Emersons Green Primary School, which he attended in his early years.

Speaking after the start of the competition, Emersons Green head of school Soraya Young said pupils were "buzzing with excitement" at George's performances on Strictly.

She said: "George's incredible journey on the dance floor has inspired many of the school's children, sparking renewed enthusiasm for music, dance, and the arts across the school community."

George, who later moved on to Colston's School in Stapleton - now known as Collegiate School - also worked at Bottegino's restaurant in Emersons Green before his content-creating career took off: he now has 2.4 million followers on TikTok and 649,000 YouTube subscribers.



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Housing plan for car wash site

HOUSES and flats could be built on a landmark former petrol station site that is currently used as a car wash and garage.

Downend Car Wash in Westerleigh Road, and a car sales and repairs business next door, would be demolished to make way for eight houses, or three houses and six flats, under plans submitted to South Gloucestershire Council.

The site shares access from Westerleigh Road with one of the two car parks for the Huntsman pub, which is not included in the redevelopment plans.

On the other side it backs on to several homes on Elmtree Avenue, Mangotsfield.

The application for "permission in principle" to build up to nine homes on the site has been submitted by agents LPC on behalf of a developer, whose name has been redacted from planning documents.

Simon Chambers, of LPC, said

the site is currently protected by a policy that resists changing the use of employment sites unless it can be shown that "all reasonable attempts" have failed to find a suitable reuse.

But he said: "This is not an obvious employment site in view of the physical constraints and its use is not a high employment opportunity."

Potential enforcement action against the garage on the site after a retrospective planning application for change of use was refused last year showed the "local conflict and limited options for expansion" for commercial use.

Mr Chambers said the site was a sustainable brownfield location in an established residential area, with vehicle access that would have fewer "potential comings and goings" than the car wash business.

Five residents had commented on the plans as the



The site as it is today

Voice went to print: all supported the idea of houses, rather than a combination of flats and houses, on the site.

But they raised concerns over parking provision, with one plan proposing 14 spaces for eight houses and the other 15 spaces for nine houses and flats.

Michelle Rogers said: "No more car wash! Great! I will agree to almost anything to replace the noise that we have had to endure from the car wash, seven days a week, for years."

"The obvious problem with building houses is going to be the

parking."

Natalie Lodge also supported new housing but said: "There is inadequate parking provision on both plans."

The council's trading standards department said that as the site was once a petrol station, last used in 1996, it could only support redevelopment once it has been shown the disused tanks will be safely removed.

The plans can be viewed by searching for application P25/02691/PIP on the council's planning website.

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Calls for rethink on new 40mph limit

CALLS are being made for South Gloucestershire Council to rethink a reduced speed limit introduced on the Avon Ring Road.

The 40mph limit has been introduced between the Bromley Heath roundabout and Coldharbour Lane, near UWE's Frenchay campus, as part of a scheme to build segregated cycle lanes and footpaths, which was finished in December.

The council first announced plans to cut the speed limit to 40mph in 2023. It said this would apply only to the westbound carriageway, heading towards Filton, on the same side as the upgraded path.

However last year, while works were underway, a statutory notice was published proposing that the road should have a 40mph limit in both directions.

The new limit came into force on December 19.

The council says the reduction is "essential" to ensure the Department for Transport-funded scheme complies with national guidance.

It says the gap between the new cycle lanes and the road carriageway is too narrow for a 50mph road in places, and vehicle lanes themselves are now too narrow to meet safety standards for a 50mph limit.

Opposition Conservatives insist the change is unnecessary and have called for a rethink.

Tory group leader and Frenchay & Downend ward councillor Liz Brennan said the reduction was "frankly ridiculous", adding: "Introducing a uniform 40 mph limit on this stretch of road feels out of step with what drivers expect,



Signs advising drivers of the new limit near the Bromley Heath roundabout

potentially lowering compliance, increasing frustration and making the road less safe, which is counter-productive."

The Conservatives highlighted a police comment during the consultation that a speed limit should "look and feel like the limit".

Cllr Brennan said the ring road "looks and feels like a 50mph road" and said the council's Lib Dem/Labour administration "needs to stop, listen and rethink" the change, which was opposed by most people who responded to consultations.

In the public questions session at December's council meeting, resident Joe Payne asked: "If a council consultation has an overwhelming objection to the proposal, why is the proposal then given the green light?"

"The A4174 speed reduction had a 90% objection response, yet continues.

"What is then the point of

us responding to a consultation if the response is just ignored when the proposal has been overwhelmingly objected to by the public?"

Downend resident Tom Williams made a series of Freedom of Information requests asking for figures to explain how the council's aims to improve air quality, address climate change and road safety would be achieved by the scheme.

He said the responses did not address the issues, because no air quality assessment had been carried out in advance, and the figures for collisions on the affected stretch of road did not compare them to the number of journeys successfully taken.

Tom said: "How can they possibly know what effect these works will have on air quality if they do not have a baseline measurement to work from?"

Responding to the calls to rethink the new limit, a council spokesperson said: "The A4174 improvement scheme is a

significant investment in our transport infrastructure, which is delivering key upgrades including new and widened cycle lanes, improved pedestrian crossings, and additional bus infrastructure to make public transport more reliable and attractive.

"In 2023 we consulted on the proposals, with most respondents supporting new or wider cycleways.

"To meet national standards, the scheme must include minimum buffer widths and speed limits. "Lower speeds will help protect vulnerable road users, particularly at new crossings and shared-use paths.

"With limited space, only a 0.5m buffer is possible in some areas, making a 40mph speed limit essential for safety."

*South Gloucestershire Council is proposing to ban pedestrians from walking on verges on parts of the ring road.

An order would prohibit people from walking on the verges on the north side of the road between the metrobus stop near the Hambrook traffic lights and the lay-by east of the Church Lane overpass, on the other side of the Bromley Heath roundabout.

Pedestrians would also be banned from using the verge on the south side of the A4174 where the foot and cycle path moves onto the top of the embankment next to Bromley Heath, and at the top of Bromley Heath Road where the footpath is not at the roadside.

Comments can be made at consultations.southglos.gov.uk until January 31.

Cyclists report slips on new path surface

SOUTH Gloucestershire council says it has "no concerns" about the safety of the surface of the new shared-use cycle path alongside the A4174, after cyclists reported slipping on it.

The BBC reported concerns from one cyclist that the surface was "very slippery" due to wet leaves on the path.

He also highlighted a concrete ledge which divides the green cycle path from the footpath alongside it, which could be easily missed in the dark or by people who hadn't used the path before.

A spokesperson from the University of the West of England confirmed that staff had emailed the council to highlight comments on internal message boards about the new surfaces "becoming slippery, resulting in accidents and near misses".

A council spokesperson said: "We have no concerns about the surface of the new shared-use cycle path along the A4174 and we routinely inspect this area of the network both proactively and where any concerns have been raised.



A section of the shared use path near Frenchay

"We remind all users of the public highway, including those who walk, cycle and wheel, to take extra care at this time of year as surfaces can be slippery during wet or freezing conditions—even after gritting."

Police driver who injured pedestrian is banned

A POLICE officer who seriously injured a woman when he drove through a red light on a pedestrian crossing while on an emergency call has been given a four-month driving ban.

PC Dan Parsons, aged 32, was driving an unmarked police car and responding to a suspected firearms incident when he collided with 19-year-old Saara Akatwijuka at the Wick Wick roundabout in November 2024.

The collision left Ms Akatwijuka with "significant injuries": she was in hospital for several weeks afterwards and police said she is still recovering from them.

Following an investigation by the force's Serious Collision Investigations Team, which referred the case to the Crown Prosecution Service, PC Parsons was charged last year with causing serious injury by dangerous driving in connection with the incident.

He pleaded guilty to the lesser charge of causing serious injury



Wick Wick roundabout

by careless or inconsiderate driving, and at Gloucester Crown Court in January he was given a four-month driving ban, a fine of £2,800 and an order to pay costs of £1,000.

He is also facing a misconduct hearing after the Independent Office for Police Conduct referred the case to Avon & Somerset police's Professional Standards Department.

A police spokesperson said: "The officer had been responding to a suspected firearms incident in Longwell Green when he drove through a red light and was

in collision with a 19-year-old woman on a pedestrian crossing, leaving her with serious injuries.

"Officers provided first aid alongside paramedics before the woman was taken to hospital."

The roundabout is the junction of the A4174 Avon Ring Road and Badminton Road, between the Willy Wicket pub and the Badminton Road bridge over the M4, which is currently being rebuilt.

The collision happened before the old traffic lights were removed and replaced by temporary lights as part of a road

works programme.

The head of the police's Professional Standards Department, Detective Superintendent Larisa Hunt, said: "PC Parsons has pleaded guilty to a serious driving offence for which he's now been sentenced.

"As a result of the collision, a young woman was left with significant injuries, from which she is still recovering.

"Our thoughts remain with her, as well as her family.

"Police officers are always expected to follow national and local guidance, and their training, when responding to emergency incidents.

"Following the incident, a mandatory referral was made to the Independent Office for Police Conduct who assessed the incident as suitable for local investigation by our Professional Standards Department.

"Now the criminal case has concluded, we'll be progressing with the misconduct process."

Drink-drive arrests up by a quarter

THE number of drivers arrested by police on suspicion of drink or drug driving in December was more than 25% higher than the same month the previous year.

Avon & Somerset police arrested a total of 262 drivers over the course of the month as part of an annual festive road safety campaign.

The number was up by 55, or 26.6%, on

the 207 arrests made in December 2024, and was also higher than the 258 arrests in the same month in 2023 and 247 in December 2022.

The force had not produced a full breakdown of the areas where drivers were arrested, or the full age range, as the Voice went to print.

But a spokesperson said 30.2% of all drivers arrested (79 out of 262) were men aged between 35 and 44.

Men made up 84.7% of all arrests (222 out of 262).

Police said drink or drugs had been a factor in a quarter of the 32 fatal road collisions across the Avon and Somerset force area in 2025.

Police have urged people to call 999

when they know someone is currently out on the road, driving under the influence of drink or drugs.

They have also set up a web page at tinyurl.com/ycsuku57 where people can report drink-drivers online at any time of the year.

Inspector Matt Boiles said: "There is no safe way to drink and drive – not at Christmas, not on New Year's Eve, not any day of the year.

"Even small amounts of alcohol or drugs can seriously impair your judgement, reaction times, and coordination, putting lives at risk.

"Don't be tempted to take chances."

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Children at the resource base with their houseplants



Making play dough

PUPILS at a primary school's specialist setting for children with physical disabilities are among the first in the country to take part in a new awards scheme.

The Young Achievers Award is a national project designed to help children aged from ten to 13 build independence, confidence and a sense of community responsibility.

Children at the resource base at Emersons Green Primary School have been taking part, led by teacher Charlotte Hawker.

The resource base is one of only six settings in the UK which supports children with physical disabilities or visual impairment to study within a mainstream school.

Charlotte has adapted activities so that every child can take part and succeed in the awards, working with Victa, a national charity supporting children and young adults who are blind or partially sighted, and their families.

Their first award focussed on the community.

Pupils took part in hands-on projects focused on kindness,

teamwork and giving back, including potting houseplants to donate to people who use the nearby Resound Foodbank.

Pupils also made their own play dough, measuring and mixing the ingredients themselves before giving it to Mangotsfield Pre-School, which is based on the school grounds.

The children from the resource base then visited the pre-school to explain how they made the dough and answer questions, which also helped to build their confidence and communication skills.

Children worked together to make peppermint creams and tactile thank-you cards for family members or friends as part of a section acts of gratitude, and discussed how people can show appreciation in everyday life.

The theme continued with a 'kindness bingo' challenge, where pupils chose and recorded acts of kindness such as holding doors open, writing kind notes or helping others.

Executive head teacher Simon Botten said: "Through completing these activities, the four pupils earned their Young Achievers community badges, marking a proud moment for both the children and staff."

"The initiative reflects Emersons Green Primary School Resource Base's commitment to supporting pupils' personal

development alongside academic learning, ensuring they are prepared for life beyond the classroom.

"In 2026 the Young Achievers hope to gain their next three awards - the science, nature and create badges, to become full Young Achievers and inspire the next group!"



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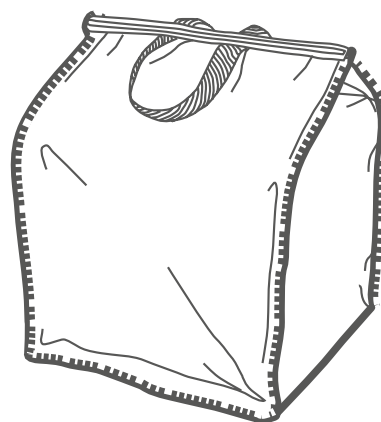
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High street gem closes after 75 years

ONE of the area's best-known shops is closing after more than 75 years as the owners retire.

Spencers Jewellers in Broad Street is believed to be the oldest family-owned and run business in Staple Hill.

It opened as Modern Jewels in 1950, and its first manager, Louis Spencer, bought the shop from original owner Stanley Bennett ten years later.

It was renamed Spencers Jewellers in the 1990s when Louis' son Jon, who had joined the business in 1976 straight from school, became a partner.

Now Jon, who runs the business with wife Teresa, is approaching retirement age and will close the shop by the end of February.

Spencers has served generations of customers, not just selling watches, clocks and jewellery but providing a valued repair service.

Louis moved to Bristol from Herefordshire to manage Modern Jewels after serving an apprenticeship as a watchmaker and completing his National Service.

Jon said: "His local Baptist minister, who was relocating to Bristol, asked my dad why he wasn't getting married and he said 'I haven't got a job and I've got nowhere to live'.

"The minister, Rev Robert Rowland,



Jon and Teresa Spencer outside their shop

said 'don't worry, I'll sort that' and soon afterwards told him 'I've found you a job, and luckily the flat above the shop comes with it'."

Jon's parents lived above the shop for 27 years before moving to a house near Page Park, and Jon attended Staple Hill County Primary School and Rodway School.

He and Teresa lived in Mangotsfield for many years but have now moved to the countryside.

Through the decades the shop has seen many changes, one of the biggest being the introduction of quartz watches.

Jon said: "My dad used to work at the

bench until midnight repairing mechanical watches. He recognised that wasn't going to continue and persuaded me to learn to repair jewellery instead."

In recent years mechanical watches have made a comeback as high-end items, and Jon says another trend is more people, particularly men, collecting multiple watches rather than keeping the same one for years.

The future of the building is not yet decided - Jon and Teresa own it, and it is possible another jeweller might want to take it over.

The couple are hoping to travel, and see more of their two children and two grandchildren, who live nearby.

Jon also plans to brush up on his piano playing - he was taught as a boy by local teacher Ivy Wilcox - and says he has also been approached by men's shed groups keen to use his skills.

The couple's West Highland terrier Angus has been a familiar sight to shoppers as he sits in the window, and Jon says they will miss talking to their customers, who have kept the shop busier than ever, from the end of the pandemic through to its final weeks.

He said: "Staple Hill has been good to us.

"We get people coming in saying their dad used to bring them in as kids, and now they're 70."

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10 year milestone for Kip McGrath

AS a familiar name on Downend High Street, Kip McGrath Bristol North is celebrating a significant milestone this year: 10 years of supporting local children with English and maths. The anniversary coincides with a wider celebration for the Kip McGrath Education Centres network, which marks 50 years of helping students around the world to succeed.

Since opening its doors in 2015, Kip McGrath Bristol North has become a trusted part of the local community. Each week, around 300 children attend lessons at the centre, and over the past decade nearly 2,000 students have been supported on their learning journey. Three years ago, the centre moved from its original home on Downend Road onto Downend High Street, making it even more accessible for local families and firmly placing it at the heart of the community.

Many families return year after year, recommending the centre to friends and neighbours, and often enrolling siblings once they see the impact on confidence



and progress. While improved grades matter, parents frequently highlight something just as important: their children feeling happier, more confident and more positive about learning.

What sets the centre apart is its focus on personalised learning, delivered by fully qualified teachers with extensive experience in local schools. Every child begins with a free initial assessment, which helps identify strengths, gaps and

next steps. From there, teachers create an individual learning plan designed to help children catch up, keep up, or move ahead of the curriculum.

Lessons blend traditional paper-based work with online activities, building strong foundations while keeping learning engaging and motivating. Progress is carefully monitored using bespoke software, allowing teaching to be adapted as soon as a child's needs change.

Sessions can be taken in-centre or online, offering flexibility for busy families and helping learning fit around school and home life.

The centre is led by Jay, a qualified teacher with over 20 years' experience in education and nearly a decade at the helm in Downend. Known for his calm, supportive approach, Jay is passionate about helping children believe in themselves and enjoy learning again. Under his leadership, the centre was named Kip McGrath Franchisee of the Year in 2022, recognising both strong educational outcomes and its positive role within the local community.

Reflecting on the milestone, Jay says the real success lies in seeing children grow in confidence and independence. "Helping a child realise they can do it is what drives us," he says. As Kip McGrath Bristol North looks ahead to the next 10 years, families who would like to find out more, or arrange a free assessment, are warmly invited to get in touch or pop in for a chat.



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Kip McGrath
EDUCATION CENTRES

Friends' mountain mission for Cameron

TWO friends are preparing to climb Africa's tallest mountain in memory of a Downend teenager.

Jo Robb and Kim Dixon will head to Tanzania on February 7 to start a six-day journey up Kilimanjaro, which at 5,895m (19,341ft) is the highest free-standing peak in the world.

They are raising money for the Cameron Williams Foundation, which aims to help men talk about their mental health, and charity Suicide Prevention UK.

Cameron, who was 19, took his own life in 2024 after being left devastated by the death of a friend in a road crash.

Jo's daughter Millie was Cameron's girlfriend and he worked at the family business, the Window Hub in Staple Hill.

Jo, who lives in Mangotsfield, said: "The tragedy hit Millie hard - we were all devastated.

"Cam was the most beautiful soul, he had the kindest heart and his laughter was infectious.

"He had recently started as an

apprentice glazier at our family window business, and was really good at it - he was eager to learn and had an amazing work ethic.

"His mischievous banter had all the team in stitches most days.

"We miss him and I hope we do him proud."

The foundation was set up by Cameron's mum Melissa Care, his aunt Amelia Care and their mum, Karen Parker, to keep his memory alive by supporting other men to find help with mental health when they need it.

Former Downend School pupil Cameron and his friend Tyler Carley were passengers in a scaffolding lorry which overturned on the Avon Ring Road near Mangotsfield in December 2023.

Tyler died in the crash, and while Cameron was not physically injured, Ameila said he had survivor's guilt and post-traumatic stress disorder, which he hid from his family and friends.



Jo Robb (left) and Kim Dixon training for their climb up Kilimanjaro

Jo, an advanced nurse practitioner based at Kingswood Health Centre, said: "I see how our mental health crisis is affecting men and boys, in practice at work and at home.

"I want to do something to raise awareness of the struggles that men and boys face when it comes to mental health and not opening up and talking to people."

Jo and Kim, of Warmley, have been training hard by walking, hiking and weight training four

times a week.

Jo said: "I've always wanted to climb Kili. We will take the six-day Machame Route, reaching the summit at night on day six, when the temperature could be as low as minus 20!

"Hiking is a mental challenge, just like mental health, and it's a good way to show people help is on hand if you need it and are struggling."

People can sponsor Jo and Kim via a Gofundme page at tinyurl.com/3s7ra7ch.

Council's pothole-filling record gets amber rating

SOUTH Gloucestershire Council has been given an amber rating by the government in a new national breakdown of which authorities are fixing potholes effectively.

The Department for Transport has produced a map and a breakdown, showing which councils are doing the best job and which need to make improvements, with the top performers given green ratings and the worst red.

South Gloucestershire has been given an amber rating for the condition of its roads, best practice in tackling potholes and overall, with a green rating for how much it is spending on maintenance.

Neighbouring Bristol and B&NES also have amber ratings, although Gloucestershire has a green rating overall.

The government says it has given £1.5 billion to councils in the South West form its Pothole Fund to be used on fixing roads and invest in long-term maintenance measures.

It says the best green-rated councils were able to demonstrate they are investing in long-term preventative measures rather than just patching up potholes, while also maintaining good road conditions and "investing significantly" into road



Potholes on Northcote Road near the junction with Windsor Place, in Mangotsfield

improvements.

Amber-rated showed some room for improvement, while those rated 'red' are not meeting the expected standards.

Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander said: "For too long drivers in the South West have paid the price because our roads were left to deteriorate. We've put our money where our mouth is, increasing the funding in the South West with £1.5 billion to fix roads, and giving

local highway authorities the long-term certainty they have been asking for.

"Now it's over to them to spend the money wisely, and for the first time we are making sure the public can see how well local highway authorities are doing in delivering the improvements they want to see in their local area."

South Gloucestershire Council says it has seen a 38% reduction in pothole reports year-on-year and has taken on extra road maintenance crews with its Pothole Fund money.

A spokesperson said: "We undertake a significant programme of work to maintain and improve our local roads, and we are pleased the rating reflects the positive steps we have taken to prioritise safety and deliver value for money for our residents.

"Over the last five years we have more than doubled the number of potholes being filled, but we recognise there is always room for improvement.

"We are currently working through our £2.4 million pothole fund programme, which consists of patching and resurfacing works and will improve the condition of sections of the network that are most in need of attention."

German trip widens horizons

DOWNEND School students visited a historic cathedral, a chocolate factory and a Christmas market during a trip to Germany.

The Year 9 pupils visited Aachen in December for a visit that combined historical, linguistic, and cultural learning.

It was organised by languages teacher and head of Brunel House Tony Rolle.

Head teacher Rachael Corns said: "While a huge amount of learning happens in the classroom, some of the most powerful lessons emerge when students step outside it and experience the world for themselves.

"One of the highlights was the breathtaking Aachen Cathedral, its stone glowing warmly in the winter light.

"Aachen's Christmas markets were alive with festive lights, wooden stalls, and the unmistakable scent of gingerbread drifting through the air.

"Students sampled German treats, browsed for gifts, and proudly practised their language skills with local stallholders. It was a joyful opportunity to connect classroom learning with real-world experiences.



Inside Aachen Cathedral

"Two further stops made the trip even more memorable: the Lindt chocolate factory and the Bahlsen biscuit factory.

"At Lindt, students watched chocolate being made from start to finish, captivated by the process and delighted by the warm, sweet aroma that filled the air.

"At Bahlsen, they saw how biscuits are produced on a huge scale, observing the



A German market

blend of modern machinery and traditional recipes.

"These visits offered a brilliant insight into food technology, engineering, and manufacturing in action.

"Judging by the number of chocolate and biscuit boxes loaded onto the coach, families at home were certainly treated to some delicious souvenirs!

"The winter sunshine, historic surroundings, and fascinating factory tours combined to create an experience they'll remember for years to come.

"The Aachen trip is a powerful reminder that school isn't just about lessons and exams, it's about broadening horizons, sparking curiosity, and helping young people grow into confident, thoughtful individuals."

Love Clear Hearing This February




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TURNERS HEARING CARE BLOG

You might not love ear wax... but you can love clear hearing



February is the month of love. We're encouraged to show appreciation for partners, family, and friends, but what about looking after yourself? Clear hearing may not sound romantic, but it plays a huge role in feeling connected, confident, and present with the people you care about.

Ear wax is completely natural and actually protects your ears. The problem arises when it builds up or hardens, which is more common during the winter months. Cold air, indoor heating, hats, earphones, and reduced hydration can all contribute to wax becoming dry and impacted. The result? Muffled hearing, blocked ears, ringing, discomfort, or even dizziness.

These changes often creep up gradually. You may notice yourself asking loved ones to repeat themselves, turning up the television, or feeling disconnected during conversations. In busy cafés, family gatherings, or social events, this can be frustrating, and sometimes embarrassing.

February is an ideal time to act. After the noise and busyness of Christmas and New Year, routines are calmer and it's easier to focus on your own wellbeing. A professional ear check can quickly identify whether ear wax is affecting your hearing.

Microsuction is a safe, gentle, and precise method of ear wax removal. Unlike cotton buds or home remedies, it doesn't push wax deeper or introduce water into the ear canal. Many people are surprised by how quick and comfortable the procedure is, and how immediate the improvement can feel.

Clear hearing isn't just about sound; it's about connection. Hearing a grandchild's voice clearly, enjoying conversations with friends, or simply relaxing without that blocked sensation makes everyday life more enjoyable.

If your ears feel blocked, sounds seem dull, or ringing has crept in, book an appointment with our friendly audiologist. We'll check your ears, show you what we see, and, if needed, remove any troublesome wax safely and comfortably.

You might not love ear wax... but you'll absolutely love hearing clearly again.

Deb Campbell

Debbie Campbell is a qualified and experienced Audiologist, who has joined the clinical team at Turners Opticians in Fishponds having worked for many years in NHS Audiology clinics.

Age is no barrier for football fan Keith

HE may be 96 but Keith Budd is still a familiar sight to fellow football supporters whenever Mangotsfield United play at home.

Keith has been watching the team since he moved to Mangotsfield 40 years ago, and until last year he was still driving to some of their away games.

Now his long-standing support has been recognised with a presentation from the club.

Keith, a retired Lloyds Bank clerk, first remembers visiting Mangotsfield as a boy 90 years ago, long before the club was founded, when he would take a tram to Staple Hill and then walk the rest of the way to see his aunt.

After moving to the area in the 1980s, he soon started following the club home and away.

He said: "I've hardly missed a game in all those years.

"My favourite memories are of the cup games, to places like Bromley in Kent, Yeovil and Merthyr Tydfil.

"I've seen a lot of very fine players over the years but my favourite was Andy Perrett - he could always score you a goal."

Keith's favourite manger in his time watching the club was Andy Black, who was in charge for more than four seasons between 1999 and 2003, and also made 450 appearances as a player.

He has also enjoyed visiting other local teams, including Roman Glass St George and AEK Boco, and only stopped attending away games to clubs a short journey away when he gave up driving last year.

Keith remains a regular at Cossham Street for home games in all but the coldest weather.

He said: "I like everything about Mangotsfield - it's a go-ahead club, it's got nice facilities and with the new pitch it's one of the best places you can go to watch football."

Keith is also a former rugby referee, and when he isn't watching the Mangos on a weekend he often watches Cleve RFC at the Hayfields next door.

He has three sons, five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren, and one of his granddaughters plays cricket for Gloucestershire.

Mangotsfield United chairman Steve Brown presented Keith with an engraved whisky glass in recognition of his decades of support at half-time during the side's 2-0 win over Fairford Town on January 17.

Steve said: "I'd just like to say thank you to Keith for his dedication and commitment to supporting Mangotsfield United over the years.

"It's Keith and supporters like him who have been, and always will be, the life-blood of this club.

"It was an absolute pleasure



Keith Budd is presented with an engraved glass by club chairman Steve Brown

to present Keith with a small token of thanks for the many years spent supporting Mangotsfield United, home and away.

"Chairmen, committees and players come and go, but the steadfastness and loyalty shown

by supporters like Keith, through good times and the bad, are the foundations that everything here is built on.

"Thank you Keith for your continued support!"

Sport: Page 27

village church

Sunday | 10:30am

Mangotsfield Primary School

vcemersonsgreen.org

Stolen scooter crash

TWO teenage boys were taken to hospital after the stolen motor scooter they were riding crashed while being pursued by police.

The Honda X-ADV 750cc maxi-scooter collided with a Toyota car at the double mini-roundabout junction of Overndale Road, Croomes Hill and Frenchay Road in Downend, at 12.43pm on New Year's Day.

The scooter had been stolen from Whitehall in Bristol three weeks previously. It had been involved in several other traffic incidents and was spotted five minutes before the crash by a police officer in a marked car, who followed it after the riders failed to stop.

The boys, aged 16 and 17, were taken to hospital for treatment and discharged within 24 hours.

Police are still investigating the incident and no charges have yet been brought.

A professional standards probe into the police conduct of the pursuit has already been carried out, and no further action will be taken against the officer involved.

The scooter was seen swerving through traffic on the Avon Ring Road before the crash. Witnesses should call 101 and quote the crime reference number 5226 000 448 if they have information or dashcam video that could help the investigation.



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TURNER'S VISION

Love your look this February: why eye exams matter more than you think



Peter Turner
of Turners Opticians
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February is often associated with hearts, love, and wellbeing, making it the perfect time to show a little extra care to your eyes. While most people think of an eye test as simply a way to update their glasses, an advanced eye examination can reveal far more than just how clearly you see.

Your eyes are unique in that they allow us to look directly at blood vessels, nerves, and structures connected to the rest of the body. This means an eye exam can sometimes detect early signs of wider health conditions, often before other symptoms appear.

More Than Just Vision

During an advanced eye examination, we don't just check whether you need glasses. We carefully assess the health of your eyes and how well they are functioning as part of your overall visual system. Subtle changes in the eyes can be linked to conditions such as: High blood pressure, Diabetes, Raised cholesterol and Autoimmune conditions.

Many of these issues can be developing silently, without obvious warning signs. Regular eye examinations can therefore play an important role in protecting not only your sight, but your general health too.

The Eye-Brain Connection

Seeing clearly isn't just about the eyes, it's about how the eyes and brain work together. Visual discomfort, eye strain, headaches, or difficulty concentrating can all be signs that the visual system is under stress, even if eyesight appears "normal".

For some patients, particularly those who spend long hours on screens or notice increasing fatigue, specialist assessments and tailored lens solutions can help reduce strain and improve comfort. These more advanced or therapeutic lens options are a hidden secret in eye care and can make a significant difference to everyday quality of life.

Prevention Is the Ultimate Self-Care

Looking after your eyes is one of the simplest forms of preventative healthcare. Regular eye examinations allow us to: Detect problems early, when they are easier to manage, Monitor changes over time, Provide reassurance when everything is healthy, Tailor solutions to your lifestyle and visual demands.

Many people are surprised by how much peace of mind a thorough eye examination can bring.

Book with Confidence

This February, consider your eye examination as an act of self-care, or even a thoughtful nudge for someone you care about. Whether you've noticed changes in your vision or simply want reassurance that everything is healthy, we're here to help.

To find out more or to book an appointment, visit our website or contact our friendly team by calling our Henleaze practice on 01179622474 or our Fishponds practice on 01179654434.

Because loving your eyes today helps protect your vision for the future.

Peter

Peter Turner is an Independent Prescribing Senior Optometrist at Turners Opticians in Bristol. He also works as a Senior Medical Optometrist at

Young talent needed

AN Emersons Green-based music festival is looking for musicians to take part in its Young Performer Spotlight concert.

The concert organised by Ham Farm Festival takes place on Saturday March 21 at Resound in Blackhorse Road, from 6.30-8.30pm.

This year is the fourth in a row that the concert has been held.

Children perform for 30 minutes, followed by a professional group after an interval.

Organiser Emily Andrews said: "This gives a great public performance opportunity to children, and also inspires them and their families by encouraging them to watch the professionals straight after."

"So many children study an instrument but have never seen a live professional classical concert before. We'd like to encourage as many local children as possible to apply."

Young musicians of Grade 1 level or above can apply if they have a piece "performance ready", certified by their teacher.

The sign up link for performers can be found at tinyurl.com/9sfw4eem.

The headline artists are CarmenCo trio, featuring voice, flute and guitars.

For more information on the group visit www.carmencotrio.com



Last year's young performers with professional group lyatra Quartet.

Window firm liquidated

A MANGOTSFIELD-based window and door supplier has gone into liquidation.

The Voice reported in December that Panoramic's showroom in Richmond Road had shut after the company ceased trading after 47 years in business. Its nine employees were made redundant.

Accountants PKF Francis Clark have now confirmed that Nicholas Harris and Lucinda Coleman have been appointed joint liquidators, following the company's decision to enter creditors' voluntary liquidation.

A spokesperson for the accountants said: "Incorporated in 1981, Panoramic Limited built a strong reputation as a manufacturer and later as a specialist supplier of high-quality windows, doors, conservatories and roof installations."

"In 2020, the business underwent a management buy-out, with ambitions to expand its product range and grow its position in the local market. For several years after this, the company continued to trade successfully. However, by late 2024, competitive pricing pressures and rising costs significantly impacted profitability."

"Despite promotional campaigns and efforts to secure additional funding, sales declined and cashflow forecasts indicated the company could not meet its financial obligations."

"The company's intellectual property and order book were sold prior to the liquidators' appointment. Following their appointment in December, the liquidators are working with Gavel Auctioneers & Valuers to sell its remaining assets – including showroom fittings, vehicles, plant and machinery – to realise value for creditors."

Mr Harris said: "Our immediate priority is to ensure an orderly winding down of Panoramic Limited's affairs and to communicate with all creditors, including customers who have paid deposits. "We will also review the company's financial position and transactions leading up to the liquidation as part of our statutory duties."

Creditors can contact PKF Francis Clark at business.recovery@pkf-francisclark.co.uk.



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WHAT'S ON

February 4

■ **MANGOTSFIELD RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION** monthly coffee morning at the Red Lion, 10am. All welcome.

February 10

■ **SODBURY AND DISTRICT FLOWER ARRANGEMENT SOCIETY** practice class at the Old Grammar School Rooms, Chipping Sodbury, 7.30pm. Also February 17 professional demonstrator Kathryn Delve presents 'Waste Not, Want Not'. Visitors £5. Information from rosemary.cummins2@gmail.com.

February 15

■ **LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATION**, Page Park, 1pm-3pm. Crafts at the Nest from 1pm. Performance by Bristol University Lion Dance Troupe, 2pm.

REGULAR EVENTS

Monday

■ **PUCKLECHURCH SHORT MAT BOWLS CLUB** are looking for new players. We meet every Monday evening (7.15-9.30) and Sunday & Wednesday afternoons 3.15pm-6pm at Pucklechurch Community Centre. Refreshments available. For more information contact John 07926541933.

Tuesday

■ **RIDGEWAY BADMINTON CLUB** meets every Tuesday Evening from 8-10pm at Downend Sports Centre for informal badminton doubles/ singles matches between adults of all ages. First visit free. More info from Graham on 07968 050320.

■ **POWER PILATES** at Christ Church Parish Hall, North Street, Downend 9:20 – 10:20. More details contact Kerry 07919 051019 and for full class timetable

■ **MESSY SPACE** at Badminton Road Methodist Church, Downend, 10-11.45am. Term-time group for toddlers and carers. Toys, books, crafts, singing and refreshments. First visit free. More information at badmintonroadmethodist.org.uk or 0117 956 1106.

■ **MONDAY ART GROUP** Spaces available Meets Monday 10-12.30 Badminton Road Methodist Church BS16 6NU Come along to see if you like it. Just doing your own art work with a sociable group.

■ **BEGINNER & REHABILITATION PILATES** 18:15-19:15 Pendennis Church (Opposite Wrenbert Road) Staple Hill. £8 please message Samantha 07736309272 for more information

PUCKLECHURCH FOLK

■ **DANCING CLUB** Pucklechurch Community Hall. Abson Road every other Tuesday from 7.30 to 10.15pm. All welcome either with a partner or solo. Enjoy an evening with us. Call Sue on 07742114566 or Linda on 0784324014.

Wednesday

■ **THE WOMEN'S SECTION OF THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION** meets on the first Wednesday of the month, 1-3pm at the YOU Foundation, Page Road, Staple Hill (by the long-stay car park). New members welcome. More details from Diane Roberts 0117 956 3407.

■ **MANGO JAMS BABY & TODDLER GROUP**, meets at Lyde Green Community Centre, 9.15am-10.45am, term time only.

■ **FRENCHAY FOLK DANCE CLUB** meets alternate Wednesdays, English and American folk dancing to live music, 7.45-10.15pm, Frenchay Village Hall. New dancers always welcome. More details at www.frenchayfdc.co.uk or email FFDCSecretary@gmail.com.

■ **CLEEVE SINGERS OF DOWNEND** Enjoy singing, then come and join this four part choir who meet on Wednesday evenings at Lincombe Barn, Overndale Road 7.30 p.m. from September until July. For more information contact the Secretary on 0117 9561881.

■ **DOWNEND FLOWER ARRANGING CLUB** meet at Emerson's Green Village Hall twice a month on a Wednesday evening, term time only. We are a friendly relaxed group, why not join us. For more information Downendflowers@gmail.com

Thursday

■ **NEXT DOOR BOOKS** welcomes new members. Book club meets on the last Thursday of the month at 11am, depending on numbers. Normally meets at Emersons Green library, email jessica.callaway@hotmail.co.uk.

■ **COFFEE, CAKE AND COMMUNITY MORNING** at Emersons Green Village Hall. Free Tea, Coffee, and Cake served 10am to 12pm, with extra time to relax and finish your drinks until 1pm. Everyone is welcome! Donations to Emersons Green Village Hall welcome. Supported by Emersons Green Town Council.

■ **WALKING WITH FRIENDS**, free group walks at a gentle pace around Siston Commons. Start and finish at Kingsmeadow@Madeforever Community Centre, Fisher Road, BS15 4RQ, 1-2pm. For more details email kingsmeadowmade4ever.org.uk or call 07588 622 372

■ **YOGA** at Christ Church Parish Hall, North Street, Downend, 10:00 – 11:00. More details contact Kerry 07919 051019 and for full class timetable

■ **NEW CLASS PILATES** at Christ Church Parish Hall, North Street, Downend 11:15 – 12:15. More details contact Kerry 07919 051019 and for full class timetable

■ **SHORTWOOD VILLAGE WI** meets on the second Thursday of the month at 7.30pm, at Shortwood Village Chapel, Main Road, Shortwood. More details from millhousejoinery@aol.com.

■ **BEECHMERE BELLES WI** meet in Emersons Green Village Hall at 7.30pm on the fourth Thursday of the month. More details from beechmerebelles@gmail.com or Facebook.

Friday

■ **PAGE PARK UKULELE CLUB**, Bean Tree café, Fridays at 1pm. All abilities welcomed. Places £4 each. For further details call or text 'Ukulele' to Ben on 07910 668258.

■ **RAINBOW TOTS** parent and toddler group meets at Emersons Green Village Hall on term-time Friday mornings, 10-11.30am. All welcome. For more details email church.egbc@outlook.com.

■ **MANGOTSFIELD AND CASTLE GREEN UNITED REFORMED CHURCH** regular coffee mornings, held on the first Thursday of the month, 10.30am-noon at the church in Cossham Street.

■ **LATER LIVE MUSIC**, Resound church, Blackhorse Road, Mangotsfield. Every second Friday monthly, except August & December, 8-10pm, £2.50. More details at facebook.com/lateratresound.

Saturday

■ **YOGA AND PILATES FUSION** at Christ Church Parish Hall, North Street, Downend 9:20 – 10:20. More details contact Kerry 07919 051019 and for full class timetable

■ **STAPLE HILL METHODIST CHURCH** Coffee mornings in our beautiful building every Saturday 10.00-12.00 in aid of church funds or charities. Enjoy Fairtrade coffee, tea and cake, and stalls.

Sunday

■ **MANGOTSFIELD AND CASTLE GREEN UNITED REFORMED CHURCH** hold regular weekly Sunday morning worship at

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

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Cossham Street. Services start at 10.30 a.m. with different speakers each week. New members very welcome. For more details please contact Peter Redding (Ch. Sec.) on 0117 9657075.

■ **BADMINTON ROAD METHODIST CHURCH** Sunday worship followed by sharing refreshments, 10.30am Service of Holy Communion usually fourth Sunday of the month, led by Rev Leigh Maydew.

More information from www.badmintonroadmethodist.org.uk.

■ **STAPLE HILL METHODIST CHURCH**, High Street BS16 5HQ Sunday services 10.30am + Sunday Club for ages 5-17. Holy Communion 2nd Sunday of the month – all invited. Taizé worship 6.00pm 3rd Sunday of the month. Contact Rev Dr Aboseh Ngwana 07482 550888, Philippa Church Liaison at staplehillmethodist@hotmail.co.uk or www.staplehillmethodist.com

■ **EMERSONS GREEN BAPTIST CHURCH** services are held every Sunday morning from 10.30-11.30am at Emersons Green Village Hall, Emersons Way. We also hold regular craft services. Contact Simon on 07765 201435, visit www.emersonsgreenchurch.org or Facebook page for more details.

■ **LYDE GREEN LITTER PICKERS** meet at 10.30am on the first Sunday of the month outside Lyde Green Community Centre, Thistle Close. See www.cleanupuk.org.uk/groups/lyde-green-litter-pickers for information.

■ **SERVICES AT ST JAMES CHURCH, MANGOTSFIELD**: 8am, holy communion. 10.30am, services rotate between all-age service (1st Sunday), morning worship (2nd & 4th Sunday), holy communion (3rd Sunday) and healing service (5th Sunday).

■ **PUCKLECHURCH BADMINTON CLUB**, Pucklechurch Village Hall, 8pm weekly. Play friendlies and mixed doubles. Over-18s only. For more details contact Mark on 07866 375512 or Pauline on 07570 046177.

Campaigning on your top priorities

I HOPE you're keeping well this winter.

Last month, my team and I worked on 495 new cases for residents, and I held my regular advice surgery, this time in Patchway.

As part of this, I supported a resident facing Home Office delays preventing them from starting their vital NHS role, helped a local business with HMRC delays which were causing financial strain, and resolved DWP issues for a resident, leading to a significant backdated payment.

I've also spoken up for our community on a range of issues, including raising issues with government ministers about support for bereaved Armed Forces families, treatment for rare cancers, adoption support, access to nature and more.

I've asked ministers and South Gloucestershire Council about clear next steps on Hambrook Junction, ahead of the report being published on local air quality, and asked questions and shared concerns about the potential development on Hicks Common in Winterbourne.

Since being elected, I've hosted regular 'Coffee with Claire' events across our large constituency, including in Downend.

I believe in doing politics differently and these informal events have been invaluable

for hearing directly from you as – together – we make ours an even better place to live.

Last month, I launched a new report at a special event, where I summarised local people's top priorities from these events and, together, we shaped local campaign plans on these. This report and ways to get involved can be found at clairehazeltgrove.co.uk/local-campaigns.

Locally, I met with our Chief Fire Officer and the team at Patchway Fire Station to discuss their vital work. I'm very pleased that our Labour Government's Fair Funding Review included an additional £15.6 million for Avon Fire and Rescue Service in their core spending power over the next three years. Having previously met with local firefighters, I raised local funding issues with our new government and am proud that we now have a better, longer-term deal for our community.

I visited Rolls-Royce following our government's £8 billion deal providing Türkiye with 20 new Typhoon fighter jets, which will see the local team providing vital engine components and maintenance. I also visited GKN Aerospace to hear more about the West of England Institute of Technology's work.



I was glad to meet with and thank Citizens Advice South Gloucestershire for their support for local people, and enjoyed visiting Little Stoke Primary and judging a debating competition at Mangotsfield School. In Parliament, I also spoke at an event about empowering girls in politics and hosted an event with 'GoHenry' on financial education.

I'm passionate about supporting young people to develop foundational skills to set them up well for adult life.

I was also proud to vote for the 'Hillsborough Law', making it an offence for public officials to mislead, and supporting victims and families in inquiries.

This is just the start of what I am determined will be another successful year for our community. Please get in touch anytime at claire.hazeltgrove.mp@parliament.uk.



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AI friends will help tackle loneliness

A CHARITY and a non-profit company have teamed up to use artificial intelligence to provide companionship for older people living on their own.

Age UK South Gloucestershire and Comfort Companions CIC are offering "friendly digital companions", accessible via a smartphone app, to people on the charity's befriending waiting list.

People in Frenchay and Soundwell are among the first ten participants who will be given one of the AI companions to talk to over the next month.

Age UK South Gloucestershire currently has around 200 people waiting for support from its volunteer befriending service, and in 2024 seven people on the list died before they could be offered help.

Age UK volunteer Grant Mackenzie, who co-founded Comfort Companions CIC with his dad Tom, said: "When I heard that seven people had died on the waiting list without



Founders Tom and Grant Mackenzie and AI 'friend' Dorothy

anyone ever getting to them, I couldn't get it out of my head.

"No one in our community should die without having someone to speak to. A simulated person is not the same as a real one, but it is far better than silence.

"Comfort Companions are friendly digital companions that hold natural, human-like conversations and are designed specifically for older British people.

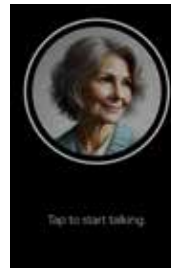
"Each person is matched with one or more of five companions using a short personality quiz, so

the experience feels warm and familiar, rather than clinical."

Grant said older people and Age UK South Gloucestershire staff had helped design the service, with volunteers helping each person who uses it to set up the companion and learn how to use it.

People who use the service tap on the companion's face to start and stop talking to it.

This means that, unlike Amazon's Alexa and Apple's Siri, the app is not constantly listening via the phone's microphone.



Age UK South Gloucestershire chief executive Mark Flower said the scheme solves a "real problem".

He said: "Demand for befriending far outstrips supply, and too many older people die waiting for support.

"We have a befriending service, which at the moment has 200 people waiting on it, waiting for somebody to be their friend.

"This project can be a lifeline for those who would otherwise go unheard."

The scheme is currently being funded from the charity's reserves but to support it past the pilot phase, Age UK and Comfort Companions are looking for supporters to come forward to donate £12 per month towards the running costs per person.

They hope to also raise funding from the community towards the cost of loan devices, internet access and support for volunteers.

To donate or find details visit www.comfortcompanions.co.uk.

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We need your ideas and help this year

AS we move into 2026 we are thinking about what we need or want to do in the year ahead.

There is quite a bit of general maintenance to keep us busy but we could really do with a new project, for the whole community, that can involve the whole community.

So if you have any bright ideas, please let us know.

There was a great turnout for our Dame School Carol Service at the end of last year: approximately 80 people came along to join us.

Many thanks to all who came along, to the Phoenix Wind Band, who braved the elements to accompany our singing, and the excellent Ukraine Choir.

However this year's Nativity and Christmas lights at the church were a bit challenging. The unfortunate demise of Panoramic Windows meant we lost our mains power to the Dame School for the Nativity.

We overcame that thanks to the generosity of Paul and Mark, two local people who lent us leisure batteries, but it did mean we were unable to light it up as we have in the past, and it meant a lot of toing and froing for some of our volunteers, to change and charge the batteries.

Hopefully it didn't spoil the effect.

Of more concern to us is that the lights on



Carols and lights at the Dame School

the church tree weren't working properly.

Thanks to the efforts of a member of the church and South Glos Council Streetcare, we managed to get some going and they looked good, but we discovered that there are a significant number of breaks in the lights, such that they will need to be taken down, inspected and either repaired or replaced.

This is going to cost us at least £1000 to do, money we don't have and will have to raise.

And we need to be clear. If the local community want us to continue to provide the Dame School Nativity Scene, Carol Service and Christmas lights then more people are going to have to help out. We'll provide more information on how later in the year.

Finally, like any community there will be

differences of opinion and different views on a wide range of topics and, like it or not, we all have our prejudices - that's normal.

However, when those spill over into anti-social behaviour and intimidation, as has happened recently to one of our volunteers, then a line is crossed. Surely we are better than that?

Our next monthly Red Lion coffee morning will be on Wednesday February 4 at 10 am: all are welcome.

If you want to get in touch, please email MangotsfieldRA@gmail.com, visit the Mangotsfield Matters Facebook page or telephone our chair, Clive Heath, on 07507 168700 or me on 07918 701881.

Chris Amos

LYDE GREEN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Do you need a chat?

We are very proud to now be part of the Chatty café scheme.

A 'Chatter & Natter' table creates a space for people to talk, whether it's for five minutes while you enjoy a brew or an hour of good conversation.

Our goal is not only to foster friendships but to encourage simple interactions that can help

combat loneliness and potentially brighten someone's day.

Although the initiative aims to reduce feelings of isolation and promote conversation, we intentionally avoid using the word 'loneliness' in our publicity materials displayed in cafes.

Instead, our messaging is positive and focuses on bringing people of all ages and backgrounds together. We want to mix everyone up!

Chatter & Natter tables are where customers can sit if they are happy to talk to other customers. Hundreds of venues offer Chatter & Natter tables, in cafes, pubs, libraries, hospitals - anywhere that people can sit and chat over a coffee.

Chatty café is every Monday at Lyde Green Community Centre from 11am to noon, when the table will be hosted by a volunteer - do come along for a chat!

Look for the table with the yellow sign.

If you would like to join as a volunteer to help us host our chatty table, please email info@lydegreenca.org.

You can also find us on Facebook, call our office on 0117 957 0410 or find more information and book events via our website, lydegreenca.org.

Helen Crew



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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



Clare Moody A&SPCC
writes for the Voice

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.

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History captured on a postcard

WE communicate constantly nowadays, but before we had access to phones, instant messaging, texting and emails, people relied on letters, telegrams and postcards to stay in touch.

Letters, sealed in envelopes, were the main form of communication for centuries.

They were often written in formal language, with correct ways to address and sign off, and they took care and effort to write. The time they took to arrive varied, as they were delivered by person, horse or carriage – from hours in big cities with frequent mail services, to weeks or months internationally.

Telegrams were introduced in the 1830s, providing a novel and rapid way to communicate. This didn't entail carrying a physical object like a letter, but sending the message electronically via an operator based in a telegraph office, usually in Morse code.

These were transmitted within an hour or a day but they were expensive, charged by the word, so senders kept them short and terse.

They were often used to convey urgent bad news, like war casualties, or good news like birth announcements.

In 1870 the first British postcards were made (based on an Austro-Hungarian idea which had proved extremely popular a year before).

Costing half as much as a letter to post and arriving quickly – with several collections and deliveries a day – they caught on fast.

People could dash off a cheery message or share news quickly without having to spend time drafting a full letter and finding an envelope and stamp before posting it.

The first postcards had an imprinted, pre-paid stamp and space for the address on one side, with the other side left blank for messages.

Postcards were used for frequent, informal chat, for sweethearts to send romantic messages to one another, to arrange get-togethers, send short pieces of news, or Christmas, Easter and other greetings.

During the two World Wars soldiers and prisoners of war were given free postage, so they could reassure their families that they were safe.

By the end of King Edward VII's reign in 1910, an incredible 800 million postcards were being sent every year.

Over time postcards changed: by 1902 most had a printed picture on one side, with both the address and message squeezed onto the reverse.

This was a boon to photographers, who could produce local cards, although most were printed. Before D-Day, a request for photos of the French coast swamped the military planners with over 10 million cards.

It became customary to send postcards from your holiday to friends and family, showing them scenes of what they were missing.

In 1968 first and second class postage rates were introduced, and it cost the same to send a letter or a postcard, so their popularity declined.

They are still sold as souvenirs today, and are fascinating collectibles that reveal how places have changed over time, like the views of Mangotsfield pictured on the examples here.



■ The old Mangotsfield Post Office on Cossham Street in the early 2000s, with a phone box outside



■ Mangotsfield depicted in a Christmas postcard from the late 19th or early 20th century

Downend Community History and Art Project (CHAP) is a not-for-profit voluntary organisation that aims to produce a community history resource and create a coherent identity for Downend and Emersons Green, built around interesting or significant places,

people and events from the past.

To get in touch visit www.downendchap.org, email big.gin@yahoo.com or write to CHAP, 49 Overhill Road, Downend, Bristol, BS16 5DS.

Helen Rana

BRISTOL u3a

We have something for everyone

BRISTOL u3a is for anyone with some free time for themselves.

There's no lower age limit but most of our members are retired or semi-retired. Literally everything we do is offered voluntarily by fellow members (we have no staff), so everybody is encouraged to

chip in.

If you decide to join u3a (you in your Third Age), you'll be spoiled for choice by the number of things you can get involved with.

Excluding local social activities, there are now over 200 interest groups across Bristol, and around 35 locally in our East & North-East Bristol group.

These are semi-formal gatherings of u3a members who share a common interest, eg walking, dancing, cinema, reading, arts and crafts, discussion groups, playing games, practising or learning a foreign language – in

fact, anything that comes to mind.

Most start as a result of a chance conversation; some begin as informal social activities.

You can see the full range of existing interest groups and a link to some proposed new groups by keying "Bristol u3a groups" into your favourite search engine.

You can even try a group before you join u3a by contacting its group leader – simply choose a group and then click on the leader's name.

Confused? Why not come along to an informal social and enjoy a cuppa and a chat with some

existing members?

This month you'll find us at: the Orchard Coffee & Bakery in St George (flat access) on February 6; the Market Café and Lounge in Kingswood (stairs) on February 10; the Crafty Egg in Fishponds (ramp) on February 18 and Mokka Downend (flat access) on February 23.

All socials run from 2pm to 4pm – everyone is welcome.

If you don't have time to attend a social, you can always contact me at learnlaughlive@bristolu3a.org.uk.

Lindsay Gough

MANGOTSFIELD DOLLY MIXTURES

WE would like to wish you all a very happy and healthy New Year.

We have just had our January meeting in the hall. Anyone who had a 'Santa's mistake' brought them along, and those left over will be put into our monthly raffles.

We were low on numbers this time, as quite a few Dollies had gone away for New Year celebrations, so we put all the chairs into a circle and over tea, coffee and cake discussed the things we would like to do in 2026.

Amongst the many suggestions were 'quiz & fizz', an Easter craft evening, a Harvest supper, skittles evening and a gin experience.

The evening proved so successful that the thinking is to keep this informal style for future Januaries, when numbers are low.

Just a little recap on December: we all thought that our Christmas pub lunch at the Lamb was excellent value. The Christmas pudding with brandy custard was exceptional.

Seven Dollies booked for the Strictly Come Dancing live tour with Bakers Dolphin on January 24, and planned to meet up for a breakfast, before picking up the coach.

To follow that, in February we have a lady coming to show some dance moves - plus our usual monthly pub lunch at the Lamb in Mangotsfield, where we always have a warm welcome from Kate and her team.

For more details about our group email carol@applause.co.uk.

Carol Coombs

BEECHMERE BELLES WI

HAPPY New Year from Beechmere Belles WI - we wish you a year filled with health, happiness and friendship.

Our 2026 programme started in January with a talk from author Jane Duffus, about the 'Women who Built Bristol' - her series of books that now runs to three volumes.

If you'd like to know what else we have planned for the rest of the year, why not come along?

We have another talk in February, this time about guide dogs. After that there are activities, crafts and some other events.

We welcome guests to any of our meetings: it's free for your first, unless it's a craft evening, when we charge £5 to cover materials used.

We promise you a warm welcome, as well as tea or coffee - and cake!

We meet in Emersons Green Village Hall at 7.30pm on the fourth Thursday of the month.

If you would like to know more about our WI please contact us via email at beechmerebelles@gmail.com or follow our Facebook page, which is Emersons Green & Lyde Green WI Beechmere Belles.

Wendy

SHORTWOOD VILLAGE WI

AS we start 2026 we have a full diary of speakers for the year, including an art for beginners session.

We also have a few trips being organised.

We rounded off 2025 when we welcomed Margo Cevik to tell us about Harriet Tubman and

the Underground Railroad.

Her work to take hundreds of slaves to freedom in the 1800's was relentless.

We also had our usual Christmas party, with games, a secret Santa and an American supper.

A ukulele group also entertained us with songs from musicals and a sing-along of Christmas carols. It was a great end to a very successful 2025.

We are a small friendly bunch, so if you would like to see what we are about we will welcome you to our next meeting on February 12 at 7.30pm, in the vestry at Shortwood Village Chapel, Main Road, Shortwood.

For any further information, questions or just a chat please contact us by email at millhousejoinery@aol.com, with the heading Shortwood Village WI.

Lynne Miller

CARERS SUPPORT

DO you look after a family member or friend who couldn't manage without your help?

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Cleve lose out to league leaders

CLEVE welcomed league leaders Trowbridge to the Hayfields for a top-of-the-table clash in January.

They had a new player, Ben Robinson on the roster and were playing in front of a record crowd.

Cleve started the game well. For the first 15 minutes they dominated possession and pinned Trowbridge in their half.

Trowbridge are a strong team and went into the match unbeaten. Their strength is in their defence, and their forwards toughed it out with Cleve.

Cleve's continual pressure led to a penalty on 30 minutes.

Matt Jarvis slotted it over, but Trowbridge then went into Cleve's 22 and scored a converted try.

Cleve continued to pound Trowbridge and gained a penalty on half-time, but a wild mistake led to the Trowbridge Number 8 picking up the ball and scoring, to make it 14-3 to Trowbridge.

After the break Cleve carried on as they had before. Good movement of the ball wide saw Ben Robinson pick up and go over, to make the score 10-14.

The game was going Cleve's way and a Trowbridge player got a yellow card, with Cleve in their 22, pressuring the line.

Trowbridge continued to show tremendous resolve in defence but eventually gave away a penalty that Jarvis slotted over, to make it 13 to 14.

The visitors responded by going forward to score again. Cleve were desperate to get back into the game and from a planned move went into the attack, with Liam McGrath going over.

The game was in the balance at 20 to 21 but in the dying minutes, Trowbridge again went from defence to attack and scored another converted try, to make the final score Cleve 20, Trowbridge 28.

Cleve's last game of 2025 was a crushing 70-7 win over Old Centralians.

Starting with total resolve, a penalty allowed Jarvis to kick to the corner and the resulting lineout used Cleve's catch and drive, with Marshall Stevens taking advantage and going over. Moments later, after superb interplay between forwards and backs, Harry O'Donnell crashed over to make it 14-0.

The intensity of Cleve's forward play was outstanding, and wing Archie Staples made a great dummy before scoring out wide.

A blip saw OCs intercept a pass in the centre and score to make it 21-7 but Cleve became ruthless in their execution, and added two more tries to make it 35-7 at the end of the half.

After the break some aggressive rucking saw Will Warman break a big toe, so he had



Cleve's new signing Ben Robinson

to go off.

But the tide was relentless, with Matt Lane, Liam McGrath, Ben Robinson and Archie Staples all scoring, Staples' try ending the game after a well-timed pass by Jarvis.

Steve Bateman

Flyers make good start to year

DOWNEND Flyers have made an excellent start to the new year, with the Women's A team securing an impressive 2-1 home victory against Winchcombe Town in the Sue Hensen-Green Cup.

Winchcombe Town, who currently compete in the league above, are a strong and experienced side, making this result even more noteworthy.

The win sends the Flyers through to the next round and marks a fantastic achievement for the squad.

Cup success has also been enjoyed at youth level. The Under 14 Ospreys delivered a convincing performance at home, recording a dominant 4-0 win against Churchdown Panthers.

It was a confident display that reflects the hard work and commitment of both players and coaches, and a great start to the year for the team.

Meanwhile, the Under-14 Eagles finished 2025 on a high, and remain unbeaten so far this season. Their consistent performances

have seen them dominate Division C as the club enters 2026.

The Eagles' results are a testament to their teamwork, determination, and growing confidence on the pitch.

Club spirit across Downend Flyers FC is currently at an all-time high.

With so many teams celebrating success, the club continues to pride itself on supporting player development and recognising individual achievements alongside team accomplishments.

One such achievement the club is especially proud to announce is the selection of Amelia Moschakis from the Under-15 Harriers, who has been named in the South West England Under 15 Schoolgirls squad.

Amelia has worked incredibly hard throughout her football journey, and her dedication has been rewarded with this fantastic honour.

This achievement also reflects the dedication of the Harriers coaches and teammates, who have supported, encouraged and challenged Amelia throughout her journey.

Everyone at Downend Flyers FC is delighted to support Amelia and wishes her the very best of luck in her continued success.

Downend Flyers wrapped up 2025 in unforgettable style off the pitch with a whole-club celebration at AirHop.

More than 400 players and siblings descended on the trampoline park, turning the Flyers purple as they bounced their way



Aimee Moschakis has been called up to the England regional squad.

into 2026 together.

It was a brilliant way to celebrate another successful year and a perfect reminder that Downend Flyers is as much about community and fun as it is about football.

If you would like to be part of this amazing club, whether as a player, coach, referee, volunteer or sponsor, we would love to hear from you at info@downendflyers.com.

Duncan Gardner

New manager for Mangotsfield

MANGOTSFIELD United have started the year with a new manager, after Glyn Ashton stood down from the role following three years in charge.

Ashton, who had managed the first team twice before, including through the Pandemic in 2020-21, remains with the club in a coaching and business role.

The club is grateful for all he did for the Mangos, taking over in 2022 after the club had dropped into the Hellenic League - something that had previously been "unknown territory".

He oversaw triumphs in the Wiseman Lighting Floodlit Cup, the club's first silverware in a decade, and GFA Challenge Trophy, as well as a promotion push last season that ended in the play-offs.

Within a couple of hours of Ashton's resignation on December 31 it was announced that former player and manager Ollie Price was returning to Cossham Street to take over as manager.

He has outlined plans for the future, which centre on returning to the Southern League as soon as possible.

On the pitch, the last game before Christmas saw bogey side and play-off hopefuls Cirencester Town visit Cossham Street, and take all three points in a 3-1 victory.

Cirencester's Harlie Price bagged a hat-trick on 9, 22 and 58 minutes. The Mangos did at least equalise his first goal, through Spike Weaver, on 17 minutes, but once the Romans regained their lead, they proved to be a much tougher nut to crack.

The Mangos, who also saw the return of Kyle Tooze to the club after a number of years away, battled hard all through the game, but the Romans stood firm.

Mangotsfield then drew 1-1 away over Christmas against struggling near-neighbours Hallen.

A good holiday crowd of 227 saw Aaron Parsons give the Mangos the lead on 25 minutes, but Hallen levelled on 69 minutes to share the points.

Price's first game as manager saw the Mangos make the perfect start to 2026, with a 3-0 away win at Pershore Town.

All three goals came in the



Mangotsfield celebrate Spike Weaver's goal against Cirencester Town. Picture: Euan McCormick

final half-hour. Kyrese Morrison bagged the first one on 64 minutes, with a strike across goal through a crowded penalty area.

Two minutes later, it was 2-0. More good work from Morrison down the left side saw the ball go to James White, who slotted it home.

That sprung Pershore into action, but the Mangos kept them out before adding a third goal in the 90th minute, Spike Weaver netting after good work from Mike Barry.

One week later, amid freezing weather around the country, the Mangos' all-weather pitch allowed the home game with promotion hopefuls and first-time visitors Droitwich Spa to go ahead.

Droitwich scored the only goal on 32 minutes, but it was still a strong performance by the Mangos, who did everything they could in front of an excellent crowd of 355.

A 2-0 home win over Fairford Town on January 17 saw the Mangos climb three places into 8th, three places but 14 points behind the final play-off place occupied by Cirencester Town.

Archie Morris scored Mangotsfield's first goal on the hour, heading in a James White free kick.

Then in the 90th minute Lewis Powell, playing his first match since returning to the Mangos for a third time, scored from a free kick on the edge of the D.

Powell, who scored 100 goals in the Southern League during his first spell at the club and added another 13 in the 2024/25 season, has rejoined from Cinderford Town.

The team now has 13 league matches left to play, nine of them at home, with three of the leading teams – Roman Glass, Slimbridge and Corsham – all yet to visit Cossham Street.

The club are also still in two cup competitions.

Although even reaching the play-offs looks a very tall order right now, Price will want the team to keep going and string as many wins as possible together to see where it all takes them, especially if some of the top teams start dropping points.

David Smale

Ashton explains decision



Glyn Ashton

AS he stepped down as first team manager, Glyn Ashton released a statement on Mangotsfield United's website.

He said: "Those who know me well will know that whilst I saw this role as an absolute privilege, it was never on my radar to manage a team at this level...I came in more to steady the ship rather than being the long term manager, and whilst I have enjoyed elements of it, I have to say that it is a full-time job on top of my proper full-time job, which is running a growing business I set up in 2020."

Ashton said he had considered stepping down at the end of last season, but felt that maintaining a consistent management, coaching team and squad, with some extra signings, would "get us over the line" to promotion this season.

However a huge number of unexpected injuries this season, many of them long-term, to key players, had left the team without up to 13 first team players at a time.

Ashton said: "Taking into consideration that I would be finishing at the end of this season I made it clear to the club recently that if the right manager became available we should make the change now rather than waiting until the end of the season, as a change now might just give us the extra impetus we need and maybe we could still force our way into play-off contention and win some silverware, too."

"I believe there is still a lot to play for this season and I believe we have made the right choice in manager for the benefit of both the short-term and long-term ambitions of the team."

Forthcoming fixtures:

January 24: Roman Glass St George (home)

January 31: Cinderford Town (H)

February 7: Longlevens (away)

February 14: Worcester Raiders (H - League Challenge Cup)

February 21: Cribbs (A)

February 24: Bitton (H - GFA Challenge Trophy)

Chiro ski

WORK, rest and play – it's often held up as a formula for personal success, helping to achieve a balance that's crucial to a healthy modern lifestyle.

I've recently taken a group of 30 brilliant chiropractors to Wengen, high in the Swiss Alps, for one of my favourite weeks of the year, where we ski all day, have chiropractic lectures in the early evening, then enjoy great food, conversation and networking long into the night – that's the Chiro Ski rhythm and I love it.

The format works beautifully: learn together, move together, eat together, laugh together.

The journey itself helps you immediately begin to switch off. We fly into Geneva Airport, then take the ski train that steadily lifts you from city level up into the mountains. With every climb, the pace of life slows and the headspace opens up. Wengen also happens to sit close to the famous "James Bond restaurant", Piz Gloria – proof that skiing has always blended adventure with a sprinkling of glamour.

With more and more people discovering the magic of the mountains each winter, I thought I'd share a few reflections and practical tips as someone who's been skiing since the 1980s.

I learnt on school trips organised by my parents (both teachers), back when kit was basic, skis were long and helmets were considered optional. In fact, my parents wouldn't let me have one because they were too expensive. Nowadays, you look more like the odd one out if you're not wearing a helmet for protection on

the slopes. Times have changed – and mostly for the better.

Why skiing is so good for you

Skiing is a full-body workout disguised as fun. Legs, core, balance and coordination all work together, often for hours at a time. Add crisp mountain air, incredible scenery and time away from everyday noise and the mental health benefits are just as powerful as the physical ones.

Warm up properly

Cold muscles and sudden effort don't mix well. Before you head off:

- Spend 5–10 minutes mobilising your hips, knees, ankles and spine
- Add a few gentle squats, lunges and rotations
- Start the day with a couple of easier runs – your body will thank you later in the week

Clothing: think layers

Bulky jumpers are a thing of the past. Aim for:

- A breathable base layer
- An insulating mid layer
- A waterproof outer shell

Warm hands, good socks and decent eye protection make a huge difference to comfort and endurance.

Helmets: just wear one

Modern helmets are light, warm and comfortable and dramatically reduce the risk of serious head injury. The 80s were fun – but not always smart.

Ski or board within your limits

Choose runs appropriate to your ability, control your speed and respect fatigue. Tired legs lead to poor decisions and there's no medal for the last run of the day.

Stay aware

Music can wait. Being able to hear what's happening around you – other skiers, changing conditions, piste machinery – is a big part of staying safe.

Phones: useful, not distracting

Carry your phone for emergencies, maps and meeting points, but keep it in a warm pocket. Cold conditions drain batteries quickly and skiing while scrolling is never a good idea.

Off-piste deserves respect

Off-piste skiing can be incredible, but it's serious terrain so:

- Go with a qualified guide
 - Check conditions and avalanche forecasts
 - Have the right kit and knowledge
- Confidence is not a substitute for preparation.

Timing matters

Early season can be magical but variable, while mid-season usually brings the most reliable snow. Late season offers sunshine, softer snow and a more relaxed pace – a personal favourite.

Chiro Ski is about far more than skiing.

It's learning, movement, connection and perspective – all wrapped up in a week that's as good for the mind as it is for the body.

If you're heading for the slopes this winter, ski smart, respect the mountains and enjoy every turn.

— Tim

President, British Chiropractic Association
Clinic Director, Cleve Chiropractic



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Club achieves National League dream

BRISTOL & West Hockey Club players achieved a long-held dream by qualifying for the National League Super 6s Championships.

The club competed in the regional indoor qualifiers at Clifton College in December and won the tournament for the first time.

The round-robin format saw B&W take on ISCA, Cheltenham and Lansdown in shortened games of two 12-minute halves.

The opening game with ISCA was a cagey affair overall, with B&W looking for counter-attacking opportunities.

A super effort from youngster George Ashley was helped over the line by thieving team mate, Dave 'Disco' Cadman and we found ourselves 2-1 up at half-time but ISCA hit back with a minute or so left in the game with a penalty corner, for a final score of 2-2.

Next up were Cheltenham, who had just finished playing their previous game.

We had a great chance to get the win against tired legs, and so we did. Some silky play saw Luke Berry slot in a brace, before Harry Bryant added a third late into the game.

The 3-0 final score left B&W needing just a single point against leaders Lansdown to make it into the final alongside them.

It turned out that Lansdown had been training all year in preparation for the tournament and looked good for the effort they'd put in. We'd already witnessed their tightly packed formation, devastating counter attacks and individual brilliance on the ball, not to mention the fact that they had enough substitutions to swap out nearly their entire outfield team in short, sharp bursts.

Playing defensively and striking on the counter, Phil 'The Assassin' Brown snuck onto the back post to calmly sweep the ball past the keeper to make it 1-0.

Lansdown grew frustrated and couldn't find a way through our defence. A quick break-away saw Harry Bryant win a penalty flick, which was slotted away nicely by his big brother and captain, Tom.

The 2-0 win put both teams into the final.

There were a few opportunities at either end, with Darren Ashley doing a mighty job between the sticks to keep the scoreline level.



The B&W team with their trophy after winning the regional qualifiers

With about five minutes on the clock, B&W were awarded a penalty corner, which Tom put through the keeper's legs before it slammed against the backboard.

There followed some clever tactical time-wasting before the clock ran out and the buzzer sounded, with B&W indoor champions of the West for the first time in our history.

In January the team took on Clifton, Epsom, St Albans, Teddington and Ipswich in what proved to be an absolute thrashing of a weekend in the Indoor National League Men's Division Two South.

Games were played over four 10-minute quarters.

Although B&W were well aware of the daunting task that awaited, we showed up with pride knowing that we had earned the right to be there.

The squad was made up of Over-40s to Under-18s, players from the 1st to 3rd team and two external players brought due to unavailability and injuries, with a complete mix of indoor experience - Nathan Patten had

never played Indoor before but stepped up and jumped straight into the deep end.

It's safe to say that B&W were no match for the well-drilled, heavily experienced and much fitter outfits that we faced over the course of that gruelling weekend.

Nonetheless, despite losing all five games, some heavily, we relished the opportunity to compete at the highest level in the club's history and definitely walked away from the experience having learned a few things.

Highlights included Dave Cadman, Matt Perriera and Harry Bryant all scoring National League goals, Wayne Manton saving a penalty flick, Nathan saving a rocket of a penalty corner off the line and, finally, Dave's mum Fiona filling in as team manager on day one.

She definitely played the part well: I don't think the officials suspected a thing!

Back outdoors, the Men's 1st team will follow our first game of the year against Westbury with a double-header weekend away in Exeter later in the month.

Harry Bryant



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